

Mark 15:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

Analysis

The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom—The Greek katapetasma (καταπέτασμα, veil/curtain) separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place in the temple. This massive curtain, roughly 60 feet high, 30 feet wide, and 4 inches thick (according to Josephus), required 300 priests to manipulate. Only the high priest could pass through, once yearly on Yom Kippur (Leviticus 16).

The passive verb eschisthē (ἐσχίσθη, 'was torn') indicates divine action—no human could tear this veil. The direction ap' anōthen heōs katō (ἀπ' ἀνωθεν ἕως κάτω, 'from top to bottom') confirms God Himself tore it. This occurred at the exact moment Jesus died, declaring access to God now open through Christ's finished work. Hebrews 10:19-20 interprets: 'We have boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh.' The torn veil proclaims the Old Covenant system obsolete—Christ Himself is the new and living way.

Historical Context

The temple veil separated the Holy of Holies (God's dwelling place) from the rest of the temple. Jewish tradition held the veil represented the barrier between holy God and sinful humanity—impassable except through prescribed sacrifice and priestly mediation. The veil's tearing occurred during Passover preparation at 3 PM, when priests were in the temple preparing evening sacrifices. This public,

undeniable miracle would have been witnessed by multiple priests and caused theological crisis. Forty years later (70 AD), the entire temple was destroyed, ending the old sacrificial system permanently.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How should the torn veil (direct access to God through Christ alone) transform your prayer life and worship?
2. What does God tearing the veil at Christ's death reveal about His initiative in removing sin's barrier?
3. In what ways are you tempted to reconstruct barriers between yourself and God that Christ's death permanently removed?

Interlinear Text

Καὶ	τὸ	καταπέτασμα	τοῦ	ναοῦ	ἐσχίσθη	εἰς	δύο
And	G3588	the veil	G3588	of the temple	was rent	in	twain
G2532		G2665		G3485	G4977	G1519	G1417
ἀπὸ	ἄνωθεν	ἔως	κάτω				
from	the top	to	the bottom				
G575	G509	G2193	G2736				

Additional Cross-References

Luke 23:45 (Temple): And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.