**The Mercy Seat**

When God gave the Israelite people the law through Moses at Mount Sinai, He made a covenant with them as His chosen people. An over-simplification of that agreement was, you obey Me and remain faithful to Me and I will bless you. God’s commands included a system of ceremonies and animal sacrifices complete with the necessary facilities and furnishings and a priesthood to administer it. According to the writer of the book of Hebrews, these sacred sacrifices, procedures and objects were designed to teach valuable lessons about the ultimate Messianic kingdom.

The tabernacle, a portable temple, was constructed with a holy place where priests officiated and a most holy place where the high priest made offering once a year on behalf of himself and the people. In that holiest of chambers resided a wooden chest covered with gold. God referred to it as the ark of the covenant and it contained the two tablets with the ten commandments, a pot of manna and Aaron’s rod that budded miraculously. This chest had no ordinary lid. Carved cherubim at each end of the lid faced each other with their wings touching in the middle and, of course, everything was overlaid with pure gold.

God referred to this golden lid as the mercy seat. Once every year, the high priest would offer a bull for his own sins and a goat for the sins of the people. He would then enter the most holy place with incense and the blood of the animals he had sacrificed and sprinkle some of the blood on the mercy seat of the ark. The Hebrew writer makes it clear that the blood of bulls and goats was not an adequate propitiation for the sins of man (Hebrews 10:4), but the ceremony was symbolic of the blood sacrifice of the Lamb of God who was to come.

All citizens of Christ’s kingdom today are priests of God, offering up spiritual sacrifices of service and holiness (1 Peter 2:5). Our sins created a barrier separating us from a righteous and holy and just God. But He took pity on our self-inflicted condemnation and offered His own Lamb, His beloved Son, the only sacrifice adequate to pay the debt we had incurred. But in the symbolism of the Jewish system, Jesus acts as both sacrifice and High Priest, entering the holiest of holies only once when he shed His blood on that gruesome Roman cross on a hill outside the gates of Jerusalem.

Christians became recipients of the new covenant in Christ when they received the circumcision of Christ, being buried in the waters of baptism (Colossians 2:11-12). Jesus continues to act as their High Priest, advocating for them before His Father’s throne (1 John 2:1-2). He is their Mercy Seat. “Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

If you are not a Christian, don’t you want the peace of knowing that you are reconciled with God and that His Son is constantly acting on your behalf? From the beginning of time, God has been working to provide everything you need to stand justified and live with Him eternally. Embrace His covenant through baptism and freely accept the mercy His Son has purchased for you.