

# The King Who Reigns from the Mercy Seat

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, everyone. It's good to worship with you. Please turn with me in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 25. And if you can keep your finger there and turn also to Exodus 37, I'm going to read from two places.

Exodus 25, 10 to 22, giving us instructions about the construction of the ark and the mercy seat, and then Exodus 37, 1 to 9, describing the fulfillment of those instructions and the actual building of it.

And for those of you who don't know me, my name is Sean. I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church, and it's my joy to preach God's Word to you this morning. If you don't have a Bible, just raise your hand.

We'll bring one over to you that you can use. If not, let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Heavenly Father, thank you for inviting us to draw near to you.

Promising that when we do, that you will draw near to us. We draw near to you now, inclining our hearts, our ears to your Word.

[ 1 : 12 ] Draw near to us in speaking, addressing us from your Word. Lord, make us stand in awe of you, your holiness, your glory.

But also strike us in you with wonder of your mercy. That it's because of what Jesus has done that we can approach you boldly, with faith, with confidence, knowing that we will receive mercy to help us in our time of need.

Help us now, Lord. We need your mercy. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you would please stand for the reading of God's Word from Exodus 25, verses 10 to 22.

They shall make an ark of acacia wood. Two cubits and a half shall be its length, a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height.

You shall overlay it with pure gold. Inside and outside shall you overlay it, and you shall make on it a molding of gold around it. You shall cast four rings of gold for it and put them on its four feet, two rings on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it.

[ 2 : 47 ] You shall make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. And you shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry the ark by them. The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark.

They shall not be taken from it. And you shall put into the ark the testimony that I shall give you. You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold.

Two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth. And you shall make two cherubim of gold. Of hammered work shall you make them on the two ends of the mercy seat.

Make one cherub on the one end and one cherub on the other end. Of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends. The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another.

Toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you.

[ 3 : 53 ] There I will meet with you. And from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in a commandment for the people of Israel.

Skipping forward to Exodus 37, verses one to nine. Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood. Two cubits and a half was its length.

A cubit and a half its breadth. And a cubit and a half its height. And he overlaid it with pure gold inside and outside. And made a molding of gold around it. And he cast for it four rings of gold for its four feet.

Two rings on its one side and two rings on its other side. And he made poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold. And put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry the ark.

And he made a mercy seat of pure gold. Two cubits and a half was its length. And a cubit and a half its breadth. And he made two cherubim of gold. He made them of hammered work on the two ends of the mercy seat.

[ 4 : 59 ] One cherub on the one end and one cherub on the other end. Of one piece with the mercy seat, he made the cherubim on its two ends. The cherubim spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, with their faces one to another.

Toward the mercy seat were the faces of the cherubim. This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated this time. Even some people who don't know anything about the Old Testament and the tabernacle still know something about the ark of the covenant, mainly because of the 1981 Harrison Ford movie, Indiana Jones, and the Raiders of the Lost Ark.

I think I was talking to Aubrey about this a couple weeks ago and talking about what's inaccurate and accurate in the portrayal in the movie. And in the movie, the United States government gets wind of the fact that the Nazis are trying to find the Lost Ark to aid them in their conquest.

So they hire the archaeologist and adventurer, Indiana Jones, to find it and secure it before the Nazis do. And there's a fascinating dialogue there where an army major asks Indiana Jones what the ark looked like.

And Indiana Jones shows him a drawing of it where the Jews are in battle and the ark is in their midst and there's light, some kind of power of God emanating from the ark and devastating their enemies.

[ 6 : 26 ] And then the major looks at the drawing and then responds, I'm beginning to understand Hitler's interest in this. And Marcus Brody, a fellow archaeologist and colleague of Indiana Jones, adds this, oh yes, the Bible speaks of the ark leveling mountains and laying waste to entire regions.

An army which carries the ark before it is invincible. Well, the Bible never speaks of the ark leveling mountains and it never suggests that an army that carries the ark before it is invincible.

In fact, it records a specific instance in 1 Samuel 4 when the Israelites carry the ark into war thinking that it will save them, but because they had been unfaithful to God, they lose because God had left them.

God's not fighting on their behalf and the ark is actually captured by the Philistines. So in contrast to this portrayal, the ark is not something, it's not a talisman or a lucky charm or an invincible weapon.

Rather, it's an artifact that represents God's rule and God's presence among his own people. To go before the ark of the covenant, therefore, is to go into the very presence of the living God.

[ 7 : 46 ] This passage, instructions about the ark is intended to teach us that we can confidently draw near to the throne of God and receive mercy and we're going to first learn about that by looking at the ark of the testimony and then we're going to look at the mercy seat.

So let's look at the ark first. It's the first item. Did the picture of the ark already show on there? Not yet? Okay. The ark is the first item mentioned in the blueprint of chapters 25 to 31 and it's the first thing that is built because it's the most important item in the entire tabernacle structures.

This is an artist's rendering of the ark. The artist took some creative license because he or she went way overboard with the molding decorations.

It doesn't describe any of that in the Bible. But other than that, it's pretty accurate. It'd be a little smaller than that table. It says in Exodus 25, 10, it says, they shall make an ark of acacia wood.

Two cubits and a half shall be its length, a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height. Historically, people all over the world have used various human body parts to measure things, to measure their length.

[ 9 : 00 ] For example, a foot, right, which comes from the length of a typical male foot, was used in Greek, Roman, Chinese, and French and English systems. A cubit is similar and refers to the length from a person's elbow to the tip of his middle finger.

And so it's typically about 18 inches. So the cubit was the limit of measurement that was preferred over the foot in places like Egypt, India, and Mesopotamia, and of course we see in Israel.

So the ark then is a rectangular wooden chest made of hard acacia wood. It's 2.25 feet in width and height and 3.75 in length.

So width and height and 3.75 feet in length. But that's not all. A simple wooden chest would not be fitting for the most holy place inside the tabernacle. So it says in verse 11 that the whole thing is overlaid with pure gold, both on the inside and on the outside.

And a decorative molding of gold is added around it. But what exactly is the ark? The English word ark comes from the Latin word arca, which means a box or a chest.

[ 10 : 15 ] So it's a chest that's intended to hold something, store something, and protect something inside it. But what exactly is it intended to store? In verse 16 and 21, it says this, God says that they are to put the testimony inside the ark.

This is a reference to the Ten Commandments that God himself has written on the tablets of stone with his fingers, which he has promised to give to Moses earlier in 24.12. Later on in Exodus 31.18, he will actually give Moses these tablets to put inside the ark after it is constructed, after finishing his instructions to Moses.

It says there that God gave to Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone written with the finger of God. We know that what's written on the stone tablets is the Ten Commandments from Deuteronomy 4.13.

According to Hebrews 9.4, there were a couple other items that were later stored inside the ark. For example, the gold urn holding a sample of the manna to remind Israelites of how God provided for them in the wilderness.

And also a staff of Aaron that budded in Numbers 17 with almond blossoms as a demonstration of God choosing the Levites, the tribe of Levi, and the sons of Aaron in particular to be priests.

[ 11 : 32 ] So those two items are also in there. But the central and most important item inside the ark was the tablets of the testimony, the Ten Commandments. That's why the ark is called the Ark of the Testimony.

And it's also sometimes called the Ark of the Covenant because it contains the covenant documents, the terms agreement, the Ten Commandments between Yahweh and his people.

In the ancient Near East, it was customary for people who are making the suzerain-vassal treaty, suzerain being the lord, the vassal being the subject, the lesser king or ruler, that each party would receive a copy of the terms of agreement, the terms of the covenant.

And they would keep it as a reminder for the lord, the suzerain lord, of the reminder of the obligation to protect his subject, to provide for his subject, and for the vassal, as a reminder for him to obey his suzerain lord, and to be faithful to him, to pledge allegiance to him.

It's kind of like the way we have merchant receipts and customer receipts when you go to restaurants, so that both parties have proof of the transaction or the agreement.

[ 12 : 45 ] So in this case here, the book of the covenant, which Moses wrote down on the scroll in Exodus 20, it contains Exodus 20, 22, to 23, 33. It's the specific application of the Ten Commandments for the Israelites to follow.

That is the people's copy. That's the Israelite copy. Now, the Ten Commandments is the master copy, inscribed permanently in stone by the finger of God, and that's kept inside the ark of the testimony as a witness, a testimony between God and his people of their covenant relationship.

This teaches us something very important about God and his relationship with us. The most sacred artifact of the Old Testament, worship and piety, that's the ark, it contains within it not treasures, not jewels, not a statue, not an idol, not bones or other relics of some special individual, but the word of God.

God governs his people from his word, through his word. It's in the keeping of his word that we bear witness to the fact that we are his people.

That's why Jesus says in John 14, over and over again, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him.

[ 14 : 19 ] Do you want to commune with God? Do you want God to make his home with you and to indwell you by his Holy Spirit? Then pledge your allegiance to Jesus and live according to his word.

Truth, the true faith, genuine faith is always borne out by love. Love for God, love for his people. And the proof of your love for God is in the keeping of God's word.

It's like a ring that a husband and wife wear. Everywhere they go, it attests to the fact that they have a covenant relationship with someone.

They belong to someone else already. And it's, how do people in the world know that we belong to someone, that we have a Lord, that we serve God? How do people know that it's by the keeping of his word?

That's our testimony and our witness to the world that we are his people. So when you refuse to swear or use crude words, vulgar language, refrain from partaking in the gossip and slander of your coworkers, you are testifying by your obedience that the Lord is my God.

[ 15 : 30 ] When you don't cheat on your tests and you honestly fill out your reading reports in school, you are testifying, bearing witness by your obedience that the Lord is my God.

When you faithfully gather with the people of God, even when you are swamped with work and weary and tired, you're testifying to the world bearing witness that the Lord is your God.

God's love and when we love our Christian brothers and sisters, even when they don't look like us or talk like us, even when they don't share our recreational interests or our culinary preferences, simply because God tells us that they are our brothers and sisters in Christ, we are testifying by our obedience that the Lord is my God.

And of course, when we evangelize, when we share the gospel with others, we're sharing, we're testifying by not only our words, not only our deeds, but also by our words that the Lord is my God.

That's why obedience is so important. Obedience is not merely a legal concern. God's not just a judge or a lawyer saying, well, this is the law so you just got to do it. No, it's profoundly relational.

[ 16 : 52 ] It's a mark that we belong to God. That's how we testify to our relationship, our covenant with God. So the ark is a chest that contains the tablets of the testimony, but it serves another very important function.

First Chronicles 28, two, when King David is expressing his desire to build a temple for God, he says this, I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord and for the footstool of our God.

So here, David refers to the ark and the footstool as distinct items. So probably, the mercy seat is what he's referring to when he says the footstool, which we'll get to later.

That's more precisely the footstool in that that's where Yahweh's feet figuratively touch. But however, the mercy seat, because it functions as the lid of the ark, they're really two pieces of a single furniture.

And that's why the ark is sometimes itself referred to, the whole thing is referred to as the footstool for the Lord. So for example, in Psalm 132, it recalls how David made preparations for the building of the temple and then how he brought the ark over from the fields of Jar, which is another name for Kiriath-Jerim, the city.

[ 18 : 10 ] That was the temporary residing place of the ark and David brought that in from there to Jerusalem. So Psalm 132 recounts that journey and it quotes Solomon's prayer from 2 Chronicles 6, 40, 42 when Solomon was dedicating the temple and it says this, Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah, we found it in the fields of Jar, Kiriath-Jerim.

Let us go to his dwelling place, let us worship at his footstool. Arise, O Lord, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. So the footstool and the ark of his might are in parallel construction.

The ark is being referred to as the footstool of God. So that's why it says in Psalm 99, verse 5, Exalt the Lord our God, worship at his footstool. So then the ark together with the mercy seat function as the resting place for God's feet, his footstool.

That's why the Lord calls the sanctuary the place of my feet in Isaiah 60, verse 13. It's because the Lord's footstool is upon the earth in the form of the ark that he says in Isaiah 66, verse 1, Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool.

By extension, the whole earth where God has set his feet is his footstool. So the fact that the ark and the mercy seat compose God's footstool tells us something important about God.

[ 19 : 36 ] The footstool is not a glorious piece of furniture. I bet no one has gilded footstools in your homes. It's not a clean bed to lie down on nor is it a stately armchair to sit on.

It's where you rest your feet. It's not a furniture that you invest a lot of money in and yet the ark of God is overlaid with gold and its lid, the mercy seat, is made entirely of pure gold.

Even where God puts his feet is holy. The whole earth, the magnificent, beautiful creation, the Grand Canyon, the Redwood Forest, all that grandeur just got his footstool.

that's how holy and glorious God is. And that's why it says in verse 12, you shall cast four rings of gold for it and put them on its four feet.

The ark has golden rings on its four feet so that you can put poles also overlaid with gold through those rings and people can carry the ark using those poles.

[ 20 : 58 ] the whole idea behind that is that the ark should never be touched because it is so holy. You have to carry it with golden poles.

And that's amazing because remember this is a portable structure, tabernacle, so the Israelite would often have to encamp, decamp, carry the tabernacle around, carry the ark of God around, but they were only allowed to carry the ark after the glory of God in the form of his cloud glory had departed from the tabernacle.

Even after the glory, the cloud glory has departed from the tabernacle, they're not allowed to touch the ark. They have to carry it in golden poles. Now, in 2 Samuel 6, it illustrates the mortal peril of disobeying this command.

Some of you guys know where I'm going. There, the Israelites are carrying the ark of God into Jerusalem, but it says that they carried the ark of God on a new cart. Driven by oxen. That's their first mistake.

The people and not animals were supposed to carry the ark. It's the people who are servants of the Lord. And it's specifically, not anyone, it specifically had to be the Levites, the priestly tribe that had to carry the ark.

[ 22 : 15 ] But here they have these lowly oxen driving the ark. Sure enough, one poor decision leads to another. As the oxen are drawing the cart, they stumble at one point so that Uzzah, who was accompanying the ark, has to put out his hand to touch the ark of God and take hold of it in order to stabilize it.

That was a grave mistake. Because it says that the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah and God struck him down there because of his error and he died there beside the ark of God.

Uzzah treed the footstool of God lightly as if it were a common piece of furniture that you can just grab hold of. And in doing so, he treated the Lord God himself with contempt.

That's how holy and glorious God is. I pray that we can recover a sense of the holiness of God by looking at the care that they took to treat his footstool with such honor.

We sometimes treat human managers, human professors, human celebrities with more reverence and awe than we do the Lord Almighty.

[ 23 : 35 ] are you more concerned about offending sinful men or about offending the holy God?

That the ark is merely God's footstool shows just how holy God is. But the ark also teaches us something else. It teaches us something about ourselves.

I think it's generally acknowledged that feet are gross. It's less of a stigma here in the West, but most people around the world would not sit at someone's feet unless they have to because they'd consider that humiliating.

You can see this in James 2, 2-4, which warns against showing partiality to the wealthy at a church gathering. It says this, For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, you sit here in a good place while you say to the poor man, you stand over there or sit down at my feet.

Have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? To tell people to sit at your feet is to treat them as your inferior.

[ 24 : 58 ] We have a similar expression in English. When you say someone walked all over me, what do you mean? You're saying that they treated you like they're beneath you, like you're underneath their feet.

Feet are often sweaty and smelly, right, because the palms of our hands and the soles of our feet have the most sweat glands per square centimeter or inch, whatever, you know, and so you sweat a lot in your palms and in your soles.

And the hands at least are out in the open. They could get aired out, and we wash them very frequently throughout the day, especially nowadays, but your feet are not exposed to the open air, and you don't wash them nearly as frequently, and so it can grow fungus, and it can get infected, and it's usually smelly.

And in the hot and dry climate of the Middle East, where people wore open-toed shoes, not only did their feet get sweaty, it also got dirty, got caked with dust.

So it was even dirtier than ours. So for this reason, people in the ancient Near East, they did not voluntarily sit at anyone's feet. And that's why the footstool became a symbol of subjugation and submission.

[ 26 : 15 ] For example, Psalm 110, verse 1, has a prophecy where Yahweh, God the Father, promises the messianic king, the coming king Jesus, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.

To make your enemies your footstool is to subdue them so thoroughly under your feet so that they're completely surrendered and helplessly submitted to you.

This was a common motif in ancient Near Eastern art. Archaeologists have found many sculptures of monarchs with their feet, with their foot on their subdued enemy. So it's not surprising that one of the Hebrew words actually for footstool that's used to describe Solomon's footstool in 2 Chronicles 9 18 is derived from the Hebrew verb that means to subdue or to bring into bondage.

The footstool is in short where the king rests his feet while he's seated on his throne. His enemies have been subdued under his feet. And it's God's footstool that contains the terms of agreement of our servitude to God.

as a perennial reminder that we are his servants, his slaves. Remember the refrain of Exodus throughout chapter 7 to 10.

[ 27 : 38 ] Yahweh repeatedly said, let my people go that they may serve me. That they may not be Pharaoh's servants, but that they may be my servants.

The Lord freed the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt so that they might serve him. If the Israelites had earned their freedom by paying their Egyptian overlords for their freedom, it would be a different story.

If the Israelites had earned their freedom by fighting for themselves, going into battle against the Egyptians, that might be a different story, but that's not what happened.

The Lord God himself delivered them. The Lord God himself fought on their behalf. The Israelites received everything for free. They did nothing but obey him.

So the Israelites are not free persons with rights and entitlements. They are not free agents who can negotiate the terms of agreement with the Lord.

[ 28 : 35 ] They are slaves of Yahweh. They are subject to him and they ought to submit to him. And that's the same for us as Christians. The apostles in the New Testament refer to themselves as slaves of God or as slaves of Christ.

Christ. We are under God's authority. In Matthew 8, 5 to 13, Jesus commands the faith of the centurion, who was a military officer, who sought him out so that Jesus might heal his paralyzed servant.

And Jesus tells the centurion, okay, I'll come and heal him. And then the centurion replies this way. He says, Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word and my servant will be healed.

For I too am a man under authority with soldiers under me. And I say to one, go and he goes and to another, come and he comes and to my servant, do this and he does it.

What does the centurion mean by all of that? The centurion is saying, I am a soldier. I'm an officer in the army. I understand what it means to be subject to authority.

[ 29 : 41 ] I understand what it means to give unquestioning obedience to your superiors out of complete trust for them. I understand that. And I also have people under my charge, soldiers who will do everything I tell them to do.

If I tell them to go, they go. If I tell them to come, they come. If I tell them to jump, they ask how high. That's what it means to be under, completely under someone's authority. And he's saying, Jesus, I know you are a man with God's authority.

You don't need to come yourself to my place. Just say the word. And the paralysis will leave my servant. As subjects under God's feet, that's what it looks like for us to live in complete trust.

As servants under the perfect and absolute authority of God, it's not our place to seek concessions, to seek compromises. It's not our place to question the wisdom of God or to negotiate with God or to ignore God and do our own thing.

our posture should be simply only say the word. Only say the word, God. If God says, speak for me, then we speak whether that means we get applause or boos.

[ 31 : 01 ] If God says, suffer for me, then we suffer for him. If God says, die for me, then we die for him with honor because it would be our privilege and joy to do so because he is our Lord, because he's our God.

God says, don't we? That's the attitude that's fitting for servants of God who worship at his footstool. But if the Ark of the Testament teaches us about the holiness of God, the glory of God, the atonement cover teaches us about the mercy of God.

By the atonement cover, I'm referring to the mercy seat. Mercy seat is really a misnomer because God doesn't actually sit on top of the Ark and the mercy seat.

Let me show you from verses 18 to 20. Follow along with me. Chapter 25, verse 18 to 20 says this. You shall make two cherubim of gold, of hammered work shall you make them on the two ends of the mercy seat.

Make one cherub on the one end and one cherub on the other end. Of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends. The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings.

[ 32 : 20 ] Their faces one to another toward the mercy seat and the faces of the cherubim be. Toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. So the cherubim are made of one piece with the mercy seat and that's on its two ends of the mercy seat, but they are not the mercy seat.

A cherub is an angelic being and cherubim is the plural form of that word, cherub. In ancient Near Eastern art, the cherubim are often depicted as lion-like four-legged creatures with a human face and wings.

But scripture tells us no details besides the fact that they had wings and that they had faces, which means it's not important for us to know exactly what they look like. They are not chubby baby angels.

They're warrior guardian angels. We know that because after expelling Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden, God posts the cherubim and a flaming sword to guard the entrance of the garden so that people may not come to get access to the tree of life after having sinned against God.



The cherubim are sentinel angels, the guardians. And the way the cherubim are positioned on the mercy seat is very revealing. According to verse 20, their wings are spread side to side over the, do we have the, overshadowing the mercy seat as if they are covering or hiding something, their faces are similar.

[ 33 : 46 ] They are facing each other, but their faces are turned downward toward the mercy seat as if they're bowing before God who is seated above because they do not dare to look up at the face of God.

It says in verse 22, God says, there I will meet with you and from above the mercy seat from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you.

But he's not saying he will be under the wings of the cherubim between them. He's saying he'll be above them between them. The scriptures, throughout the scriptures, God is repeatedly described as being enthroned on or upon or above the cherubim in a lot of places.

For example, he says in first Chronicles 13 verse six, that David and all Israel went to Kirith-Jerim to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord who sits enthroned above the cherubim.

This is also consistent with many ancient Near Eastern parallels of the wings of the cherubim forming a throne for a king or a deity. So the mercy seat is not the throne, but a part of the footstool.

[ 34 : 58 ] And God is seated in the heavenly places on the heavenly hosts, the angelic beings that attend to him and serve him. That's why God says heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool.

And when Solomon is dedicating the temple with the ark and the mercy seat inside it in first King, a 30, he asked God to listen to their plea, listen to their prayers when they pray toward the temple, toward the ark and the mercy seat.

And then, but then he says he then listen in heaven, your dwelling place. And when you hear, forgive Solomon understood this. When the people pray toward the ark and the mercy seat, God hears from heaven and answers.

The ark on earth is a footstool of God, the footstool of God that is connected to the throne of God in heaven. It's the meeting place of heaven and earth.

That's why mercy seat is a misnomer. I prefer the new international versions translation, which calls it the atonement cover. That's apt for two reasons. One, you may have noticed in chapter 25 or 17 that the length and breadth of the atonement cover matches the length and breadth of the ark exactly.

[ 36 : 10 ] The height is not given because it's a flat slab of pure gold. The reason why the dimensions match the ark, it's because as verse 21 says, you're supposed to put the mercy seat on top of the ark.

So pragmatically it functions as a lid, a cover. So the atonement cover is quite appropriate. But there's a second reason why the atonement cover is accurate because the actual Hebrew word behind the translation means atonement.

That's what the mercy seat means. It's atonement. It comes from the verb that means to cover sin. It's sometimes translated propitiation, referring to the appeasing or pacifying of God's righteous wrath against sinners.

That's where we get the word, the Jewish holiday, Yom Kippur, comes from the word Kippur, which is a day of atonement. That's what the mercy seat means.

That's what the atonement cover is. Once a year on the day of atonement, the high priest would kill a bull as a sin offering and kill a bull as a sin offering for himself and kill a goat for the sin offering for the people of God, the Israelites.

[ 37 : 20 ] And then he will take the blood from both of those animals and go into the most holy place and he will sprinkle it. Where? On the atonement cover.

On the mercy seat. That's where atonement is made and that's why it's called the atonement. And this is amazing. Remember what I told you earlier that the word for Solomon's footstool in 2 Chronicles 9.18 means subjugation or domination.

That's what a footstool represents. But the footstool of Yahweh is called mercy. It's called atonement.

It's called covering for sin. A propitiation. Before he was a Protestant reformer, Martin Luther was a scrupulous Catholic monk.

He once quipped that if ever a monk got to heaven by monkery, I ought to have gotten there. But despite this, Luther had a deep soul struggle. A profoundly disturbed conscience and a spiritual angst that made him ever doubtful of his own salvation.

[ 38 : 31 ] He often despaired of salvation, knowing full well that he was a sinner at the root. At one point, Luther's mentors sent him off to seminary to get a doctorate just to distract him from his obsessive preoccupation with the state of his soul.

This is how Luther described his own state. He says, Do I live as a monk without reproach? I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience.

I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love. Yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners. And secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God and said, as if indeed it is not enough, that miserable sinners eternally lost through original sin are crushed by every kind of calamity, by the law of the Decalogue, without having God add pain to pain by the gospel and also by the gospel, threatening us with his righteousness and wrath, thus I raised with a fierce and troubled conscience.

But as he read Paul's letters in the original Greek, and as he read Augustine's interpretation of Paul's epistles, he realized that the righteousness of God is not revealed by the law, but that the righteousness of God is revealed through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

As it says in Romans 3, 21 to 26, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith.

[ 40 : 12 ] This was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance, he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

How does God demonstrate his righteousness? He had been forbearing in the past. He had passed over sins instead of punishing them as the sinners deserved.

So how can God still be righteous? Because Jesus in our place, by offering himself as a propitiation by his blood, satisfied the wrath of God. Because Jesus satisfied the justice of God by bearing the punishment and he satisfied the wrath of God by appeasing him, placating him.

So that God is both just, one who upholds justice by punishing the wicked, and he is the justifier, the one who declares the guilty sinner righteous. And Luther finally made that connection that is in the Greek translation of Exodus 25, our passage for today.

The word that is used, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word that it uses to translate the atonement cover, the mercy seat, is propitiation. Since Jesus is the propitiation by his blood, then the mercy seat, where the blood of propitiation is sprinkled, represents, and points to Jesus' ultimate sacrifice on the cross.

[ 41 : 44 ] God said, there I will meet you. There I will meet you and I will speak with you. That place is Jesus. That place is his cross.

And that may be what John 20, 12 has in mind when it reports Mary Magdalene witnessing the empty tomb. She goes to find a tomb and where Jesus' head was and where Jesus' feet were, guess what's there?

The cherubim, the two angels, one at his head, one at his head, and one at his foot, just like the mercy seat or the atonement cover. Brothers and sisters in Christ, we are sinners who have violated the terms of our agreement with God, our covenant.

We are rebels guilty of treason against the king of kings and we deserve to be crushed underneath God's feet to be made his footstool.

We are enemies of God that should be reduced to his footstool. Do you feel weighed down by guilt and shame? Are you a fornicator, an adulterer?

[ 42 : 52 ] Are you a slanderer, a drunkard, a gossip, a thief, a liar? Are you someone who hates your neighbor?

You and I deserve to be crushed underneath God's feet. But remember this, his footstool is not called subjugation.

It's called propitiation. The very place where we should be crushed for our sins is where we receive mercy and forgiveness.

Why? Because someone else was crushed in our place there on the atonement cover. Because someone else has poured out his blood and sprinkled it upon the atonement cover.

because Jesus died on the cross for our sins and was raised from the dead as we who have put our faith in him, we have been cleansed, covered.

[ 43 : 56 ] Instead of being vanquished, we are vindicated. Instead of being crushed, we are covered over by his blood. It's amazing.

This is why we don't need the ark or the atonement cover anymore. Too many people waste precious time speculating about the possible whereabouts of the ark, which in all likelihood was destroyed during the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem.

In fact, Jeremiah, before that even happened, prophesied already. Jeremiah 3, 16, 17, already prophesied of a day when the ark of the covenant of the Lord shall not come to mind or be remembered or missed.

It shall not be made again. At that time, Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord and all nations shall gather to it to the presence of the Lord.

We don't need the ark anymore. We don't need the atonement cover because Jesus was laid upon the atonement cover for our sins on the cross once and for all. And when Jesus returns, it says in Revelation 20, what is this holy city, Jerusalem, that replaces the ark of covenant?

[ 45 : 09 ] John reports this vision. He says, he saw the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God. And that Jerusalem is us. And it says in verse 22, and I saw no temple in the city for its temple is the Lord God, the Almighty and the Lamb.

And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it for the glory of God gives it light and its lamp is the Lamb. There will be no temple because we will have direct access to God and we will be in his immediate presence.

And as we look forward to that day, that's what Jesus has won for us. And as we look forward to that day, we can now, today, with confidence draw near to the throne of God.

Why? Because we know that we will find mercy there because the blood of Christ has been sprinkled. Let's pray together. Father, we deserve to be crushed underneath your feet.

But how can it be that our Lord, your perfect only Son, was crushed in our place?

[ 46 : 50 ]    He who should be exalted, crushed. How can it be that we profit from our Savior's death?  
Father, thank you for your love. Thank you for your mercy. Thank you for sending Jesus,  
putting him forward as the propitiation by his blood.  
So that wrath is gone. the penalty is paid. And we get to dwell with you forever.  
We love you, Father. In your Son's precious name, we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.