

THE DOCTRINE OF PROPITIATION

- I.** Introduction.
 - A.** Propitiation means satisfaction.
 - B.** Because God is holy (absolute righteousness and justice), He cannot overlook sins and sinful conditions.
 - C.** His absolute righteousness demands a penalty for sin and what His righteousness demands, His justice fairly executes.
 - D.** Propitiation means that Jesus Christ fully satisfied all of the righteous demands of God toward sinners.
 - E.** Propitiation is related to several concepts:
 - 1.** The wrath of God: Sin is a revolt against God and He must inevitably react against it with wrath. Sin creates a tremendous liability and the demands of Divine justice must be met.
 - 2.** Because God is holy, His justice must be appeased to spare man from eternal destruction.
 - 3.** The love of God: Because of His love for mankind, God Himself provided the remedy for sin.
 - 4.** God provided the solution for sin by sending Jesus Christ as a perfect satisfaction for sin.
 - 5.** Love was the motivating factor which caused God to provide our Lord Jesus Christ to be the propitiation for our sins. 1Joh.4:9,10
 - F.** While many of the doctrines associated with salvation are directed towards man, propitiation is directed towards God.
 - G.** God was propitiated (and remains propitiated) by what Jesus Christ did on the cross.
 - H.** Christ's work on the cross satisfied the perfect righteousness (+R) and justice (+J) of God. Heb.2:17; 1Joh.2:2; 4:10
 - 1.** This relates to mankind in general: He provided the satisfaction for all sins a.k.a. the doctrine of Unlimited Atonement.
 - 2.** And to each of us specifically; each of us has sinned and our sins are violations of God's +R.
 - I.** His perfect work on the cross removed the wrath of God from all who accept the free gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Joh.3:36; Rom.5:9
 - J.** Propitiation is a doctrine that falls under the broad category of Soteriology (doctrines related to or associated with salvation).
 - K.** While it has fallen into disfavor with modernist/liberalist theologians (because they do not like to acknowledge the wrath of God) this doctrine is clearly taught in both the Old and New Testaments.
 - L.** When men attempt to denigrate this doctrine as being unworthy of God, they demonstrate ignorance of God's attributes.
 - 1.** God's +R demanded satisfaction for sin.
 - 2.** God's +J (operating under sovereignty, omniscience, and omnipotence) secures what His righteousness demands.
 - 3.** Jesus Christ provided satisfaction.
 - M.** Other doctrines that are closely related to this doctrine:

1. Atonement/Expiation.
2. Redemption.
3. Reconciliation.
4. Justification.
5. Regeneration.
6. Adoption.
7. Forgiveness.

II. Vocabulary:

- A. There are no specific Hebrew terms for propitiation though the concept is illustrated in the O.T.
- B. ἱλάσκομαι – hilaskomai: to be propitious, to make propitiation.
- C. ἱλασμός – hiliastos: propitiation, an offering which provides satisfaction; a sin offering.
- D. ἱλαστήριον – hilasterion: a place of propitiation, a mercy seat; this word is used two times in the New Testament:
 1. Heb.9:5: Mercy seat.
 2. Rom.3:25: Correctly translated, this verse makes it clear that Christ was our place of propitiation, our mercy seat. (Many other verses teach that He was also Himself the sin offering which provided satisfaction).

III. Propitiation and the Essence of God.

- A. An understanding of the Divine Essence (the attributes of God) is necessary to fully understand this doctrine.
- B. His attributes are righteousness, justice, sovereignty, eternal life, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, immutability, veracity and love.
- C. God's righteousness and justice together equate to His Holiness.
- D. His +R made propitiation necessary.
 1. Scripture reveals that God is absolutely righteous and separate from evil of any sort. Deu.32:4; Psa.11:7; 119:137; 145:17; Hab.1:13; Jam.1:13; Rev.15:3
 2. Since He is +R and His standards are perfect, anyone that violates them must be wrong. Cp.Psa.19:9; 119:75
 3. He is holy. Jos.24:19
 4. He cannot ignore any violation of His standards.
 - a. He uses the strongest terms to describe His attitude toward violations of His righteousness. Cp.Pro.6:16-19; Zec.8:17; Mal.2:16
 - b. The phrase “*the anger of the Lord*” is used some 35 times in the O.T. to express His response to sin and evil.
 - c. He hates all who perform iniquity. Psa.5:5; 1Pet.3:12
 - d. This is not a passing response, but an attitude that God consistently maintains. Cp.Psa.7:11; Rom.1:18
 5. All men descending from Adam are guilty before Him, a fact He does not overlook. Rom.3:9-18,23; 5:18a “*condemnation*”
- E. His +J pronounces the deserved sentence.

- F.** His omnipotence guarantees that His sovereign sentence will be carried out.
 - G.** Immutability guarantees that He will not change His mind.
 - H.** Omniscience is required to validate these matters.
 - 1. Omniscience is aware of each sin that is committed against God. Pro.15:3; Jer.16:17
 - 2. Only the One who knows all violations could truly know if each violation had received the just penalty.
 - a. Men could never truly satisfy God with regard to their own sins, since a man could never be aware of all his own sins.
 - b. Ignorance of one's trespass does not exempt one from the required punishment. Cp.Lev.5:17
 - 3. God is the only One who could pronounce that each and every sin had received its just penalty.
 - 4. Since a man is incapable of satisfying God's justice for even himself, he certainly could never provide a solution for all men.
 - 5. God is the only One who could know the sins, know if they had been judged, and know if absolute justice had been satisfied.
 - 6. The idea of propitiating God, through any human system of merit, is destined for failure since man lacks even the degree of knowledge sufficient for the task.
 - I.** The love of God motivated Him to provide the solution.
 - 1. As we have noted, man is completely incapable of satisfying God in regard to sins.
 - 2. Due to the magnitude and universal nature of the problem, God is the only possible source of a solution.
 - 3. He provided the answer in the person of His Son. Joh.3:16 cp.1Joh.4:10
 - 4. He provided the solution for every person, regardless of their personal decision to accept or reject the free gift of His provision. 1Joh.2:2 cp.Rom.3:24; Eph.2:8,9
 - 5. The Bible declares that God's justice executed His righteous demands with regard to our sins when they were judged in His Son. 1Pet.2:24; Rom.3:24; Heb.13:12 cf. Isa.53:3-12
 - 6. God has declared that His justice has been perfectly satisfied by the work of His Son. Heb.10:10-17
 - 7. Thus the person of our Lord Jesus Christ is both the *hilasterion* (a place of propitiation, a mercy seat, a place of satisfaction) and the *hilasmos* (a sin offering that provides satisfaction) that satisfied the +R and +J of God. Rom.3:25; 1Joh.2:2
- IV.** Propitiation is illustrated in the Ark of the Covenant and the burnt offering in the O.T.
- A.** The Ark of the Covenant (the mercy seat was the cover for the ark; Exo.25:10-22; 37:1-9; Lev.16:1-17; Heb.9:1-14)
 - 1. The ark was a box of acacia wood overlaid with gold, speaking of the hypostatic union (Jesus Christ is the God/man).
 - a. The wood portrayed His humanity.
 - b. The gold portrayed His Deity.

2. It contained three items. Heb.9:4
 - a. The tablets of the Law illustrated sin as a violation of God's +R. (Men violate the Law; Christ perfectly kept the Law).
 - b. Aaron's rod that budded showed sin as a rejection of authority. Num.17:1-10
 - c. The pot of manna spoke of sin as negative volition (-V) to Bible doctrine (BD):
 - 1) The instructions regarding the manna were a test as to whether or not the Jews of the Exodus generation would obey God's instruction. Exo.16:4
 - 2) They manifested -V to God's word by failing to follow His instruction. Exo.16:16-20
 - 3) They rejected God's provision with their constant complaining. Num.11:1-35; 21:5
3. So the contents of the ark portrayed areas of sin.
4. The ark and its contents form a shadow of Christ bearing the sins of the world in His own body. 1Pet.2:24
5. God was propitiated (satisfied) by what Christ did on the cross.
6. The lid of the ark was solid gold; on each end it had a cherub. (This pictures God's +R and +J of rule that must be satisfied)
7. Once a year, on the Feast of Atonement, the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place (sometimes called the Holy of Holies) and sprinkled blood on the mercy seat seven times.
8. This represented Christ propitiating the Father on the cross. Lev.16:1-19; Heb.9:1-28
 - a. The sins (as portrayed by the Law, the rod, and the manna) were in the ark.
 - b. The ark portrayed Christ; our sins were judged in His body. 1Pet.2:24
 - c. The mercy seat was the top of the ark.
 - d. Blood was applied to the mercy seat, symbolically "covering" the sins within.
 - e. The blood portrays the work of Christ in atoning for our sins once and for all, thus propitiating God the Father.
- B.** The burnt offering. Lev.1:1-17
 1. The various offerings were designed by the Lord to perfectly picture various aspects of the work of Christ.
 2. He is the One who knew precisely what would be required, so He is the One who established the offerings (vss1,2).
 3. This offering perfectly pictured Atonement and Propitiation.
 4. All sacrifices had to be male, pointing to the fact that God's Son would be a male (vs.3).
 5. The fact that it had to be without defect, teaches the sinless perfection of our Lord Jesus Christ (vs.3).
 6. The offeror was to lay his hands on the head of the animal, indicating his identification with his offering (vs.4); the animal was identified with his sins and the animal pictured the atonement by which Jesus Christ would propitiate the justice of God (Christ was identified with our sins on the cross fulfilling what the animal only pictured. Cp.2Cor.5:21).

7. The offering was to be slaughtered, picturing the work of Christ on the cross in bearing our sins (vs.5). Cp.1The.5:10; 1Pet.3:18
 8. The sacrifice had to be skinned and the internal organs exposed (vs.6), teaching that Christ was thoroughly evaluated, both overtly by men and internally by God. Cp.Mat.17:5; Joh.8:46
 9. The parts were to be placed on the bronze altar; bronze pictures judgment, thus the bronze altar typifies the cross (vss.7,8).
 10. They were to be completely consumed by fire; fire also pictures judgment and the burning of the animal portrayed the judgment of God upon the Messiah. Cp.Isa.53:6,10-12; 1Pet.2:24
 11. The complete incineration of the animal (vs.9) illustrates the totality of the sacrifice of Christ; He was judged for every sin; nothing was held back.
 12. Spiritual death is separation from God and during the period of sin bearing He was separated from the Godhead. Cp.Mat.27:46
 13. The ascending smoke, designated as a soothing (or fragrant) aroma, teaches the impact of Christ's sacrifice in heaven and God's acceptance of this sacrifice which provided the satisfaction (propitiation) of His +R and +J (vs.9).
 14. The various types of animals used indicates that propitiation is available to all, rich and poor, great and small (vss.3,10,14). 1Joh.2:2 cp. 1Tim.4:10
- C. Abraham's test in offering Isaac as a burnt offering illustrated propitiation. Gen.22:1-19.
1. The test designed to critique Abraham's love for God in obedience (Gen.22:12,b,18b) was symbolic of God the Father offering His Son Jesus Christ in atonement and propitiation of sins on the cross.
 2. Just as the whole burnt offering of an animal taught propitiation, so did the offering of Isaac as a whole burnt offering.
 3. Isaac is declared to be a type of Christ in Heb.11:19.
 4. Isaac, like Christ, was his father's only son. Cf.Joh.3:16
 5. The wood/tree used for the offering represented the cross of Christ. Cf.Gal.3:13
 6. Isaac carrying the wood represented Christ carrying the cross-beam on the way to Golgotha. Cf.Mat.27:31,32
 7. The knife, the instrument of death, represented the efficacious work (spiritual death) of Christ on the cross; Christ died twice on the cross, spiritual and physical. Isa.53:9 "...in His deaths (Hebrew plural of *maweth*); cf.Phi.2:8
 8. It was Christ's spiritual death that propitiated God the Father as to sins.
 9. Isaac's silence in being bound and placed on the altar represented Christ's complete obedience and submission to the Father's authority. Cf.Isa.53:7; Joh.5:30
 10. The stopping of the sacrifice with respect to being a test was performed by "*the Angel of Yahweh*", being Yahweh Himself (cf.Gen.22:16).
 11. He is visualized in the 3rd Heaven calling down to Abraham as the pre-incarnate God-man (cf.Gen.16:7-13).
 12. His intercession and halting of the test teaches that only the unique God-man is qualified to be a sacrifice with respect to sins.

13. That a substitute is needed for men in this vein is then illustrated in God providing the ram as an alternative for sacrifice.
14. The test for Abraham not only tested his love for God, but taught that propitiation in sacrifice to the Father must come from One Whom God provides, not from an earthly father e.g., a virgin birth. Cf. Mat. 1:18; Luk. 1:26-35

V. The Results of Propitiation:

- A. It frees God to share His +R with man a.k.a the Doctrine of Imputation.
- B. It frees God to share His life with man a.k.a. the Doctrine of Regeneration.
- C. It frees God to offer Ph₂ and Ph₃ blessings to the believer.

*“and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins;
And not for ours only, but also for the whole world.”*

1Joh.2:2