

PROPITIATION

Romans 3:21-26 *“²¹ But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith, for a demonstration of His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”*

Hebrews 2:16-18 *“¹⁶ For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the seed of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore, He had to be made like His brothers in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to help those who are tempted.”*

1 John 1:1-2 *“¹ My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ² and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*

1 John 4:10-11 *“¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”*

Another BIG word: PROPITIATION—what does the word mean? It is from the Greek verb, ἱλάσκομαι (hilaskomai), which the Greeks used to describe making their gods propitious (appeased, favorable) to earn their good will. However, this is never the way the word is used in the Bible, with respect to God because man cannot do anything to bring God into a favorable attitude or gracious disposition toward sinful man.

Understanding the absolute holiness and righteousness of God, what do we possess physically, morally, or spiritually that compares to God’s holiness? The answer is

absolutely NOTHING—we are sinners without the ability to even conceive of holiness, much less practice holiness!

Our only response in the presence of God’s holiness is demonstrated by what Isaiah did when He went to the Temple and saw the Lord: ¹ *In the year of King Uzziah’s death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, with the train of His robe filling the temple.* ² *Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.* ³ *And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is Yahweh of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory.”* ⁴ *And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called out, while the house of God was filling with smoke.* ⁵ *Then I said, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh of hosts.”* (Isaiah 6:1-5)

We are hopeless sinners who have no favor or standing before the Holy God. We desperately need someone to invite and empower us sinner to draw near to God! We are not qualified!

It is always God who must provide propitiation through the divine barrier of His own holy and righteous character. In that regard, God is only propitiated through the vicarious and expiatory sacrifice of Christ, the incarnate God.

God cannot, God never has, God never will, let any sin go unpunished. Our sin is pardoned in Christ or punished in hell. But it will never be overlooked. If God were to let sin go unpunished, God himself would become a sinner.

At the cross, God so dealt with sin that He can show mercy to the believing sinner in removing his guilt and covering his sins.

In Luke 18:13, a form of the Greek word, ἱλάσκομαι, is used by the tax collector in his prayer—it is translated, “*be merciful!*” The tax collector wanted God to be propitious on his behalf. Since God is immutable, His relative attitude toward sin and ungodliness only changes toward those who themselves change in their attitude and actions toward sin and God.

He wills to act differently towards those who come to Him by faith, solely on the ground of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, Since He never acts contrary to His unchanging righteousness, the sin of mankind required the penalty of judgmental wrath which was poured out on our substitute at Calvary!

The propitious work of the Cross is the means whereby the barrier which sin interposes between God and man is broken down. By sacrificially giving up His sinless life, and receiving the penalty for the sins of mankind, Christ canceled the power and penalty of sin that would separate God and the *believer*.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew verb, *kaphar*, is the root of the word, *kopher*, a *covering* (e.g., *mercy-seat*). The blood of the sacrificial lamb sprinkled on the mercy-seat served as God's act of propitiation for His people, because "*the life of the flesh is in the blood*," (Leviticus 17:11).

Sin has caused every person to forfeit his life, and God has provided the one and only way whereby eternal life can be bestowed, namely, by His only Son voluntarily laying down His life, thereby, providing Divine retribution to cover the sins of mankind.

According to Dr Adrian Rogers, "Christianity is described in three sentences: *"I deserve hell. Jesus took my hell. There's nothing left for me but His heaven. That is salvation by grace... God is a holy God. Because God is a holy God, God's anger and God's justice condemns sin. God has sworn that the sinner must be penalized and punished. But, If God punished sinners for their sin, they would die and spend eternity in Hell.*

However, God loves mankind and desires to spend eternity with mankind. Yet, if God did not punish man for his sin, His justice would never be satisfied, His holiness would be sullied, and His righteousness would never be propitiated. In other words, He would no longer be a holy God!"

God solved the problem by becoming a substitute. God became flesh, came to earth as a man, and lived a sinless life. Since the penalty for sin is death (Romans 3:23), The sinless, holy, incarnate God took the sin of mankind upon Himself.

In His agonizing death on the cross, God received the penalty for humanity's sin. He became mankind's satisfaction for sin's penalty and fulfilled the righteous judgment—the propitiation for sin.

When Jesus died on the cross, He bowed His head and said, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30). *The penalty for all sin has been paid in full!* Therefore, God is both just and the Justifier (the *propitiation*) of the forgiven sinner who, through faith, trusts in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior!