



THE MERCY SEAT

December 19, 2025 | *Exodus 25:17-22; John 20:12*

The Mercy Seat

Yesterday, we investigated the Ark of the Covenant and how it was a picture of Christ. But we didn't look at the Mercy Seat or the lid (*Ex. 25:17-22*).

The Mercy Seat was fashioned with pure gold, with cherubim or angels placed at each end. The cherubim faced the seat and covered the Ark.

The purpose of the Mercy Seat was to be a covering or a lid for the Ark. God said that He would meet with Moses and the High Priest from "between the cherubim, above the Mercy Seat." In other words, the Mercy Seat was to be God's "throne" on earth.

The Ark and the Inner Veil

However, before we can understand the importance of the Mercy Seat, we must dig a little deeper into the meaning of the Ark and the Inner Veil. Why were these two items so ominous in the sight of the people?

The Inner Veil was a grim reminder of the Law of God. Remember, the veil was a ten-cubit square. Ten was the number of the Commandments. Thus, God's Law was strongly represented in the veil, and it screened the people from the glory of God and His presence (*Rom. 3:23*).

The Ark of the Covenant was also a reminder of the Law, a chest holding the tablets of the Law itself. The Ark was also surrounded by a room that was ten cubits on all sides, all pointing to the Law.

The person (God) who sat on this earthly "throne" was the Judge of the Law. The Ark could not be seen or touched without the punishment of death. Simply put, God's holiness could not be

approached by sinful men.

Why exactly did God give His people the Law? Remember, the Commandments were a mirror to show us who we are and who God is. These laws are not just a list of dos and don'ts, but they reveal the character of God, what He is like, and what He considers valuable (i.e., life, marriage, family, property, truth). These laws are His standards for an ideal world.

Second, we refer to the Commandments as the Moral Law. Morality — what is right and wrong — is determined by God, not by His creatures. Thus, the Commandments reveal mankind's sinfulness, our immorality. In our sin, we are incapable of keeping the commandments (*Matt. 19:16*).

Thus, the Commandments reveal our inability to live up to God's standard of holiness and perfection. We fall short of His glory and need help to overcome our sin.

Third, the Commandments reveal our need for a Savior, the only person to keep the Law (*Matt. 5:17*). Paul said that he would not have known sin had it not been for the law (*Rom. 7:7-11*). The law revealed his sin and need for Christ (*Rom. 3:9-12, 19-20, 23; 6:23; Gal. 3:24*).

We cannot earn good standing with God. We are utterly incapable of doing so. Thus, we need help from someone else to supplement our shortcomings.

Removal of the Barriers

While the Law is ominous and intimidating, causing us to consider our unworthiness in the sight of God, the Lord made a way for us to be right with Him. Jesus, having fulfilled the commandments for us, negated the penalties of the Law of God and provided an easier way to the Father.

When Christ died on the cross, He initiated the mercy of God on our behalf (*Rom. 5:6-8; 7:24; 8:1-4*). How so?

The Inner Veil that stood between us and the Lord was torn from top to bottom. His sacrifice removed the barrier between God and man. Now, those who believe in Christ are priests in Him and have access to God's presence.

As for God's throne of judgment (the Ark), the only way to avoid death was for the High Priest to sprinkle the lamb's blood on the Mercy Seat. But when Christ died on the cross, the blood of the Lamb was spilled on our behalf. In Christ, we receive the mercy of God when we deserve the judgment of God.

In *John 20:12*, as Mary Magdalene wept for the missing Savior, we are told that Jesus' body lay "between the angels." The empty tomb was the New Testament Mercy Seat.

Death, as a result of sin, is no longer our enemy. Because of Christ, God has extended His mercy. Thus, Christ eliminated the barriers of the Law for His followers for all time.

If we were tried in the court of heaven, the case against us would be too overwhelming and condemning to escape, except that Jesus is our Advocate, our attorney (*1 Jn. 2:1*). He represents us before the Judge, who is God the Father, and makes ready our defense.

Here is the case against us.

God says to us, “You have been found guilty of sin, and the penalty for that sin is death. Your sinfulness has offended Me and warrants the full extent of My wrath. Your sin has also broken our relationship. We are now separated, no longer able to fellowship. Furthermore, your past condemns you. I will always remember your failure to meet My standards, and because of your rebellious nature, you will never again be holy.”

When we understand the case against us, we can better grasp the price paid for our sins. We deserve the full penalty of the Law — eternal separation from fellowship with God. The magnitude of that thought should sober us quickly.

But Christ took upon Himself the penalty for our sin, even when we did not deserve it, just so we could experience God’s mercy. Mercy is the withholding of a consequence or punishment.

At the Great White Throne judgment in heaven, all people will stand before Christ (*Rev. 20:11-15*). He will have before Him “books” and “the Book.” All our sins will be displayed before us in “the books,” but none of that will matter, if our name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Because of Christ, we will be extended mercy when we deserve judgment and death.

What Child is this in the manger? He is the Mercy Seat!

Though we stand condemned before our holy God and His perfect law, He has shown us mercy because of Christ. Praise God that we have not received what we deserve!

Ponder and Pray

Imagine yourself on trial before God. What did Christ do for you?

Knowing this truth, how should you respond?

Have you missed some days?
Click [here](#) to access previously emailed devotions.

The reading plan and devotions were developed by Aaron Ferguson, one of our Elders and author of the *Study Guide and Daily Reflections for the One Year Chronological Reading of the Bible and the New Testament*. For more details, visit his website at BiAY.org.



