

## Propitiation: Wrath Appeased

1 John 2:2

As we continue our series: *Understanding Christianese*, I want to consider one of the most endearing and beautiful words in the English language – propitiation. Webster defines propitiation as “*an atoning sacrifice.*” The word propitiate is defined as “*to gain or regain the favor of goodwill; to appease.*” While propitiation may not be used extensively in daily conversation, it is certainly a word that every believer should be familiar with and thankful for.

The actual word propitiation is only found three times in Scripture – [Romans 3:25](#); [1 John 2:2](#); and [1 John 4:10](#). The biblical definition for propitiation speaks of “*a sacrifice, a covering, the payment and appeasement for sin, fully satisfying the righteous demands of the Father – literally turning away His wrath and being reconciled to Him.*” Surely you will agree such a doctrine and divine act of grace should be understood and embraced by every believer.

While the actual word propitiation is only found three times in Scripture, the act of propitiation is found throughout the Bible. In a secular, or non-theological sense, propitiation is found in the relationship between Jacob and his brother Esau, [Genesis 32](#). Jacob tricked his father Isaac, and had essentially stolen the blessing and inheritance of Esau. Having fled from his brother and living in exile for 20 years, Jacob desired to return. As he journeyed home, Jacob was informed that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men. Fearing for his life, Jacob sent an enormous gift of hundreds of animals in an attempt to appease the anger of his brother. The gift Jacob sent to Esau can be viewed as a propitiation – a payment to appease anger and bring about reconciliation.

In a theological application we see the principle of propitiation revealed in the Old Testament on the Day of Atonement. The high priest would take the blood of the sacrifice behind the veil in the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, placing it on the mercy seat. Within the mercy seat were the tables of stone inscribed with the Law of God. As the Lord looked upon the mercy seat, having the blood applied, He saw the blood covering the Law, and His righteous judgment was appeased. We know this offering was not permanent because the high priest had to repeat the offering every year on the Day of Atonement. It did however point to the propitiation Christ would eternally secure as He fully satisfied the righteousness of God, appeasing His wrath and atoning for sin.

As we continue our series, I want to examine the [eternal truths](#) in the text as we consider: [Propitiation – Wrath Appeased](#).

**I. The Gift of Propitiation** (2a) – [And he is the propitiation for our sins](#). John reveals the gracious gift of propitiation for mankind. Consider:

**A. The Source (2a) – And he is the propitiation for our sins.** John declared that Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God is the propitiation for our sins. Considering what we discussed in the introduction, we know that the sacrifices of old brought temporary appeasement, but these could never fully satisfy the righteous demands of God for sin. In order for sin to be atoned, and God to be satisfied with the offering, there would need to be a perfect sacrifice. In essence, God Himself would have to be that offering. Through the eternal plan of God, Christ came to earth in the form of a man in order to provide the atoning sacrifice for sin. Propitiation for sin would not have been possible apart from the sinless, perfect sacrifice of the Son of God. Men had offered countless sacrifices down through the ages of time, all in accordance to the Law of God, but these were unable to appease the judgment of God. This would require a perfect sacrifice. [Heb.10:1-4 – 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. \[2\] For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. \[3\] But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. \[4\] For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.](#)

**B. The Sacrifice (2a) – And he is the propitiation for our sins.** Bearing in mind the nature of propitiation, (a sacrifice and payment to appease sin,) we know that such a sacrifice was demanded. This sacrifice had to be offered in blood. In order for atonement to be made for sin, the sacrifice had to die. Jesus, being our propitiation, offered Himself as the atoning sacrifice for sin. There was no other way for sin to be atoned or the righteousness of God to be appeased because of sin. If there was any hope for mankind to be reconciled to God, Christ had to die for our sin!

- It is impossible to fully comprehend the price that was paid to redeem us from sin and reconcile us to God. The death of Christ upon the cross, propitiating for our sin was horrific. His was not a quick and easy death. As he was crucified upon the cross, the sin of the world was placed upon Him. He bore our sin in His body as He died upon the cross. The perfect Son of God became sin so we could be forgiven and made acceptable to God. [2 Cor.5:21 – For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.](#) As Christ bore our sin in His body, God the Father, in complete righteousness, judged our sin in the body of His Son. The wrath and judgment of God was poured out on the Son for sin. Jesus endured the judgment we deserved as He bore our sin on the cross. [1 Peter 3:18 – For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.](#)

**II. The Grace of Propitiation (2a) – And he is the propitiation for our sins.** Here we discover the marvelous grace extended through propitiation. Consider:

**A. The Presence of Sin** (2a) – *And he is the propitiation for our sins.* John declared an eternal truth that we must comprehend. Jesus is the propitiation for **our sin**. We were born in sin due to the fall of Adam. We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners, following the nature of our birth. There is not a single person born into this life, other than the Lord Jesus Christ, who is not sinful and in need of their sin being atoned. Our lives were lived according to the flesh, separated from God. *Rom.3:23 – For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* *Rom.3:10 – As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.* *Isaiah 53:6 – All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

**B. The Penalty of Sin** (2a) – *And he is the propitiation for our sins.* As we consider the truth of our sin, knowing we all are born in sin, separated from God, we must also consider the penalty for sin. *Rom.6:23 – For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* *James 1:15 – Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* Sin brought a death sentence for all humanity. Because of sin, death entered the human race. Apart from the propitiation of Christ, appeasing God for sin, and providing an atonement for sin, eternal death is the final result. We were born in sin and had no way of appeasing the righteous demands of God. Had Christ not been willing to bear our sin and offer Himself the atoning sacrifice for sin, we would all be condemned to eternal death.

**C. The Payment for Sin** (2a) – *And he is the propitiation for our sins.* It may appear that I am repeating myself, but I want to emphasize the fact that propitiation required a sacrifice to appease the righteousness of God. This had to be a perfect sacrifice – one that would please the Father and atone for sin. The blood of bulls and goats were unable to bring about atonement. Christ laid down His life on the cross of Calvary in order to provide payment for our sin. Sin was atoned, fully satisfying the righteous demands of God, but it came at a high price. Jesus died so we could live. He bore our sin and tasted the wrath of God so we could escape the judgment of God and death that accompanies sin. We cannot fully describe propitiation apart from the divine sacrifice Christ made on our behalf. When His blood was shed, the Father was eternally satisfied. There will never be a need to shed blood again to atone for sin. Our salvation was secured through the propitiation of Christ our Lord. *Heb.10:10, 12, 14 – By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* <sup>[12]</sup> *But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.* <sup>[14]</sup> *For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*

**III. The Guarantee in Propitiation** (2b) – *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* Here we find the guarantee in propitiation. Notice:

**A. The Scope (2b)** – and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*. John was speaking to fellow believers at that moment, but he also revealed a gracious truth – this propitiation was not provided for them alone. The propitiation of Christ had fully satisfied the righteous demands of God in regard to sin. His sacrifice on the cross brought redemption, full and free. While these could rejoice in the propitiation of Christ, John declared that the gracious propitiation of Christ was not reserved for them alone. He provided atonement for the sins of the entire world. As Christ died on the cross, propitiating for sin, He provided the opportunity of salvation for all who come to Him by faith. He made the way of salvation for whosoever would believe.

- Christ died on the cross thousands of years ago, but the propitiating sacrifice He made then continues to atone today. His sacrifice provided for our salvation and all who come to Him by faith for salvation. His propitiating sacrifice was not reserved for the Jews of the early church, or those of a specific religious or economic background – Christ provided salvation full and free!

**B. The Satisfaction (2b)** – and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*. In this we also discover the full appeasement for sin. His blood was sufficient to redeem all humanity. As He offered His shed blood as an atonement for sin, the Father was completely satisfied. His blood made the way for redemption and reconciliation for all who respond to the call for salvation. Christ finished the work of redemption as He died on the cross for sin. The Father was pleased with the sacrifice of His Son, and accepts all who receive salvation in Him.

- The practice of offering blood sacrifices continues to this day. Many cultures continue to sacrifice animals, and in some horrific instances human beings, in an attempt to appease the gods and gain their favor. God was pleased only with the sacrifice of Christ His Son. There is no other way of acceptance to God. If you are apart from Christ in salvation, your sin has not been appeased in the eyes of the Father. You remain accountable for your sin and will stand in judgment because of sin. This is so tragic and unnecessary. Christ provided for our salvation, but we must come to Him in repentance and faith if we are to receive it! **John 3:16-18 – 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. <sup>[17]</sup> For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. <sup>[18]</sup> He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**

**Conclusion:** Because of sin we all owed a debt we could not pay. We stood condemned in sin and the penalty for our sin was eternal death. Christ provided payment for our sin as He offered Himself the propitiating sacrifice for sin. Have you repented of your sin and responded to His gracious offer for salvation by faith? There is no other way! Apart from Christ you remain accountable to God for sin. Come by faith and be saved today!