

Scanning Everything from the Mt. Everest of Propitiation

PROPITIATION – an atoning sacrifice that satisfies the wrath of God on behalf of those for whom it is made.

The five pillars in God's plan of propitiation:

1.) Propitiation is required by God's character.

2.) Propitiation is initiated by God's love.

3.) Propitiation is defined by substitution.

4.) Propitiation is accomplished by Christ's death.

5.) Propitiation is appropriated by faith.

INTRODUCTION: *The Need for a Perfect Propitiation.* The seriousness of sin: The dominant problem in the world is sin. It stains every life, disturbs every relationship, fixes itself on every baby, rules the heart of every worldling. It makes us susceptible to disease, suffering, war, death, and ultimately hell. Sin is incurable (Jer 13:23). Sin brings us under the control of Satan. It brings misery. It makes us children of wrath who are enslaved to sin under the lordship of the evil one (Eph 2:1-3). Sin renders us unable to love God and to please God (Rom 8:5-8).

Sin is lawlessness according to 1 John 3:4. It is the violation of God's immutable law. Scripture describes sin as lawlessness, transgression, moral stumbling, enslavement to lusts and passions, pollution, rebellion. Sin produces a moral debt to God. Sin racks up a debt of moral obligation to God that ignites the fires of hell (Matt 18:23-34).

God is holy and will therefore punish all sin. All sin is against God first and foremost (Ps 51:4). Unforgiven sin exposes the soul to unquenchable divine wrath – God will not acquit the guilty (Ex 23:7). Sinners go through life accumulating sin. God has told us that there is a strict principle operating of moral cause and effect (Gal 6:7, 8).

Scripture warns that unrepentant souls are “storing up wrath for the day of wrath” (Rom 2:5, 6ff). Those who do not repent and come to God for forgiveness will have God's eternal wrath released upon them. God is determined to not leave the guilty unpunished (Ps 7:11). He is angry with the wicked everyday. God regards it to be an abomination to justify the wicked (Prov 17:15; 24:24).

God's punishment of sin will be absolutely comprehensive. Every violation of God's law will be punished. Judgment will extend to the thoughts, motives, and secrets of the heart (Rom 2:16; Heb 4:12). Divine judgment will extend to every careless word spoken (Matt 12:36, 37). Those who hope to have their severity of judgment offset by their efforts at law-keeping will be horrified to discover that they have offset none of their condemnation (Gal 3:10-13; James 2:10; Rom 3:19, 20). (When we see the wicked prosper in this life, we forget at times that they are hanging by a thread over the mouth of hell (Ps 37; 73; Job 21).

Sin is man's greatest problem; forgiveness is man's greatest need. God has already sworn that He will punish every transgression. Yet the glorious news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that God desires to forgive sins and to bury them in the deepest sea of His forgetfulness (Is 43:25). Your personal relationship with God begins when you receive forgiveness in Christ. This glorious gift of forgiveness becomes the basis of your relationship with God (Eph 1:7:2:8, 9; 1 Jn 1:9; 2:2). But in order to receive God's forgiveness in Christ, we must recognize the depth and seriousness of our sinfulness. You must be willing to depart from your sin and surrender to Christ as Lord (Titus 2:14-3:6). Those who come to God for forgiveness understand that they are sinners who deserve God's wrath. They understand that God grants forgiveness and that they must confess their sins to God (Luke 18:13).

God's Holy Spirit prepares the sinner to see his need of forgiveness and to see God's willingness to forgive (John 16:8-11). God's Spirit brings us to the conviction that we desperately need forgiveness. The Spirit produces both the conviction of our sinfulness and guilt (and its eternal consequences), and the reality that you need to ask God for forgiveness and that He is willing to hear and forgive you (see Is 55:6-11).

God does not forgive by being indifferent or lenient toward sin. The sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God was necessary in order for us to be forgiven. In order to receive forgiveness, we must understand and believe that forgiveness comes only through faith in Christ and His shed blood for sinners (1 Pet 2:24; 3:18; Heb 9:14). (Countless individuals who know something of the guilt of their

sin stop short of faith in Christ and instead put their hope in religious works. Sadly they hope God will make some sort of exchange with them of effort and sincerity for salvation. God will not forgive on the basis of human works or religious exertion, only on the basis of Christ's finished work upon the cross does He receive sinners.)

The Gospel must be preached, for in the Gospel, God's way of putting sinners right with Himself is revealed and uncovered (Rom 1:16, 17). The Gospel reveals how God can be perfectly just when He justifies guilty sinners (Rom 3:26). The Gospel therefore proclaims God's "legal basis" for the forgiveness of sinners.

Propitiation defined: It is impossible for man to make an adequate atonement for his sins that God will accept (Ps 49:5-9). *PROPITIATION* – is an atoning sacrifice that satisfies the wrath of God on behalf of those for whom it is made). Oh how important it is to know where to find a perfect atonement for your sins.

The Five Pillars in God's Plan of Propitiation:

1.) (Pillar One) Propitiation is required by God's character.

In the propitiation at Calvary, God's wrath was poured out upon Christ in order to vindicate God's justice, and to make possible His grace (He is "Just and the Justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus").

QUESTIONS WE NEED TO CONSIDER: *What is it about God that requires propitiation for sin? What is it about God that provides propitiation for sin? What is it about man (as the image of God) that eliminates every proposed solution to sin and guilt but a divinely planned propitiation? The infinite wisdom of God is manifested in the cross (1 Cor 1:18-25). Christ is God's wisdom – all treasures of God's wisdom and knowledge are in Christ (in Christ's Person and in Christ crucified). That God should plan man's salvation, a salvation that magnifies God's grace and at the same time, uphold and exalt **all of God's attributes** is infinite wisdom.*

The manner in which God has chosen to save rebellious sinners must uphold and vindicate God's justice. (ILLUSTRATIONS: *A Cossack leader passed a law that anyone caught stealing food would be beaten with 30 lashes on a bare back. When the hood was pulled off of the face of an elderly woman who had stolen food, it turned out to be the leader's mother. The leader bared his back, sheltering her, he put his arms around his mother as he took the 30 stripes for her. This is justice and mercy in the same act.) In a second example of justice upheld in mercy – a Roman governor passed a law that adultery should require that the male perpetrator have both eyes put out. When his own son was caught in the act, the governor had one of his own eyes put out and one of his son's eyes put out. In both of the above illustrations, the action of the substitute was 100% voluntary.)*

God's righteousness and justice are **demonstrated** in Christ's propitiatory work (v. 26). The truth exalted in this demonstration is that God is utterly just and righteous when He forgives the sin and guilt of believing men and women. God's honor is linked to the fact that there must be **a legal basis** (in the sight of God's law) for the forgiveness of sins. **The divine legal basis for God extending forgiveness to sinners is propitiation -- Romans 3:19-26.**

2.(Pillar Two) Propitiation is initiated by God's love.

The plan to give His only begotten Son to be a propitiation for sinners comes from the heart of God the Father (Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 4:9, 10; Rom 5:8). God was in Christ, "reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Cor 5:19). Rom 3:25 -- God "displayed" His Son publicly as a PROPITIATION. This "placarding" of

Christ was, as we will see, for a most important purpose (Grk. *Protithemai* – to show publicly or openly). (The crucifixion of Christ involved both Jew and Gentile. It did not happen in some lonesome corner of the world but at the crossroads of three continents – see Acts 26:26.)

Propitiation is the heart of the Gospel. In the truth of propitiation, the purpose of the cross is clearly unfolded. Propitiation is indispensable to the understanding of the Gospel. Propitiation teaches us that the nature of Christ's death on Calvary was that of an atoning sacrifice that satisfied the just wrath of God against sinners. Thus propitiation is the heart of the Gospel – it reveals the heart of God who is jealous for His own holy honor and it reveals the heart of God who loves the world (Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 4:9, 10).

3.) (Pillar Three) Propitiation is defined by substitution.

God's wrath is His holy disposition against sin. Wrath is His righteous response to sin against His holy character (expressed in His moral law).

In pagan religions the worshipper was responsible to satisfy the offended deity. In the glorious Gospel, Christ Himself is the satisfaction of God's wrath on behalf of all those who will believe. ***This is the principle of substitution; the Son of God being punished in our place (Rom 5:9; 1 Thess 1:9; Is 53).***

The very first issue when considering atonement is this: ***the value of the atonement is not set by the guilty party, it is determined solely by the Judge, (God Almighty who will judge the living and the dead).*** Tragically, there are millions of people around the world seeking to offset their wrongdoing by forms of penance/atonement NOT recognized by God (hot wax on the hands, stair-climbing on the knees, burning candles, religious rituals and ceremonies, repetitious prayers, social work, etc.).

When seeking an answer to the question, "On what basis can God clear the record of a sinful rebel?" we will have to ask the question, "What is the nature of Christ's death?" Was it primarily an example, or a demonstration of love, or was it the very height of martyrdom, or some sort of sacrifice that won God's love for the world? In understanding what Christ accomplished on Calvary's cross, God's authoritative, infallible interpretation of what took place is the only thing that matters. Romans 3 makes it clear that Christ's death was a **true penal substitution.** PENAL SUBSTITUTION is the glory of the Gospel!

Is God's absolute moral law upheld when He forgives believing sinners? Romans 3 answers that question in the affirmative. God cannot forgive sin by a legislative act. When He forgives sin, it is not clemency, it is not leniency, it is not an unpaid pardon, it is not indifference toward sin, it is not a legislative act.

When God forgives sins, it involves a *judicial* act. When God forgives, it must involve justice; it must not be a violation of His justice because God's justice is immutable. Christ being displayed publicly as a propitiation involves God's intent to show the whole world the **legal basis** for the forgiveness of sins! We could accurately say that ***God only forgives what He pays for!*** This is the only way that God could remain righteous when He forgives wicked men.

4.) (Pillar Four) Propitiation was accomplished by Christ's death.

Propitiation involves the satisfaction of God's justice by the death of Christ for us. The trampling of His holy law must be fully addressed if sinners are to be cleared of guilt. God's inviolate honor would be bruised if sinners were restored without justice being done. For God's righteousness character is codified in the Law. ***This broken law, despised by sinners, must be answered, addressed head on, and vindicated if sinners are to be forgiven and restored to God.***

Application: I hope that you are picking up on the fact that it is not as easy for God to forgive as one might think – in order for God to pour out oceans of mercy upon sinners, His justice must be fully satisfied.

Key in understanding propitiation is that it is a transaction between the Father and the Only Begotten Son of God on behalf of sinful man. Just before the Lord Jesus Christ gave up His spirit in death on the cross He uttered these words, “It is finished” (Grk. *Tetelestai* – [it is] paid in full (Jn 19:30). This same word, *tetelestai*, was written upon first century tax receipts that had been paid in full.) How significant this is for our understanding of the nature of the atonement. Jesus paid and paid until the Father said “Enough! I am satisfied. My wrath against the sin of believers has been fully satisfied and placated.”

Application: We are frequently tempted to run somewhere other than to the atonement when we feel our guilt and failure. How significant this is for us who are frequently disturbed by the sense of our sinfulness and failure over against God’s law. How vital to our walk with God that we know precisely how satisfied the Father is with the finished work of the Son on Calvary on our behalf. We need often to think clearly through propitiation, the heart of the Gospel, and its application to us. God’s Holy Spirit assists us in this – He points to the blood (John 16:14).

5. (Pillar Five) Propitiation is appropriated by faith.

Faith is the instrument by which propitiation is applied to us. (By faith in Christ and His substitutionary death, we find full and free forgiveness in the cross.) In the exercise of saving faith the believing sinner **transfers** all reliance away from self and self efforts. He or she stakes all confidence of eternity with God the Person of Christ and His merits. (Faith is not the ground of our salvation, the work of Christ on the cross is the very foundation of our salvation.)

Application: The God of the Bible is not a god who is detached, distant, implacable, unappeased, unmerciful, unknowable. The God of the Bible cannot be mollified and softened by human works, by Mary or priests, or by religious acts. God has planned our salvation from start to finish. He has given His only begotten Son. Christ’s sacrifice is the basis for all mercy poured out upon the believing and repenting sinner.

Dear people, there is a great need for repentance here regarding the things that you have heard. It is in our sin nature to distribute our soul’s security or “weight” over things that cannot save us. Your eternal destiny depends upon your willingness to turn away from all false atonements. You must cast yourself upon Christ alone – the God of the universe has provided a perfect atonement for sinners. Christ is the propitiation that provides the only secure refuge from God’s wrath. God is glorified when we take refuge in Him. On the last day, all false refuges will be exposed as such. They cannot save us more than a cardboard box could save us from a tidal wave.

The Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ: He is Mediator of His propitiation

Hebrews 5:5-10 – He is the source of eternal salvation to those who obey Him.

Hebrews 7:25-28 – Jesus holds His priesthood permanently; He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him. He is perfectly suited to our needs – infinitely superior to all fallible human priests.

Hebrews 8:6-13 – Christ is High Priest and is Mediator of the new covenant.

Hebrews 9:11-15 – Christ as High Priest entered the perfect tabernacle to offer His own blood. He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. Christ’s blood will cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Hebrews 9:24-28 – Christ entered the holy place, heaven, to appear in the presence of God for us. He represents believers as High Priest. He was offered ONCE, to bear the sins of many.

Hebrews 10:5-9 – The Father prepared a body for Christ to “sacrifice” once for all. God’s will was for Christ to offer Himself to the Father as a sacrifice for us.

Hebrews 10:10-18 – By Christ’s once for all sacrifice, believing sinners have been set apart to God, once for all.

Hebrews 10:19-23 – Confident access to God is only through the once for all finished work of Christ.

Hebrews 13:10-16 – Christ was offered once for all that He might sanctify us. He suffered outside the gate. We must identify with Him, bearing His reproach. Since Christ’s work is finished, the only sacrifice that remains to be offered by “believer priests” is the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving (see 1 Peter 2:5, 9, 10).

The implications of Christ’s work of propitiation:

1.) The mediation, dispensing, and application of the infinite benefits of Christ’s work on Calvary belong to the Trinity, not to man! The application of Christ’s propitiatory work is by the power of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Peter 1:2; Titus 3:5-7). How dangerous for man through religion to try to control it, manage it, dispense it, harness it, sell it, mediate it, or market it! Judgment awaits those who have sought to usurp the role of the Holy Spirit in applying the saving benefits of propitiation through manmade religion. Christ is the High Priest who offered Himself once for all to God. Sinful man is not needed in this offering. Christ’s work of offering Himself is finished, complete, and all-sufficient.

2.) If Christ’s work is indeed finished, then the only work for us that remains, regarding sacrifice as His priests, is that of praise and thanksgiving. (Consider the blasphemous error of the “bloody” offering of the mass in light of this biblical truth.)

3.) The Christian life is built solely upon the foundation of Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor 3:11). Even ongoing forgiveness is based upon the all-sufficient, finished propitiation of Christ (1 John 2:2).

4.) What are the ramifications of knowing that God propitiates His own wrath against sin? First, man can have no part in the atonement. Second, all three members of the trinity are involved in your salvation. The Father planned your salvation, the Son secured it, and the Holy Spirit applies it. Under the new covenant, God’s name is “Father.” Third, all barriers to your fellowship and acceptance with God have been removed by propitiation. As such, God in Christ has removed all that disqualifies the believer from fellowship, love and security in God as His beloved child (1 John 1:1-4). Fourth, it is impossible to know God, unless you know Him as the God who has given His Son to be a propitiation for sin—we must know Him as propitious (1 John 4:9, 10; 2 Cor 4:6).