

"The Mercy Seat" Exodus 25:17-22

"You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits *shall be* its length and a cubit and a half its width. ¹⁸ "And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. ¹⁹ "Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it *of one piece* with the mercy seat. ²⁰ "And the cherubim shall stretch out *their* wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim *shall be* toward the mercy seat. ²¹ "You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. ²² "And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which *are* on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel. (Exodus 25:17-22 NKJ)

The Mercy Seat was the most beautiful part of the most important piece of furniture in the world. It was designed by God, it matched what was and is in Heaven and it points us to Christ.

Let us consider the Mercy Seat -

I. The mercy seat is made of pure gold symbolizing the perfectly pure righteousness of Christ –

"You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; ... (Exodus 25:17 NKJ)

*1. Even tried / tested human righteousness is spoken of in similar terms –
A. Consider Job -*

But He knows the way that I take; *When* He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. (Job 23:10 NKJ)

*B. Or the godly, tried by fire believers Peter wrote to –
In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your*

faith, **being** much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 1:6-7 NKJ)

2. *Christ's righteousness obviously exceeds ours because He is completely sinless –*

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15 NKJ)

*Christ's absolute moral purity is represented by the pure gold of the mercy seat, which is the only part of the ark which is pure, solid gold. The rest of the ark was made of acacia wood and covered with gold - "And they shall make an ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits **shall be** its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height.¹¹ "And you shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it, and shall make on it a molding of gold all around. (Exodus 25:10-11 NKJ)*

3. *In this sense, the rest of the ark is like the church, the body of Christ, it is covered with His righteousness, it contains precious things –*

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. (2 Corinthians 4:7 NKJ)

II. The mercy seat is made of the perfect dimensions fit for its purpose, to cover the ark –

"... two and a half cubits *shall be* its length and a cubit and a half its width. (Exodus 25:17 NKJ)

These are matching dimensions –

"And they shall make an ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits *shall be* its length, a cubit and a half its width, ... (Exodus 25:10 NKJ)

These perfect dimensions point us to Christ Who is the perfect match for us as our High Priest –

1. *In His humanity He was completely and perfectly human –*

Therefore, in all things He had to be made like **His** brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things **pertaining to God**, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. (Hebrews 2:17 NKJ)

As the mercy seat was a perfect fit for the top of the ark, so Christ was made in all things like us.

2. *However, while like us in our humanity, He was superior in His Deity, pure gold, to do those things we could not possibly do –*

But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. ²⁶ For such a High Priest was **fitting** for us, **who is** holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; ²⁷ who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. (Hebrews 7:24-27 NKJ)

- III. *The mercy seat has the cherubim on it, with their faces toward it, it is called the mercy seat, or atonement cover because it was the place the blood of the offering would be sprinkled, it is the place God meets with His people, therefore it is the focal point of Heaven –*

18 "And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. ¹⁹ "Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it **of one piece with the mercy seat. ²⁰ "And the cherubim shall stretch out **their** wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim **shall be** toward the mercy seat. ²¹ "You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, ... ²² "And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which **are** on the ark of the**

Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel. (Exodus 25:18-22 NKJ)

1. *The gold molded cherubim represent the actual cherubim:*

A. *Who guard the way of the tree of life –*

So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 3:24 NKJ)

B. *They are those who attend the throne of God -*

And I looked, and there in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubim, there appeared something like a sapphire stone, having the appearance of the likeness of a throne. (Ezekiel 10:1 NKJ)

This *is* the living creature I saw under the God of Israel by the River Chebar, and I knew they *were* cherubim. (Ezekiel 10:20 NKJ)

c. *Note here, their faces are toward the mercy seat, the place of sacrifice –*

"...the faces of the cherubim *shall be* toward the mercy seat. (Exodus 25:20 NKJ)

2. *The mercy seat is the place of Heavenly focus because it is also the seat, place of atonement –*

"And Aaron shall bring the bull of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house, and shall kill the bull as the sin offering which *is* for himself. ...¹⁴ "He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle *it* with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.¹⁵ "Then he

shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which *is* for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat.

¹⁶ "So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness.¹⁷ "There shall be no man in the tabernacle of meeting when he goes in to make atonement in the Holy Place, until he comes

out, that he may make atonement for himself, for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel. (Leviticus 16:11-17 NKJ)

3. *In that it is the place of Heavenly focus, and a place receiving the blood of the sacrifice in this it portrays for us, Christ cross, which is to be our place of FOCUS –*

² For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:2 NKJ)

IV. *Finally, note the place of the mercy seat, between God and the Law, as Christ is Mediator for us –*

"You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you.²² "And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, ... (Exodus 25:21-22 NKJ)

1. *The mercy seat is between God and the Law, representing Christ as our Mediator and propitiation –*

For *there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,*⁶ who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, (1 Timothy 2:5-6 NKJ)

whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,²⁶ to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:25-26 NKJ)

2. *The Greek Old Testament uses the same word in Exodus 25:17 for mercy seat as is used in Romans 3:25 for propitiation –*

We see this in the New American Bible translation –

Exodus 25:17 "You shall then make a propitiatory of pure gold, two cubits and a half long, and one and a half cubits wide. (Exodus 25:17 NABO)

ἱλαστήριος, ον (Hilasterios) with focus on the means by which sins are forgiven having atoning power, bringing about reconciliation; substantivally τὸ ἱλαστήριον means of forgiveness (RO 3.25); by metonymy, with a focus

on the place where sins are forgiven by means of the blood from an atoning sacrifice placed there *place of forgiveness, place where God forgives sins*, often translated *mercy seat* (HE 9.5)

ἱλαστήριον (Hilasterion) οὐ, τό *means of expiation, place of expiation* Ro 3:25; Hb 9:5.*

Christ stood between God and the law for us –

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (Romans 5:1 NKJ)

Arnold Brevick