

1 John 2:2

“Christ, Our Propitiation”

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: **And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world.***

Introduction

A couple Wednesday evenings ago we began studying these verses by looking at the purpose John states for writing what he has written (V.1a “that ye sin not”). What John has said about forgiveness and what we are about to study in these two verses were not written to excuse our sin or soothe our rebellious consciences, but instead to motivate us to live holy. If that is the purpose, then what John writes next is the promise. John writes, “And if any man sin.” The word “and” can also mean “but.” Stated that way it would read, “These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. But if any man sin.” John MacArthur writes:

“The Greek grammar of the phrase if anyone sins is instructive. The verb is an aorist subjunctive third-class conditional that conveys the strong probability of actual occurrence. John’s expression could be translated “if anyone sins, and it will happen.” Immediately following his emphasis in the first part of verse 1 that believers do not have to sin, the apostle acknowledges that they definitely will (cf. 1:8, 10). (The pronoun we encompasses the apostle with the “little children,” also referred to earlier in verse 1, showing that the apostle has to be referring to the sins of true believers.” John MacArthur, 1–3 John, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary; Accordance electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 2007), 45.

The promise is that when we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, and our advocate is Jesus Christ the righteous! Then we come to V.2 and find the provision. Our advocate is also the propitiation for our sins! It is important to remember a quote I read last week and that is that,

“Christ’s intercession is the continual application of his death to our salvation” John Calvin. If that is true, and I believe we would all agree that it is then Christ’s propitiation is what gives His advocacy merit. If our sins are not paid then we have no case before God, but if our Lawyer is not only representing us but has paid the cost for our crimes, then we have a plea!

The provision is found in v.2, “And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” Notice what the text does not say. The text does not say, and He has provided the propitiation for our sins but it says He is the propitiation. He is the provision! Christ Himself is the propitiation for our sins. I was reading in Matthew 1 for our Bible challenge and in the footnotes of Matthew 1:21 said that He could be stated He Himself, which would read, “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for He Himself shall save His people from their sins.” Christ would do this, He would save His people from their sins by being their sacrifice!

There are two main ***provisions*** in Christ our propitiation. 1. God is Satisfied. 2. We are Secure! Christ is the Father’s satisfaction, Christ is the sacrifice for sin, and Christ is the saints solace! Let’s spend some time looking at these provisions.

1. **Christ Himself is the Father’s Satisfaction** – Atonement

The word propitiation has the idea of expiation. It is appeasement that has been made necessary by sin. Propitiation is the act or means by which atonement is made. At the heart of atonement is reconciliation which is the restoration or repairing of God’s relationship with sinful men and women. The Biblical and correct view of propitiation is very important to Christian faith and practice. If we do not right understand what God has done for us in Christ then we will not be thankful and we will not strive to walk worthy of His high calling!

Before we can rightly understand propitiation, we need to make sure we have a correct understanding of sin. Sin is simply defined as missing the mark, but there is much more involved. We have to understand that the “bullseye” is the standard demanded by God’s law. Sin is doing what God says not to or not doing what God says to do. Sin is stepping over the boundary set by God’s Law. R.C. Sproul writes, “Even the smallest sin is an act of rebellion against God. Every sin is an act of cosmic treason, a futile attempt to dethrone God in His sovereign authority.”

Sin is not judged by the way we perceive it but by the reality that it is disobedience to God’s command and a violation of His Law. We have all sinned and come short of God’s glory, not by accident but on purpose. We are sinners by birth or nature because in Adam all die. We are sinners by choice because as a moral agent with the ability to choose right from wrong we have willfully chosen to disobey what God has commanded. The Scripture declares that the wages of sin is death. That is the only just payment there is for sin and sin must be paid for because God is righteous. He has to punish disobedience to His Law because it would be wrong not to. If He is Holy and requires holiness on our part, our rebellion to His command must be punished.

John MacArthur puts it this way, “God’s justice must be satisfied. Every sin ever committed by every person who has ever lived will be punished in one of two ways. Either God’s wrath will be satisfied when all unrepentant and unbelieving sinners suffer eternally in hell (Matt. 13:42; 25:41, 46; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:15), or for all who, by the convicting and regenerating power of the Spirit, repent and believe savingly in Jesus, God’s wrath is satisfied by the punishment of Christ Himself on the cross (John 3:14–18). Divine punishment rendered forgiveness according to God’s sovereign love and grace” (cf. Rom. 3:24–26). John MacArthur,

1–3 John, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary; Accordance electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 2007), 47-48.

God's justice must be and will be satisfied. However, in love and grace God provided a way for us to receive forgiveness! John's audience would have understood propitiation and would have probably thought about the Old Testament sacrifices! The word that is translated propitiation is also translated mercy seat in the LXX (Greek OT/This is according to John MacArthur).

“And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which *are* upon the ark of the testimony, of all *things* which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel” (Exodus 25:21–22).

So, the mercy seat was to be in between the Shekinah glory cloud and the tablets that contained the Law of God that were placed inside the ark. We know that the blood of the sacrifice would be sprinkled on the mercy seat! **The sacrifice would then be coming between the glory of God and His broken law. God would come down and “accept” the sacrifice that was being offered to Him for the Law that they had broken.**

We know that no animal sacrifice could atone for sin. “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. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year.

For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure” (Hebrews 10:1–6).

“Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *offering* for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure *therein*; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these *is, there is no more offering for sin*” (Hebrews 10:7–18).

With one offering, the offering of Himself, Jesus Christ forever satisfied the wrath of God against the sin of all who believe! This is because Jesus was worth more than all the OT sacrifices put together. He had kept the Law of God to perfection and then He endured the punishment for Law breakers! Then John says something amazing. He says that Christ is not only their propitiation but is also the propitiation for the whole world!

Propitiation would have been something John's audience was familiar with. "Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that *is* for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: And he shall make an atonement for the holy *place*, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness. And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy *place*, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel" (Leviticus 16:15–17).

When Jesus was about to be crucified "And one of them, *named* Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11:49–52).

"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;" (Revelation 5:9).

John proclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!" He didn't come for only one nation, He didn't come for only one people group, He didn't come for only one class of people, but as the children's song says, "red and yellow, black and white, they're all precious in His sight!" In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, bond nor free, but all have been made one in Him (Gal. 3:28)! Unlike the OT that sacrificed many lambs for

one nation, Christ is the One Lamb for the whole world! And this offering is the satisfaction for all believers in the whole world throughout the entirety of human history. Yes, He is the Savior of the world! What comfort and peace this affords the child of God!

Now let's put this in context. John is writing that these believers' sin not, but if they do, he wants them to know they have an advocate who is the propitiation for their sins! Their sins have been paid for! Their fellowship is secure!

Although the scripture teaches that God hates all workers of iniquity and is angry at the wicked every day, "The thought is 'not that of appeasing one who is angry ... against the offender; but of altering the character of that which from without occasions a necessary alienation, and interposes an inevitable obstacle to fellowship' (Westcott). The *hilasmos* changes man not God; it annuls his sin and thus removes the barrier to fellowship with God." John R. W. Stott, *The Letter of John: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 19; IVP/Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 90. Christ is not simply pacifying an angry deity, Christ is removing the obstacle of our fellowship! Pagan religions offered sacrifices to pacify their angry deity's, but none of those experienced fellowship with their God! Our God offers the satisfactory offering Himself to remove the hinderance or obstacle to our fellowship with Him! God has secured us for Himself, by Himself!

What John is telling his community of believers and what John is telling us is that although we sin, because of Christ, our fellowship is never broken! To the believer who is walking in the light, confessing their sin, and is being cleansed by the blood/death of Christ our fellowship is as secure as the trinity's fellowship!

“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” (John 17:22–23).