

Propitiation, the Sacrificial Lamb

Scripture Reading

NASB

“Observe the month of Abib and celebrate the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night. You shall sacrifice the Passover [lamb] to the LORD your God from the flock and the herd, in the place where the LORD chooses to establish His name[...]Roast it and eat it at the place the LORD your God will choose. Then in the morning return to your tents”.

– Deuteronomy 16:1-2, 7

“You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is *to be* handed over for crucifixion.’ [...] While they were eating, Jesus took *some* bread, and after a blessing, He broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins’”.

– Matthew 26:2; 26-28

In a court of law, if a person is deemed guilty they must pay a penalty for their wrongdoing – this is a just verdict. Likewise, as all mankind has committed sin, it is only just that we pay a penalty for our sin. God is *just*, yet God is not *only* just, He is also *loving*, thus God created a plan for man’s redemption in line with both these aspects of His nature. This plan began with the institution of animal sacrifice in the Old Testament. A just nature cannot simply forgive sin, the penalty of sin must still be paid. Thus, animal sacrifice unto the Lord represented the sin of Israel, of mankind, being placed on another. Yet this symbol was only the first part of the plan, foreshadowing the true redemption of mankind.

“For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near[...]for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Heb. 10:1,4), wrote the author of Hebrews, demonstrating the futility of the Law to remove sin. Something more than the blood of animals was needed to pay the price of sin once and for all. It was during Passover, when the Jewish people would celebrate God’s redemption of Israel from Egypt, that Jesus made His final trip to Jerusalem to celebrate, or rather fulfill, the Passover.

“He takes away the first in order to establish the second. By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:9-10). Christ’s death on the cross ushered in a new era, a New Covenant, between God and man. Where animal sacrifice was insufficient, Christ, the true Passover lamb, stood in for mankind and took our sin upon Himself. When the fullness has come, that which foreshadows it is rendered obsolete; with Jesus taking our sins upon Himself, the works of the Law become fulfilled in Him; no longer are we slaves to the Law, we are slaves to grace. It was Christ’s blood shed on the cross, our **propitiation**, which then allowed for us to be justified before God, not by any deed of our own; justification is based upon **propitiation** (Rom. 3:23-25). Not only did Christ’s **propitiation** allow man to become justified, it also allows for man to become sanctified (Heb.10:10). Jesus

shed his blood for all sinners, being all mankind, but his blood only covers over the sins of those whose faith is in Him (Rom. 3:23-25). For this reason, we must tell others of the glorious work of Christ, that one's sins may be forgiven via the **propitiation** offered through His blood. Forgiveness is found at the cross of Jesus, for all those who'd come and give their lives to Him.

Here is one illustration to help you think about propitiation and it's role in our salvation:

There's a story about a judge whose own son was brought before her for a crime he had committed. The judge felt a deep grief that her son would violate the laws upon which she based her entire life. Tears welled in her eyes and she listened painfully as the evidence against her son was presented. The courtroom sat in silence wondering how the judge would rule. Would she just give him a reprimand in an act of mercy? Would she give him the minimum penalty for the offense? Much to their surprise, she handed down the maximum fine, upholding the law to its fullest degree. The son was in shock, for he knew that he couldn't pay the fine and was anguished at the thought of imprisonment. He looked up at her in disbelief.

But then something happened that nobody expected. She stepped down from the bench, took off her judge's robe, told her son how much she loved him and then paid, out of her own pocket, the fine she had just handed down. Not everyone understood what she had done. As a judge, she showed her commitment to honor the law to its fullest, but she then stepped down from that seat of honor and showed her love for her child. Her son never understood the depth of his mother's commitment to the law until that moment, and, until that moment, he never knew the depth of his mother's love for him. He felt deep sorrow for the pain he had caused her and for those he had hurt by his act of crime. With his head bowed, and his tears flowing freely, he asked for her forgiveness, which she willingly and freely gave to him.¹

Discussion Questions:

1. From the Scripture reading above and article, list some words which help demonstrate to you the nature of propitiation.
2. Why is animal sacrifice insufficient? What does it mean to foreshadow?
3. Read Hebrews 10:19-25. How are we to live in light of Christ's propitiation?
4. In closing, use your own words to describe propitiation. How are God's justice and love both involved? How does the story of the judge help bring this home for you?
5. Pick two to three scriptures together to write down and memorize this next month that you want to take away from this study.

Extra Reading:

Read Romans 3, Hebrews 10:1-25
