

# Walking Through the Veil VI: Love Covers

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*Have them make a chest of acacia wood, two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. Overlay it with pure gold, both inside and out, and make a gold molding around it... Then put in the ark the Testimony, which I will give you. Make an atonement cover of pure gold two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. And make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover... Place the cover on top of the ark and put in the ark the Testimony, which I will give you. 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. – Exodus 25:10-22 (10-11, 16-18, 21-22 printed)*

## What is Holy

The innermost section of the tabernacle is the Holy of Holies, or the Most Holy place. Remember, holy is not necessarily the focus on moral rightness, but it is the act of setting something apart. So the inner room was the place most set apart from everything else: all other activity, all other purposes, even all other people. The Most Holy place was created for one purpose: to fulfill what God wanted for mankind.

*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. – Exodus 25:22*

To this end, there was only one item within the Most Holy Place: the Ark of the Testimony (Ark of the Covenant). In the order of things, the Ark was first and most important. With the Ark, only certain people had access to it. Outside of the times of moving it, no one except the high priest had access to the Ark, and that was only for one day a year. Handling the Ark was only to be done in a particular way, and those that did not heed God's purpose with regard to the Ark paid a hefty price:

*They moved the ark of God from Abinadab's house on a new cart with Uzzah and Ahio guiding it. David and all the Israelites were celebrating with all their might before God, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, cymbals and trumpets. When they came to the threshing floor of Kidon, Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the ark, because the oxen stumbled. The Lord's anger burned against Uzzah, and he struck him down because he had put his hand on the ark. So he died there before God. – I Chronicles 13:7-10*

There were things that God was very serious about, and the place of importance of *what the ark was to Israel* was one thing that He refused to play with.

## The Original Design

The Ark was one unit with three parts:

- The Chest – the chest was made from Acacia wood, overlaid with gold, representing the place where God and man came together. The Chest was made to originally contain the tablets of the Testimony – the Law, or the Ten Commandments. Over time, other things were added to the chest, but in the pattern given to Moses on the mountain, The Chest only contained God’s word for His people. Jesus effectively was the Chest, holding God’s word for his people
- The Cover – While it seems strange to call out the cover to the chest, it had significance in what it hid, as well as in what it received. The cover hid all of the items that were contained within the Chest, as well as being the *receiver* of the blood of the sacrifice. Even though the items remained intact, they only existed behind the cover. They had no effect beyond the cover. While the Chest was wood and gold, the cover was pure gold. The cover kept what God had provided for his people intact, but also provided a shield or buffer for the tenets of the Law. Galatians 3:13 says *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”* Jesus, effectively is the cover for us
- The Cherubim – Two cherubim, or celestial beings covered the chest and cover. They were specifically set to look toward the cover with their wings outstretched to shadow the area between the cover and their wings. The Cherubim were also made from pure gold. The Cherubim represent God’s commitment to His word for his people. Jeremiah 1:12 says, *The Lord said to me, “You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled.*

God told Moses that he would meet him *between the cover and the Cherubim*. God’s meeting with Moses was not so much a physical, logistical meeting, but a place of God’s purpose. To understand this, we must look at the second aspect of the purpose for the 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 for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. – Leviticus 16:15-16a*

The cover was the place that would receive and hold the blood of the sacrifice. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest had one job: offer sacrifices first for himself, then for the nation. He would take the blood from the sacrifice and sprinkle the blood on the cover as well as in front of it. God would “see” the blood and forgive the sins of Israel committed until that day. This was very similar to God’s command when Israel was about to leave Egypt:

*Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs... The blood will be a sign*

*for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt. – Exodus 12: 7,13*

When it came to the Ark, God could have focused on what was in the Chest to determine how to react and respond to Israel, but he chose (and chose ahead of time, mind you) to focus on the point of atonement and forgiveness. God would meet Moses “between his forgiveness and his intention to fulfill his word”. This is also the place that God chooses to meet us:

### What Was Placed in the Ark?

*Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold covered Ark of the Covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron’s staff that budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. – Hebrews 9:3-4*

Over time other things were added to the Ark of the Testimony. The items were not just keepsake items, but spoke to specific things God was doing in the lives of Israel, and what they did to prompt God’s action in these events

- 1) **Aaron’s Rod that Budded** – After people were grumbling against Moses and Aaron in particular, the Lord wanted to demonstrate whom he had **chosen** – *The staff belonging to the man I choose will sprout and I will rid myself of the constant grumbling against you by the Israelites... The Lord said to Moses, “Put back Aaron’s staff in front of the Testimony to be kept as a sign to the rebellious. This will put an end to their grumbling against me, so that they will not die.” – Numbers 17:5, 10*
- 2) **Jar of Manna** – the Israelites complained about having no food, to which God supernaturally supplied manna from heaven. *Then Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar and put an omer of manna in it. Then place it before the Lord to be kept for the generations to come.” As the Lord commanded Moses, Aaron put the manna in front of the Testimony that it might be kept. Exodus 16:33-34*
- 3) **Tablets of the Law** – Moses had received the law, written by God. Following this he was told about the people corrupting themselves. Moses intercedes for the people and God relents of his anger, but when Moses sees them, he gets angry himself and throws down the tablets breaking them in pieces

All of the items with the exception of the Law were initially placed before the Lord (before the Ark), but eventually made their way inside the ark. They could be seen as points of failure for Israel – their rejection of God, their grumbling against God, and them taking matters into their own hands. On the other hand, they can be seen as God *watching over his word to perform it* - His provision, his choosing, his word, none of which could be stopped by the actions of people. **The Most Holy place, the place most separated was a place where God fully represented his intention and action on behalf of mankind.**

## Making Atonement

In the courtyard and in the Holy Place, there were activities happening all the time. In the Most Holy place, however, God signified only a certain time that any activity happened.

*When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered **regularly** into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, **and that only once a year**, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and the sins the people had committed in ignorance. – Hebrews 9:6-7*

For God, his atonement, or *making things right* was not a daily ritual or a regular occurrence. God wanted to show the difference between the *daily activities* of his people, and his *completed work*:

*When Christ came as a high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves, but he entered the Most Holy place **once for all** by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. – Hebrews 9:11-12*

For the high priest to make atonement, he had to dip his finger in the blood to sprinkle it on the ark cover. In this, the high priest not only had to identify with the sin but also of the sacrifice that was given for him and for Israel. The high priest had to *engage in the sacrifice – touching the sacrifice at the most intimate level*. Paul makes a statement about himself that is hard to understand, until you understand it from the standpoint of engaging in the sacrifice:

*Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. – Colossians 1:24*

This sounds like Paul is saying that the work of Christ is not complete enough to save, that it takes something of us to fulfill it. However, when seen in light of engaging in the sacrifice, you can see that Paul was wanting to fully touch the sacrifice of Jesus... to engage it to the point of knowing that “when the blood was sprinkled on the cover”, that forgiveness and making all things right would be done for those he was ministering to. For the Colossian church, Paul wanted nothing more than the absolute complete work of Christ to be realized in them – for them to see nothing of his own human effort, but to see only the work that God did behind the veil. Our lives are to be the same for those in our lives: engaging the sacrifice of Jesus for them... *touching the blood* to sprinkle on the cover to declare them at one with God.

## **Introspection and Action**

Who are you to *go to the cover* for? Think of, engage in the sacrifice that has been made for you, and with that understanding, approach the place where God meets you on behalf of others in your life. Seek "at-one-ment", or the making things right on their behalf.