

Defending the Faith



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July 2017

Why Was the Veil of the Temple Torn in Two?

“And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split” (Matthew 27:50-51).

At the moment of Christ's death, something strange occurred. Not only was there an earthquake, but the veil of the sacred Temple in Jerusalem was torn in two. Jews pray in synagogues, but the Temple was the only place where sacrifices could be offered to God. The Temple was where God's presence was manifested. The veil of the Temple was a curtain, which separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple. The Holy of Holies was the most sacred part of the Temple because this was where God dwelt, since Solomon, King David's son, built the Temple. No one was permitted to enter this part of the temple, except the High Priest, who entered once a year on the Day of Atonement to offer a blood sacrifice for his own sins and those of God's people. This was where the Ark of the Covenant was kept, which according to Hebrews 9:4 held *“the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant (on which God had written the Ten Commandments).*

The veil is believed to have been about sixty feet tall, thirty feet wide, and possibly about four inches thick. This veil was substantial. It was made to protect the Holy of Holies, yet at the moment of Christ's death, it was torn in two. According to Hebrews 9, the services on the Day of Atonement were symbolic, a shadow of things to come. The gifts and sacrifices offered could not truly cleanse God's people of their sins, yet they symbolized Christ's sacrifice to come. Christ's sacrifice on the cross replaced the need for animal sacrifices. Christ, our God, shed His blood to offer us a way to enter the Holy of Holies, the true presence of God. For those who receive Christ's sacrifice in their hearts, the Holy Spirit, God Himself, comes to live inside of each of us. There is no longer a need for a Temple made with hands. *“A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).* Today, as Christians, we are the temple of God. Think about this. God Himself lives within you!

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Keeping this in mind, Christ's words take on new meaning, "*Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me*" (Matthew 25:40). There is profound truth in these words. If God truly lives within each faithful Christian, then Christ's words can be literally interpreted to mean that how we treat others is how we treat the Holy Spirit within them. This is why he said, "*Truly.*" This is a spiritual truth.

The Holy Spirit within each of us binds us together. "*For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit*" (I Corinthians 12:13). We are one body in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, if we insult or mistreat a Christian, we grieve the Holy Spirit within them, the same Holy Spirit that is within ourselves. Therefore we, too, experience the pangs of conscience, which is truly the Holy Spirit's sadness for our sinful behavior. The Holy Spirit is one person of the Trinity. He unites us to God and to one another. The passage leading up to this verse, begins "*for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me*" (Matthew 25:35-36). When we care for our Christian brothers and sisters, we truly care for God within them. In the same vein, "*If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it*" (I Corinthians 12:26). When we interact with one another, we should imagine the face of Christ within them and treat them accordingly, with love and respect.

The veil symbolized the separation of God from humanity. When the veil was torn, the separation from God was removed by Christ. Since His resurrection, we have the opportunity to be in communion with God through the Holy Spirit. We can communicate with Him directly, and we can hear His voice, if we listen. How can we hear Him? The Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts and minds in the language of love, guiding us to always act in love. He asks us to become humble, meek, merciful, forgiving, and compassionate toward others. When we act in love toward others, especially Christians, we are showing love toward Christ because the Holy Spirit unites believers with God and with one another. If we hear His voice and follow our conscience by acting in love when each opportunity arises, the Holy Spirit rejoices and fills us with His joy. This is how we know we are hearing God's voice. This is how we experience God's presence within us. God lives within each faithful Christian. Listen for His voice and experience God!

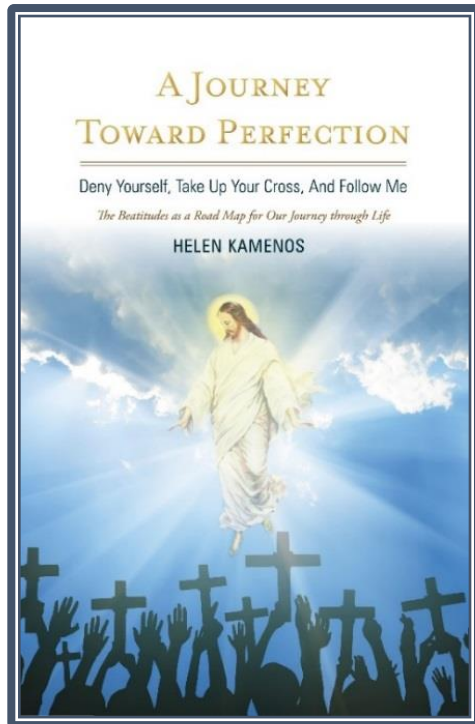
Our God came into this reality and visited us to offer us an incomprehensible love! It is up to each and every one of us to make the decision to accept His love or reject it. What does He ask of us in return? He only asks us to love Him and to love our neighbors.

Helen Kamenos
Readers' Favorite Author

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Take the Challenge

Unlike any other book on Christianity that you have read, *A Journey Toward Perfection* challenges you to fulfill God's purpose for your life. It dares you to be transformed and experience God's presence. Most fear change, but if you desire to become the best version of yourself, take the *Journey Toward Perfection*.

To fully comprehend God's love for us, it is necessary for us to understand Jesus, God's beloved son, who left His throne of glory to live among us, to become vulnerable like us. To fathom God's love for us, it is essential for us to walk in His footsteps by traveling life's journey as He did. As we embark on this journey, we will learn how to endure and overcome the trials and tribulations of our lives. We will learn how to cultivate a relationship with God, communicating with Him in a two-way dialogue, not only speaking to God, but also being attuned to His voice.

Christ gave us a road map to follow through the Beatitudes. By following this path toward Christ, God is revealed to us in an unprecedented way and becomes a beacon in our lives. Two thousand years ago, Christ ignited a fire, which changed the world. Take the *Journey Toward Perfection* and be transformed. By knowing the love of God, you will undergo a metamorphosis. You will become the butterfly that God always meant for you to be.

"I truly was blown away by *A Journey Toward Perfection*...It's a very good study tool and is also enjoyable reading in its own right." (Mary C. Blowers - reviewer for Readers' Favorite)

"This book was written with a pure heart and soul. You can feel Helen Kamenos' love for Jesus in her words and how much she wants everyone to feel as close to Him as she does. It was exciting to read her words because she was excited to tell us what she thought...It was a wonderful experience." (Rabia Tanveer - reviewer for Readers' Favorite)

"An uplifting book for all those who seek the love of Christ. The book leads readers into a deeper relationship with God and reiterates the power of God's love." (Mamta Madhavan - reviewer for Readers' Favorite)

"It reinforced and gave a new perspective to lessons I learned and absorbed at my mother's knee...The book is beautifully written, logically organized, and will definitely help you on your personal journey." (Ray Simmons – reviewer for Readers' Favorite)

Book Signing at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in the fall – More details to follow!

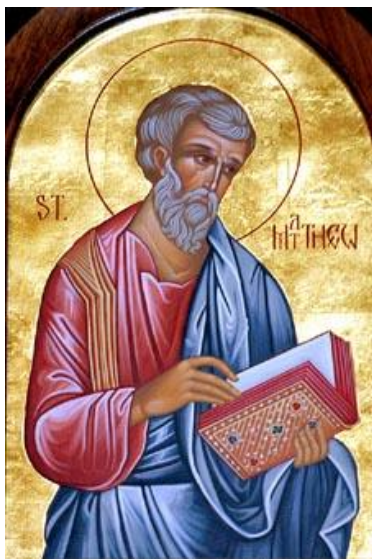
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St. Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist

During the summer months, the Orthodox Church reads various passages from the gospel of Matthew every Sunday. Matthew recorded the Sermon on the Mount, which includes the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, and many of Christ's teachings on love. If you have not spent much time reading the Bible, Matthew is the best place to start.



St. Matthew was one of Jesus's 12 disciples. "As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him" (Matthew 9:9). Matthew did not hesitate. He left behind his previous life as a tax collector for the Roman Empire and began a new life with Christ. He repented of his sins by repaying all those he cheated four times what he owed them, and he gave the rest of his possessions to the poor. Matthew preached in Palestine for several years, where it is believed he wrote the gospel at the request of his Jewish converts. Matthew also preached in Syria, Media, Persia, and Parthia.

While preaching in Ethiopia, Matthew met Fulvian, the ruler of the land who worshipped pagan gods. He ordered Matthew's execution, placing his head downwards in a pile of brushwood, which was set on fire. The following excerpt tells the story of Matthew's martyrdom:

"When the fire flared up, everyone then saw that the fire did not harm Saint Matthew. Then Fulvian gave orders to add more wood to the fire, and frenzied with boldness, he commanded to set up twelve idols around the fire. But the flames melted the idols and flared up toward Fulvian. The frightened Ethiopian turned to the saint with an entreaty for mercy, and by the prayer of the martyr the flame went out. The body of the holy apostle remained unharmed, and he departed to the Lord." (<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2007/11/16/103313-apostle-and-evangelist-matthew>)

Fulvian repented of his deed and eventually was baptized, became a priest, and then served as bishop of the Ethiopian Church.

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