



**A**ND thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee.<sup>22</sup> And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel. (Exodus 25:21-22)

**A**ND he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.<sup>11</sup> And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.<sup>12</sup> And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, *Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.*<sup>13</sup> And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.<sup>14</sup> And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.<sup>15</sup> The Lord then answered him, and said, *Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?*<sup>16</sup> And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?<sup>17</sup> And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him. (Luke 13:10-17)

You may be justifiably mystified at what connection there could be between the two narratives above – one of the Mercy Seat, and the other of the Sabbath Day miracle of our Lord in the synagogue. Believe me, there is altogether a unifying principle brilliantly expressed in the Lord's action in the synagogue described above.

There were two prominent Mountains of the Lord mentioned in Exodus. The first was Mt. Horeb where water gushed forth from the Rock (that Rock was Christ – 1 Cor 10:4) when struck by Moses as a sign of mercy and deliverance in the Wilderness of Sin for Israel. (see Exodus 16:1 and 17:6) That Rock is still the means of salvation for our souls in the worldly Wilderness of Sin. The second Mount of the Lord was Sinai upon which the Lord delivered the Law of Commandments to Moses. The first Mount of the Lord was

the Mount of Mercy, the second Mount of the Lord was of Law and Judgment. Which came first? Mercy, then came Law. Mercy always trumps Law. Mt. Horeb was also the place of the calling of Moses in the midst of the Burning Bush. In mercy, God called Moses to bring His people out of bondage in Egypt. In mercy, God sent His only Begotten Son (the Rock of Horeb) almost fifteen centuries later to save His people out of the bondage of sin – then and today!

The Scribes and Pharisees of that day placed far greater weight on legalism than spiritual compassion and true religion. There are sects today who would impose the same 'letter-of-the-law' observance upon, not only the Sabbath observance, but every law given for the good of man by God, to man's hurt. It is important to know the truth, and it is equally important to observe the spirit of that truth. As our Lord said to the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well: *But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.* (John 4:23)

Now consider the structure of the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle. In the Holy Place which lay before the Veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy stood, on the right side, the Table of Shewbread of the Presence. This represented the Bread of Life which is Christ the Lord. On the left-hand side as one approaches the Veil was the Seven-branched Lampstand representing the Light of God's Word and, perhaps, His body, the Church. There was an Altar of Incense just before the Veil at which the High Priest once per year offered up the prayers of the people. The smoke of the incense represented those prayers rising to Heaven. The Veil was ripped, top to bottom, at the completion of Christ redemptive work on the cross. He became our High Priest so that we need no other intercessor but Him with the Father.

Behind the Veil was the place of God – the Ark of the Covenant containing the two Tables of the Law, a Golden Jar of Manna, and Aaron's Rod which budded miraculously proving him to be the first High Priest. Later, in Solomon's Temple, the Ark contained only the Two Tables of Commandments.

We would yet be lost in our sins were these all that existed behind the Veil of the Most Holy Place. The Law is a curse to us brought upon us by Adam and his willful disobedience. But there was yet another feature there which makes all the difference in the world to us – the Mercy Seat atop the Ark of the Covenant with the Shekinah Glory represented by the space between the two facing Cherubims atop the Ark. This was the place of the Cloud from which God spoke and at which He met in communion with us. This is the place of our Lord Jesus Christ since .... *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.* (John 1:14)

It is clear that the Mercy Seat is above the Ark and the Law. We are all convicted by the Law, but all saved who are called by Faith to Christ in that Seat of Mercy made possible by our Lord. Once again, Mercy trumps Law.

The principle of the Sabbath is of vital importance. It was a single day – the seventh of each week – set aside to rest and to praise and worship our Lord. It was not only a day for physical refreshing and rest, but for growing in faith and truth. It was not intended by God to be a day onerous to His people, but rather a great blessing. *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.* The word SABBATH is Hebrew for REST!

But being made to rest in bondage is not rest at all. The Jewish rulers had made it a day of such constraining rules and observances that it had become a day of dread for most in Israel. *And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.* (Mark 2:27-28)

It is a mistaken assumption that our Lord abrogated the Commandments of God by His death on the cross. On the contrary, He made that Law complete and more binding. He added the dimension of Love to the Law that enabled us to keep it. Even to be envious of sin is to commit that sin. And He also took our burdens upon Himself to bear so that all our good works are not ours at all, but the work of Christ working in and through our members. We have our REST, or Sabbath, in Christ – not one day out of seven – but seven days out of seven! Just as the Lord is our Passover which we observe in Holy Communion, but He is also our Sabbath.

In the synagogue, Jesus healed a woman on the Sabbath drawing the ire of the leader of the synagogue. Fearing to attack our Lord frontally, he diverted his condemnation to the people who would come for healing on the Sabbath. But our Lord was not disinclined to call out hypocrisy when He saw it – unlike the politically correct ministers of our day. *Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?*

A reminder, in case you had forgotten: with God it is always the right day and time to do good to others.

I am ashamed of many of my fellow ministers who are fearful to call out sin and sinners wherever they emerge openly in violation of the Word of God. If I call Joel Osteen a hypocrite, which he is, I am condemned for being hateful. If I name homosexuality and homosexual marriage as grievous sins, I am likewise condemned for judging; however, whose judgment is in error – mine or the Lord's. Whatever God has condemned, we had best condemn. Jesus commanded, *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.* (John 7:24) When, in obedience to God, we judge sin based upon His Word, it is not our judgment, but God's, righteous judgment that applies. The Church must get back to discipline in moral living and forsake the dictates of an immoral and unrighteous world.