

## **EXODUS 25:10-22**

### **(THE ARK OF THE COVENANT AND THE SEAT OF MERCY)**

Since Genesis 1:1, we have seen literally thousands of pictures of Christ and His work. The total number is literally astonishing. Surely His words to the leaders of His time about all of Scripture testifying of Him are true!

Today we have 13 verses which are literally filled with pictures of Him. So many so, that some had to be passed over in order to fit the verses into a single sermon. However, when we are done, I'm sure your head will be filled with delight at the absolutely marvelous display of the revealing of Him in each word or thought.

The Ark of the Covenant is probably the most notable aspect of all of Israel's worship. People who don't know a single thing about the rest of the Old Testament have still heard of the ark and have an idea of what it is supposed to look like. It is the center of attention in movies, documentaries, books, and so on. We are fascinated by it like no other piece of antiquity.

If it is real, then it means that the story of the Hebrews is true - and so everyone is looking for it. Some have even, untruthfully, claimed to have found it. But there is no need for an ark any longer. Why, because we have the true Ark which this one only pictures. We have Christ Jesus. Today, you will see why we can make the claim that He is the fulfillment of this marvelous piece of furniture where God met with man.

**Text Verse:** "Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days,' says the LORD, 'that they will say no more, "The ark of the covenant of the LORD." It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit *it*, nor shall it be made anymore.'" Jeremiah 3:16

Jeremiah foresaw a time when Israel would no longer direct their attention to an implement made of wood and gold. Instead, they would have their attention directed elsewhere. That time is beginning to occur, even before our eyes. Jewish people are coming to their Messiah in a magnificent way.

And someday, the nation as a whole will acknowledge Him for who He is - the place where God meets with man. Many pictures of this are found in today's thirteen verses. So let's get right into them. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. Details for the Ark (verses 10-16)**

**<sup>10</sup> "And they shall make an ark**

The word *aron*, or ark, has only been used one time so far in the Bible, and yet its use actually gives us an early insight into the purpose of the ark which Moses is now going to be instructed to make. In Genesis 50:26, we read this -

"So Joseph died, *being* one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt." Genesis 50:26

The *aron* simply describes a box or chest of some sort. In the case of a coffin, it is a type of chest with a specific purpose. The ark which will now be described is also a type of chest and it will have quite a few purposes, all of which picture Jesus Christ. Every detail about this marvelous piece of furniture looks forward to Him.

It has to be noted now that in these directions for the construction of the sanctuary and the implements in it, the ark is the first piece of furniture to be

named and described for construction. And yet, we will find out later that its actual construction is detailed *after* the detailing of the construction of the tabernacle. This is seen in Exodus 36 and 37.

It is right and appropriate that the housing of the ark would be constructed and ready for the ark itself. However, everything about the tabernacle is centered on this ark and therefore, it is also right that the details for its construction should come first.

It should be noted here and now that what is being constructed is very similar to arks that have been found in ancient Egypt and elsewhere. For this reason, the Pulpit Commentary says -

"Arks were an ordinary part of the religious furniture of temples in Egypt, and were greatly venerated. They usually contained a figure or emblem, of some deity. Occasionally they were in the shape of boats; but the most ordinary form was that of a cupboard or chest. They were especially constructed for the purpose of being carried about in a procession, and had commonly rings at the side, through which poles were passed on such occasions. It must be freely admitted, that the general idea of the "Ark," as well as certain points in its ornamentation, was adopted from the Egyptian religion." Pulpit Commentary

Other scholars agree with this, but I think it is incorrect. What is being described is, according to the book of Hebrews, a "copy and shadow of the heavenly things." Therefore, the similarity between the artifacts of other cultures should be attributed to their attempt to copy the true heavenly things, not the other way around.

<sup>10 (con't)</sup> **of acacia wood;**

This is the wood which was requested for the construction of the tabernacle and all its furniture in Exodus 25:5, and so this is the second time that *shittah*, or acacia wood, is named in the Bible. As I said last week, acacia is a very slow growing tree that would be readily available in the area where they are. Its heart wood is dark reddish-brown and is beautiful when sanded and polished.

It is like cypress in Florida which is resistant to decay because it deposits in its heartwood waste substances which turn into preservatives. This renders it unpalatable to insects. It is also dense and difficult to be penetrated by water and other decaying agents. It is considered an incorruptible wood, thus picturing the incorruptible nature of Christ's humanity.

<sup>10 (con't)</sup> **two and a half cubits *shall be* its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height.**

A cubit, or *ammah*, is a unit of measurement which is the length of the forearm below the elbow. It comes from *em* which means "mother" and thus it is the mother measurement. It is debated what the exact length of a cubit is, but it is about 16 inches.

The only other time that such precise measurements were given in Scripture so far was in the construction of Noah's Ark in Genesis 6. The same words are used - length, width, and height. The dimensions of the ark mean that it will be 5.625 cubits in space.

The actual dimension in feet is debated, but scholars go from about 3' 9" long to 4' 5" long. Assuming the smaller measurement, it would be 3' 9" x 2' 3" x 2' 3". It is not an especially large box. Rather, it is humble in its size.

## <sup>11</sup> **And you shall overlay it**

Moses is next instructed to "overlay" the ark. The word "overlay" is introduced into the Bible here. It is *tsaphah* - it will be used 48 times, the majority of them are in Exodus when detailing the construction of the tabernacle, or in Kings and Chronicles when detailing the construction of the temple.

This word means exactly as it is translated, to lay out or to "overlay." Importantly, it is identical to another word, *tsaphah*, which means "to look out or about, spy, keep watch." That was first used in Genesis 31:45-49 during this exchange -

"So Jacob took a stone and set it up *as* a pillar. <sup>46</sup> Then Jacob said to his brethren, 'Gather stones.' And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there on the heap. <sup>47</sup> Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed. <sup>48</sup> And Laban said, 'This heap *is* a witness between you and me this day.' Therefore its name was called Galeed, <sup>49</sup> also Mizpah, because he said, "May the LORD **watch** between you and me when we are absent one from another." Genesis 31:45-49

If you remember the details of that sermon, the heap that was constructed, and all of the surrounding details, pictured the formation of the Bible, the Word of God.

<sup>11</sup> (con't) **with pure gold,**

The overlaying of the ark is to be with gold. As seen last week, *zahav* or gold is the finest of the biblical metals. It indicates purity and holiness, royalty, and divinity. It is one of the few metals that has a natural color which is not silver. Thus it is both a metal and a color, and not surprisingly, both are associated with kingship.

It is precious because of its rarity, and it is valuable. Throughout history it has been used as a basis for monetary systems, and it is the standard by which the value of other things is set. It is also considered an incorruptible metal.

But the gold to be used has an adjective to describe it, *tahor*, or "pure." It means clean or pure and comes from the verb *taher* which means pure in a physical, chemical, ceremonial, or moral sense. In this we can see that the gold is to be wholly undefiled.

11 (con't) **inside and out you shall overlay it,**

The gold was not only to overlay the outside, but the inside as well. What was incorruptible in wood was to be completely covered in a layer of what is incorruptible in gold.

11 (con't) **and shall make on it a molding of gold all around.**

The molding or *zer*, is introduced into the Bible here. It will be used just 10 times and only in Exodus. It is a molding which spreads around the top as if a crown. It is comparable to an Aramaic word which means a wreath or a crown. This may have been used to keep the mercy seat in place.

12 **You shall cast four rings of gold for it,**

Moses is next instructed to "cast four rings of gold." The word for "ring" is *tabbaath* and it will take a moment to explain. The word means ring, but it comes from another word, *taba*. That is a verb which means "to sink." This then gives the idea of a signet which is sunk into clay or wax in order to make a seal. From this

comes the idea of any ring. This is seen in the first use of it in the Bible back Genesis 41-

"Then Pharaoh took his **signet ring** off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck." Genesis 41:42

12 (con't) **and put *them* in its four corners;**

Some versions say "four corners" and some "four feet." The word is *pa'amoth* and it means times, or occurrences. Literally, it is "to strike." One will strike an anvil. One's foot strikes the ground as he walks, etc. This is why some translators choose the word "feet."

If you look at different pictures of the ark, you will see some with the carrying poles along the sides anywhere from the bottom to the top at the molding. Others put the poles right at the feet so that the entire ark is elevated above the carriers. I would favor the idea of "feet." This would keep the ark wholly elevated above the priests who carried it and it would keep them from having any part of their body touch it as they did so.

12 (con't) **two rings *shall be* on one side, and two rings on the other side.**

The obvious question is "which sides? Almost all drawings show the poles along the long side of the ark, not the short side. However, that raises a problem which we will see in a moment...

**13 And you shall make poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold.**

The word for "poles" is *bad*. It means "alone." It indicates a single piece of wood which stands alone. These were also to be made of *shittah*, or acacia wood, and they too were to be overlaid with gold.

**14 You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, that the ark may be carried by them.**

The poles were to be placed into the rings in order for it to be carried. This then brings in the problem of "which side" the rings were on. Was the ark carried like a funeral bier or what is carried like a throne? If the poles were in the long sides, then it would be as if carrying a funeral bier; if in the short sides, then like a throne. The reason why this becomes complicated is because we read this in 1 Kings 8 -

"Then the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the temple, to the Most Holy *Place*, under the wings of the cherubim. <sup>7</sup> For the cherubim spread *their* two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim overshadowed the ark and its poles.

<sup>8</sup>The poles extended so that the ends of the poles could be seen from the holy *place*, in front of the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside." 1 Kings 8:6-8

It is without a doubt that the ark rested length-wise in the temple with the cherubim on the ark on each side, to the left and right as one walked in. Thus the poles were along side the *short side* of the ark. The poles were extended, but not removed, from the ark so that they could be visible in the holy place. It was a symbol that the ark had reached its place of rest.



From this, we can know that unlike the pictures we commonly see, the ark was carried by the priests as a throne. The ark would face forward with the cherubim on each side as it was carried.

**<sup>15</sup> The poles shall be in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it.**

From even before its construction, the law was given that the poles should never be removed from the ark. They were to be as permanent as any other part of it. This was to ensure that the ark would never be touched. Should someone presume to do so, there would be an immediate penalty. 2 Samuel 6 shows us -

"And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out *his hand* to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. <sup>7</sup> Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for *his error*; and he died there by the ark of God. <sup>8</sup> And David became angry because of the LORD's outbreak against Uzzah; and he called the name of the place Perez Uzzah to this day." 2 Samuel 6:6-8

**<sup>16</sup> And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you.**

Once the ark was completed, the Lord directs that the Testimony, meaning the two tablets of stone which are the basis of the law, were to be put inside of the ark itself. As the basis of the law, they represented the entirety of the law. And what is the purpose of the law? It is explained in Deuteronomy 31 -

"Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there as a witness against you;

Deuteronomy 31:26

The law was a witness against the sin and rebellion of the people. The substance of that law, based on the Ten Commandments, was contained within the ark itself.

*Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty  
And glorious is the Lord in His place  
To stand in His presence, a glorious sight to see  
And to gaze upon the beauty of His face*

*But fallen man cannot so upon Him look  
Lest we die from the stain of sin we bear  
The words which testify against us are written in His book  
In the law, only condemnation is found there*

*But at the throne of Christ, there is mercy and grace  
At the place where God and man do meet  
Once again through Christ, we can look upon God's face  
And for eternal ages, enjoy fellowship so sweet*

*Glory, glory, glory to the Lord, Christ Jesus  
Who has made the way back to God for us*

## II. There I will Meet with You (verses 17-22)

<sup>17</sup> “You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold;

As important as the ark and what it pictures is to the theology of the Bible, the mercy seat is no less so. This mercy seat is known as the *kapporeth*. This word is introduced into the Bible here, it is used 27 times, and only when speaking of this mercy seat.

It is identical in meaning to *kopher*, which means "a cover" but in this case it indicates "a satisfaction." This comes from the word *kaphar*, which in this situation means "to appease" or "to satisfy." The theological implications of what this mercy seat, and its use, pictures are of the highest importance for fallen man.

This seat was to be made of pure gold, indicating no defilement. It was to be unstained in any way. John Lange describes its purpose -

"...the mercy-seat (*kapporeth*), as a symbol of God's gracious willingness to accept expiation as such a fulfilment of His general will as covers and removes the demands imposed by the law, or the special will, on account of guilt." John Lange

In 1 Chronicles 28, the Holy of Holies, where the ark and its mercy seat were contained, was called *bayith ha'kapporeth*, or "house of the mercy seat," or "house of the expiation." It is the place where sins were dealt with once a year on the Day of Atonement. As a squiggle for your brain, which you will need before we finish today, the Greek translation of the OT translates this word, *kapporeth*, as *hilastérion*.

17 (con't) **two and a half cubits *shall be* its length and a cubit and a half its width.**

The mercy seat was to be made to the exact size of the top opening of the ark itself, thus it served as a lid to the ark while serving as the place of expiation for the sins of the people at the same time. The tablets inside were thus embodied within the ark.

**18 And you shall make two cherubim of gold;**

What a cherub looks like is debated over. Ezekiel gives a vivid description of them in his book. Among other things, he says -

"Each one had four faces: the first face *was* the face of a cherub, the second face the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle." Ezekiel 10:14

Whether these cherubim above the ark looked like those in Ezekiel or not cannot be known for certain. From the Bible, we can deduce that cherubim were a special class of being. The first time they were mentioned was in Genesis 3 -

"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

They are a select class of angels which, among other things, are near to God, they have great power, and they act as guards. As they are guards of the tree of life, they are the ones who can point man to the way of accessing the right to that tree. Two of them are to be depicted on the mercy seat.

As a note of rectification, the KJV incorrectly uses the term "cherubims." The "im" at the end of the word makes the word plural in Hebrew. Therefore, the plural is either "cherubs" for English or "cherubim" for Hebrew. "Cherubims" is incorrect.

**18 (con't) of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat.**

The term "hammered work" or *miqshah* is used for the first of ten times, and its meaning is disputed. It comes from *miqsheh* which means "a fancy hairdo." So, it could be a turning of metal, like the braids of hair, or it could be a hammering of metal for shaping.

The word "ends" is another new word - *qatsah*. It means "the extremity." Here, the Hebrew reads "from the two ends," and thus the term "hammered work" is probably correct. The cherubim are made to rise out of the mercy seat itself. The central thought of these cherubim is that they were there, beholding the mercy seat, and thus the ark, because their form comes out of the mercy seat itself. In other words, the two are inextricably linked together.

**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.**

The verse is explicit and well translated. One cherub was to be at one end, and the other at the other end. And each was to come from out of the mercy seat. They were not to be made separately and then soldered on (see Cambridge), but instead they were to be fashioned out of the same piece of gold that the mercy seat was made of. John Lange provides a thought on the symbolism -

"...the two cherubim as symbols of God's righteous dominion in the world, proceeding out of God's gracious will and the law, in order to the maintenance of

the justice which is represented by the union of the ark and the cover [the mercy-seat]." John Lange

**20 And the cherubim shall stretch out *their* wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings,**

The word for "wings" here is *kanaph*. It means "an extremity." It can be wings on a bird, the edges of a garment, the corners of the earth, etc. If these cherubim resembled men as some speculate, then the "wings" could be their garments spread out over the mercy seat. This would do no harm to the idea of "wings." Or they could be literal wings as angelic figures are often represented as having.

**20 (con't) and they shall face one another;**

This means that they will positionally face each other. One cherub is facing the other on the opposite side. The word for "another" here is *akh*, which means "brother." Thus in the larger sense it indicates "one like another." One is facing the other of its kind.

**20 (con't) the faces of the cherubim *shall be* toward the mercy seat.**

Although the cherubim are positionally facing, their attention is directed not towards each other, but towards the mercy seat. It is true that they could see the reflection of one another in the gold, but the attention would be focused on the place itself. Everything else would merely be a reflection of what took place there.

**<sup>21</sup> 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.**

Although it hasn't been said yet that the mercy seat would be placed atop the ark, it could be inferred by the dimensions of it which matched the dimension of the ark. Now what seemed implicit is made explicit. The mercy seat is the top of the ark and the covering for what is inside. And what is in there is repeated from verse 16 - the Testimony that I will give you.

What is implied is that what is under the mercy seat and within the Ark *requires* mercy. Were it not so, a mercy seat would not be needed. What seems cumbersome in this verse is that the lid is said to be put on the ark before the testimony is placed into it. This isn't the case. The word "and" can be used to mean "after." Therefore, it would say, "...after you have put in the Testimony."

Again, the tablets are called the "Testimony" for a reason. They are a testimony to the people concerning their duty, and they were a testimony against them when they violated its standards. However, because they were inside the ark, they were sealed there, within the ark and under the mercy seat.

**<sup>22</sup> And there I will meet with you,**

The word "meet" here is *yaad*. It doesn't just mean to meet, but rather "to appoint" or "to designate." In other words, this is the designated spot of meeting. It isn't a random meeting place as if it could be there or somewhere else. Nor was it a random time of meeting, as if He may be in or He may not be in. Rather, it is the designated place *of* meeting. And the word "you" here is singular. It is a personal meeting place with the one who was allowed to come into it. It is not a general meeting place where anyone can come and meet with the Lord.

22 (con't) **and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat,**

If the cherubim are on each side, and their wings cover the mercy seat from above, then it must be that *where the cherubim are looking* is the spot where the Presence would be, not above them as if He sat atop them. If that were so, then it would have said that. Rather, it is between the cherubim and below their wings; above the mercy seat. The word for "speak" is the general word for speaking. It is therefore, from this spot that His word would go out.

22 (con't) **from between the two cherubim which *are* on the ark of the Testimony,**

The cherubim would be on the right and on the left of Moses, or the designated High Priest. From the center of the mercy seat, between the cherubim is where the word would issue from. But it also notes "which are on the ark of the Testimony." The mercy seat, and thus the cherubim, are on the ark itself.

**\*22 (fin) about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.**

The ark is the focal point of Israel's relationship with the Lord and the mercy seat above it would be the place where the commandments would issue forth from. Again as before, what is implied is that mercy *is needed* concerning the commandments of God. From that, it is implied that the commandments will, in fact, be broken.

One doesn't need mercy if they are in compliance with the law. Mercy is *not getting* what you *do* deserve. Therefore, it is from this spot that propitiation of the people's sins would come and mercy would be granted.



*Into His presence I came, the Ruler of all  
I came boldly because the mercy seat was there  
On the name of Jesus, I did call  
And covered by His blood, with God, fellowship I could share*

*I was going astray, and was as lost as I could be  
Yes, one of the world's many lost children  
But in a mere moment, mercy found me  
I was cleansed and purified right there and then*

*It was at the spot where my Lord did die  
And where His blood soaked into the ground  
There at the place of mercy, for Him I did cry  
And there at that place... mercy was found*

### **III. Wonderful Pictures**

You've already been given all of the information you need to know for what the things we have seen picture. Let's just think of Jesus - His Person and His work - and it will all fall into place. The *shittim* wood is the base material for the ark. Its heart wood is dark reddish-brown and is beautiful when sanded and polished.

This pictures Christ's humanity. He, a Son of Adam from the Middle East would bear the same general color as the wood. Shittim is an incorruptible wood, thus picturing His incorruptible nature. Though a Man, He never sinned.

The ark was not of a very large size. In fact, it was humble in that regard. Rather than being some giant, ostentatious thing that people would flock to, it was rather lowly. This pictures Christ in His humbled and lowly human state. He didn't come as a larger than life figure, but rather He came to a poor family and led a rather small existence by the world's standards.

The ark was overlaid with gold, the most precious of the biblical metals. This represents His deity which overlays the wood, or His humanity - He being the God/Man. The word for "overlay" was *tsaphah*, which as I noted is identical to another word which means "to look out or about, spy, or keep watch."

Thus His divine nature is what watches over His subjects, keeping an eye on them. The gold therefore not only pictures His divine nature, but it is also a picture of His royal, kingly status. One who has subjects is the ruler of those subjects. And finally, the gold is the standard by which the value of all other things is set. Therefore, He *is* the standard by which all others are compared to.

The gold of the ark is described by the adjective *tahor*, or pure. This comes from the verb *taher* which means pure "in a physical, chemical, ceremonial, or moral sense." In this we can see that the gold is completely undefiled in any way, thus it pictures Christ's perfect purity in all ways - physical, moral, etc.

The ark was covered inside and out with gold. This pictures his complete incorruptible human/divine nature. He is simultaneously fully Man and fully God. And He is completely incorruptible in both respects.

The molding of the ark is a continued picture of His kingly status. Though the word *zer* is never used in the Bible to indicate a king's crown, in picture this is exactly what is seen. This crown was at the top of the ark, which pictures His

body, and it is the place where the mercy seat would rest. Thus, it is a picture of the merciful king.

Next we saw the four rings. The number four in the Bible always speaks of the physical creation. The four corners of the earth are represented by the four rings. The four-fold division of mankind - the families, tongues, countries, and nations are represented by these four rings, and thus the four rings are represented by the message of the four gospels going out to all people and all places.

The ring is the symbol of authority, as a signet. Just as a signet sinks into wax as a sign of authority and as a testimony of the king's rule, the four gospels sink into the hearts of man and are a testimony and authority of the rule of Christ the King.

These rings are attached to the four *paam* or "feet" of the ark. The word used indicates a strike as if the steps of a foot. These four feet then are the gospels themselves. They are the written record of the work of Christ from which the message of Him is derived. These gospels represent Christ the King, the Servant, the Son of Man, and the Son of God as depicted in those four gospels.

The poles of the ark, or *bad*, are that on which the ark rests as they carry the ark. The number two in the Bible indicates that there is a difference in things - they contrast, and yet they confirm. There is day and there is night. They contrast, and yet they confirm the duration of a day. There is salvation and there is condemnation. They contrast, and yet they confirm the end for all men.

The word *bad* means "alone." There are two poles which together support the one ark. The ark pictures Christ and thus they are the two testaments which present the work of Christ. They are what makes Christ mobile to the world as their word carries Him, each contrasting - the law and grace, but each supporting the whole and confirming the message of Him.

And each is made of the same materials, shittim wood and gold. Together, they proclaim the dual nature of the coming Messiah, and of the Messiah who has come - He is the God/Man. As the four gospels are the transition from Old to New, it is the four rings, attached to the four feet, to which the two testaments are affixed. They are the *tabbaath*, or seal, of His rule.

As Christ is the King, the carrying of the ark on the poles pictures the palanquin which a king would have been carried around in. He is the King depicted in the four gospels which are tied to the two testaments of the Bible.

The Bible is explicit that the poles were *not to be removed* from the Ark. Should either or both testaments of the Bible be removed, we would not have a proper presentation of who Christ is. Without one or the other, we would have a faulty view of Him, and without either, we would have no knowledge of Him at all.

This is why Paul says in 2 Timothy, "All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." During a Bible study some weeks ago, our precious Mabel asked what the poles represent. This is the answer.

After the description of the ark, came that of the mercy seat. It was to be of pure gold. Again, it pictures Christ's deity, His kingship, purity, and moral perfection. It was to be the same size as the ark because it was to be that which encloses it.

The mercy seat is the spot where the blood was to be applied and it is the spot where God would meet with man. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the mercy seat is called the *hilastérion*. The word means, "A sin offering." It is that by which the wrath of God would be appeased, and thus it is a propitiation. And this is exactly how Isaiah describes the coming Christ -

"Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him;  
He has put *Him* to grief.  
When You make His soul an offering for sin," Isaiah 53:10

Paul picked up on this in the New Testament and uses the same word, *hilastérion*, to describe the finished work of Christ -

"For there is no difference; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> 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, <sup>26</sup> 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 3:22-26

As the mercy seat sat on the crown molding, the propitiation for the sins of the people at the cross of Calvary is considered to be the crowning achievement of the work of Christ.

The cherubim were first seen in Genesis 3:24 as the ones who guarded access to the tree of life. To guard something means that access *is* available. If it weren't, then there would be no need for guards. Cherubim then had the means of access.

And though these two are not guards, they show that the way to the tree of life is realized in the propitiation of Christ's death as a sin-offering. They are united with the mercy seat, being worked out of the same piece of solid gold. As there are two of them, then it implies that even though they come from the same metal, they differ. Two implies a difference. And yet, they confirm that they are one, having come from the same metal.

What the meaning of these cherubim are is debated. There are three prevalent views: 1) They represent actual angels as those guarding the tree of life. 2) They are symbolic representations of the Godhead. 3) They represent all of redeemed humanity.

Their positioning shows us what they represent. They are of the *same gold* as the mercy seat, thus they bear the *same nature*. However, there are two of them and they are facing one another bodily and yet looking down at the place of mercy. They thus represent the redeemed of all humanity, Jew and Gentile alike.

They come from the same metal and so they are one, and yet they are separately fashioned and so they are two. They contrast and yet they confirm the redeemed of man. This is why the term *tahor*, or "pure," was used. This adjective wasn't used to describe either the gold of the rings or of the poles. Why? Because the gospels and the written testimonies have been handled by man. They have our taint in them, even if they are the inspired word of God. In the ark and mercy is a picture that we have become like Christ, pure and undefiled because of His work.

Many verses in the New Testament confirm that we will be like Christ and that we will be one, even though two. In one example of our new, Christ-like nature, Paul gives us these words -

"For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness of His* resurrection, <sup>6</sup> knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." Romans 6:5, 6

In support of the fact that we are one in Christ and yet still two in distinction, Paul writes this to us in Galatians 3 -

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28

We remain Jew and Gentile, and male and female, and yet we are one in Christ. The meaning of the cherubim looking towards the mercy seat then becomes obvious. All of the redeemed of humanity have but one place to look for mercy from God - to the finished work of Christ.

It is a marvelous set of pictures we have been given, but there is more. Twice it notes that the Testimony was to be placed in the ark. The ark then isn't just a picture of Christ, but it is also a picture of Christ's death. Despite being incorruptible and fully God, He still died, pictured by the ark itself.

Inside it was the tablets which represent the entire law. Those, being inside the ark, picture Christ embodying the law. He is the fulfillment and embodiment of it. However, without His death, the law could not be considered fulfilled.

In His death, the law *was* fulfilled and thus nullified. He is the *end* of the law. And in His death a new covenant came into place, seen in the mercy seat. Both the fulfilling of the law for us, and the granting of mercy *from* the law, come through His death. He is the place where propitiation with God is restored. John tell us it is so -

"In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. <sup>10</sup>In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation (hilasmos) for our sins." 1 John 4:10

It is Christ who fully answers each demand of the law; it is Christ who covers over our sins with His own shed blood; and it is Christ who has come between us and the curse of the law. Again, Paul shows us this truth in Galatians 3:13 -

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree')."

The testimony is sealed in the ark; the law is completed in the work of Christ. The blood covers the transgressions of the law in both - one in picture; one in Person. Christ's blood has taken away the curse of the law from us, covering it for all time.

As a pictorial lesson for those who are looking to see if Jesus really is the One to come and fulfill these things, John shares with us a marvelous account which occurred just after the resurrection. It is so innocuous that most of us just read over it and never realize what he is trying to tell us -

But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down *and looked* into the tomb. <sup>12</sup> And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. <sup>13</sup> Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"

She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."

<sup>14</sup> Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?"

She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher).



<sup>17</sup> Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'" John 20:11-17

Mary looked into the tomb. And what did she see? "...two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." A picture was being made of the true mercy seat where the blood of Christ left His body and sprinkled the earth below Him.

The two angels were there, fulfilling the picture of the ark which was given to Moses 1500 years earlier. These two angels, or "messengers" as the word implies, are Enoch and Elijah - one Gentile, one Jew who represent the redeemed of the ages. They were taken to attend to the Lord and His ministry as is seen in both testaments of the Bible.

It is in Christ where we are designated or appointed to meet with God. Christ is no random meeting place as if He could be there or somewhere else. Nor in Christ is there some random time of meeting, as if He may be in or He may not be in. Rather, He is the designated place of meeting.

In Him, God is always there, in both time and in place. If you are in Christ, you have personal access to the throne of grace, because in Christ you have been granted the mercy to again enter into God's presence.

If you wonder why the cherubim had their "wings" raised, it is a picture of the redeemed, gazing at the sight of Christ's work and raising their arms high in victory. In our white garments of purity it will be ten thousand times ten thousand wings as we hail the matchless King of Glory and shout "Hallelujah! Christ has prevailed!" If you have never called on Christ as Your Savior, *why not!* Do it today.

**Closing Verse:** "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. <sup>2</sup> And He Himself is the propitiation (hilasmos) for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." 1 John 2:1, 2

Next Week: Revelation 21:5 *It's a lot nicer than the land of Sweden* (Return to Eden) (Resurrection Day 2016)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **A Place Where Mercy is Found**

And they shall make an ark of acacia wood  
Two and a half cubits its length shall be  
A cubit and a half its width, this is understood  
And a cubit and a half its height, you see

And you shall overlay it with pure gold  
Inside and out you shall it overlay  
And shall make on it a molding of gold all around  
So shall it be done, I do say

You shall cast for it four rings of gold

And in its four corners shall they be applied  
Two rings shall be on one side, as I have told  
And two rings on the other side

And you shall make poles of acacia wood  
And overlay them with gold, let it be understood

You shall put the poles  
Into the rings of the ark on each side  
That the ark may be carried by them  
In this you shall certainly abide

The poles shall be in the rings of the ark  
They shall not be taken from it, it is true  
And you shall put into the ark  
The Testimony which I will give you

You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold  
Two and a half cubits shall its length be  
And a cubit and a half its width  
Such are its dimensions you see

And you shall make two cherubim of gold  
Of hammered work them you shall make

At the two ends of the mercy seat  
Not a single detail shall you forsake

Make one cherub at one end  
And the other cherub at the other end, to make it complete  
You shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it  
Of one piece with the mercy seat

And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above  
Covering the mercy seat with their wings, you see  
And they shall face one another  
The faces of the cherubim toward the mercy seat shall be

You shall put the mercy seat  
On top of the ark, this you shall do  
And in the ark you shall put the Testimony  
That I will give you

And there I will meet with you  
And I will speak with you  
From above the mercy seat, so I will do  
From between the cherubim two

Which are on the ark of the Testimony

About everything which I will give you  
In commandment to the children of Israel  
All the things they are to do

O God, how marvelous are You in all ways  
For giving the true Ark of the testimony to us  
And so forever, yes even through eternal days  
We can fellowship with You, through our Lord Jesus

All of these pictures from Israel's past  
Have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ our Lord  
And through Him and His work we are reconciled at last  
Yes, through Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word

Praises, yes praises we shall eternally sing to You, O God  
And forever in Your marvelous light, golden streets we shall trod

Hallelujah and Amen...