

The Ark of the Covenant and Mercy Seat

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Ex 25:10-16 “They shall construct an ark of acacia wood two and a half cubits long, and one and a half cubits wide, and one and a half cubits high. 11 You shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it, and you shall make a gold molding around it. 12 You shall cast four gold rings for it and fasten them on its four feet, and two rings shall be on one side of it and two rings on the other side of it. 13 You shall make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. 14 You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark with them. 15 The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be removed from it. 16 You shall put into the ark the testimony which I shall give you.

Placement of the Altar of Incense Heb 9:1-5

1 Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary. 2 For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place. 3 Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, 4 having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant 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; 5 and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

The outer court - the holy place	The inner court - the holy of holies
The lampstand	The Golden Altar of incense
The table and sacred bread	The Ark of the Covenant
	The Mercy Seat

The Ark of the Covenant

The Ark was the most important article of furniture.

It is the first item mentioned in the instructions concerning the Tabernacle (Ex 25 - 40).

The ark was considered God’s throne. He dwelt between the cherubim (Ps 99:1)

The Ark measured 3 ft. 9 in.; by 2 ft. 3 in.; by 2 ft. 3 in.

The Ark was a symbol of Jesus Christ, the God - Man

It speaks of His deity (gold) and **His humanity** (shittim wood); He is – “very God of very God and very man of very man.”

Col 2:9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,

Jesus spoke as God Himself

Jn 14:1 Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

Jn 14:9 He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?

He was also a mortal man, living perfect in his humanity.

He grew tired and sat down at a well in Samaria in the cool of the day.

He slept, He ate, He drank, and He laughed and wept.

And beyond all that, He suffered.

Inside the Ark was three items: Points to Jesus as Prophet, Priest and King

1) A golden jar of manna (Ex 16:33-34) Jesus as Prophet - He spoke for God

Dt 18:15 The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. (Dt 18:15-19)

Jn 6:32 Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst." (Jn 6:32-35)

Christ not only spoke for God, but He was God's message to man. He was the Logos, the Word of God, the very Alphabet of God, and the Alpha and Omega. He was God's final message to man. Since Christ came, heaven has been silent, for God has no addenda to place after Christ. There can be no postscript to the letter where Christ is the embodiment of that letter. God has told out His heart in Christ.

2) Aaron's rod which budded (Num17:10) Jesus as Priest.

The prophet spoke for God before men; the priest spoke for man before God. Aaron's rod which budded (the authority of his priesthood) was in the Holy of Holies, thus today there is in heaven at God's right hand the man Christ Jesus, Christ our Priest is in heaven representing us in glory at this very moment.

Heb 2:17 Therefore, He 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.

3) The tables of the covenant (Ex 25:16, 21; 40:20) Jesus as King

The tables of the covenant speak of the kingship of Christ. He was born a king, He lived a king, He died a king, He rose from the dead as a king, and He is coming again to this earth as the King. He is coming as King of kings and Lord of lords.

These threefold functions describe the office of Jesus Christ as Mediator.

There must be one who can represent man before God and one to represent God before man.

1Tim 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24)

He must have authority to rule.

1Cor 15:25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

Jesus Christ fulfills this; for He was God before man, and today He is man before God. Because He is both God and man, He is able to bring a holy God and sinner man together.

He is the answer to the cry of Job's heart:

Job 9:32-33 "For He is not a man as I am that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together. There is no umpire between us, Who may lay his hand upon us both.

The Mercy Seat

Ex 25:17-22 You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. 18 You shall make two cherubim of gold, make them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat. 19 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. 20 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. 21 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. 22 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 a top for the ark, but it was a separate piece of furniture.

It was made of pure gold, 3 ft. 9 in. by 2 ft. 3 in.

On top of the mercy seat and coming out of it were two cherubim (angels) of gold.

The mercy seat was probably the most important article of furniture, for it the place where God communed with man. It was where God was found. He dwelt between the cherubim.

Ex 30:6 "You shall put this altar in front of the veil that is near the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is over the ark of the testimony, where I will meet with you." (Ex 30:36)

Num 7:89 Now when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim, so He spoke to him.

Latter when David gives Solomon the plans for building the temple, he calls the temple "the place [house] of the mercy seat." (1Chr 28:11-12)

God's glory is revealed here

Ex 40:34-35 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

This is the place where we draw near to the throne

Heb 4:16 to receive mercy and to find grace to help us in time of need

Heb 10:19-22 for fellowship

The gold mercy seat - speaks of the resurrected Christ, seated on the throne at the Father's right hand, waiting until the time when His enemies will be made His footstool.

Ps 110:1 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." (Lk 20:43; Ac 2:35; 7:49; Heb 1:13; 10:13)

It is the sacrificial blood that makes the mercy seat as such. On the Day of Atonement (only then could the high priest approach the mercy seat); the high priest performed the following (see Lev 16)

1. The high priest removed his official garments and clothed himself in white linen (a symbol of repentance) as he went about the duties of the day.
2. He offered a bull calf as a sin offering for the priests and himself.

3. Then he entered the Holy of Holies with a censer of live coals from the altar of incense, filling the area with incense. He sprinkled the bullock's blood on the mercy seat and on the floor before the ark of the covenant.

4. Then he cast lots over two live goats brought by the people. He killed one of the goats as a sin offering for the nation, taking the blood inside the veil and sprinkling it as before, thus atoning even for the Holy Place.

5. He confessed the sins of the nation over the live goat as he placed his hands on its head.

6. Finally he sent the live goat (the scapegoat), into the wilderness. (Symbolically it carried away the sins of the people.)

7. Then the high priest clothed himself in his usual apparel and offered a burnt offering for himself and one for the people with the fat of the sin offering.

8. Outside the camp the flesh of the bull calf and goat was burned.

The blood propitiates:

Rom 3:25 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 word, translated "propitiation" in the Greek is the same word for the mercy seat. Christ is the mercy seat today for the world.

This phase of His work is enlarged upon in Hebrews 9:24-28;

Heb 9:24 For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; 25 nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. 26 Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. 27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, 28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

God is propitious, He is "mercy seated," toward the world.

It is extraneous to try to do something to make a ground to approach God; God has already done that work, and He is propitious to an infinite degree. God does not have to be won over by the sinner; He is already won over. God's face is not turned away from the world in anger; His hands are outstretched toward a hostile world, and His mighty bared-arm of salvation is revealed. When the sin of man stood between God and man, He came forth and bore the penalty that there might not be anything that would shut man out from the heart of God. He says, "Come on, come on, I have provided the mercy seat." God now can save a sinner who does no more than to trust in Jesus. God is waiting, wanting, and yearning to save the last, the least, and the lost. The mighty bared-arm and the on-surging and pulsating heart of God are revealed today toward a world in sin and darkness that does not know that God loved them to the nth degree. The publican does not have to cry for mercy now, for God has a meeting place where publicans and sinners can come. There is a mercy seat in heaven. Men talk about committing the unpardonable sin today. What is this thing that they call the unpardonable sin? There is no act that one can commit today that will shut that one away from the mercy seat. To remain in a state of unbelief alone will shut one out. There is a mercy seat. [from Through the Bible; by J. Vernon McGee]

The Day of Atonement in the NT

There are many references in Paul's epistles, and the whole Book of Hebrews that are inseparably connected to the Day of Atonement. The ritual of the day is explained as a "type" of the atonement made by Jesus Christ (Heb 9 & 10). Christ, our High Priest, shed his blood on Calvary, then having atoned for the world's sins, He appeared in heaven before the Father.

Unlike the annual repetitions of the day in Israel, Christ's atonement is "once for all ... securing an eternal redemption"

Heb 9:11-12 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; 12 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.

Rom 5:9-10 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (see also 1Cor 5:7; 2 Cor 5:18-21; Gal 3:13-14; Col 1:14; Tit 2:14; 1Pt 1:18-19; 1Jn 2:2; 4:10; Rev 5:9).