



He Who Dwells Between The Cherubim

In the Old Testament both the LORD of Hosts and the God of Israel are identified with the phrase “dwells between the cherubim”. This phrase is used 7 different times in the Old Testament (1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Samuel 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chronicles 13:6; Psalms 80:1; Psalms 99:1; Isaiah 37:16). To understand what is meant by this phrase all we have to do is look at what the Bible tells us about the Ark of the Covenant. In Exodus 25:10-22, Moses is given instructions to build the Ark of Covenant. The description we are given in Exodus 25 shows us that the Ark included what our English Bibles refer to as a “mercy seat”. This is actually a poor English translation of the Hebrew because the term “mercy seat” creates the picture for the English reader that Moses is referring to some kind of chair and this is not the meaning conveyed by the Hebrew.

The Hebrew word that is translated in our English Bibles as “mercy seat” is the Hebrew word “kalpporet” (Strong’s # 3727). The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament by Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter defines this word as “A noun meaning a lid, propitiation. This word refers to the lid that covered the ark of the testimony. It was made of gold and was decorated with two cherubim.” So, the “mercy seat” was really just the lid that covered the Ark of the Covenant, and it is not any type of chair. Symbolically this lid represented the footstool of the God of Israel. The symbolic picture created by this lid was one of the God of Israel sitting on His throne in heaven and the Ark of Covenant on earth being His footstool before His throne.

1 Chr 28:2

² Then King David rose to his feet and said, “Hear me, my brethren and my people: I had it in my heart to build a house of **rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God**, and had made preparations to build it.

Ps 132:7-8

⁷ Let us go into His tabernacle; **Let us worship at His footstool**. ⁸ Arise, O LORD, to Your resting place, **You and the ark of Your strength**.

Is 66:1

¹ Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is My throne, **And earth is My footstool.**
Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest?

This "mercy seat" was flanked by cherubim on each side. So, it was literally "between the cherubim". The Ark of Covenant was then placed in the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle (Exodus 26:31-35). The Most Holy Place was separated from the rest of the tabernacle by a veil and could only be accessed by the High Priest once a year on the Day of Atonement.

The High Priest could only enter the Most Holy Place while performing the ceremony we find recorded in Leviticus 16. The meaning of this ceremony is explained in Hebrews 9. In Hebrews 9, we find that the High Priest symbolically represented Jesus Christ going before the throne of God the Father to be accepted as the sacrifice for mankind. This symbolism shows us that the "mercy seat" that sat "between the cherubim" pictured the footstool before the throne of God the Father. In addition, the entire point of the Most Holy Place being separated from the rest of the tabernacle by a veil was to teach us that access to the Father is only possible through the sacrifice of Christ. The point is that Christ has to remove this veil for us to have access to the Father (Heb 10:19-22). So, we see that all of the symbolism of the "mercy seat" that sat "between the cherubim" points specifically to God the Father.

The Father Is Superior To Christ

However, this leaves us with the question of whether or not the phrase "dwells between the cherubim" can also apply to the One Who became Jesus Christ? Does He also dwell "between the cherubim"? Put another way, do God the Father and Jesus Christ sit side by side on the same throne? To fully address this question, we first need to understand that God the Father is superior to Christ in authority. While God the Father and Christ are equal in nature and character, They are not equal in authority. Christ is certainly a God being and worthy of worship, however, He is in a subordinate role in authority to the Father. They are not "co-equal" rulers of the universe. This superior/subordinate relationship is seen all throughout the Bible. For example, during His ministry on earth, Christ directly stated that the Father was greater than Himself.

John 10:29

²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, **is greater than all**; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.

John 14:28

²⁸ You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' **for My Father is greater than I.**

However, Christ's statements that the Father was greater than Himself were not just referring to the fact that He was a physical human being when He stated these words. Even after being resurrected and returning to being a spiritual God being we find that the New Testament repeatedly states that Christ views the Father as His "God". In other words, Christ submits to and worships the Father.

John 20:17

¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to **My God** and your God.'"

Rev 1:5-6

⁵ To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings and priests to **His God and Father**, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Rev 3:12

¹² He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of **My God**, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of **My God** and the name of the city of **My God**, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from **My God**. And I will write on him My new name.

Notice in every one of these scriptures Christ is a God being and not a human being. So, the fact that He came to earth as a physical human has no bearing on the fact that Christ views the Father as His "God". This fact clarifies the significance of Christ's statement during His ministry that the Father is "the only true God".

John 17:3

³ And this is eternal life, that they may know You, **the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.**

The Bible is clear that Christ is also a God being and worthy of worship. So, by stating that the Father is "the only true God" Christ is not denying that He is also a God being. Clearly Christ's point in making this statement was expressing the Father's superiority to Himself. It is also interesting to note that we never see statements in scripture of the Father referring to Christ as His "God". Rather, what we find is that Christ is always described in a subordinate role to the Father. For example, Christ is described as the Servant of the Father.

Acts 3:13

¹³ The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified **His Servant Jesus**, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go.

Acts 3:26

²⁶ To you first, God, having raised up **His Servant Jesus**, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

We also find that the Father is Christ's head and that Christ fulfills His role in subjection to the Father.

1 Cor 11:3

³ But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and **the head of Christ is God**.

1 Cor 15:27-28

²⁷ For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted.

²⁸ Now when all things are made subject to Him, then **the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him**, that God may be all in all.

So, we can see that while the Father and Christ are both God Beings and thus worthy of worship they are not "co-equal" rulers of the universe. The Father is superior to Christ and should be honored as such.

He Who Sits On The Throne

With this understanding of the roles of God the Father and Christ we can now better understand what the Bible tells us about the Father's throne that is pictured by the "mercy seat" that sits "between the cherubim". One of the common arguments for the belief that both the Father and Christ "dwell between the cherubim" is based on the fact that the Bible mentions a number of times that Christ sits at the Father's "right hand" (Psalms 110:1; Hebrews 1:13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). However, it is important to understand how this phrase is used in the Bible. We find a good example of this in the book of 1 Kings:

1 Kings 2:19

¹⁹ Bathsheba therefore went to King Solomon, to speak to him for Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her and bowed down to her, and sat down on his throne and had a throne set for the king's mother; **so she sat at his right hand.**

Here Solomon sets up a throne for his mother and sits her "at his right hand" but this is not saying that she has been made an equal to Solomon as king of Israel and that she shares his throne and his position. Rather, her being seated "at his right hand" is placing her in a position of honor and respect. Christ sitting at the Father's "right hand" is expressing a similar meaning.

The book of Revelation repeatedly makes it clear that the Father has a throne that is unique to Himself. In Revelation 4 the Father's throne is described in detail. Throughout the book of Revelation, the point is made numerous times that the Father is the only One Who sits on this throne. John refers to "He who sits on the throne" numerous times throughout the book of Revelation and this is always a reference to the Father's throne.

Rev 4:2-3

² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, **and One sat on the throne.** ³ And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.

Rev 4:9-11

⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down **before Him who sits on the throne** and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: ¹¹ "You are worthy, O

Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."

Rev 5:1-7

¹ And I saw in the right hand of **Him who sat on the throne** a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ² Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" ³ And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. ⁴ So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. ⁵ But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." ⁶ And I looked, and behold, **in the midst of the throne** and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, **stood a Lamb** as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of **Him who sat on the throne**.

Rev 5:13

¹³ And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to **Him who sits on the throne**, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

Rev 6:15-17

¹⁵ And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶ and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us **from the face of Him who sits on the throne** and from the wrath of the Lamb!" ¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

Rev 7:9-10

⁹ After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our **God who sits on the throne**, and to the Lamb!"

Rev 7:15-17

¹⁵ Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And **He who sits on the throne** will dwell among them. ¹⁶ They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; ¹⁷ for **the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne** will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Rev 19:3-4

³ Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!" ⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped **God who sat on the throne**, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!"

Notice God the Father is repeatedly referred to as "He who sits on the throne". In other words, this is unique to the Father. In Revelation 5:6-7, we see Christ described as being "in the midst of the throne" and He (Christ) takes the scroll out of the hand of "He who sat on the throne" (the Father). Clearly it is the Father sitting on the throne. Again, in Revelation 7:15-17 we see Christ described as being "in the midst of the throne" but again He is clearly distinguished from "He who sits on the throne" (the Father). If both the Father and Christ equally shared this throne the repeated statement of "He who sits on the throne" would not be a meaningful distinction to make.

The Father Shares His Dominion With Christ

Given the repeated statements that the Father's throne is unique to Him all throughout the book of Revelation, there is one scripture that can appear to contradict the numerous scriptures cited above:

Rev 3:21

²¹ To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

This scripture appears to be telling us that the Father and Christ share a single throne. This idea doesn't match the detailed descriptions we find in Revelation 5:6-7 and Revelation 7:15-17. If the Father and Christ sit side by side on a single throne then contrasting Christ with "He who sits on the throne" would not make sense. Additionally, if we follow this logic through then if Christ shares the Father's literal throne and the resurrected saints share Christ's literal throne then this would mean

that the Father, Christ, and the resurrected saints all collectively sit together on the same throne. In that context, the statement “He who sits on the throne” loses any meaning. The key to understanding this verse is realizing that the Greek word translated as “throne” in this verse can have several meanings. The Greek word here is “thronos” (Strong’s # 2362). This word can certainly mean a literal throne that a king sits on, but it can have other meanings as well. The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates lists “Metaphorically used for dominion” as one of the meanings of this word. In other words, Revelation 3:21 is telling us that the Father has shared His dominion with Christ by appointing Him to positions within the Father’s Kingdom and Christ is promising to do the same with the resurrected saints.

Putting all of the scriptural evidence together we see that the “mercy seat” that sat “between the cherubim” on the Ark of the Covenant is a symbolic picture of the footstool before the throne of God the Father and that this throne is unique to the Father as He is the One described as “He who sits on the throne”. Therefore, the phrase He “who dwells between the cherubim” should be understood as specifically a reference to the throne of the Father. Thus, the phrase “dwells between the cherubim” identifies the “LORD of Hosts” and the “God of Israel” as titles for God the Father.