

The Propitiation for our Sins

Propitiation is another one of those terms that some believers find difficult to understand. However, many precious truths regarding the person and work of our Lord Jesus can be discovered when its meaning becomes clear. The word in its English spelling occurs only three times in the Word of God.

In the book of Romans, the apostle Paul described work of redemption through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. In referring to the Lord Jesus he said, *“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”* (Rom. 3:24-25). The expression, “*set forth*”, can be translated as, “*foreordained*”, and reminds us of God’s eternal purpose in providing a means of reconciliation and redemption for sinful man.

These verses tell us that the Lord Jesus through His voluntary, sinless sacrifice has satisfied the holiness and justice of God. The Lord Jesus, through bearing our sins and the judgment our sins deserved allows God to maintain His righteousness while showing mercy to the sinner in forgiving His sins. Paul wrote that God’s righteousness has been declared, and He can now be just and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus (Rom. 3:26).

The apostle John wrote concerning the Lord Jesus, *“he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only: but also for the sins of the whole world”* (1st Jn. 2:2). The worth and value of the blood of Christ is such that a righteous God is satisfied to accept it as sufficient payment for the sins of the whole world. This is an amazing truth.

This does not mean that all the world will be saved, but it does mean all the world can be saved. However, only those who are willing to acknowledge their sin and accept the Lord Jesus as Saviour and His precious blood shed on the cross as the only means of cleansing and forgiveness will be saved. How wonderful then to read in the Sacred Scriptures, *“whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved”* (Acts 2:21).

John tells us that the word, “*propitiation*”, is evidence of God’s great love for us; in providing a means whereby He might bestow His mercy and grace upon us. He wrote, *“herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins”* (1st Jn. 4:10). One of the most well-known verses in all of the Word of God bears out this incredible truth, *“for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (Jn. 3:16).

It is quite interesting to learn that while the word, “*propitiation*”, does not appear in the Old Testament Scriptures, in its English spelling, its wondrous truth is seen in the Mercy Seat, which rested upon the Ark of the Covenant, in the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle. In fact, in many of the Old Testament Scriptures where we find the words, “*Mercy Seat*”, it can be translated as, “*propitiation*”.

Under the Old Testament laws regarding sacrifice, the High priest went once a year into the Most Holy Place and sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the Mercy Seat. Two golden Cherubims, which signify God’s holiness and righteousness, sat on top of the Mercy Seat, with their faces looking down towards the place where the blood was sprinkled (Ex. 30:10; Lev. 16:14-15; Heb. 9:7).

This indicated God's acceptance of the sacrifice, and sins were covered for a period of one year. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews reminds us that this had to be repeated year after year, and that the blood of bulls and of goats could never take away sin (Heb. 10:1-1-4). Then, referring to our blessed Lord Jesus, the only acceptable sacrifice, he wrote, "*but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God*" (Heb. 10:12).

The Lord Jesus Christ is our Propitiation, our Mercy Seat. He has satisfied the holiness of God and the demands of His righteous law forever. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews reminds us once again, "*Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us*" (Heb. 9:12).

*God's holiness is satisfied,
The Law's demands are met;
Since the sinless Saviour died,
And cancelled our sin's debt.*

*Cov'ring for sins of deepest hue,
His precious blood supplies;
All transgressions hid from view,
Of penetrating eyes.*

*For Christ, has paid the ransom price,
For sinners, sin was made;
Redeeming blood doth now suffice,
To turn God's wrath away.*

*God looks on the mercy seat,
Where precious blood is found;
He can with pardoned sinners meet,
Based on that holy ground.*

*Erring sinners reconciled,
Through Him who took our place;
Once a stranger, now a child,
Through such amazing grace.*

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