



Exodus 25:17-22

God's Throne of Grace - His Mercy Seat

Many scholars have observed that almost all expressions employed in describing the significance of the tabernacle are also used in reference to heaven. That is because the earthly tabernacle was patterned after the one in heaven (Exodus 25:9, 40; 26:30; 27:8; Numbers 8:4; Acts 7:44; Hebrews 8:1-5; 9:11-12).

How is it possible for a thrice holy God to dwell in the midst of a sinful people? God's arrangement in both the Old and New Testaments is by means of the blood of the sin-offering sprinkled on the Mercy Seat--God's throne of mercy.

The throne of God is a blood sprinkled throne. There is no other approach to a holy God.

Nothing was left to chance in something as serious as a holy and righteous God meeting with sinful man. This was serious business. The Tabernacle symbolized the only way in which a guilty sinner could approach God.

God revealed the way of approach for man in the books of Exodus and Leviticus. Man can come to God only through the shedding of blood. We have observed incipient teaching on this subject in Genesis 3:21; 4:4; 8:20-21; 15:12ff; 22:8ff, and Exodus 12:13, 23.

The clear teaching in the Tabernacle symbolism is the atonement for the guilty sinner on the Mercy Seat. God declared His holiness and revealed the purpose of redemption. He declared how He could be a just God and at the same time justify the guilty sinner (Romans 3:26-30).

The Tabernacle vividly pictured the place of sacrifice in the flowing and sprinkling of the blood and the coming of the perfect Lamb of God that would take away the sin of the world. Inwardly it symbolized the place where God met with sinful man on the Mercy Seat.

The Tabernacle was composed of two rooms separated by a thick veil or woven curtain. The first room was entered from the outside and was called the Holy Place. The second room was entered through the Holy Place and was called the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies. There was only one piece of furniture in the Holy of Holies and it was the Ark of the Covenant with the Mercy Seat on top of it.

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

The Ark of the Covenant was a chest about 23 inches wide, 39 inches long, and 23 inches high, made of wood and covered inside and out on all sides with gold. Inside this chest was a golden jar containing manna, the two tablets of the Law and Aaron's budded rod. The chest was mounted on four legs and had four rings for two gold-covered poles by which the ark was carried. King David called the Ark "the footstool of our God" (1 Chronicles 28:2).

The Ark contained the testimony of God to Israel. The Ark of the Covenant was "covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant" (Hebrews 9:4, NASB 1995). The service of the Tabernacle was meaningless and valueless without the Ark of the Covenant. It symbolized the place where God upon His throne met with His people.

Jewish scholars have often noted the Ark was a symbol that God was present among His people and that His covenant blessing was resting upon them. The whole sanctuary was built for no other purpose, but to be as it were a house, a habitation for the Ark (cf. Ex. 26:33).

The Ark contained the tables of the covenant or Ten Commandments that expressed the obligations of the chosen people of God. Christ is the only person who has ever lived up to demands of the law.

The Ark also contained a pot of manna as a testimony of God's provision for His people during their forty year journey before they entered into the promised land. It foreshadowed Christ as the Bread of Life. The daily provision of manna was God's grace meeting the need of His people in the wilderness.

The third item was Aaron's budded rod that reminded the people of the revolt against the leadership of Moses and Aaron (Num. 17). Aaron's rod had brought forth buds, and blossomed, and yielded almonds. It was a testimony against the rebels. The dead rod of almond wood came to life and bore fruit, just as God's chosen Messiah came to life after His crucifixion and bears fruit even today.

The Ark is known by various names in the Old Testament. It is "the ark of the testimony" (Ex. 25:22), "ark of the covenant" (Num. 10:33), "ark of the covenant of the LORD" (Josh. 3:17), "the Ark of God" (1 Sam. 3:3), "the Ark of the LORD God" (Yahweh) (1 Kin. 2:26). It is "the holy ark" in 2 Chronicles 35:3, and "the ark of Thy strength" (Ps. 132:8).

It was carried about in the wilderness from one camping place to another with two golden covered poles born on the shoulders of the Levites (Ex. 25:12-15; cf. 2 Sam. 6:2-11).

The Ark of the Covenant typified the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Mercy Seat is where God received the representative of His blood-cleansed people. It was the place of mercy.

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THE MERCY SEAT

A solid slab of pure gold formed the lid on top of the Ark, and it was called the Mercy Seat or *kapporeth*. It was the cover, or lid placed on the Ark and signified the covering or removal of sins by means of expiatory sacrifice. The Mercy Seat signifies the place of propitiation. It received its name from the blood of propitiation which was sprinkled on it on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). It is the place where justice and mercy meet. The blood of the innocent victim on the Mercy Seat met the holy demands of God's Law. The Old Testament throne of grace was the place where God exhibited His presence, and met man in His grace.

The chest lid of solid pure gold was 23 inches x 39 inches and the most valuable of all the holy vessels. It had two cherubim (pl. of "cherub") facing each other molded onto the lid. These golden cherubim probably resembled winged angels in God's presence symbolizing His holiness.

Exodus 25:17-22 describes the Mercy Seat.

You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. You shall make two cherubim of gold, make them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim *of one piece* with the mercy seat at its two ends. The cherubim shall have *their* wings spread upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings and facing one another; the faces of the cherubim are to be *turned* toward the mercy seat. You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.

The Mercy Seat was God's throne here on earth in the midst of His chosen people. Within the Holy of Holies was the *Shekinah* glory, which symbolized in visible representation God's presence between the cherubim over the Mercy Seat. In the sprinkling of the blood on the Day of Atonement, a holy God met sinful man on the Mercy Seat.

The Tabernacle made it clear that the sinner could not approach God in his own merit. He stood condemned in the eyes of God. "The soul that sins will surely die" (Ezekiel 18:4). "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). That is not the figment of the imagination or the paranoia of a sick mind. It is the objective truth. Sin separates man from God. A holy God shut sinful man out of the Tabernacle by the walls and the veils. Our sins shut us out from the presence of a thrice holy God.

Only on the Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*, once a year, did a sole person enter the veil of the Holy of Holies and sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the Mercy Seat (Leviticus 16:13-16). "Moreover, he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; also in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times" (Leviticus 16:14). It foretold in picture form the day when our Great High Priest would enter the veil and make atonement for our sins. The blood of the sin offering was sprinkled upon the Mercy Seat which constituted Yahweh's throne. There His infinite holiness and justice met with His mercy. God was satisfied with the substitutionary sacrifice for sin.

CHRIST IS OUR MERCY SEAT

Upon His throne of grace, the LORD God met sinful man at Calvary. Jesus Christ shed His pure holy blood for our sins once-for-all turning away the wrath of God and tearing down the wall that separates us. At the

for our sins once-for-all turning away the wrath of God and tearing down the wall that separates us. At the cross God judged and dealt with our sin. Cf. Hebrews 10:10-14, 19-31; Romans 5:8-10; 1 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 2:13.

Christ is our Mercy Seat (Romans 3:24-25). He is our "propitiatory sacrifice." The believing sinner is "justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed . . . "

The Greek word translated "propitiation" or "a propitiatory sacrifice" in Romans 3:25 is identical to the one translated "mercy seat" in Hebrews 9:5. Our sins were removed by means of the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Christ is our Mercy Seat by virtue of the propitiation which He offered to God. He is our "propitiation" (1 John 2:2; 4:10). He is the sacrifice that satisfied the offended justice of God. The righteous demands of God were met and satisfied by the death of Christ on the cross.

"He (Christ) had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17). "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

Jesus Christ entered a Tabernacle not made with hands. "Now the main point in what has been said *is this*: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; so it is necessary that this *high priest* also have something to offer" (Hebrews 8:1-3). "But when Christ appeared *as* a high priest of the good things to come, *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:11-12).

What does God see when you go into His presence? He sees the blood of Jesus (10:19-22). When He sees the blood He knows all His claims against us have been met at every point and His righteousness has been exalted by the death of Jesus. He no longer has judgment against us. He invites us to draw near to Him.

Jesus Christ is our propitiatory sacrifice. He is the only means of turning away the righteous wrath of God toward the offending sinner. The pagan idea of propitiation is not found in the New Testament concept of propitiation. Man in his sinful nature cannot change the disposition of a holy and righteous God. Sinful man cannot bring a holy God into a favorable attitude. God is propitiated by His own provision made in the vicarious, substitutionary expiatory sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ at Calvary. Man sinned and brought upon himself the wrath of God. Jesus annuls the power of sin to separate God and man. Jesus Christ is our covering for sin. His one sacrifice embodies all of the symbolic sacrifices in the teachings of the Tabernacle.

"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

God's wrath is His settled, controlled, holy antagonism against all sin. The propitiation is the appeasement of the wrath of God by the love of God through the gift of God. Jesus Christ is the Great High Priest and at the same time the perfect sacrifice for our sins. God took the initiative in His sheer unmerited love and turned His own wrath away by His own blood. God's perfect justice has now been satisfied. Our sin debt has been dealt with in full payment. The holiness of God is now satisfied. Therefore God's wrath has been turned away. Thank God! If we choose to go to hell it is because of our own choice. God has made perfect covering of our

Thank God! If we choose to go to hell it is because of our own choice. God has made perfect covering of our sins on His Mercy Seat.

The apostle Paul summarized beautifully what God was doing. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:19-21). A righteous and holy God sees the blood of Jesus that has made atonement for our sin, and He sees the believer clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ.

God came to where man was to meet him in fellowship. When the sinner could not go to heaven because of his coming short of the glory of God, God in the person of His Son came from heaven to earth "that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). God issues an invitation for each of us to "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). Let's "keep on drawing near" with confidence to the place where God meets us in Christ.

"Jesus Paid It All!
All to Him I owe."

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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