

# Exodus 51 - No Mercy at the Mercy Seat

Exodus (Names) - Changing the World  
Dr. Leon L. Sanders Exodus 25:10-22

## Begin at the Center

- Moses begins his synopsis of God's direction to him at the only two articles in the Holy of Holies
  - This is the center of God's holiness
  - This is the essence of God's plan for salvation
  - This is the "meeting place" where holy God and unholy man can meet
  - Our relationship with God must begin with His Blood

## The Tabernacle

Tabernacle - Outside



Tabernacle - Inside



Holy Place

Holy of Holies

## Ark of Covenant

- Built of wood overlaid with gold
  - Gold does not oxidize or tarnish - ever
- The ark has four rings, two per side, for four priests to carrying the ark and seat; the poles stayed with the ark
- Anyone else who touched the ark was to die (25: 6:1-7)

## Ark of Covenant and "Seat"

Ark and "Seat"



Ark in Transport



## Ark was a Storage Chest

- The ark was to contain
  - Essence of God's Law - Ten Words (25: 10:1-5)
- Ark will contain two other items
  - Aaron's rod that budded (25: 17:1-11)
  - Pot containing the manna (25: 16:32-34)

## Lid was a “Seat”

- Lid was made only of pure gold
- At each long end of the lid was a cherub
  - Faced each other
  - Wings outstretched toward each other
- Every aspect of these two articles presaged the holiness of God assuaged by the blood of the innocent One

## Ark was a Sarcophagus

- אָרֹן - Hebrew word for chest or sarcophagus (Ex 50:26)
  - Uses same English word as the vessel used to:
    - Carry Noah
    - Carry Moses
  - Very different meaning and words in Hebrew
  - Probably a carry-over from Greek Septuagint which also used same word for these two different objects (κιβωτός)

## Sarcophagus Means Death

- Sarcophagus points to those to die (spiritual/physical)
  - Law - All who break the Law (sin) die (Sinners) (Ro 7:12)
    - The power of the Law broken when Christ died and arose (1Co 15:54-57)
  - Christ, Who knew no sin became sin, dying for sins of His people (2Co 5:21)
    - Manna represented Christ (Jo 6:31-37)
    - Rod represented His obedience to the Father to death

## Rod Also Spoke of Priesthood

- Aaron was High Priest
  - There arose a dispute about whether there should be a special priesthood or could anyone perform the duties
  - Issue was decided by God symbolized by the dead rod which would have come back to life; i.e., budded
  - Only Aaron's rod had budded proving that God had established Aaron's priesthood

## Christ Priest – Melchizedek

- The rod foretold the One who
  - Would die
  - Would come back to life
  - Would be priest
- Only Christ met these criteria (He 5:6-10)
- He became a priest forever symbolized by Melchizedek (He 9:11-28)

## Tradition Misses the Mark

- The term mercy seat came into use via Martin Luther
  - He translated the Hebrew word (כַּפֹּרֶת) as mercy seat when it simply means "cover"
  - His meaning probably was that we obtain mercy when Christ's blood is offered here; however,
    - Understanding the meaning of these objects reveals that there is no mercy when standing before the cherubim
    - One either is holy or one suffers being unholy – no mercy

## Greek Follows Hebrew Here

- Greek Septuagint and New Testament use the word propitiation (ἱλαστήριον) that means
  - Turning away wrath via an offering
  - More true meaning of Christ's sacrifice for sin
  - Has nothing to do with mercy for the sacrifice
- We receive mercy because Christ stood here for us

## Understanding Angels, Kind of

### Cherubim

- Ezekiel describes cherubim (Ez 10)
- Name (כְּרוּב) transliterated
- God is above, between, the cherubim (Is 37:15-16; Ez 11)

### Seraphim

- Name (שֶׁרָפִים) is used for fiery serpents (Num 21:4-9)
- Explicitly mentioned only in Isaiah (Is 6:1-7)
- Appear similar to Ezekiel's cherubim

## Of Angels, Cherubim & Seraphim

- Angels are ministering spirits (Heb 1:14)
  - Cherubim and Seraphim may be subsets of angels leading to the conclusion there may be further divisions
- Based on the paucity of information it is impossible to state any true distinction between these two groups
- Satan was a cherub before his sin (Is 28:16)

## Defenders of God's Holiness

- These spirits:
  - Share God's holiness with those as ordered (Ex 6:1-7)
  - Announce God's holiness (Ex 4:6-9)
  - Probably are defenders of God's holiness preventing unholiness from reaching God's throne'
- Then, they would be hostile to any unholy person (sinner) coming before God

## They Examine the Sacrifice

- These cherubim are depictions of the cherubim (seraphim) about God's throne who look for the sinless sacrifice that satisfies God's holiness - pays for sin
  - No man can pass their presence for all have sinned (Ps 142)
  - Only a sinless sacrifice is acceptable - Christ
  - Holiness requires a holy sacrifice to atone for sin
  - He passed their gaze; yet, they do not understand (Ex 3:11)

## Visible Image of Fear of the Lord

- The image of cherubim looking down on the coffin (sarcophagus) reminder of:
  - Fear of the Lord ('s holiness) is the beginning of wisdom (Ps 111:10)
  - Dreadful to fall into the hands of the living God after disdaining the blood of Christ's sacrifice (Heb 10:28-31)
  - It is not a place one wants to, or can, stand without Christ



## Jews Profaned this Image

- According to Jewish Talmudic thought
  - The cherubim in Solomon's Temple were in a near copulant embrace displaying God's love for Israel
  - They had rejected the essence of God's holiness and substituted vulgar sensuality in its place debasing themselves and His gospel (Lev. 1:14-25)
  - In essence, they did not fear to fall into the hands of the living God

## White Throne Judgment

- Everyone who dies without the Gospel will stand before God while these beings look down on him/her
  - They will look for holiness
    - God will open the books displaying their filthy rags (Is. 64:6-8)
    - Their lives display their rejection of God's holiness
    - They will be cast into the Lake of Fire
  - They will not find pure holiness, only pure sinfulness

## One Scenario for Thought

- Being found without Christ's righteousness the lost:
  - Will be carried by the Cherubim from God's throne
  - The Seraphim (fiery serpents) will spend eternity examining them for signs of God's righteousness
  - Together both execute God's wrath including Satan
  - This is the true universality - all who refuse God's offer of holiness (salvation) will be examined for eternity