

BFF327 The Mercy

Scott Moore: Welcome to the "Building Faith Families" podcast with Steve Demme. I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. Good morning, Steve. How are you today?

Steve: I've been up since 5:30. I've been working on this study, and there's so much there that I'm immersed in it, but I'm also in awe of it. It's about the mercy, which most people call the mercy seat. However, I have found that the word "seat" is not in there. That's the first change of thinking that we need to have as a group.

Before we go into that, why don't we pray, and then we'll dip our feet into this river of truth? Father, thank You for Your word, so deep and so rich and full of life, as well as information.

You told us that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word. I pray that we will live today in a new way as we ponder these words that You've put into Your inspired book, the Bible. Give me a wisdom to teach and give us all hearts to hear and ears to hear what Your spirit is saying to us today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: Scott, you have a big assignment today.

Scott: All right.

Steve: If you remember our last episode, we were talking about the ark. Of course, you ended on a very spiritual high note with bringing in Harrison Ford and Raiders of the Lost Ark.

Scott: I actually cut that part out last night.

Steve: You can leave it in for this one.

Steve: I think it is important for us to remember that the ark was in the Most Holy Place. In fact, I'd be willing to say that's why it was the Most Holy Place is because the ark was there. The ark was more than a box made of acacia wood covered with gold. It was the place where the Decalogue, the 10 commandments, the law, the covenant was housed. The expression – the ark of the testimony is used 38 times. The ark of the covenant is used 43 times.

The tablets of stone were inside this ark. Above the ark, we have cherubim. On top there is a cover or lid or gold piece that's two and a half cubits by one and a half cubits. It's called the mercy.

The Most Holy Place is where the priest, the high priest entered one time a year.

This is the ark that Uzzah touched and died. This is the ark that was moved amongst the five cities of the Philistines and wreaked havoc in their cities, and made Dagon, their false God, appear on his face with his hands and head cut off. This is the ark which, when carried by the priests, stopped the flow of the Jordan River.

I hope that we can embrace an awe attached to this study, as we look at it that we'll be taking a deep breath, and remembering this is in the Most Holy Place, the Holy of Holies.

It wasn't just the fact that there were two tables of stone in the ark with words which God's finger had written on them. This was a covenant. A contract. An articulation of a relationship between God and His people.

There's two longer passages and the first is in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 5:29 captures the heart of this book. God says, "Oh, that My people had such a heart as this, to fear Me and to keep My commandments always, that it might go well with them and with their children." This law is God's heart expressed in words.

Deuteronomy 4. "Oh, Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I'm teaching you and do them that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that Jehovah, the God of your fathers, is giving you.

"You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of Jehovah, your God, that I command you." Skipping down to the seventh verse.

"For what great nation is there that has a God, so near to us as Jehovah, our God, is to us whenever we call upon Him, and what great nation is there that has statutes and rules so righteous, as all this law that I set before you today.

"Only take care and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children."

This is God speaking out of His heart to His people, and He's recording it for them. This is what is placed inside this golden box.

The seventh chapter brings out a different aspect of this covenant, starting in the sixth verse. "You are a holy people to Jehovah, your God. Jehovah, your God, has chosen you to be a people for His own possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

"Jehovah did not set His love on you or choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, but you were the fewest of all peoples, but because Jehovah loved you and kept the oath, which He swore to your forefathers, Jehovah brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

"Know therefore that Jehovah, your God, He is God. The faithful God who keeps His covenant and His loving kindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments." There's God on one side expressing who He is, and what He expects. He basically says, "If you'll do your part and love Him, and keep His commandments, this is what's going to happen."

This is God making a covenant with His people, and these sacred words expressing His heart, are stored in this wonderful gold box, the ark.

On top of the ark there is a cover. Exodus 37:6–9. "He made a mercy..." As I said, I have not been convinced by anything I've studied or read that it's a seat, and I don't want to lose the mercy aspect for thinking of it as some kind of a chair for God to sit in. I'm going to read this without the word "seat." "He made a mercy of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. He made two cherubim of gold. He made them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy. One cherub at the one end, one cherub at the other end.

"He made the cherubim of one piece with the mercy at the two ends. The cherubim had their wings spread upward covering the mercy with their wings, with their faces toward each other. The faces of the cherubim were toward the mercy."

Here, we're doing a deep dive now. There are four or five words in Hebrew that are translated "mercy" in English. I went through these all this morning in my old paper Young's Concordance. I went through them and I spelled them out. "Chesed or Hasid," "raca," "olios," "kenan." They mean kindness, loving kindness, love, pity, compassion, beneficence, graciousness.

However, the word that God uses 27 times for mercy in this context is not any of these words. It unique and used mostly in the Pentateuch. 18 times in Exodus, 7 in Leviticus, 1 time in Numbers, and 1 time in 1 Chronicles – referring to the temple.

When we read "mercy" in our head as English-speaking people, we're thinking of God Who is merciful. He is kind. He is compassionate.

However this word is "kapporeth." It means propitiary. "Kapporeth" or propitiary is real close to the word "kippur" -- now I hope you're hearing the K and the P and the R in English -- but this is kippur, which is used eight times in the Bible and each of those eight times it's translated "atonement."

"Kapporeth," "kippur," are closely related. They mean propitiary. They mean atonement. The root word for both of these two words is "kofer," which means the price of a life or a ransom.

Another word closely related to "kofer" is "kaphar," which is used 104 times, which means to cover over, to pacify, to make propitiation, to make atonement, to cleanse, to be merciful, to reconcile.

I hope when you look at the initial word, "kapporeth," and the closely related word, "kippur," along with the root words "kofer" and "kaphar," you get a picture. It's atonement. It's propitiation. It's ransom. It's the price of a life.

I looked up some words here just to help us to make sure we're all on the same page. I looked up the word "atonement." In the 1828 old original dictionary. Atonement means the expiation of sin. Expiation refers to expiation from the sins of men made only by the obedience and sufferings of Christ.

Another translation for propitiation is, "The atonement or atoning sacrifice offered to God to assuage His wrath and render Him propitious to sinners." Then I wondered, "Wow, what does propitious mean?"

It means favorable, kind, disposed to be gracious or merciful, ready to forgive sins and bestow blessings. This piece of gold, this mercy has to do with Christ taking away our sins. It has to do with the wrath of God being assuaged.

Now, put them together. You have the ark with the law, the covenant in it, and right above it, you have mercy. I don't know if you see this connection, but consider this passage in **Psalms 85:10**, "Mercy and truth are met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other." This is what we see happening in this Holiest of Holies. We have the truth in the ark, and we have mercy above it. Mercy and truth are met together.

John 1:14, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us; and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only son from the Father full of grace and truth." Mercy and truth.

John 1:17. "The law was given through Moses." The law was given through Moses to Moses, and it was put in the ark. Then it says, "Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

Jesus Christ is right here. We're seeing Him in the Holy of Holies. He is the ark and the mercy in one. He is the truth made flesh, and He is also the sacrifice, the propitiation for our sins, for us who are unable to keep the truth. Paul says in Galatians that the law is a tutor which brings us to Christ. It's the law that reveals our sin. It's the law that reveals our need for a savior.

The corresponding Greek word in the Septuagint for the word Mercy in the Holy of Holies is translated "mercy" or "mercy seat" in the King James version. It appears two times in the New Testament, in Hebrews, and Romans 3.

I'm going to read this in two different translations **Romans 3:21–23**, "Now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the Law. Although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 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 "mercy seat" by His blood to be received by faith."

Most translations use the word "propitiation," which we have just defined. Let me read that last verse again in the amplified version.

"Whom God put forward, before the eyes of all, as a mercy seat and propitiation by His blood, the cleansing and life-giving sacrifice of atonement and reconciliation, to be received through faith."

It gets better. **Romans 3:25**. "This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance, He has 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.”

Goodness. I'm ready to start singing the "Hallelujah" chorus here. He is just, so he's faithful to the covenant in the gold box, the ark. He's faithful to the truth, the law, and His covenant. On top of that, He's merciful, He's the justifier, His son has made propitiation, atonement, reconciliation by His blood. If we believe it, we can come into this Holy of Holies, and find true life.

1 John 2, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the world."

Romans 5:8–11, "God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now, that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

I don't know how much clearer it can get between these passages in the Old Testament and the New Testament. I'm going to reread Exodus 25, which I was going to start with, because I couldn't make sense of it until I had this background.

Verses 17 to 22, "You shall make a mercy of pure gold. Two cubits and a half shall be it's length, and a cubit and a half its breadth. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work, so you make them on the two ends of the mercy.

"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 with their wings, their faces one to another toward the mercy shall the faces of a cherubim be. And you shall put the mercy on top of the ark."

"And in the ark, you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. There, I will meet with you. And from above the mercy from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I would give you in commandment for the people of Israel."

Leviticus 16:2, God says, "Speak unto Aaron, that he come not at all times into the Holy Place within the veil before the face of mercy, which is upon the ark, that he die not. For I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy."

I think this is Jesus. He is God with us. He is the one that meets with us. He is the one that is our Immanuel. Now, you have the opportunity to respond and represent all the people that are listening.

Scott: There's a couple of thoughts that came to mind while you were talking. One is just the covering of the law with the mercy. I'm just looking at it, just thinking of the image of that when you talked about. The law is inside the box, and it's covered by this mercy.

I just looked up cover in the New Testament and came up with Romans 4:7, "Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, for whose sins are covered." It just feels like, "Oh, yeah, here's the law, and I've covered it."

Steve: Yes, that's good.

Scott: Nowadays, the more I read the Bible, the more I am hit with, "How is it all Him?" We talked about the big players in the Bible, David and Moses. All these characters, it's not like they were anything without God doing this.

It's like, "Oh, here's the law. You need to carry it around, but guess what? I covered it with mercy."

Steve: Amen. I found one more little edifying fact. In Numbers 4, "This is the service of the sons of Kohath in the tent of meeting, the most holy things. When the camp is to set out, Aaron and his sons shall go in and take down the veil of the screen."

We've talked about this veil. This is the veil that separates the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. It says they're supposed to take down this veil of the screen and cover the ark of the testimony with it.

Steve: Then they put on it a covering of goatskin and spread on top of that a cloth all of blue. All I could think of was, Hebrews 10:19-20, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" As I read this, I am picturing Jesus draped over the ark.

He is the veil. He is flesh, and He broke down everything that separated us from our God. There's Jesus draped over the ark so that we can be restored, and we can come in and find life. I don't know what else to say. How about we pray?

Father, thank You that You are merciful and gracious in every way. You gave those wonderful words. Nobody has a covenant or words like You've given to Your people. On top of those wonderful words, You put mercy. Mercy and truth, grace and truth, met right there, and Jesus died.

He's the one that made propitiation. He's the one that made atonement for us. Thank You for letting Jesus be draped over the ark. We worship You and thank You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scott: Amen. That's our show for this week, folks. Thanks for joining us for the Building Faith Families podcast with Steve Demme. If you have a question for the show, email Steve at spdemme@gmail.com. If you have a question for me, you can reach me at scott@unsocializedmedia.com. Thanks for joining us. Have a great week.