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"Christ, our . . ."

Joel Portman

"Christ, our Life. . ." Colossians 3:4

Paul, by the Spirit, has been giving to the Colossian believers the great truths that extol the supreme glory and dignity of Christ as the head of the body, His supremacy and exalted position. Indeed, He is incomparable! Clearly, the purpose is to controvert the arguments of the heretics who were seeking to diminish the glory and exalted position of Christ, and who were leading these saints away from a genuine appreciation for Who He is and what He should receive from them. How could they even consider the possibility that they needed anything apart from Him, or that conceptions of angels or powers, or even observances of days and ceremonies could add anything to the richness of their spiritual life received by their link with their risen Head?

Having established the great truths of ch. 1 that emphasize His greatness and sufficiency, and then having shown the insufficiency and faultiness of all else in ch. 2, He would turn their minds toward the position that they occupied and the results that are to be seen in their lives. The position of a believer in Christ is no empty theological concept without fruit; it is a very practical truth that is based on reality, and the reality of that link with Him who "sitteth on the right hand of God" must and will be displayed.

"Risen with Christ"

"If" usually carries the force of a positive statement that is true of every believer. We are "risen with Christ" and since that is true, then there is an expected response. It is not a question of doubt, but rather a positive statement of a Divine declaration. The only way that "if" can indicate otherwise in this case is to say that if this statement is not personally true in the life of a reader, then he or she is not a child of God and has no link with the Lord Jesus. Other passages declare the same truth that we appreciate and which he has already stated in ch. 2:12-13, 20 as well as in Romans 6:4-5, 9-11, Galatians 2:19-20, Ephesians 1:19-20, 2:5-6.

"Seek" indicates that this is the driving force of a believer's life. It is a strong desire that is normal in one who is linked with Christ at God's right hand (Romans 8:32, Ephesians 1:20, 1 Peter 3:22). William Lincoln says, "In Ephesians, saints are said to be already 'blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ'--here they are to 'seek' them." Those things include all the qualities and characteristics that pertain to Him which are intended to be seen in our lives. A Christian's life is a very positive experience, not negatively rejecting the elements of the world alone. As the great truths that pertain to the reality of our lives grasp us, it will result in the mind ("affection") being set on those things, not on earthly things. We read of those who have no divine life that they "mind earthly things," (Philippians 3:19), for they have nothing more to be occupied with. The false teachers were only occupied with the lower things of earth (2:20) and this exhortation seems to apply primarily to the things that they were teaching directly. We learn in Revelation that God's judgment is coming upon "earth-dwellers", or those who have no other dwelling place and thus are solely occupied with earth. May the Spirit of God direct our thoughts and desires more toward that which is spiritual and eternal, so that the results may be seen in daily living.

"Dead", with Life Hid with Christ

Those who are "risen with Christ" have died with Christ. This is not something to be attained; it is, rather, a statement of reality. One cannot be risen with Christ if they have not already died with Christ to the life that is only linked with the world and carries the expressions of the old man. "Risen" gives the positive side, whereas "died" is the negative; both are important in their practical impact on the life. As a

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result, we have received a life that is spiritual and is of a different nature. It is Divine, for it is by means of a birth from above (John 3). and it is eternal and heavenly. However, that life is unknown in its character to those who are of the world. It is “hid with Christ in God,” a mystery to those who have not the Spirit of God indwelling them. The true character of that life is not seen in its fullness at this time. It is only known fully by the One who has given it. Since He is unseen to the world and His true value is unappreciated, so the full glory of a Christian’s life is still hidden, securely established and awaiting that day when He shall appear.

Since the Christian life is “hid with Christ”, it also indicates that the essence of that life is Christ. We revel in the fact that we have received eternal, spiritual life through Him (John 10:10, 28-29, 14:6, 20:31, 2 Timothy 1:1, etc.). This is saying more; He is that life, and through a spiritual, organic link with Christ, the actual reality of a believer’s life is Christ. Paul expresses the same thought repeatedly in other epistles, such as in Philippians 1:21, Galatians 2:20. “The statement is to be understood in light of the undeniable fact that Christ is the source, sustenance and summation of the Christ life.” (WBT, “Colossians”). Again, William Lincoln expresses it, “He is speaking of the source of life; it is in God’s Son up there, and from Him it is constantly flowing down to us, flowing out from Him and flowing in to us.” It is truly a marvelous truth to appreciate and revel in, that we, as believers, have a life that is essential that of Christ living in us and which enables one to express the attributes of life that are honoring to Him and which express something of His person. Although with failure, the statement is true and it gives incentive and ability for the present, but as the verse continues, it is the anticipation of the future. He will appear (be manifested), and then the true character of the child of God will also be manifested when we are with and like Him eternally. This manifestation may indicate the moment of the redemption of the body at His coming (Romans 8:21-25), or may go beyond that to the coming out, when with Him in His glory, the believers will also be seen in their character as a result of the judgment seat of Christ. What a blessed hope is indicated to us in this present experience of living in vital union with the risen Christ! How could one turn aside to the empty, paltry elements of this world when this is the actual case and is meant to result in a life that is full of joy and peace? May this stir us to live the daily manifestation to some degree of what we will be seen as in that day of glory!

“Christ, our Hope. . . 1 Timothy 1:1

Even as Christ our life includes the anticipation of the future manifestation in glory, so this verse reminds us that the certainty of the future fulfillment of all God’s promises (which are established in Christ, 2 Corinthians 1:20), are vested in Him as well. Paul had been called by the risen Christ to be an apostle to the Gentiles according to the

commandment of our Savior God and Christ Jesus (proper order of His name), and it was in the same assurance that he could write that He is our hope.

We read in Romans 8:24, that hope that is seen isn’t hope, and yet hope in Scripture is not simply a desire for something that may not come to pass or materialize. It is rather the certain, anticipated expectation of the fulfillment of a reality that is assured because it is based on the promise of God, who cannot lie (Titus 1:2) and who cannot fail to fulfill His Word. We are “saved by hope” (Romans 8:24) or “to the hope”, that is, in view of the future that we will eventually enjoy in His presence. We read that He is the “God of (the) hope” in Romans 15:13, and Paul, in Colossians, directs our minds to “Christ in you, the hope of (the) glory”, (1:27). So that the Christian has the pleasure of living daily in the midst of every discouragement and trial, but in view of the future that will result in a vital, eternal change. In Titus 2:13, we read that is is a “blessed hope” and as we often sing, it “illuminates with beams most cheering the hours of night.” Scriptures are full of assurances concerning this hope that we enjoy. In that great resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians 15:19-22, Paul states that “if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

It is the purpose of the Holy Spirit within us to enlighten our hearts and minds concerning this hope (Romans 5:5), but it is God’s purpose that this hope might center our hearts and minds more securely in the Lord Jesus and that it will also have a practical effect on our lives. “Every man that hath this hope in him, (set on Him), purifieth himself, even as He is pure,” (1 John 3:3). It is our desire that whenever He appears, we may not be ashamed before Him, as John speaks, (possibly primarily concerning himself and his work) in 1 John 2:28. So that the hope is not only a blessed expectation; it is a practical reality in the life of a believer. May the Lord so enable and stir us so that we might be living constantly in the present assurance of that moment and in the practical expression of its impact on our lives.

Are we? Are we living for the Lord? Are we laboring for the Lord? Is it our one great business of life to live for Him? How many objects have set before us, on account of which to live on earth! To please our God and Father, and to seek to imitate the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, the one business of life, the only business of life. The man seeking this—to bring honor to Christ! The one in a profession, or in any occupation in life, seeking to bear fruit, for the Lord! Is this the one business of life, beloved ? Ask yourself, What am I living for? Am I living for the Lord?

The Effects of the Atonement of Christ

W. Hoste

The effects of the atonement of Christ are very broad, retrospective as well as future. Every blessing, material or spiritual, that has come to man in the history of the world is on the ground of the death of Christ. The rain, the sunshine, the fruits of the earth, the covenant of night and day, the cycle of the seasons and every other temporal blessing has the same reason behind it. Without it God must have withheld any and every blessing, for man has forfeited every claim by sin. The very breath the blasphemer uses to curse the name of God, he owes to the propitiation of Christ; the fact that God's judgment lingers, that the Gospel is preached are other effects of the same cause. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself NOT IMPUTING THEIR TRESPASSES UNTO THEM" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

The effects of the atonement for believers will take eternity to appreciate all that it means of forgiveness, life, victory and glory. We are cleansed, forgiven, justified, sanctified, and made nigh through faith in the atoning blood. We can go further and sing, "Our every joy in earth and heaven, we owe it to Thy blood". "And not only so, but also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement (reconciliation)" (Romans 5:11).

But the Atonement has a still wider application. In Leviticus we read that atonement was made for the Holy Place, Tabernacle and Altar (chap. 16:16-20). But why for places? How can "things in heaven" be "reconciled" (Colossians 1:20)? The Universe is a great whole. Sin has made its entrance even into the heavenly sphere. A note of discord has been introduced into the universal harmony. Now there is no thought in the Scriptures of the effects of the Atonement being applied to the fallen angels; they sinned against the light of heaven. But the defilement of their guilt on heavenly things must be removed, the discordant note of their rebellion attuned, satisfaction paid to the insulted Majesty of Heaven, the future stability of the Universe assured, and a solid and enduring foundation laid for the eternal glory of the Triune God. All this is guaranteed by the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"To the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen" (Jude 25).

Atonement

W. W. Fereday

Atonement in its primary meaning is the vindication of the claims of the throne of God in regard to human sin. This stands out very clearly in the High Priest's procedure on the Day of Atonement in Israel as described in Leviticus 16. First he carried into the holiest the blood of the bullock for himself and for his house; then he presented the blood of the goat for the people of Israel; but not until these things were accomplished was the scapegoat dismissed with all the sins of the people upon its head. God was considered first, then man.

Sin is a grievous offense in the eyes of the Creator. It has destroyed His delight in man; it has wrought mischief and ruin in His creation both above and below; it challenges His authority perpetually; and it menaces His throne. Not even Divine longsuffering, still less Divine grace, could be shown to the guilty save on the ground of atonement. The mercy-seat in Israel's tabernacle was God's earthly throne. but it typified His throne in the heavens. The animal blood that was sprinkled on and before His earthly throne to Him from year to year of the richer blood that would in due season be shed—the blood of His own dear Son. God has signified His acceptance of the precious blood of Christ by raising Him up from the dead, and seating Him in glory at His own right hand. The Old Testament declares "it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul"; the New Testament solemnly insists that "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 9:22).

Good resolutions and deeds of charity cannot be accepted in atonement for sin. To present them to God for such a purpose would be to repeat the grave blunder of Cain. Abel's lamb was "a more excellent sacrifice" than the products of his brother's toil. The one was a humble acknowledgment of guilt; the other was a virtual repudiation of guilt. God could not do otherwise than resent the attitude of Cain, while opening the door for repentance even for so serious an affront.

The Christian has the testimony of no less a person than God the Holy Ghost that all the claims of the Divine throne have been met by the one offering of Jesus. No other offering of any kind whatsoever is required or could be accepted. To put anything human alongside of Christ's perfect sacrifice would be to question its worth and efficacy. If God is satisfied with what Christ has accomplished, the Christian may well be satisfied also. The Israelite on the afternoon of the Day of Atonement had the comfort of seeing all his sins dismissed with the scapegoat; the Christian has the assurance from God that his sins and iniquities He will remember no more (Hebrews 10:17). There is this immense difference however between the Israelite and the Christian: the one was set right with God for twelve months by Aaron's atoning work; the other has been set right with God for ever by the infinitely more

It is through loss that all gain in this world is made. The winter leaves must fall that the summer leaves may grow.

precious work of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Sanctified” and “perfected” are God’s grand terms descriptive of the present position of all believers.

John Trapp, (1600’s),
in his comment on Balaam’s words in Numbers 23:10, “Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his,” said, “Carnal men care not to see that which they would gladly find . . . some faint desires, and short-winded wishes, may be sometimes found in them, but the mischief is, they would break God’s chain, sunder happiness from holiness, salvation from sanctification, the end from the means; they would dance with the devil all day, and then sup with Christ at night; live all their lives long in Delilah’s lap, and then go to Abraham’s bosom when they die.”

The Vail; Rent or Unrent?

R. Surgenor

The first recorded song in the Holy Scriptures is found in Exodus 15, which commences with these words; “Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord.” What occasioned the song was the fact that Israel had experienced redemption and deliverance from slavery in Egypt. The song was vibrant, hearty, sincere, and scriptural. It would have been a wonderful experience to stand a distance away and listen to over two million redeemed souls singing to the Lord. You will notice that the song was not for their entertainment, but was an expression of holy worship to the Lord.

Basically, Christians are the only people in the world that have the right to sing. The modern songs of the ungodly are a sham, and some are even sinful. It seems to me that singing is connected with redemption, so God’s people have much to sing about.

Considering Two Hymns

However, have you considered in some of our hymns that you might be singing something that is not true? Does this surprise you? Well, it is a fact. There are unscriptural expressions in some of our “sacred” hymns. Consider hymn # 5 in the believer’s hymnbook. James Montgomery wrote,

“Thy body **broken** for my sake,
My bread from heaven shall be;
Thy testamental cup I take,
And thus remember Thee.”

However, was the Lord’s body broken? A careful investigation of 1 Corinthians 11:24 shows that the verb “*broken*” is not found in that verse according to J. N. Darby, and the Revised Version, first published in 1885. Darby’s rendering is, “This is My body which is for you,” and the same wording is in the R.V.

Going back to the last supper, Luke records our Lord’s words, “This is my body which is given for you” (22:19). He never once mentions His body being broken. His redeemed are “members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones” (Eph. 5:30), and we will never be severed from Him, thus the most accurate manuscripts speak, not of His body broken, but rather of His body given. The word “given” is unique as it indicates a payment given to pay a debt. The word means, “to give what is due.” The breaking open of the loaf at the Lord’s Supper is not a symbolic act, but merely a convenience for all to easily take a piece of that opened loaf. Yet we heartily sing, “They body broken for my sake,” which of course is not true.

Come with me now to another hymn, written by James Deck.

“The veil is rent: Lo! Jesus stands
Before the throne of grace;
And clouds of incense from His hands
Fill all that glorious place.”
(# 283, Believer’s Hymn Book)

Due to this hymn, we often hear brethren pray to God stating that they are drawing near to Him through the veil that is rent. They will even quote the verse like this, “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil” that is rent, “that is to say, His flesh” (Hebrews 10:19–20).

Now, this is very interesting, for you will look in vain to find the expression, “that is rent” in the Bible. It is just NOT there! Now it is very important that we see this truth of an unrent veil, when referring to our Lord, and this has been written to show you why.

The Tabernacle Vail

Before going further, let us consider the vail of the Tabernacle in the Old Testament. You will notice there that it is spelled “vail,” while in the New Testament it is spelled “veil.” Its first mention is found in Exodus 26:31, where the Lord is instructing Moses regarding its design. This unique piece of tapestry is mentioned 24 times in the the OT., in Exodus, 15 times, Leviticus 7 times, and Numbers 2 times.

It is figuratively mentioned in Hebrews 3 times. Then another veil is mentioned in Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38, and Luke 23:45, which was the veil of the Temple in Jerusalem during the days of Christ.

It is important to recognize that the Tabernacle veil is a type, or, a picture of Christ. The writer to the Hebrews speaks of this Tabernacle and all associated with it as an “example and shadow of heavenly things” (Hebrews 8:5). Consequently when we speak of the veil and compare it to our blessed Lord, we are not stretching things and making something that is the figment of our imagination. The lessons that the veil afford are exceedingly valuable, fragrant, and precious, to the spiritual soul.

“And he made a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen: with cherubims made he it of cunning work. And he made thereunto four pillars of shittim wood, and overlaid them with gold: their hooks were of gold; and he cast for them four sockets of silver. And he made an hanging for the tabernacle door of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, of needlework; And the five pillars of it with their hooks: and he overlaid their chapiters and their fillets with gold: but their five sockets were of brass” (Exodus 36:35–38).

Essentially, the Tabernacle veil was a 15 by 15-foot of intricately woven fabric, to be used as a divider between the holy place and the most holy place in the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle measured 15 feet wide and 45 feet long, and fifteen feet high. The first compartment measured 15 by 30 feet, and the second 15 by 15 feet. The veil divided the two compartments. It served to hide from view the ark and the mercy seat. It was only once a year, on the day of atonement (Lev.16), that the high priest ventured cautiously through the veil to approach unto God to make an atonement for the nation, with the blood of the sin offering.

The Making of the Veil

The actual making of the veil was under the authority and direction of Bezaleel and Aholiab. Perhaps wise hearted men were employed, as Exodus 36 seems to indicate. It is interesting to notice the various categories of those employed in the making of the Tabernacle fabrics. In Exodus 35:35 we read of (1) the cunning workman, (2) the embroiderer in blue, purple, scarlet, and fine linen, (3) and finally of the weaver. They were people that the Spirit filled with “wisdom of heart,” and could “devise cunning work.”

The cunning workman would be a person that would weave figures in tapestry. This would involve the curtains, the veil, the ephod, and the breastplate. The embroiderer in blue, purple, scarlet, and fine linen, would work with a needle shaping design in stitches of colored thread. This would include the entrance curtains of the tent and court, and the girdle of the high priest. The weaver worked in the loom in the ordinary way with materials of a single color. Thus the weaving of the robe of the ephod, and coats of the

priests was his responsibility.

The Door and the Veil; a Difference

There was also another curtain of the same dimensions that covered the entrance to the Tabernacle, called “The door of the Tabernacle.” It too was the work of the embroiderer, its colors being the same as the veil. Although cherubims were woven in the Tabernacle curtain and the veil, we do not read of any woven in the curtain of the Tabernacle door.

There were differences between the door and the veil, and for a specific reason, for they speak to us of two different New Testament truths. Consider first the Tabernacle door. This tapestry hung from five pillars, and if you read Darby’s translation you will readily observe that these pillars of shittim wood, their hooks, their chapiters and connecting rods were all overlaid with gold, and each stood firmly on a base of brass. To enter the sanctuary, one must go through the Tabernacle door first. The lesson is this. The five pillars represent the five New Testament writers of the epistles, namely John, Jude, James, Peter, and Paul. In fact, Peter, James, and John are called pillars of the church in Galatians 5:9. The Tabernacle’s sanctuary (the first compartment) represents the local assembly. To enter a local assembly, to be received into the fellowship, one must pass the tests of these five men. Let us consider their divine standards.

Five Testing Men

John brings before us the test of divine life. “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4). Has the applicant overcome the world? Or is he still dabbling in worldly things. If so, he is not fit for assembly fellowship, and perhaps he might not even be saved. Here is John’s second “test.” “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14). Is there a genuine love in his heart for the Lord’s people? Does he crave to be in their company? Or, does he still companion with the ungodly? Is he still walking in the counsel of the ungodly, or standing in the way of sinners? (Psalm 1). If so, he has failed John’s test, and if saved, certainly not fit for assembly fellowship.

The second pillar is Jude. Notice what he says. He exhorts professors that they should “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 1:3). Is the person applying for assembly fellowship clear on vital doctrine? Does he believe that he can be saved and then lost? Is he clear on separation from the religious world? Does he see the truth of one cup and one loaf at the Lord’s Supper? Is he uncertain about the rapture, believing that the Church may go through the great tribulation? Does he believe that one can still speak in tongues and see visions? If so beware! If he can’t earnestly contend for the teachings of the Spirit, he certainly cannot come into

assembly fellowship. Just think of the havoc a man with those false ideas could work in a local assembly.

Next comes James. He writes, "Faith without works is dead" (2:26). What James is pointing out is simply this. A man may say that he is saved, but if his life doesn't correspond to his profession, then in reality, he is not saved at all, his faith is dead. Then he goes on to say, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (4:4). That is strong language, isn't it? I rejoice in the fact that you will never find any of the writers of Holy Scripture employing political correctness! Ah no! They all tell it as it is, right from the mouth of God. There is real danger today with those raised in an assembly when they profess salvation. The reason being, that if they have made a false profession, yet they know "Gospel Hall" language, and can present a very convincing and scripturally oriented story. But, does their lifestyle correspond to their profession? They may have a convincing story, but no real change in their life. It is a total disaster to receive a false professor into the assembly fellowship for they will go on deceived themselves, and also perhaps work havoc in the assembly years later.

The fourth pillar is Peter. He emphasizes love for the sincere milk of the word, and evidence of spiritual growth. He also mentions a holy and a royal priesthood. Also included in his teachings are suffering and pilgrimage. Does the applicant measure up to Peter's standard for the people of God? Can he pray? Will he be exercised to publicly take part when received into the fellowship of the assembly? Or does he plan on "sitting like a bump on a log" after being received. Does he witness as a royal priest? All these traits should be looked for by the assembly before receiving a professing Christian.

Last, and certainly not least comes Paul. What a pillar he was. Church truth abounds in his epistles. He exhorts saints to present their bodies a living sacrifice unto God, and not to be conformed to this world. He teaches the wrong of needlessly offending a weak brother, and speaks much of loving the truth, the assembly, and the brethren. The person requesting fellowship into the assembly, does he measure up to Paul's exhortations. Is he meek and lowly, or does he favor himself? All these things must be taken into serious consideration, before one is allowed through the door into the sanctuary which is the assembly.

These five pillars rested on a different substance than the four pillars of the vail. The vail pillars rested on sockets of silver, but the five Tabernacle door pillars rested on brass. The picture is this. Brass links their foundation to the brazen altar, which speaks of the sacrifice of Christ on the sinner's behalf. The foundation of these men rested on Christ and His sacrifice at Calvary. The tops of the pillars, unlike the pillars of the vail, were complete. They had chapters, which provided an architectural completeness.

The work of these men had a completion date. There came a time in Paul's life when he said, "I have finished my course" (2 Timothy 4:7). They no longer are working, but are resting from their labors. Just as the pillars were joined together by gold connecting rods, so these men were divinely (the gold) joined together (the fillets). They were all of one mind. Their writings provide a grand mosaic of essentially divine truths, all blended together to form a uniform thought. The pillars were of shittim wood, overlaid with gold, thus we see human men (the wood) divinely inspired in their writings (the gold).

The Vail's Four Pillars

Coming to the vail, we see a completely different architecture involving the four pillars. These gold-covered pillars rested on silver sockets. Consider the pillars of the court which are a picture of believers. Their sockets were of brass, the same as the sockets for the Tabernacle door pillars. Believers stand on the same foundation as the apostles previously mentioned. However, the connecting rods of the court pillars were of silver. Silver speaks of redemption, and it is redemption that links all the Lord's people together. The vail's pillars were composed of shittim wood, expressive of the holy humanity of our Lord. They were overlaid with gold telling forth the truth that the perfect Man was also deity, He was God manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16). They rested on silver telling forth the story that it is He "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7).

The pillars were four, and the Spirit employed four holy men to record the life of our blessed Lord in His sojourn here, namely Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Four also speaks of that which is universal. The story of the Cross has gone to the four corners of the earth, and as a result, in a coming day, "they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God" (Luke 13:29). The number four also reminds us of what Christ is made unto us. Paul writing the Corinthian saints reveals that "of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30).

One thing unusual about the four pillars is that they were incomplete. They had no chapters. Even though the Lord completed the work on earth that the Father gave Him to do (John 17:4), yet His work on our behalf is far from being finished. Upon entering heaven at His ascension, He immediately began officiating as our Great High Priest. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. He works to save us to the end of our journey (Hebrews 7:25).

The Colors of the Vail

The vail must have been a beautiful tapestry to behold,

uniquely made by the cunning workman, the embroiderer, and the weaver. The various colors remind us of Christ. Blue, pointing to the fact that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world (John 4:14). Christ testified, "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John 6:38). "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever" (John 6:51). Thus the color blue tells us of Him who came down from heaven to redeem us.

Purple tells another story. It is the color of kings. The mock coronation of Christ is seen at His trial. "And they clothed Him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about His head" (Mark 15:17). "And sitting down they watched Him there; And set up over His head His accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Matthew 27:36-37). Even though rejected by Israel, the day is coming when He shall reign in righteousness, and will be acknowledged as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 17:14; 19:16).

The Crimson Worm

The scarlet is a color with a story behind it. In those days the scarlet dye was obtained from the coccus ilicis worm. Prophetically Christ cried, "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people" (Psalm 22:6). The word "*worm*" is *elwt towla*, and is translated "scarlet" 34 times, "worm" 8 times, and "crimson" 1 time, for a total of 43 times.

The word "worm" referred to in our text is unique in Scripture. In the Hebrew it is a particular female worm, which is called the "crimson worm." This worm relates very significantly to the death of Christ on the cross. "When the female of the scarlet worm species was ready to give birth to her young, she would attach her body to the trunk of a tree, fixing herself so firmly and permanently that she would never leave again. The eggs deposited beneath her body were thus protected until the larvae were hatched and able to enter their own life cycle. As the mother died, the crimson fluid stained her body and the surrounding wood. From the dead bodies of such female scarlet worms, the commercial scarlet dyes of antiquity were extracted" (OB Lexicon). Christ died upon a tree, shedding His blood to give us eternal life and to shelter us from the coming wrath of God. Just as the worm sought out a tree on which to die, so our Lord "sought out" the Cross. His was a willing sacrifice. No one had to drive Him to the tree. Oh no, He offered Himself willingly as our sin offering, and remained on the tree until all necessary for our redemption was accomplished. After the removal of the worm, the scarlet dye left on the tree remained. Christ is no longer on a tree, but the story of the Cross will remain forever throughout the ages of eternity. The crimson dye will never fade away. Some claim that on the fourth day, the worm pulls its head and tail together, forming itself into the shape of a heart on the tree, its body

turning to wax is no longer crimson, but white as snow. Thus, on the Cross, I not only behold the scarlet, a picture of His redemptive work on my behalf, but I see a white heart, reminding me of the purity of His eternal love to me. Isn't it amazing the tremendous truths one can derive from a mere little worm!

One more thing about the scarlet. The offspring of the dead mother were also stained with her scarlet dye. Consider God's faithful servant Daniel. King Belshazzar said to him, "I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom" (Daniel 5:16). Daniel gave the interpretation and dissolved all doubts. As a result we read, "Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom" (Daniel 5:29). On that occasion Daniel was glorified. Now then, what about ourselves? Shall we be glorified? Notice Paul's words to Timothy. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us" (2 Timothy 2:12). The capacity in which I will be glorified and reign with Christ is conditional, for it depends on how faithful I have been to Him down here.

The fine linen would be white, speaking of the absolute purity of the Son of Man. He did no sin, He knew no sin, and in Him was no sin. He Himself said, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" (John 8:46). "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (John 14:30). There was nothing in the Lord Jesus for Satan to work on. Satan tempts the sinful nature of men, but the Lord had no sinful nature to respond to the evil one's temptations. He was, and is, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26).

The Cherubim

The inner covering, and the vail, were the only cloths that had the design of Cherubims being woven in them. The first mention of these angelic beings is found in Genesis 3:24. "So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." Thus we see that these holy beings were employed in the government of God. Regarding the Lord, we read in Isaiah 9:6, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." After His resurrection, the Lord said, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). Thus we see His undisputed authority over all angels and mankind.

In Revelation 19:11–16, we see the authority and government of the Son of God fully manifested as He returns to earth to set up His kingdom. "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." The skillfully woven Cherubim in the vail depict this character of the Son of God.

Coming to the New Testament we see Christ symbolically represented as the Veil in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Also, the literal veil in Herod's Temple is mentioned three times. The two are vastly different!

A Ship Secured to the Shore

In Hebrews 6:17–20 we read, "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Some have suggested that this hope is one's own efforts that keeps his soul steadfast. I beg their pardon, for I believe that the hope mentioned here is the Lord Himself. He is my Anchor. It is He, and He alone, that keeps me steadfast in the time of storm. I believe that this interpretation brings more glory to God than teaching that the hope is a product of my own feeble effort. This whole picture is nautical. Consider a merchant ship out from shore in a stormy sea. It is too dangerous to try to come inland to dock, so a little boat, called a forerunner, is sent from the ship, dragging behind it a rope secured to the ship. When the little boat reaches land, the rope it brought is tied to a large rock called the anchorage to secure the ship out in the stormy sea. Having being secured, the ship will not drift away, it is securely tied to the anchor on the shore. We are out in a troubled sea (Isaiah 57:20), but thank God, we are made secure, for our life is hid in Christ. Our Forerunner has gone before, and has secured us until the day of our home-call. He has entered through the veil, into the immediate presence of God.

The Veil—Christ's Flesh

The next mention of the veil is in Hebrews 9:3, which refers to the Tabernacle veil, which divided the holy place from the Holiest of all. The third mention of the veil is in Hebrews 10:19–22. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

You will carefully notice that in this exposition the Veil represents the Lord Himself as a glorified Man. He is the Veil, and it is only through Him that we can enter into the holiest. Remember His words in John 14:6. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." This Veil is not rent, as we sometimes sing.

The Rending of Cloth

You may counter this exposition and say, "What about the veil being rent in the Temple when Christ died?" That is a good question, and I believe that I have the answer. If you look carefully at the Scriptures you will notice that the rending of cloth never represented anything pleasant or good. Take for example the following incidents. When "Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; he rent his clothes" (Genesis 37:29). It was a day of distress for Reuben. When false tidings were brought to Jacob about his beloved son Joseph, he "rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days" (vs. 34). "And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes" (Numbers 14:6). "And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads" (Joshua 7:6). These incidents in the life of Joshua were most distressing, thus he rent his clothes. Consider Samuel and Saul. "And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou" (1 Samuel 15:27-28).

Coming to the Crucifixion we notice that the high priest rent his clothes, and said, "What need we any further witnesses?" (Mst 14:63). I wonder if Caiaphas realized that his action made void his priesthood? Leviticus 21:10 states, "And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes."

After Christ returned to heaven, we still find men rending their garments through distress. "And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the

chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you" (Acts 14:12–15).

The Temple at Jerusalem

Coming to Herod's Temple, what do we find? When our Lord commenced His earthly ministry, He called it, "My Father's House" (John 2:16). However, as time went on, and the nation of Israel finally rejected Him as their Messiah, He solemnly states a revealing statement about the Temple, saying, "Behold, **your** house is left unto you desolate" (Matthew 23:38). What had happened? God had departed. He was no longer there! Now carefully notice, when the Lord died on the Cross Matthew and Mark record the following. "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38).

Luke writes, "And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst" (Luke 23:45). Many expositors state that this showed that the way was now opened into the presence of God. The whole idea is nonsensical, it is absurd! This traumatic event revealed quite the contrary! The rending of the veil revealed to the Jewish priests, that the presence of God was gone, that truly, their house was left unto them desolate, just as the Lord Jesus had pronounced prior to His betrayal and crucifixion. Gazing into the most holy place behind the veil, they could plainly see that the Shekinah presence of God was not there. The rending of the veil constituted the whole Jewish economy void! It was over!

C. H. Spurgeon remarked; "It is not fanciful to regard it as a solemn act of mourning on the part of the house of the Lord. In the East men express their sorrow by rending their garments; and the temple, when it beheld its Master die, seemed struck with horror, and rent its veil." The construction of the veil made it impossible for even a mere group of men to tear. Just when Jesus gave up His spirit in the midst of two crucified malefactors, the hand of God reached down and ripped the vail in the midst, from the top to the bottom. This was a miracle of God. The rending of the veil announced that the whole system of types, and shadows, and ceremonies had finally come to an end. The ordinances of an earthly priesthood were rent with that veil. The dispensation of law was over. God now would no longer dwell in the thick darkness of the Holy of Holies. He no longer would shine forth from between the cherubim. The holiest was vacant and sacrifices that pointed to the sacrifice of Christ were at an end.

To speak of Christ as the veil that is rent is a misnomer. May I term it an insult to our Lord? To speak of

Him as the veil that is rent is to say that His priesthood is void, and that it no longer exists. Perish the thought! No, my dear brother and sister, the veil is not rent!

James Deck, who attended a private Church of England theological college, and later became a pioneer of the gospel in New Zealand, was wrong in giving the impression that we can approach our Lord because of a rent veil.

Perhaps a more scriptural expression could be found in Elizabeth Dark's hymn.

**Lamb of God, through Thee we enter—
Inside the veil.**

**Cleansed by Thee, we boldly venture—
Inside the veil.**

**Not a stain; a new creation:
Ours is such a full salvation;
Low we bow in adoration—
Inside the veil.**

Thank God we have a living, glorified Man at the right hand of God, who affords us, as holy priests, immediate access into the presence of a thrice-holy God, whom we freely address as our Father. God waits – we enter –and consequently, we are blest!

CHRISTIAN, never take hold of sin, except with a gauntlet on thy hand; never go to it with the kid-glove of friendship; never talk delicately of it; but always hate it in every shape. If it comes to thee as a little fox, take heed of it, for it will spoil the grapes. Whether it bounds towards thee as a roaring lion, seeking whom it may devour, or makes advances in an attractive form, with graceful mien, seeking by a pretended affection to entice thee into sin-beware; for its hug is death, and its clasp destruction. Sin of every kind thou art to war with—of lip, of hand, of heart. However gilded with profit; however varnished with the seemliness of morality; however complimented by the great, or however popular with the multitude, thou art to hate sin everywhere, in all its disguises, at every time, and in every place.