

Coach House Church

BEACONS

UNVEILED

18TH NOVEMBER 2020

One of the most discussed topics in the last year has been the wearing of face masks. In almost every country in the world there have been protests when local governments have made the wearing of face masks mandatory. At the beginning of the pandemic there was considerable debate here as to whether we should be made to wear masks with many people citing their right to choice as a reason for ignoring the rules. As Christians we know that the apostle Paul exhorted us to obey the rules that our leaders impose. There were many people who sought to challenge the scientific evidence, stating that wearing a face mask would not prevent people from catching the disease. Well this statement is indeed true but those who seek to advance this argument do so on the basis of their own needs and not the needs of others. The face mask is not there to protect the wearer but is there to seek to minimise the risk to others that they might have come into contact with. Now I should point out that we need to recognise that there are a number of people, who for medical reasons cannot wear a normal face mask, but for everyone else we should all follow the rules set by our government.

Now in the bible there is a story about someone who had to wear a face mask. He did this to protect the people he came into contact with. In the story the face mask is referred to as a veil and we will see that the reason for this was very similar to the situation we face today.

This story involves Moses, and it happened during the time that the Israelites were wandering around the desert. After Moses had received the 10 commandments on the tablets of stone he returned to the Israelite camp only to find the people worshipping a golden calf. In his anger Moses broke the tablets and this meant that a bit later he had to go into Gods presence for a second time to get a replacement set of tablets.

Exodus chapter 34 says "Then the Lord said to Moses "Write down all these instructions, for they represent the terms of the covenant I am making with you and with Israel" Moses remained there on the mountain with the Lord for 40 days and 40 nights. In that time he ate no bread and drank no water. And the Lord wrote the terms of the covenant – The Ten Commandments – on the

stone tablets. When Moses came down Mount Sinai carrying the two stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, he wasn't aware that his face had become radiant because he had been speaking with the Lord. So when Aaron and the people of Israel saw the radiance of Moses face they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called out to them and asked Aaron and all the leaders of the community to come over, and he talked with them. Then all the people of Israel approached him, and Moses gave them all the instructions that the Lord had given him on Mount Sinai. When Moses finished speaking with them he covered his face with a veil. But whenever he went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with the Lord, he would remove the veil until he came out again. Then he would give the people whatever instructions the Lord had given him, and the people of Israel would see the radiant glow of his face. So he would put the veil over his face until he returned to speak with the Lord"

In this passage we read that the people were afraid of Moses. Although Moses appearance may have been the cause of some concern to them, we might perhaps think that, maybe they were overreacting. So why were they so afraid? Well the people knew that if they saw the face of God then they would surely die. Moses face was clearly reflecting the glory of God and to the people it seemed reasonable enough to assume that if they saw this for too long it would be just like seeing the face of God, which would result in their death. So for this reason Moses wore a veil. Just like today, this mask was not to protect himself, but to protect others. Today we don't wear a face mask because we shine with the glory of God, but we do wear a face mask to protect others from the potential that we could cause them harm.

Now this event happened because God was making a covenant with Israel. In this agreement God set out His terms for accepting the people firstly into the promised land, and ultimately into eternity. We read in Exodus that, of all the Israelites who set off on the journey through the desert, around a million people altogether, that only 2 of them, Joshua and Caleb, actually entered the promised land. It turned out then, that this covenant, mostly, led to death. The veil that Moses wore was symbolic of the veil that was drawn across the peoples hearts, the people didn't want to see God, much as most people today don't want to see God, and veil represented that barrier. Furthermore when the temple was built there was a massive curtain that acted as a barrier between the people and the presence of God. The good news is that this barrier between Man and God would not be for ever because we know that God made a better covenant, a new covenant, by sending Jesus, His only Son, to die on a cross.

The apostle Paul brings all these point together in his second letter to the Corinthians, he wrote

"The Old way, with laws etched in stone, led to death, though it began with such glory that the people of Israel could not bear to look upon the face of Moses. For his face shone with the Glory of God, even though the brightness

was already fading away. Shouldn't we expect far greater glory under the new way, now that the Holy Spirit is giving life? If the old way, which brings condemnation, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new way, which makes us right with God...Since this new way gives us such confidence, we can be very bold. We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so the people of Israel would not see the glory, even though it was destined to fade away. But the peoples minds were hardened and to this day whenever the old covenant is being read, the same veil covers their minds so they cannot understand the truth. And this veil can be removed only by believing in Christ...Whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord makes us more and more like Himself as we are changed into His glorious image"

The current problem with Coronavirus has left us tied down, restricted and fearful of the outcome. The hope of the nation is in a vaccine to free us from the need for the veil.

The Law had tied the Israelites down, and indeed all other people, what was needed was a way to remove this veil. Despite the veil being in place the Israelites did actually know that there would eventually be someone who would come to save them. Paul tells us that this person is Jesus. On the day that Jesus died on the cross, in fact at the exact time of His death, that thick heavy curtain in the temple was torn in two. It was torn from the top to the bottom, not by man, but by God who was showing us that our relationship with Him was to be a personal one, with the Law no longer being written on tablets of stone, but written on our hearts.

The truth is, it isn't the face masks, or even coronavirus, that need to be removed, it is the veil over our hearts that is the most pressing need. Only by trusting in Jesus can we have the veil removed.

Please remember to wear your face covering when you ought to, and in doing so, use it as an opportunity to thank God that He has removed the one veil that really matters.

Amen



STEVE ADSHEAD



Coach House Church

leadership@coachhousechurch.org // 0161 432 5604

the coach house church, 222 wellington road north, stockport sk4 2qn

