

Exodus 25:10-22

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[0 : 00] Exodus and chapter 25. Exodus 25 and we can read verse 22 there.

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Exodus takes part over a two year period. The book itself covers a two year period after the escape from Egypt for the Israelites.

And we have during this time, it's a sort of probation period after God has rescued them from the state of slavery in Egypt.

[1 : 21] We have this probation period of two years where God wants to teach them very specific things about himself and about themselves. And so we have through Exodus, we have an account of them, of course, making their way out of Egypt.

They escape the ten plagues and they're coming out on the Dead Sea. But then after that, we have this period of the wilderness. We have this time where they are just going through the desert, traveling from Egypt, making their way towards the promised land.

And during this time, they have three periods of grumbling. They have, first of all, the period where they are very thirsty and they reach this pool and it's a bitter pool. And they begin to complain, oh, we had water back in Egypt.

This is great, we're going to die here. So what does Moses do? God commands them to put a twig, a rod of wood into the water and it becomes sweet.

That's Mark 1. Secondly, they begin to complain because they begin to get hungry again. And the hungrier they get, the more they complain. And what does God do again? He provides bread from heaven.

[2 : 38] He provides manna. He provides the quail at night. Mark number two. Then thirdly, they've come away from the pool. They've moved on from there long ago.

And they're thirsty again. And you think to themselves, well, surely they can figure out that God has saved them. And he's split the sea in two. And they've walked over dry land.

He's turned a bitter pool into something drinkable. He's rained bread from heaven. You'd think, clear as day, that they'd understand that God is faithful. That God will provide.

They begin to complain. And what does he do? He asks Moses to strike the rock. The rock at the base, near the base of Mount Sinai.

Just before they reach Mount Sinai. Which is one of the most pivotal things about the book of Exodus. Mount Sinai. And he strikes the rock. And from this rock flows a stream.

[3 : 37] That follows them the rest of the time that they're there. In the whole district of Horeb. And that rock, of course, symbolically, as we see in 1 Corinthians 10, is Christ who is struck.

And from him flows the water. Again, just pure symbolism. But Moses and the people of Israel reach Mount Sinai. And there they see God's presence.

God goes before them, of course, right throughout this whole wilderness. And he goes before them as a cloud through the day. As a pillar of cloud. And through the night as a pillar of fire.

But he comes to this Mount Sinai. And all of a sudden the people begin to get very afraid. All of a sudden the people are filled with awe. Because the whole mountain is then covered in God's presence.

And Moses and the 70 elders go up. And there they meet with God. And then God sends them back. And he gives them a command.

[4 : 39] Because no longer is he going to go in front of them. No longer is he going to simply do the things that they want him to do. No longer is he going to be their lucky charm. No longer is he going to simply, you know, go in front of them as some sort of guide.

Making sure the way is clear. Making sure the way is safe. And then they can just get on with their business. No. He doesn't just want that. He doesn't want to be just their ticket out of Egypt.

He doesn't want to simply be their ticket through this life. He asks them, verse 8, in verse chapter 25, Then have them make a sanctuary for me.

And I will dwell among them. He wants to live with his people. He wants to establish again the covenant that he has made with them.

He wants to establish that promise that he made. And he wants to dwell with his people. And so we reach chapter 25, where the Lord said to Moses at the beginning of this, Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering.

[5 : 54] You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give. These are the offerings you are to receive from them. Gold, silver, and bronze.

Blue, purple, and scarlet yarn. And fine linen. Goat hair. Ram skins dyed red and hides of sea cows. Acacia wood.

Olive oil for the light. Spices for the anointing oil. And for the fragrant incense. And onyx stones.

And other gems to be mounted on the ephod and the breast piece.

Then have them make a sanctuary for me. And I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.

And so he tells them, build it exactly like this. And he doesn't start with the exterior. He doesn't start telling them about the tent and about the curtains and about the altar or anything like that.

[6 : 58] He starts first and foremost with the ark. This was the centerpiece of the whole tabernacle. It was then the centerpiece of the whole temple.

And symbolically, it's the centerpiece of our lives too. Because here was God's throne. This ark of the covenant, as we see in verse 22, there, above the cover between the two cherubim, the daari ark, over the ark of the covenant, I will meet with you.

This is where his presence was going to rest. And so the first thing we note about this building of the ark is that it had to come from a free offering.

God didn't just command them, give me money. Not at all. He said, you would receive the offering for me from each man, and then it's not a full stop, whose heart prompts him to give.

It was a voluntary action. Their hearts were made to be prompted to want to have God live among them, to want to have God and his presence come and dwell with them.

[8 : 19] They were to actively be part of the process. God wasn't just going to barge into their lives without their consent. He wanted them to volunteer, to approve, to be willing.

Out of the free will offering of my heart. And then, as we know this, it had to be according to God's design.

It had to be. Just because it was heartfelt doesn't mean they could build whatever they liked. Just because it was heartfelt doesn't mean that they could then just say, well, we've provided the money, we've done the heart part.

He's not going to mind, really, what we build, as long as it's voluntary, as long as it comes from the heart. No. He wants it to be exact.

He wants it to be the way that he commands it to be. So we come to the construction of the ark. And here we have a chest.

[9 : 25] A chest with an open top. That's about three feet long, two and a half feet wide and high. It's quite a small box, but it's not too small.

It's a good size. And in this, they were to overlay it with gold leaves, pure gold leaves, both on the inside and on the outside.

Now, note something. It says pure gold, not gold, but pure gold. Every other time it talks about gold, it talks about normal gold. But this had to be pure, refined, with absolutely no imperfections.

The poles that were made, the same wood, were simply overlaid with normal gold. And these are the things that people could touch. This is what people carried on their shoulders.

But the box itself, that no one was allowed to touch, was even purer. Because the pure God of heaven was to sit and make his throne off this chest.

[10 : 34] Not only that, it was meant to be transported. So you have this open lid box that was meant to be transported around.

It was meant to go in front of the people. And again, it's quite clear. It's quite clear. We keep God not only with us, but before us in all things.

He has first priority. And as the cloud moved, as the pillar of fire moved, it was the ark that moved first.

This was carried in front of the people and the people followed the presence of the Lord. But then you have on top of that, a cover, a lid made.

And we'll look at the three different elements of the ark. Because first of all, what was kept inside the chest was the law. The covenant that was written on the stone tablets.

[11 : 39] That's the first point of this evening. The law of the ark of the covenant. And then you have this lid, commonly called the mercy seat, which is translated from Martin Luther's German translation.

Basically for the word covering. The atonement covering of the ark. And he called it, as we call it from his German translation, the mercy seat.

And that went on top. So second point is mercy. And then thirdly, sitting on top of the mercy seat is the presence of God.

So we have the law, we have mercy, and we have the presence. So let's first of all look at this law. So you had inside this chest these two stone tablets.

The law was held inside. Written on these stone tablets were the fundamental terms of the covenantal relationship between God and his people.

[12 : 47] The fundamental terms of the relationship between God and his people in writing. It's not just, these ten commandments are not just a list of do's and don'ts.

They're not just a list of regulations that we are meant to do. But on the flip side, the ten commandments are there to reflect to us what God is like.

When it says you shall not steal, yes, that's a law to us. But it's also telling us that God, as the one who created this rule, that he perfectly holds each and every single one of them.

And what it tells us, the testimony the ten commandments give to us of who he is, is that he won't steal from us. He won't cheat you.

You shall not commit adultery. So often in this life people cheat on each other. God never cheats on his people. God never steals apart from one thing, the punishment we deserve.

[13 : 59] In a sense he stole that from us. We did not deserve it. It was ours. We did not deserve to have it taken from us. It was our punishment to suffer for and yet he takes it from us.

That's the only stealing God does. But every other commandment is reflecting on the flip side what God is like. but it also tells us the terms of the relationship.

Because if the people of Israel were to keep these terms then his covenant would always be true. If they kept and stuck to these ten commandments then they would be his people forevermore and every generation that followed would be his people forevermore and they would make his kingdom. they would be his chosen people in the whole world. This tells us that we have to make much we have to make a lot of the word of God even today.

You see because if you think about it symbolically what is the ark? What is this chest? Why would they build a chest and treasure it and keep it in the holy of holies?

[15 : 26] And why was it the most precious thing? What do you normally keep in a chest but treasure? It's the most common idea of what a chest is, a treasure chest. They were to value these commandments that were held in the base of the throne of God.

And likewise today what we are to do is to value the word of God. We are to treasure it in our hearts, in our chests.

We are to hold it and keep it and treasure it in our own lives. Otherwise we're not keeping care of it at all.

The holy of holies was the most innermost part of the whole camp of Israel. And likewise our hearts and mind that's where we are meant to keep this same law in here.

We're meant to treasure it. And if you look at Hebrews chapter 8 if I can reach it quickly Hebrews chapter 8 and verse 10 it says there this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel.

[16 : 44] After that time declares the Lord I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people.

You see God dwells where the law rules. God dwells where the law rules. If we don't treasure his word if we don't think this is the most valuable thing in our whole existence if we don't treasure this and keep it and write it on our hearts through the Holy Spirit how can we expect God to dwell with us?

He will write it in their minds and write it on their hearts I will be their God they will be my people God dwells where he rules and likewise just as this chest was carried around with them wherever we go we take the law we take the word with us in our hearts is where we keep it but you see we all know that we can't keep the law that's part of the gospel we're sinners who haven't kept the law and we try and keep it in our hearts and yet we forget about it time and time and time again and other things take the place inside this chest it can be family it can be relationships it can be ambition it can be career it can be great things there's nothing wrong with ambition careers families relationships of course not but if that is what we keep in the arc of our hearts then we've already broken the fundamental terms of the covenantal relationship that God holds with his chosen people it means that the arc by itself with the open lid isn't salvation for us it does not answer our questions it does not fulfill our need because we can't keep it and that's where the mercy seat comes in our second point is all about mercy because you see the lid goes on top and with this lid it covers exactly exactly the dimensions of the box it itself is three feet long two and a half feet wide and it covers every open inch of the top covering it perfectly that's why it's called in chapter 25 make an atonement cover of pure gold it was made of pure gold as well make an atonement cover pure gold it covers the law and likewise it covers our sin this mercy seat as it's so often called it's called that because it's where

God sits and it's where mercy likewise therefore sits that's where atonement is made that's where mercy is found and where mercy is found it rests there and where mercy rests it sits there it's the mercy seat it's where we must go to for our salvation it's the location for every single last one of us of mercy and throughout really the mercy seat by itself didn't do much it just sat there but Aaron the high priest again Leviticus again the whole thing is symbolic would sprinkle blood onto this atonement covering and as the blood went onto the covering this seat became something else this seat became our salvation as

Christ's blood strikes upon his purity as his own blood comes from the covering that he himself provided by perfectly keeping the law by perfectly upholding and keeping and fulfilling the law that was in the ark as he covered it his blood sprinkled on it and all of a sudden it becomes our source of salvation we have in Leviticus 16 and verses 14 and 15 he is to take some of the bull's blood and with his finger sprinkled on the front of the atonement cover then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the atonement cover he shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood he shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it in this way he will make atonement this is where we are all made one with

[23 : 11] Christ atonement crudely means to be made at one with God atonement at one with God and there that's where we find our salvation you know we are no longer under the law we're no longer under the law the law is now under grace we are now under grace we are now under mercy we can't keep the law the law is simply here now in our lives to restrain sin to keep it in check but it does not save us these are no longer we are no longer under a covenant of works we are simply under a covenant of grace the same grace that God extended to Abraham in Genesis Genesis chapter 12 and

God there spoke to Abraham and Abraham simply believed and God accounted Abraham's belief as righteousness simply out of mercy he took the sins of Abraham he did not have to fulfill any law and neither do we you see with the ark with our hearts we can't keep the law but with our hearts Christ comes and he covers it he covers our sin with his atonement with his death and every day because he clothes you in his righteousness every day God looks at us and he dwells with us because of the mercy seat because it covers the law then

God can dwell you see in Mark chapter 10 it says there that Christ gave his life as a ransom for many Mark chapter 14 his blood poured out for the many this atonement seat this mercy seat it's there for us it's there to resemble that Christ has covered every sin you have ever done and ever will do your whole nature as a sinner is covered by Christ if you believe in him you see this ark meant nothing to the people unless they believed in it of course there were people in the camp of Israel that didn't believe in it and you think if you think to the times of 1st Samuel the book of 1st

Samuel and the times of Samuel you have there Eli the priest at the time and in those days what they used to do with the ark was every time there was a war they would literally take the ark out and think and because God was with them they would win the battle lo and behold they lost and the ark was taken because it's not the ark by itself that saves but it's belief in the ark it's submitting to the ark it's submitting to what the ark is speaking about Jesus Christ it's submitting to the God that rests on the ark just like he rests with Christ God himself so in our lives we cannot simply walk around we cannot live a Christian life where you do your own thing I can't where I do my own thing and then if something goes wrong that's when

I pray or if something is happening and I'm struggling or I need help that's when I pray I pull God out like a lucky charm and basically what I'm doing is I'm housing him in the box where I give God dimensions and I keep him there just in a box in my mind to open him up whenever I need him that's not the God of scripture that's not the Christ of mercy his mercy comes into our lives when we submit to this Jesus Christ don't carry the ark with you as some sort of lucky charm and don't use Jesus he's not just our ticket but he is so much more he is so much more than just a ticket from sin he is the life that we need he is the love that you've been looking for he is the comfort that you've been looking for he is the peace that you've been looking for he is the joy that you've been looking for and the promises that he gives to his people that you will forever be my chosen people and [28 : 46] I will bring you home and you will be part of my kingdom it is dependent on on his mercy on his mercy alone our access now because of what Jesus has done back in those days they had the holy of holies and only the high priest could go in once a year but we know that at the cross when all the sacrifices were fulfilled the curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom and each and every single one of us have access to God even now because of the mercy that he extends to you and because of what Christ has done on the cross it isn't just your ticket but again Hebrews

Hebrews really goes into what the priesthood of the Old Testament is all about that's really the biggest theme of the book of Hebrews but we have there Hebrews chapter 4 verse 16 let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need because of what Jesus has done we come boldly and there we meet with God and his presence verse 22 there above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the testimony I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites now we see from the top of the atonement cover at both ends made out of the same gold the gold that was overlaid on top of this wood covering was then fashioned at the both ends into two angelic figures two cherubim that were to sit there looking at each other but also looking down and their wings would stretch over and touch one another from each side and it was in between these two cherubim that God's presence would sit now what we have here is what are these cherubim first of all who are they and why do we never think about them well cherubim are mentioned over 90 times in the Old Testament and right throughout the tabernacle sewn into every single one of the linen every single curtain of the tabernacle were tiny pictures of the cherubim right throughout this whole tent were tiny pictures of the cherubim why why was it so important that these be images is this not breaking maybe the second commandment you shall not make any graven image well no these cherubim were not things to be worshipped and the people knew these were not idols for them to look towards they were simply telling them that this was the throne of grace because the cherubim were the stewards of God's throne they weren't messengers they weren't messengers from God to man no not at all and the people weren't meant to look to the cherubim as any sort of intercession for them the cherubim were not going to save them it was the

God that they attended to it was the God that they looked to they were the guardians of the sacred and they attended to the throne of God the idea of a cherubim is not one of power it's one of servanthood and from that we know that the image isn't talking about these angels it's talking about what comes between and they don't break even the second commandment because it's trying to make a picture what breaks the second commandment is making a picture of the infinite God who cannot be picturized he cannot be contained in a finite image but we have in Colossians that he sent Christ who is the image of the invisible God he is our image of the infinite God Christ himself didn't break the second commandment by coming in physical form but all throughout this tabernacle all the cherubim point towards God and there there among the people we have as we sang in Psalm 80 and the very first verse in Psalm 80 you who are enthroned in glory shine upon us in our need enthroned in glory the image is of the throne room and here God sits here where his presence is where the law is God dwells and where Christ has made atonement God dwells you see it's not

just keeping the law or trying to keep the law that will get you God in your heart in your life not at all it's the law but more especially it's the atonement of Christ in fact in a sense it's not the law at all what got this people what gave these people the presence and the dwelling of

[35 : 07] God was that God sat on the atonement mercy seat the ark wasn't just a box to hold the law it was the very place that God would come and dwell with his presence and with the intercession with the mediation of Jesus Christ it's the same for us today because if we can accept that the heart that our innermost soul is where we're meant to keep the law if we can accept that Christ covers us with his atonement with his righteousness because of his blood that is spilt then also we must accept that he dwells in us I don't know about you but I don't remember that fact enough that God just isn't up there

God just isn't around us but he's in his people he is dwelling with them he is guiding them he is giving them power he is sanctifying them and through the Holy Spirit God and Christ dwell with his people we know all of us have God's presence resting on us we don't need physical acts anymore the curtain has been torn and God dwells with each one of us individually we know like Moses here I will meet with you and give you all my commands we know through his word commune freely with God the door has been opened the curtain has been torn the presence is yours and because of that we come boldly to the throne of grace we come with confidence because God is on our side I can see my very far away concept but every time the people took this arc they knew God was on their side even if they struggled even if they were full of doubt even if they found life so hard even if there was tragedy they knew and they could see it God was with them and they knew that God would lead them to the promised land it's the same with you and me this life is full of struggles it's full of doubts it's full of our own hypocrisy it's full of our own sin we are going to mess up time and time again we will grow stale we will at times grow lukewarm or we will at times backslide but it's not about us it's not about you it's not about how well you keep the law it's about the atonement that sits above us it's about the atonement that covers us all and it's in this freedom that we will find the presence of God it's in this freedom that we can go out into the world and we can be confident that God is with us and it's the freedom it's the peace that you're given through the fact that you don't have to do things in this life to win

God's favour it's that comfort that no matter what he is with you that's what frees us up to keep the law more and more it's because of the atonement cover that we are now given the grace and the mercy to follow in his footsteps we're not under the law of course not that's covered we're now under grace but let it be that under grace we fall in love with his word more and more we fall in love with following him more and more because all of it is housed together simply because grace came didn't throw away the law it simply fulfilled it but as we as God's people as a congregation no matter where you find yourself today tomorrow next week next year

God is with us he'll help you he'll save you he'll go before you and we can tell him Lord go before us Lord give us opportunities Lord help us in our day to day battles Israelites took this covenant this act into war and so should we when war comes in our lives we shouldn't leave God alone he should be first and foremost going before us he should be our priority wherever we walk and whatever happens to us he is first he is preeminent let us bow our heads in prayer let us pray heavenly father we thank you for your word and we pray

[41 : 12] Lord that you would remind us once again how precious your word is in our lives but Lord give us the freedom that we find in Christ to remember Lord that it is not what we do but it is what you have done and gives us peace even today thousands of years on Lord that one moment of time goes beyond time Lord and it impacts every moment of history both past and its future Lord we pray that you would help us to put you first and foremost in our hearts and lives Lord that we would keep our eyes firmly fixed on you Lord as we speak to others and we will know that we are not simply on our own

Lord encourage us to remind us that you are there with us we are not doing things in our own strength but instead we have the power of the almighty God who infuses his word with a power that is beyond our imaginations Lord go before us this day and for the rest of this week and we ask you and we praise your name for the presence that you afford to your people and we ask this with the forgiveness of our sins Amen We can conclude tonight singing from Psalm 133 Psalm 133 in the Sing Psalms and we can sing to the tune

Eastgate Psalm 133 in the Sing Psalms how excellent a thing it is how pleasant and how good when brothers dwell in unity and live as brothers should and we can sing all the way to the end like

Herman's Jew upon the hill of Zion it descends the Lord bestows his blessing there the life that never ends the Lord the Lord go before us as we sing his praises how excellent a thing it is how pleasant and how good surround breath the Lord Stop the earth into his eyes and pens his diaphragmic and hear their hands hebbens

And in as brothers should, and in as brothers should.

For it is like the precious soil poured out on Eron's head.

[44 : 43] That running over down his feet upon his collar straight.

Upon his collar straight. Like darkness drew upon the hill of Zion in dispense.

The Lord bestows his blessing through. The life that never ends.

The life that never ends. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this, your Sabbath day.

And we pray that your praises would have been sweet to your ear, Lord. Go before us as we enter into the world at large.

[45 : 58] And Lord, we pray that you would go before us in all things, in all that we do. That you would have first priority. And Lord, we ask all of this in Christ's holy and precious name.

Amen. I like my friend. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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Amen.