**Threads of Hope Sew Devotion 19**

Today we are going to look at one of the most important pieces of fabric in the Bible—the Veil. When we talk about the Veil, we are really looking at a description for fabric that was used in the same manner and the same place without it being the exact same piece of fabric throughout time. I think you’ll understand what I mean as we talk about it.

In the Old Testament, we see the children of Israel leaving Egypt and wandering in the desert for 40 years. During that time, God gave Moses instructions to build the Tabernacle, a portable building where the Israelites could come to worship and where God’s presence could dwell. You are probably familiar with the Tabernacle and we have looked at it before during a Threads of Hope devotion. The Tabernacle was designed as a building that could be packed up and transported from place to place so nothing about it was permanent. Much of it was fashioned from pieces of fabric stitched together to make walls and ceilings. In addition, there were three specific pieces of curtain that separated different portions of the Tabernacle. Each of these specific curtains could be considered a veil since the Hebrew word for “veil” means “to separate”. Each of these curtains separated who could proceed into the next area of the Tabernacle.

The first of these curtains was at the entrance into the court of the Tabernacle. We can call this veil, The Gate. Only Israelites could enter beyond this seven-foot high curtain and only if they were bringing a sacrifice to be burned on the altar. The second of these “veil” curtains hung in front of what we consider the Tabernacle building. We can call this veil, The Door. Only priests who had washed and done their own sacrifice could proceed beyond this second curtain as they brought the incense for the Altar, the oil for the Lampstand or the bread for the Table of Showbread into the Holy Place.

The third of these specific curtains is what we know as and what the Bible refers to as The Veil. This curtain separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. Only the High Priest could proceed past this Veil into the Holy of Holies to make the atonement before the Ark of the Covenant, and this only happened once a year. After making atonement for his own sin, the High Priest could enter into the Holy of Holies to make the blood atonement for the sin of the nation before the Ark of the Covenant. The cover of the Ark was known as the Mercy Seat and on it was where the presence of God dwelt between two winged cherubim. The Veil separated the people from this holiest place of God’s presence.

Each of these curtain--the Gate, the Door, and the Veil--was made from God’s exact specifications to Moses. The book of Exodus tells us these measurements, how the curtains were to be hung, and what materials were used to make them. Each one was made of finely twisted threads in the colors of blue, purple and scarlet. For the actual Veil, Exodus chapter 26 tells us Moses was to “Make a curtain of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen, with cherubim woven into it by a skilled worker.” (Exodus 26:31)

Imagine being that skilled worker. Being tasked with making the Veil, weaving the threads together to create a pattern that would show the Cherubim, the defenders of God’s glory and holiness. The Veil was a large piece. It extended from the floor to the ceiling, about 15 feet high according to the measurements of the Tabernacle, and at least 15 feet from side to side. It was hung on gold hooks in silver sockets. When the Israelites moved their camp and the Tabernacle was packed up, the Veil was placed over the Ark of the Covenant and transported by the priests.

As history progressed and the Israelites settled in the Promised Land, King Solomon built a permanent place of worship in Jerusalem to replace the Tabernacle. The dimensions of the rooms in Solomon’s Temple were bigger than the portable Tabernacle and the Veil used in the Temple was larger than the one in the Tabernacle as well. The book of I Kings records the measurements of the Temple Veil to be about 45 feet tall with a corresponding length. The temple that stood in Jesus’s day, known as Herod’s Temple, was larger yet. According the Jewish historian Josephus, the Veil in Herod’s Temple could have been nearly 60 feet tall. (As a reference, the ceiling in the SBC worship center is about 30 feet tall, so think about that next time you are in there!)

The Bible does not tell us the weight or the thickness of the Veils that were used in the Tabernacle or in Solomon’s Temple or Herod’s Temple. There are some other sources that give us information but it is important to remember that these sources are not Scriptural. It is Jewish tradition that the Tabernacle Veil was so thick that two horses attached to either end of it could not tear it apart. According to the Talmud, which is a book of Jewish writing, the Veil in Herod’s Temple was 4 inches thick and so heavy that it took 300 priests to hang it.

The New Testament books of Matthew, Mark and Luke all give us the most important information about the Veil. Listen to this description of the death of Jesus from Matthew 27:50-51 “And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.”

Rather than focusing on the weight or thickness of the Veil, the Bible gives us the most important pieces of information. First, that the Veil was torn at the exact moment that Jesus breathed his last breath on the cross. And second, that the Veil was torn in two from top to bottom. If we remember how tall the Veil would have been, up to 60 feet tall, tearing it from the top would have been an impossibility for any human person. It could have only been torn by God. It wasn’t just a rip—it was a complete tear, all the way down from God to man.

Before Jesus’s death on the cross, we were separated from God. His blood sacrifice for us opened the way into a relationship with Almighty God, both here on earth and one day, in heaven. We no longer need someone to act as a go-between to talk to God on our behalf or to offer a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus is that go-between. He is the once-for-all sacrifice for sins. We don’t have to be separated from God by a Veil or by anything else. Listen to what Hebrews 10:19-20 says about our new access to the Father: “Therefore, brothers and sisters, . . . we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body.”

The Veil was one piece of fabric with profound meaning in Biblical times—the separation of sinful man from a holy God. Its destruction had even more intense implications—a holy God providing his only Son as a sacrifice for sinful man.

This month as you sew, reflect on this most important piece of cloth—the Veil. Let the meaning of that fabric impress on your heart and mind. Imagine standing before the Veil, seeing as it tears and hearing the words of the centurion as he pronounces, “Surely this man was the Son of God!” (Mark 15:39) Thank God for the sacrifice of His Son Jesus. Then go sew up some garments that will help send the Gospel message to boys and girls around the world.