

Appendix 2

The Tearing Of The Temple Veil In Matt 27:51

There is a chiasmic relationship between the way the gospel age begins and ends. In this comparison the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost as the Christian centuries begin corresponds to the latter rain just before they end, the period of soul searching which preceded Pentecost corresponds to the period of soul searching after the latter rain has finished doing its work, and the short period between Christ's death and ascension corresponds to the similarly short period between His leaving the sanctuary in heaven and arrival here.¹ Notice that on both ends of the period in question there is a time during which Christ is not in the sanctuary. What is the significance of this fact?

Seventh-day Adventists have spent a great deal of time talking about what it means for Christ to be in the sanctuary, but what does it mean for Him not to be there? The veil of the temple in Jerusalem was torn on a Friday afternoon. On the Sunday morning following, Christ told Mary, "I have not yet ascended to my Father" (John 20:17). This is a most instructive statement. In fact the short time before Christ's ministry begins might well have as much to teach us as the short time after it ends.

According to Ellen White, after the veil was torn at the moment of Christ's death, "The great sacrifice has been made. The way into the holiest is laid open. A new and living way is prepared for all. No longer need sinful, sorrowing humanity await the coming of the high priest. Henceforth the Savior was to officiate as priest and advocate in the heaven of heavens."² In another place she writes, "The veil is rent, the partition walls broken down, the handwriting of ordinances canceled."³ And yet Christ at this time was not in the sanctuary. Instead He was resting peacefully--at last--in a borrowed tomb on this earth (or rather inside the earth), over Sabbath. The way into the holiest was thrown open to us, but not yet to Him. Jesus Himself would not enter heaven for parts of three more days.

Thus, the opening of the holiest to believers at the cross did not occur at Jesus' ascension but previously at His death. Let us not brush this fact aside but savor it for a moment. The way into the presence of God was thrown open to believers at the cross and yet the antitypical day of atonement did not begin at that time nor did Christ enter the holiest even to dedicate it until at least the following Sunday. In the case of Matt 27:51, how could the day of atonement begin at a time when, on biblical authority, we know that the High Priest who alone could minister it was absent? More than this, He was dead.

But if the connection between the holiest and the day of atonement is inescapable, when did it begin--at Christ's death (Matt 27:51) or at His ascension (Heb 6:19-20)? It certainly did not begin at Christ's death. In view of John 20:17 any such correspondence is radically and permanently unavailable. It did not begin at His ascension either. It took five hundred years for the "rebellion," mentioned by Paul in 2 Thess 1:3, to occur and when it did the "daily" was still being ministered. Dan 8:11 says, "It set itself up to be as great as the Prince of the host; it took away the daily sacrifice [*tāmîd*] from him, and the place of his sanctuary was brought low."

If the *tāmîd* of Dan 8:11 is the antitypical daily service, when did the corresponding yearly service or day of atonement begin? At the end of the 2300 days in 1844 (see Dan 8:13-14). But Heb 6:19-20 does not tell us anything about the antitypical day of atonement and neither does Matt 27:51.

¹The plagues do not begin to fall until Christ leaves the sanctuary and they do not continue after He arrives at the earth. They fall only while Christ is en route. Once He leaves the sanctuary, it does not take a year for Him to complete His journey. At least it did not take Him a year to ascend to the Father (see John 20:17, 27). The distance is the same in either direction. The plagues do not fall for any extended period of time. They are over quickly. In a broadside of April 6, 1846 Ellen White states: "Then Jesus laid off his priestly garment and put on his kingly robe, and took his place on the cloud which carried him to the East, where it first appeared to the saints on earth--a small black cloud which was the sign of the Son of Man. While the cloud was passing from the Holiest to the East, which took a number of days, the synagogue of Satan worshipped at the saint's feet" (quoted in Francis D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics* [Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1951], p. 625). From this we can deduce that the period during which the plagues fall--which is the same as the period during which Christ is in transit "passing from the Holiest to the East"--is "a number of days." I would like to thank my friend, Pastor Calvin Johnson, for bringing the above statement to my attention.

²*The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1940), p. 757.

³*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1953-57), 5:1109.