

Hebrews 9:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat;
of which we cannot now speak particularly.

Analysis

Above the ark were 'cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat.' The mercy seat (Greek 'hilastērion' - place of propitiation) was where blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement, making atonement for sin. The cherubim's presence indicates God's throne. Paul uses 'hilastērion' for Christ (Romans 3:25) - He is the true mercy seat where God's wrath is propitiated. The author declines to detail these ('we cannot now speak particularly'), focusing on their fulfillment in Christ.

Historical Context

Leviticus 16 describes the Day of Atonement ritual where the high priest sprinkled blood on the mercy seat. This annual ceremony temporarily covered sin, pointing to Christ's once-for-all sacrifice that actually removes sin.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How is Christ the true 'mercy seat' where God's justice and mercy meet?
2. What does the mercy seat's location (between cherubim, above the ark) teach about approaching God?

Interlinear Text

ὑπεράνω δὲ αὐτῆς χερουβιμ δόξης κατασκιάζοντα τὸ
over **And** **it** **the cherubims** **of glory** **shadowing** G3588
G5231 G1161 G846 G5502 G1391 G2683

ἱλαστήριον· περὶ ᾧ οὐκ ἔστιν νῦν λέγειν κατὰ
the mercyseat **of** **which** **we cannot** G2076 **now** **speak** **particularly**
G2435 G4012 G3739 G3756 G3568 G3004 G2596

μέρος
G3313

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 16:2 (Grace): And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.

Numbers 7:89 (Grace): And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with him, then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy seat that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubims: and he spake unto him.

Psalms 99:1 (Parallel theme): The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved.

Psalms 80:1 (Parallel theme): Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.

Leviticus 16:13 (Grace): And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not:

Hebrews 4:16 (Grace): Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

1 Chronicles 28:11 (Grace): Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat,

2 Kings 19:15 (Parallel theme): And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth.

1 Samuel 4:4 (Parallel theme): So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

1 Peter 1:12 (Parallel theme): Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.