

Is there a Mercy-seat for Believers?

E. Dennett.

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In hymns and prayers it is very common to meet with the idea of the mercy-seat as being the resource and retreat of the children of God in the midst of their trials and sorrows. The question therefore is whether this is a scriptural thought. Twice only, as far as we remember, is the expression found in the New Testament; viz., in Romans 3: 25 (propitiation in the English version, but really mercy-seat), and in Hebrews 9: 5. In the latter it is only mentioned as a part of the sacred furniture of the holiest; and hence it is to the former of these two passages that reference must be made. Now a moment's glance at the context shows that in Romans it is the sinner, and not the believer, who is in view. "All have sinned," says the apostle, "and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth a mercy-seat through faith in His blood," etc. That is, all having been declared to be sinners, and lost and helpless on the ground of works, God justifies freely by His grace on the ground of the work of Christ. And with this object He sets forth His mercy-seat — no longer concealed, as in the tabernacle, behind the veil — Christ; and when the sinner approaches through faith, believing God's testimony to the efficacy of the blood of Christ, God's righteousness is declared in that He is just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Here then it is undoubtedly the sinner that approaches the mercy-seat; and, to the glory of God's unbounded grace, he finds, when he thus draws near, that through the value of the blood sprinkled there, as it were, before the eye of God, his sins are for ever put away. And we remind the reader that this is really the only passage that speaks of the mercy-seat as a place of approach.

Quite true, it may be replied; but the fact remains that Aaron every year went into the holy of holies on the day of atonement, and does not this justify our use of the expression? But why did Aaron continually appear before the mercy-seat? It was, as Hebrews 10 teaches, because it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Inasmuch therefore as Christ by one offering has perfected for ever them that are sanctified, the need of the mercy-seat is gone. What then remains for the believer? It is the THRONE OF GRACE, to which we are exhorted to come boldly, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. E. D.