

*(Exod. 25:10-22)* - From *Exodus 25* to *Exodus 30*, God gave Moses specific instructions on making the Tabernacle, with its furnishings, and the elements of the priesthood, required for Israel to worship God in a temporal and ceremonial way. Every part of the Tabernacle, all materials and all elements were types and pictures that foreshadowed the glorious Person and finished redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ to save His people from their sins. In these elements and the service of the priests through the blood of particular animal sacrifices, God set forth the Messiah whom He would send into the world to redeem His people by His blood, and whom He had justified by grace based on the righteousness of God imputed to them. We can read of this in *Hebrews 9:1-10*. The “*time of reformation*” is that time God had appointed for Christ to come into the world and do His great work of redemption by His obedience unto death as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God’s elect. That was a time of great change, from the Old Covenant law with its tabernacle and its priesthood to the New Covenant wherein all the types and pictures were abolished by way of fulfillment in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ (*Heb. 9:11-14*). Consider how the following elements in the tabernacle pictured Christ.

Aaron, Moses’s brother, was the first high priest of Israel. There was only one high priest at a time. All the other high priests were one man, descendants of Aaron, in each generation. The high priest was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, our one and only eternal great High Priest. All other priests who served the tabernacle were descendants of Levi. They pictured all sinners saved by grace who have been made priests by the blood of Christ. The Bronze (Brazen) Altar and the animal sacrifices were types of Christ our Substitute and Sacrifice. The Golden Laver was a type of Christ our cleansing and regeneration. The Candlestick was a type of Christ the Light of the World. The Table of Shewbread was a type of Christ the Bread of Life. The Incense Altar was a type of Christ our Intercessor and Advocate.

The tabernacle was constructed according to God’s plans given to Moses, and it was constructed mainly to house the Ark of the Covenant. This ark was a box made of wood and covered with gold. The wood pictured Christ’s humanity and the gold pictured His deity - one Person with two distinct natures, God manifest in the flesh. The ark was to contain the tables of the law given by God to Moses. The main object on this Ark was the MERCY-SEAT. This was a lid also made of wood and covered with gold, again, picturing the two natures of Christ as both God and man in one Person. Upon this lid there were the figures of two cherubims (angelic creatures first mentioned in *Genesis 3:24* and involved in the worship and praise of God). These cherubim were placed on either end of the mercy-seat with their wings stretched towards each other covering the mercy-seat, and their faces looking downward towards the mercy-seat. They pictured God’s messengers (preachers) who continually look and point to Christ, the one mercy-seat. The Ark with the mercy-seat was placed in the inner, central chamber of the Tabernacle which was known as the Holy of Holies, or the Holiest of all. The Lord God said -

*“And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel” (Exodus 25:22).*

The real significance of the Ark of the Covenant was what took place involving the mercy-seat. The term “mercy-seat” comes from a Hebrew word meaning “to cover, placate, appease, cleanse, cancel, or make atonement for.” It was here that the high priest, only once a year (*Leviticus 16*), entered the Holy of Holies where the Ark was kept and atoned for

his own sins and the sins of the Israelites. The high priest sprinkled the blood of the animal sacrificed on the brazen altar onto the mercy-seat to appease the wrath and anger of God for sins committed. This was the only place in the world where this atonement could take place, and this is where the glory of the Lord was revealed in His highest and greatest manifestation (the shekinah glory of God). This is where God revealed Himself as both a just God and a Savior based on the blood of sacrifice to atone for the sins of Israel.

This mercy-seat was a symbolic foreshadowing of the ultimate sacrifice for all the sins of God's chosen people (spiritual Israel) by the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross for the remission of sins. What was merely a ceremonial, temporal, and typical atonement for the physical nation of Israel typified the spiritual, eternal, and final satisfaction of God's justice revealed and established in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of those whom God had chosen and given to Him before the foundation of the world. Christ, the true believer's mercy-seat, accomplished the righteousness that reconciled God to sinners and sinners to God (*2 Cor. 5:19-21*).

The Apostle Paul, a former Pharisee and one familiar with the Old Testament, knew this quite well when he wrote about Christ being the propitiation for sin in *Romans 3:24-26* - "*Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood.*" The purpose of this great work was (and is) "*to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.*" "*Propitiation*" means complete satisfaction to God's justice which guarantees the salvation and eternal life of all for whom Christ, our great high priest, our sacrifice, our mercy-seat, died and arose again.

Just as there was only one place for atonement of sins in the Old Testament, the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant, so there is also only one place for reconciliation in the New Testament - the cross of Jesus Christ. As New Testament Christians, we do not look to that physical Ark, that physical sacrifice, or that physical mercy-seat. We look to and rest in the Lord Jesus Christ and the righteousness He accomplished in His obedience unto death and which God has imputed to us. Christ as our one and only mercy-seat "*is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world*" (God's elect all over the world from every nation) (*1 John 2:1-2; cf. 1 John 4:10*). We dare not approach God without Christ, our mercy-seat. To do so is certain death, but to come to God in Christ is the assurance of sweet communion, fellowship, and blessings from God.

In *Luke 18:9-14*, the Lord told a self-righteous and unbelieving group of people of two men, one a Pharisee and the other a publican. The Pharisee prayed to God thanking Him for all that God had enabled him to do as the ground of his justification before God. There was no confession of sin and no mention of his need of a righteousness that he could not produce or to which he could not contribute. There was no mention of salvation and justification based on Christ's righteousness imputed and received by God-given faith. The publican, however, spoke the following - "*And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner*" (*Luke 18:13*). The term "*be merciful*" is the Greek term that means "*be propitious,*" showing how this sinful man saw his need of God's grace through the blood of sacrifice sprinkled on the mercy-seat, which is Christ. The same word is translated "*to make reconciliation*" in *Hebrews 2:17*. The Lord said of this publican - "*I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*" (*Luke 18:14*). To be "*justified*" before God means to be forgiven of all sins based on a just ground, and to be declared righteous in God's sight based on a just ground. This just ground was typified in the blood sprinkled on the mercy-seat, and the type was completely fulfilled in and by the Lord Jesus Christ our eternal Mercy-Seat.