

Doctrine of Propitiation

1. Three important Greek words are used to present the teaching of propitiation.

1.1 They are Hilasmos - ἱλασμος (1Jo 2:2; 4:10), Hilasterion - ἱλαστήριον (Rom 3:25; Heb 9:5, "mercy seat"), and Hilaskomai - ἱλασκομαι (Luk 18:13; Heb 2:17).

1Jo 2:2 And he is the "**propitiation**" for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

1Jo 4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the "**propitiation**" for our sins.

Rom 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a "**propitiation**" through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

Heb 9:5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the "**mercy seat**"; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

Luk 18:13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God "**be merciful**" to me a sinner.

Heb 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, "**to make reconciliation**" for the sins of the people.

1.2 Vines has the following to say about this word propitiation:

1.2.1 It is God who is "**propitiated**" because He has so dealt with sin that He can show mercy to the believing sinner in the removal of his guilt and the remission of his sins.

1.2.2 Through the "**propitiatory**" sacrifice of Christ, he who believes upon Him is by God's own act delivered from justly deserved wrath, and comes under the covenant of grace.

1.2.3 Never is God said to be reconciled, a fact in itself indicative that the enmity exists on man's part alone, and that it is man who needs to be reconciled to God, and not God to man. All of course because " God has a problem ".

1.2.4 He can act differently towards those who come to Him by faith, and solely on the ground of the "propitiatory" sacrifice of Christ, not because He has changed, but because He always acts as a righteous God.

1.2.5 The expiatory work of the Cross is therefore the means whereby the barrier which sin interposes between God and man is broken down.

- 1.2.6 By His sacrifice on the cross, Christ annulled the power of sin which separated God and man."
2. The need for propitiation arose because of the holiness of God on the one hand, and the sin of man on the other.
 3. The emphasis in the meaning of the word is upon satisfaction.
 4. The NT usage indicates clearly that Christ's death fully satisfied the demands of the offended holiness of God.
 5. In the liturgy of the Tabernacle/Temple the place where our Holy God met sinful man was at the mercy seat where the High Priest would once a year on the day of Atonement sprinkle the symbolic blood.
 6. To understand the OT place of propitiation, one must understand the ark of the covenant mentioned in Exo 25:10-22.

Exo 25:10 And they shall make an ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof ...

Exo 25:17 And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof.

TABERNACLE/TEMPLE CHART

6.1 The ark was made of acacia wood representing the humanity of Christ and overlaid with gold representing the Diety of Christ.

6.2 In the ark were three things representing sin and evil: the table of the law speaking to sin; the rod that budded speaking of the evil of rebellion against authority; and the pot of manna speaking of the rejection of God's divine provision or what we would call logistical grace.

Heb 9:4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

6.3 The symbols of sin and evil being in the box were thus covered; the symbolism taught of the work of Christ in taking care of both sin and evil.

6.4 On the day of atonement the High Priest sprinkled blood showing that the righteousness and justice of God was satisfied.

6.5 Since the life is in the blood and all sacrifice and offering were only the shadow of a reality to come i.e Christ, the blood is representative of the 1st Advent role of Jesus.

Lev 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

Heb 10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect ...

Heb 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins ...

Heb 10:6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure....

6.6 The OT liturgy taught us that God is free to love us because His +R was satisfied and His +J must execute what His +R demands.

6.7 The concept is explained in 1Jo 4:10 i.e. the perfect love of God can love us without compromising His character in any way.

7. Christ's Love

7.1 A person's love is no stronger than the character of the one who initiates the love.

7.2 The character of Jesus is perfect therefore His love is perfect.

7.3 This perfection "can not" be matched by us.

7.3.1 We love Him as our character is strengthened from doctrine in the soul.

7.3.2 Jesus' love for us however does not in any way depend upon us.

7.4 Therefore Jesus' love depends on who and what Christ is and not who and what we are.

7.5 His love then is one of absolute grace.

8. Christ has found a way for man to respond to His love.

1Co 2:16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

1Jo 4:19 We love Him, because He first loved us.

8.1 We respond to the love of Christ by taking in His mind.

9. Doctrine must be in the soul of the believer before we can respond to the love of Christ.

10. We cannot love Christ unless we know Him from doctrine in the soul.

11. In the NT the cross becomes the place where God would meet man.

11.1 Thus John could say that Christ is the propitiation, the satisfaction, for the sins of believers and also for the sins of unbelievers.

1Jo 2:2 And he is the **propitiation** for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

12. The doctrine of propitiation clearly teaches that Christ's death on the cross was a substitution for sin.

2Ch 29:24 And the priests killed them, and they made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel: for the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel.

12.1 His death satisfied the righteous demands of God the Father.

12.2 As a result of that propitiation God was satisfied and the relation of the entire world to God was altered.

12.3 The propitiatory sacrifice of Christ was the basis for the reconciliation of the world to God Himself.

2Co 5:19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

13. Reconciliation has to do with the fact that the world has changed in relation to God through the death of Christ.

13.1 Propitiation is Godward taking care of the essence of God whereas reconciliation is manward and brings man back to God and redemption is sinward where sin is paid for on the cross.

14. Propitiation relates to the satisfaction brought to God as a result of the death of Christ.

15. God was the one offended by man's sin, and it is He who must be satisfied with the payment for that sin.

15.1 Man must avail himself of the Propitiation potential by faith in Christ.

Joh 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

15.2 God can never be merciful to a sinner and He can never overlook sin; it must be expiated.

Luk 18:13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

Proper Translation:

"And the tax collector standing some distance away would not even look upon God for he knew his sinful condition but he also knew the price had been paid so he cried out, " God I command that you be propitious to me a sinner".

16. The judicial work of Christ in propitiation must, of course, be appropriated by faith.

Joh 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

17. God need not be begged and persuaded to be propitious or "merciful" as the publican tried to do (Luk 18:13).

18. The work has been done. God has already been propitiated. He is satisfied with the work of Christ.

19. Now man is invited to enter by faith into that completed work.

20. Atonement is a related word.

20.1 It speaks of a process of bringing those who are enemies into harmony and unity, and thus it means reconciliation.

20.2 In the NT, the Gr, **Katallage** - καταλλαγη, "reconciliation," is once translated "atonement" where it describes the work or action of God in Jesus Christ by which the sinner is reconciled to God.

Rom 5:11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the **atonement**.

Rom 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

20.3 This reconciliation, however, is not merely any reconciliation. It takes place in a definite setting of OT teaching and practice.

20.4 The Hebrew verb Kaphar and noun form Kopher, signify appeasement or propitiation.

Exo 29:33 And the Priest shall eat those things wherewith the "atonement" was made, to consecrate and to sanctify them: but a lay person shall not eat thereof, because they are holy.

Lev 1:4 And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.

20.5 Under the Mosaic law atonement for sin was taught by the death of the animal.

20.6 The shedding of its blood was the evidence of its death.

Lev 17:11 "For the life of the body is in the blood; and I have appointed it for you to make "atonement" upon the altar in behalf of your lives; for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life [of the victim]" .

20.7 Biblical atonement has a definite form, this specific reconciliation being effected by the death of Jesus Christ in His incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension.

20.8 The Biblical concept: In both the OT and the NT the need of reconciliation is posed by the gracious, wise, and omnipotent resolve of God to satisfy His holiness and justice and yet fulfill His purpose even for sinful, guilty, alienated, and impotent man.

20.9 Man in his sin is obviously unfit for fellowship and an eternal destiny with God.

20.10 Man is neither able to absolve his guilt nor to free himself from transgression. All sorts of schemes were developed by man.

20.11 The OT sacrifices were certainly not designed as a means of human self-atonement. They pointed to the atonement of Christ.

20.12 For the fulfillment of the divine purpose in man, there is need of a substitutionary sacrifice as the basis of forgiveness, liberation, and restitution.

20.13 Now with reference to human logic, this might not seem to present any problem.

20.14 God might simply abandon man on the one side, or declare and make him righteous on the other, in an arbitrary acceptance in spite of sin.

20.15 As self-revealed in Holy Scripture, however, God is holy and loving as well as righteous, and therefore He was not willing that man should perish.

20.16 But being righteous, He neither would nor could condone man's guilt or receive him in his sin.

20.17 Reconciliation as accomplished by God is thus God's self-consistent action for the divine restoration of fellowship between Himself, an absolutely Holy God, and fallen, sinful man.

21. It may seem to us that the love and the righteousness of God pulled different ways, so that the first reconciliation had to take place within God Himself; but this is a false concept.

21.1 How could there be an action in which justice was done both to the righteousness of God on the one side and His love on the other, when it was a matter of saving guilty and impotent men?

21.2 In His eternal wisdom and power, God had in Himself before time was, the answer to this question.

21.3 Worked out historically in the action recorded in Scripture, this answer lay in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son, in whom all the demands of righteousness were met.

21.3.1 He kept the law perfectly in our stead, and in His spiritual death as He died under the penalty of the broken law.

22. Thus the purpose of absolute justice and righteousness was accomplished, man being freed from the guilt and power of sin and restored to eternal fellowship with God.

23. Let's look at the concept of "The Incarnation".

23.1 Christ was both God and man, so that He could act for both parties in one cause.

23.1.1 While the incarnation was not itself the atonement, it was its indispensable basis.

23.1.2 God now dealt with mankind in the one Godman, so that already there was in this new work an indissoluble relationship.

23.2 He fulfilled the law of God and attained righteousness, overcoming temptation and manifesting consistent obedience even to the death of the cross.

23.2.1 He thus merited to the full the divine good pleasure, but in such a manner that there was in Him no rift between the divine righteousness and divine justice.

23.3 In His obedience, He bore the righteous judgment of sin as the one for the many.

23.3.1 Thus sin was not condoned, it was judged in an act which was itself the crown of obedience and therefore acceptable to the Father.

23.4 He was raised the third day from the dead, so that the sinner judged in Him is also victoriously renewed through Him.

24. In the new life of Christ, the sinner is thus freed from the power as well as the guilt and penalty of sin, and now has the potential to live the new life to which he is restored.

25. The potential can only be realized by transforming the mind and attaining temporal sanctification on a moment by moment basis.

26. Scriptural formulations.

26.1 To describe the tremendous and inexhaustible reality of this great work of reconciliation, the Bible uses many forms of expression.

26.2 It was an act of redemption in which the price paid by another, and finally by God Himself, was the precious blood of Christ (Mar 10:45; Gal 3:13; Eph 1:7; 1Pe 1:18-19).

1Pe 1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

1Pe 1:19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

26.3 It was an act of conquest, in which the powers of evil, i.e., sin, death, the devil and hell, were overthrown (Rom 8:37; Col 2:15).

Rom 8:37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

Col 2:15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

26.4 It was an act of sacrificial propitiation, in which the pleasing self-offering of the Innocent was accepted representatively for the guilty (cf. Rom 3:25; 5:12-21; Heb 2:16-18).

Heb 2:16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.
Heb 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Heb 2:18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.

26.5 It was an act of penal judgment, in which the divine wrath was suffered by the Just for the unjust (Isa 53:10-11); and therefore in one act God was just and yet also the justifier of those who trust in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:26 ff.).

Isa 53:10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

Isa 53:11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

27. In all these statements there is an element of metaphor. They are drawn from familiar social, military, cultic and forensic situations.

28. Man is in fact enslaved, and God liberated him at a price.

29. There was in fact a conflict, and Jesus Christ on the cross triumphed in and by the defeat of Satan and the powers of evil.

30. Separation between the Holy God and sinful man is a reality, but it was bridged by the offering of Christ which was well-pleasing to God.

31. In conclusion.

31.1 First, the reality of reconciliation is so vast that no single simple statement of one aspect can claim to be adequate .

31.2 The Bible itself presents different aspects in order the better to encompass the whole.

31.3 The various presentations all bring out elements of the truth of reconciliation comprehensively.

31.4 There is an absolute reality of atonement which can be expressed fully only by accepting all of the Bible has to say with reference to our so great salvation.