

The Ark and the Mercy Seat

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[0 : 00] Have you heard of the ark? Who's heard of the ark? Most of you, most of everyone has heard about the ark.

! What do we think of Noah's ark? Notice only eight people were saved on the whole planet. Eight. Eight were saved, saved, in this ark.

It carried them to safety. It carried them safely through the great flood. But friends, there's more than one ark. Here's another ark. See, Exodus 2 verse 3. There's Noah's ark and there's Moses' ark.

Heard of that one? Moses had an ark. In Exodus 2 verse 3, Jochebed, his mother, could no longer hide him. He's a little babe now. She took him an ark of bulrushes and daubed it with slime and with pitch and put the child therein.

And she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. Moses' mother, Jochebed, took Moses and put him in an ark, a vessel, a container made from bulrushes.

[1 : 47] Notice Moses was saved by this ark, wasn't he? He was saved.

Notice Moses was saved by this ark, wasn't he? He was saved. As the Lord enabled the princess to find the ark and to take Moses into safety.

Moses was saved by the ark. And then there's a third ark. A third ark. Well, there's Moses in the ark. And then we see a third ark in Exodus 25, 26.

It tells us about the ark of the covenant. In Exodus 26 verse 34, we read about, this is some representation of it. Exodus 26, 34 tells us how, Thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place.

Now this is the ark that we want to talk about just now. The ark that I want us to take some time to have a look at. The ark of the covenant. This was the key piece of furniture in the tabernacle.

[3 : 07] And it bore the testimony to the saving power of God. The ark of the testimony, as it's also called, the ark of the covenant. And all of these arks that we see, Noah's ark, Moses' ark, the ark of the testimony, the ark of the covenant, as it is also known as, bears testimony, doesn't it?

To the saving power of God. God's saving, God's gracious saving. All of these arks have to do with God's saving. And we think of God's saving right now.

His gracious work of saving us. The gracious work of Saviour and Lord. It's in the ark that we find his saving, the saving grace of God. And the ark for us today, really as we look back, is Christ, isn't it?

Christ is what was pictured. Christ in Noah's ark. Christ in Moses' ark. Christ in the ark of the covenant. And there's many signs and symbols we find as we learn from all these things. But now let's just consider the ark of the covenant for a time.

And on top of the ark was what's called the mercy seat. On top of the ark was this mercy seat. And it says in Exodus 25, 22, There will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat.

[4 : 25] You can see as it's pictured here, this mercy seat was like the lid. And above the lid were these two representations of angels called cherubim.

And they were on top of the ark. And in Exodus 25, 22, God says that, I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee. It was at this very place, at the mercy seat, that God says he meets with his people.

He says, I will meet with thee. I will meet with thee. I love this, don't you? Amen. That not just, when we fellowship together, it's not just to have a meeting.

You know, we can have a list of meetings to go to, but what matters most, what matters essentially, is not just to have a meeting, but to meet with God. Amen.

That's what we're here for. We're not here to have a meeting. We're here to meet with him. To meet with him. To meet with God. And God's people. And this was the mercy seat here. The place where

we commune with God.

[5 : 25] Don't you want to commune with God? To have one-to-one communion. You and God in union, combining, communing together as one.

And this tabernacle, as it's pictured here, it had two rooms. Essentially, two rooms in that tent, the tent of meeting. And the first room was the holy place, the outside of it.

And inside the holy place was a second room, the holy of holies, the most holy. And in this tent, which was surrounded by an encampment of many thousands and thousands of God's people, here was the centre point, the holy of holies.

And in this holy of holies, the most holy was the Ark of the Covenant, the Ark. And, you know, I've got my, I've done some measurements here. I have my tape measure somewhere.

And I've, here it is. And I've done some measurements now just to help you to understand the size of the Ark, okay? So here we go. 23 inches wide.

[6 : 37] 23 inches wide. 23 inches high. 39 inches long. 39. Now, it just happened to, I checked that table over there, this table over here, and it's just about the right dimensions.

It's kind of funny, isn't it? 39 inches long. And 23 inches high. 23 inches wide. That just gives you a picture. In this colossal gathering, the encampment of the people of Israel, in this enclosure, and then in this tent, and then in this most holy place, is this little Ark.

A little container. And it was covered inside and out on all sides with gold. So this was not, it's not anything huge. It's quite simple and small, really, isn't it?

And this chest was mounted on four legs. It had four rings of gold for two gold-covered poles to carry it.

And this Ark was a symbol that God was present with his people. He says, there I will meet with thee. A symbol God was present. And we want to meet with God here today, don't we?

[7 : 52] We don't have the pillar of fire and the cloud of glory, but we have God's presence here, in and amongst his own beloved children.

And the Ark was a picture of that which was to come. Now, we see, as represented here, the lid was the mercy seat. And inside the Ark were some special signs and objects.

For example, the Ten Commandments was there that expressed the obligations of the chosen people of God. And who is the one and only person who has fulfilled the law?

Christ, our Lord. He is the only one who's ever lived up to the demands of the law. Inside the Ark too was a pot of manna, just this container of the manna, which was God's provision for the children of Israel through their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness till they enter the promised land.

The manna. What does the manna speak of? Christ is the bread of life. And he meets our need.

And then also a third item in the Ark under the mercy seat, the lid, was Aaron's rod that budded.

[9 : 09] It happened at the revolt of the people of God against Moses and Aaron in Numbers 17.

Aaron's rod brought forth buds and it blossomed and it yielded almonds as a testimony against the rebels.

And the dead rod of the almond wood came to life just as Christ came to life out of the tomb. And he bears life and fruit today. So now about the mercy seat.

And we have got a little video here that should, we'll just, Jeff would you mind just turning the light off? We'll just come back to that in a moment. I'd like to play it probably a couple of times just while I talk, just to give you a kind of, just a visual, I want to just have a visual representation of it.

Just a representation of what it would have looked like, this tabernacle, the tabernacle of Moses.

You had the outer curtain, the people were camped around in these little tents. And then you walked through the door into the place of the tabernacle.

[10 : 19] You had the altar of, the brazen altar where the blood was sprinkled. You had the laver that represented the washing as the priest would then come to the tabernacle itself, to the actual tent of meeting.

And that was covered with various curtains. And all of these have a meaning which we can't elaborate on just now because I'm just going to focus on that one piece of furniture just today, just briefly.

You see, they entered into the holy place and there you would see the golden lamp stand, the menorah. You'd see the showbread, the table of showbread.

And then the altar of incense with the representation of prayers wafting up into the heavenlies, the prayers. And then you'd go to the Ark of the Covenant, the mercy seat was taken off and then inside

were those items.

So I might just play that one more time while I just chat a little bit further with you. It's good to just get a visual representation of these things. Now, thinking about the mercy seat, it was a solid slab of gold, pure gold.

[11 : 30] It was the cover placed on the Ark and it signified a covering of a removal of sins by means of sacrifice. Because on that mercy seat, the blood was spilled.

It was poured out. And on that day of atonement, only one person could enter in. Only one single person, the priest, the high priest, but entering through the veil into the holy of holies and sprinkled there the blood of the sacrifice on the mercy seat, Leviticus 16.

And it foretells for us the time when the great high priest, our great high priest, would enter in the veil and make atonement for our sins.

And the blood of the offering was sprinkled upon the mercy seat. Here is where justice and mercy meet, at the mercy seat. It was God's throne here on the earth. And in the midst of God's chosen people, it was the throne of his grace.

It was the throne of the Holy Spirit, where God showed his presence and met man in his grace.

Think of that mercy seat, that there the holiness and justice of God met with his mercy. And it's the same today, isn't it, as we reflect on Calvary?

[12 : 39] We reflect on the mercy seat. The glory was there. God's glory dwelt here. And we are granted access here. Not just one, not just one high priest, but every believer can now enter in.

We can enter in here. Amen? There's washing. There's a clearing of guilt here. The blood is here. Justification. Sanctification. And guilty sinner, you can be saved.

Glory to God. Isn't that good news? That's the best news ever, isn't it? That anyone can come if they were but come by the blood. Meet God.

You can go right on in. And the veil is open. It's been torn from top to bottom by the hand of God. God's throne of mercy, his grace is here. His mercy seat, the throne of God, is a blood sprinkled throne.

And there's no other way to the holy, to this holy God. But friends today, the sinful man can meet him right here at the mercy seat and find mercy.

[13 : 46] That's glad news. Amen? And we can be reconciled to God. You can know him today. God was satisfied with the substitutionary sacrifice for sin.

Someone had to be our substitute. A perfect one. The perfect one. No one else could do. And at the cross, God dealt with our sin. He judged it there.

God meets us in Christ. Really today, Christ is our mercy seat. We see that in Romans 3, 24 through 25. It talks about the propitiation.

In other words, he turns away God's anger. He turns away God's wrath against us by his pure and holy blood. There's no other way for the turning away of the wrath of God against my sin, your sin. Only one can be that sacrifice that satisfies the offended justice of the almighty God. And the righteous demands of God were met there at the cross.

[14 : 43] And it was pictured here for us in, as we see, the mercy seat. That ultimately was fulfilled. In Hebrews 9, verse 12, it tells us how. By his own blood, he entered in.

This great high priest, the perfect high priest, the one and only great high priest, the almighty God in the person of our saviour Christ, Jesus. He entered in himself.

And by his own blood, he entered in, into the holy place and obtained eternal redemption for us.

And how does God see us now? When you go into his presence, does he see you as a dirty, foul, stinking sinner?

No, he sees you. He sees the blood of Jesus. He sees the blood of Jesus. Apply the blood. Know the blood is covering you. Know Jesus has saved you.

Know that you're caught on him. The Lord Jesus is the only way to escape the righteous wrath of God. And friends, it tells us that is God's love. Not that we love God, but that he loved us.

[15 : 45] And he sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. It's the same word propitiation is mercy seat. He became the very mercy seat.

He became the very place where the blood was outpoured. The very place where we can meet with God. The very place where the glory of God is. And he turned his own wrath.

God turned his own wrath against us, away from us, by his own blood. And he's made a perfect covering now of our sins on his mercy seat.

Of course, today we don't have a tabernacle or as the ark was later taken to a temple. We don't have the ark of the covenant today. It's a mystery where it is, if it is still on this earth somewhere. But we know, ultimately it does talk about the ark of the covenant in heaven. But that's an aside. But the point is what it pictures. It pictures the perfect provision if we will but receive it.

[16:44] And in 2 Corinthians 5.21 it reads that he has made him to be sin for us. Him who knew no sin. That we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

That's a wonderful blessed truth you can know, personally know. That a righteous and holy God can see the blood of Jesus has made atonement for your sin.

And he sees the believer clothed in the righteousness of Christ. And God invites you and me to come. He says, let us come.

Let us come. Therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace. That we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. We've seen the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, the holy place, the most holy.

We enter right in to the most holy place, the holy of holies. And there we see the ark of the covenant. And on top of the ark we see the lid that covered this chest of wood, covered with gold.

[17:52] The mercy seat. That there the blood was sprinkled by the high priest. But for us it all pictures Christ. It's Christ. It's Christ from the minute you walk in the gate of the tent.

The minute you walk in that enclosure of the tent of meeting. The gate, the veil, the laver, the sacrifice, the lampstand, the showbread, the altar of incense, the curtains.

It all speaks of Christ. It speaks of Christ. It speaks of him. And the great high priest who himself has redeemed us. And friends, at the communion time we again are reflecting on these truths.

These eternal truths. These blessed truths. And so every believer can come boldly. There's no holding you back. If you would but trust him you can come. Run to him.

Run to that throne this morning. You know, as it were. And we can, and this is not the communion service per se. This is at any time. Can't we come? We can come at any time and any place to the very throne of grace.

[19:02] It's not in some physical place. It's in, it's in, in view for us as believers. We could come and ask him for his mercy and find it. Find his grace today.

I'm going to ask Brother David Skinner, if you could, and Peter Guttridge to wait on us. And so the Bible tells us that it was in the same night that Jesus, our Lord, was betrayed.

That he took that bread. He met with the disciples and he took that bread. He took that cup. And so we want to be reminded again of that precious time where he laid down his life for us.

As was pictured in the Ark of the Covenant. As was pictured at the mercy seat. As was pictured at the Lord's table of the upper room. As was pictured and as is pictured now in this bread and in this cup.

Speaks of his life, of his body, the bread. It speaks of his blood outpoured, shed for us the cup of the grape, the fruit of the vine.

[20:04] And friends, let's hold together. And prayerfully the Bible invites us to come. It urges us to come. And this invitation is extended now to us to come.

And this is a reflection of that spiritual truth that each of us can know. Friends, I urge you this morning. The Bible says not to take lightly, carelessly, unheeding.

Yet come prayerfully. Come humbly. Come gladly. Come repentant. Come trusting. Come unto Christ this morning.

Know him. You might say, I don't understand this. I'm not even sure. Just trust him. Simple faith. And I was talking with someone lately as we were doing some door knocking.

And he was saying words to the effect that he's just a bit of a sceptic, but he kind of believes. I said, well, you sound a bit like the man in the Bible that says, I believe.

[21:04] Help them on unbelief. You know, we've all got a degree of, oh, this stuff I don't, I can't get my head around. There's things in this word of God, this Bible that I don't fully fathom and may never do until I see him.

You know, help my unbelief. But I believe. I believe. Help my unbelief, Lord. Help me to overcome that which I don't understand. Help me to get through that mystery of life that it is sometimes that I can break through the barrier of my unbelief.

That I can see, yes, he died for me. I don't understand it all. I can't explain it all or plumb the depths and the riches of it all. But I know I believe. I do believe.

I know I believe. If you do believe that Jesus has come, he's died on the cross. If you've acknowledged, he has done so, that you've trusted him for yourself to save you and you're saved by the ark.

Just as Noah and his family, they entered into the ark. They didn't have to, as it were, kick the tires and make sure it wasn't going to fail them because that ark would never fail them.

[22 : 17] Moses' ark, his mother just put him in there. And he trusted. He trusted the ark for his safety, for his safekeeping. And likewise, too, the saving of God is reflected in the ark of the covenant.

It's God's mercy and grace. It's his throne of grace. It's where he meets and he communes with his own beloved people. And we can meet and commune with him right now by faith.

And we can't enter into a physical structure, but we can enter in spiritually to enter into his very throne room, to know even the holy of holies is torn wide open.

There's nothing holding us back. We don't have to qualify by virtue of tribe, of birth, of being one of the Jews, that even we as Gentiles can enter in.

That's amazing, isn't it? There's nothing that can deter you from entering in to that grace of God.

Nothing can stop you from answering in this morning other than your unbelief.

[23 : 27] Trust him now. His mercies are new every morning, aren't they? New every morning. And we can come unto the mercy seat. Come boldly to that throne of grace.

Glory to God. Let's go to our song.