



Studies in the Book of Exodus

Text
Exodus 26:1-37

Topic
God describes the veils behind
which His glory was manifested

Title
"All Veil the King"

Shark Week just celebrated its 30th season. There's just something about watching other people interact with sharks that makes me wonder why I ever went in the ocean.

Jaws pretty much ended my beach days. I didn't need Megalodon to convince me that people are *food*, not *friends*.

Not only did I swim off the beaches of Southern California, I was a SCUBA diver. We took diving excursions to the back side of Catalina Island; I do miss that. Being underwater for an extended period of time was an amazing experience.

SCUBA stands for Self Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus. When using SCUBA gear you are temporarily able to enter a place which would otherwise be impossible to access.

What does SCUBA diving have to do with the Old Testament Tabernacle? It's not a perfect illustration, but see if this makes sense. We know from the Book of Hebrews in the New Testament that there is a true Temple in Heaven, and that the Tabernacle on earth was a copy.

Heaven is an environment that is off-limits to us in our natural state. Although a few Bible characters have been transported there and lived to tell of it, it's clear that Heaven's holiness would simply overwhelm us. We need glorified, resurrection bodies in order to enjoy the extended stay of eternity.

Desiring to meet with us, God designed the gear we needed in order to access Heaven on earth. The Tabernacle, consisting of its two chambers, was the place man could experience the Presence of God and not be overwhelmed by His holiness. It was the only place on earth where a man could, in a manner of speaking, breathe the rarified air of Heaven. It was momentary, but it was wonderful.

Chapter twenty-six describes the curtains that comprised the covering enclosing the Tabernacle, and the veils that served as entry into both of its chambers.

Those curtains, and those veils, were precisely described by God to Moses. Their description was intended to communicate God's ultimate intention - to restore what was lost through sin in Eden and have face-to-face time with mankind.

Keeping that in mind, I'll organize my comments around two points: #1 The Curtains Told You That Tabernaciling Among Men Is God's Desire, and #2 The Veils Told You That Tabernaciling Among Men Is God's Doing.

#1 The Curtains Told You That Tabernaciling Among Men Is God's Desire

(v1-30)

They say colors can affect your mood and behavior. There's even a name for it: Color Psychology.

For example: Red's and yellow's can increase a person's appetite. Think about fast food restaurants like McDonald's or KFC. They incorporate the color yellow and red. They deliberately chose that color scheme because they want people to get *hungry*.

You should think about color when you're dieting. Another researcher claims white is a color to avoid in your kitchen. Darker colors will not stimulate your appetite as much.

Those of you on the Paleo diet might want to paint your kitchen rock-gray, and then add cave drawings of yourself taking down a chicken with a spear.

As we read about the curtains of the Tabernacle, their colors and texture and any embroidery will be our focus. Commentators tend to see seemingly endless types and figures in every minute detail of the Tabernacle. They might be right; everything was intended to prefigure Jesus. But I want to concentrate on the things that are obvious and biblical - and that means color, texture, and embroidery.

God's plans for the Tabernacle and its service take up more entire chapters in the Bible than any other subject. If it was that important in redemption history, we can't skip over it. Bear with me as I read the first thirty verses:

Exo 26:1 "Moreover you shall make the tabernacle *with* ten curtains *of* fine woven linen and blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*; with artistic designs of cherubim you shall weave them.

Exo 26:2 The length of each curtain *shall be* twenty-eight cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits. And every one of the curtains shall have the same measurements.

Exo 26:3 Five curtains shall be coupled to one another, and *the other* five curtains *shall be* coupled to one another.

Exo 26:4 And you shall make loops of blue *yarn* on the edge of the curtain on the selvedge of *one* set, and likewise you shall do on the outer edge of *the other* curtain of the second set.

Exo 26:5 Fifty loops you shall make in the one curtain, and fifty loops you shall make on the edge of the curtain that *is* on the end of the second set, that the loops may be clasped to one another.

Exo 26:6 And you shall make fifty clasps of gold, and couple the curtains together with the clasps, so that it may be one tabernacle.

Exo 26:7 "You shall also make curtains of goats' *hair*, to be a tent over the tabernacle. You shall make eleven curtains.

Exo 26:8 The length of each curtain *shall be* thirty cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; and the eleven curtains shall all have the same measurements.

Exo 26:9 And you shall couple five curtains by themselves and six curtains by themselves, and you shall double over the sixth curtain at the forefront of the tent.

Exo 26:10 You shall make fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in *one* set, and fifty loops on the edge of the curtain of the second set.

Exo 26:11 And you shall make fifty bronze clasps, put the clasps into the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may be one.

Exo 26:12 The remnant that remains of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remains, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle.

Exo 26:13 And a cubit on one side and a cubit on the other side, of what remains of the length of the curtains of the tent, shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle, on this side and on that side, to cover it.

Exo 26:14 "You shall also make a covering of ram skins dyed red for the tent, and a covering of badger skins above that.

Exo 26:15 "And for the tabernacle you shall make the boards of acacia wood, standing upright.

Exo 26:16 Ten cubits *shall be* the length of a board, and a cubit and a half *shall be* the width of each board.

Exo 26:17 Two tenons *shall be* in each board for binding one to another. Thus you shall make for all the boards of the tabernacle.

Exo 26:18 And you shall make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards for the south side.

Exo 26:19 You shall make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards: two sockets under each of the boards for its two tenons.

Exo 26:20 And for the second side of the tabernacle, the north side, *there shall be* twenty boards

Exo 26:21 and their forty sockets of silver: two sockets under each of the boards.

Exo 26:22 For the far side of the tabernacle, westward, you shall make six boards.

Exo 26:23 And you shall also make two boards for the two back corners of the tabernacle.

Exo 26:24 They shall be coupled together at the bottom and they shall be coupled together at the top by one ring. Thus it shall be for both of them. They shall be for the two corners.

Exo 26:25 So there shall be eight boards with their sockets of silver - sixteen sockets - two sockets under each of the boards.

Exo 26:26 "And you shall make bars of acacia wood: five for the boards on one side of the tabernacle,

Exo 26:27 five bars for the boards on the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the far side westward.

Exo 26:28 The middle bar shall pass through the midst of the boards from end to end.

Exo 26:29 You shall overlay the boards with gold, make their rings of gold as holders for the bars, and overlay the bars with gold.

Exo 26:30 And you shall raise up the tabernacle according to its pattern which you were shown on the mountain.

The Tabernacle was a moveable tent that measured about 15' wide, 45' long, and 15' high. The framework was formed by boards of acacia wood - 20 on either side, and 8 at the back. They were held together by five horizontal bars, and stood in sockets of silver which were sunk in the ground.

Over this three-sided framework, three sets of curtains were hung, which made the ceiling and drooped over the boards:

1. The first set of curtains were visible only to the eye of the priests who served inside the Tabernacle. They were made of fine linen, white, with cords of blue, purple and scarlet. Figures of Cherubim were woven into them.
2. The second set of curtains were of goat's hair. They were longer and wider than the first set, completely covering them.
3. The third set of curtains were made from the skins of seals (or maybe porpoises), and were lined with rams' skins dyed red.

The entrance into the Tabernacle was through a veil. Once inside, you were in the Holy Place. It was 15' wide by 30' long and 15' high. It contained three articles of furniture: The Table of Showbread, the Menorah, and the Altar of Incense.

Another veil separated the Holy Place from the innermost chamber, the Holy of Holies. It was a perfect cube - 15'x15'x15'. In that room was the Ark of the Covenant as a chest to hold the Ten Commandments, with its lid called the Mercy Seat. God's Presence manifested itself above the Mercy Seat.

Priests had daily duties to perform in the Holy Place; the High Priest had an annual duty to perform in the Holy of Holies.

On the most basic level, the Tabernacle was a visible token of God's desire to dwell - or as we are saying, to "tabernacle" - among men. In Exodus 25:8 God said, "And let them make Me a [tabernacle], that I may dwell among them."

As millions of Israelites pitched their tents in the wilderness, so did God pitch His tent among them; in the very center of them, in fact.

It must never begin to bore you that God desires to have fellowship with you. He made man in His image, in order to have a relationship with us. The man He made in His image, and the woman He made from the man, sinned by disobeying God's one simple command. The result was that the incredible face-to-face time our first parents enjoyed was lost, attested to by the fact that they hid from God when He called out to them.

In that very moment, God preached the first Gospel message when He promised to send the Seed of the woman to crush Satan. It's doubtful Adam and Eve understood it entirely, but God was promising to come to earth as a man - as fully God and fully man - to resolve the issue of sin, and to restore fellowship with mankind.

Because the penalty for sin is death, God killed animals to temporarily cover Adam and Eve. He thereby set in motion the teaching that an innocent, sinless Substitute was needed to take our place in death.

God was coming to die. Only by dying in our place and thereby paying the penalty for sin, could we be restored.

The Bible is the progressive revelation of exactly how and when God came. Each chapter got mankind closer to the incarnation of Jesus Christ - God in human flesh - and His substitutionary death on the Cross to satisfy the penalty for sin and provide for us new life.

When Jesus came, the apostle John exclaimed, "And the Word became flesh and **dwelt** among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

"Dwelt" is the word *tabernacled*. A spiritually-minded first century Jew would immediately understand that Jesus was the fulfillment of the first Gospel preaching; and that the Tabernacle and later the permanent Temple, were merely steps along the way to His coming.

God, Who had tabernacled among them in the Tabernacle, was now tabernacling among them as a man in the Person of Jesus.

I say this with reverence: Although nothing is impossible for God, it ain't easy for His holiness to be satisfied in a way that restores the fellowship that was lost through sin. It took all the centuries we read about in Scripture.

There, in the Holy Place, redemption history took a giant leap forward. A thoughtful priest could for a few moments each day breathe Heaven's rarified air.

The priest stood beneath the white linen curtain with its cords of blue, purple, and scarlet. I can't say how much of the symbolism the Jewish priest would have understood; but we, with the complete Word of God, can see in substance what he was looking at in symbol.

Blue is the color associated with Heaven. In Exodus 24:10, looking up, the Israelites got a glimpse of Heaven, and they mentioned it was "sapphire" in color (24:10). Sapphire "is most commonly found in a range of blue shades.

In First Corinthians 15:47 we read of Jesus that He is "the Lord from Heaven." The blue was for the promise in Genesis of the coming Seed of the woman, who would be God come from Heaven to earth.

Purple is, in the Bible, emblematic of royalty. When the Roman soldiers mocked Jesus before His crucifixion, hailing Him as a king, they put on Him a purple robe. Do you have any doubt that Jesus is, in fact, King? The Lord from Heaven would be the King. Scarlet, or red, is the color of blood.

Here is an incredible insight from A.W. Pink's *Gleanings in Exodus*. He points out that in Psalm 22:6, which prophetically describes the crucifixion of Jesus some 400 years before it happened, the sufferer exclaims, "I am a worm." If you consult *Strong's Concordance*, you'll learn that the word for "worm" is a crimson or scarlet grub that was used to dye clothing red.

Red strongly suggested that the Lord from Heaven, the King of the earth, would suffer and die. Did Jesus not sweat great drops of blood? Did He not shed His blood, taking my place; taking your place?

Woven into the linen ceiling directly over the priest were the Cherubim. We first see these angelic creatures when Paradise was lost. Adam and Eve were driven from the Presence of God, and the way to the Garden of God was guarded by Cherubim.

Put it together. Mankind had lost face-to-face time with God. The way to Heaven was closed and guarded. God Himself was coming from Heaven to suffer and die, but in so doing He would restore all things and reign as King.

There were two additional curtains. The next was goat's skin. The goat was associated with sin offerings. Especially on the annual Day of Atonement, when one goat was slain, and the other sent away into the wilderness as the scapegoat.

In Second Corinthians 5:21 we're told that Jesus, Who knew no sin, was made sin for us. The goatskin represented substitutionary sacrifice.

The outer curtain was of seal or porpoise skin with a lining of ram's skin dyed red. I'll give you a moment to get over your horror that Flipper's skin was used.

Looking from the outside, the Tabernacle was plain. There was nothing beautiful about it. That type of covering didn't suggest the beauty that was being concealed.

That's so like Jesus in His incarnation. The prophets emphasized He was plain, having nothing unusual about Him. People wondered how He could do the things He did, and say the things He said, on account of His humble origins. The apostle Paul said Jesus "made Himself of no reputation" (Philippians 2:7).

The ram's skin dyed red might be a nod to the famous episode where Abraham was about to sacrifice his son, Isaac. God stopped him and, in Isaac's stead, provided a ram.

The One Who "made Himself of no reputation" humbled Himself to die on the Cross. In His case, the Father *did* sacrifice His only Son. He prepared a body for Him - a body like ours - in order for Jesus to be the once-for-all sacrifice for the sin of the world.

Regardless how much, or how little, of the symbolism and shadow the Jews understood, **we see it**. We're told, "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (First Corinthians 10:11).

At the minimum, the Holy Place was an incredible advancement in mankind having fellowship with God. It brought men in to His presence, and proclaimed that even closer fellowship was on its way.

#2 The Veils Told You That Tabernacling Among Men Is God's Doing

(v31-37)

The most important thing you're taught when getting certified in SCUBA is to always breathe naturally. Don't hold your breath - especially on your way back to the surface.

Depending on how long you stay underwater, you may need to stop during your ascent to the surface to decompress. There are also decompression chambers certain divers must use.

If you don't allow for decompression, terrible things can happen to you; like death.

It was likewise possible to die if you entered the Holy of Holies incorrectly:

Lev 16:2 and the LORD said to Moses: "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at just any time into the [Holy of Holies] inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat.

Only priests could enter the Holy Place daily to serve; only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies annually to offer sacrifice for the nation.

It may seem harsh; but remember, God was making it possible for men to get close to Him. *Any access was amazing.*

Exo 26:31 "You shall make a veil woven of blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen. It shall be woven with an artistic design of cherubim.

Exo 26:32 You shall hang it upon the four pillars of acacia *wood* overlaid with gold. Their hooks *shall be* gold, upon four sockets of silver.

Exo 26:33 And you shall hang the veil from the clasps. Then you shall bring the ark of the Testimony in there, behind the veil. The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy *place* and the Most Holy.

Exo 26:34 You shall put the mercy seat upon the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy.

Exo 26:35 You shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand across from the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south; and you shall put the table on the north side.

Exo 26:36 "You shall make a screen for the door of the tabernacle, *woven of* blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen, made by a weaver.

Exo 26:37 And you shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia *wood*, and overlay them with gold; their hooks *shall be* gold, and you shall cast five sockets of bronze for them.

The priests daily entered the Holy Place through a veil. Annually, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest entered the Holy Place through that veil, then into the Holy of Holies through another veil.

The veil to the Holy of Holies also served to cover the Ark of the Covenant when Israel was on the move (Numbers 4:5).

Every little thing about these veils was symbolic. Let's take a big-picture approach to the veils - and especially the veil that only the High Priest could go through.

As wonderful as this fellowship with God was, veils suggest barriers. Wouldn't it be great if those veils, those barriers, could be removed?

Imagine every priest having immediate access into the Holy of Holies at all times. Then imagine every Israelite being a priest - so that everyone had that same access.

Something like that happened in the first century. It happened as Jesus was ending His suffering on the Cross:

Mat 27:50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

Mat 27:51 Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom...

There are two things about this tearing that are unmistakable.

The first, and the most obvious, is that the tearing was God's doing. He reached down and tore it from top to bottom.

When you talk about the Temple that replaced the Tabernacle, the First Temple was built by Solomon. It was destroyed by the Babylonians. When the Persians allowed the Jews to rebuild their Temple, that Temple was the Second Temple. It is sometimes called Zerubbabel's Temple after the governor of Judah at that time. In the time of Jesus, King Herod was remodeling the Second Temple; so it's sometimes called Herod's Temple.

Herod had increased the height of the Temple from 20 cubits to 40 cubits, according to the writings of Josephus. The veil was thus somewhere near 60' high. An early Jewish tradition says that the veil was about four inches thick, but the Bible does not confirm that measurement.

It's size and it's thickness tell us this tearing was not done by man, but by God.

It was His doing; and because of it, we have the closest fellowship with God possible apart from being absent from our bodies and present with Him in Heaven.

The barrier between God and man was removed forever by God's own doing. There would be no more need for spiritual decompression in the chambers of the Temple. It had served its earthly purpose. The way to God was opened.

The second thing about the tearing of the veil is something that is revealed to us by the inspired writer of the Letter to the Hebrews:

Heb 10:19 Therefore, brethren, [we have] boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,

Heb 10:20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, **through the veil, that is, His flesh,**

Heb 10:21 and *having* a High Priest over the house of God,

It compares Jesus' torn flesh to the torn veil as if they were one. As the veil was torn, Jesus' flesh was torn for each one of us. We, through His substitutionary death and shed blood, can receive salvation and have direct access to God.

When it says we have "boldness to enter the Holiest," it's not talking about approaching God in an earthly Temple. God was through with that Temple and its religious system, and the Temple and Jerusalem were destroyed by the Romans in 70AD, just as Jesus prophesied (Luke 13:35).

We are His Temple - indwelt by His Holy Spirit at the moment of our salvation.

At any moment, we could be in the very Presence of the Lord. Through death, or by the rapture, we will, the apostle Paul promises, “see Him face-to-face” (First Corinthians 13:12).

The apostle John says, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (First John 3:2).

We could quote the Psalmist here and say, “This was the LORD's doing; It *is* marvelous in our eyes” (Psalm 118:23).

God’s promise in Genesis to restore fellowship is almost complete. Any moment, Jesus will return in the clouds to resurrect the dead of the church age, and to rapture living believers.

That event will be followed by the seven-year Great Tribulation on earth... Which will be followed by the Second Coming of Jesus to the earth... Which will be followed by the Millennial Kingdom on the earth, ruled by Jesus from Jerusalem... Followed by the Great White Throne judgment in which all nonbelievers from all history will be consigned to eternal conscious torment in the Lake of Fire.

Followed by the creation of new heavens and a new earth, in which there is no need of a Temple because believers in our glorified resurrection bodies will finally enjoy face-to-face time fellowship with God.

Until then we, by faith,

*Turn [our] eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face*

*And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.*