

Sovereign Grace Conference

August 3-8, 2008

The Doctrine of Propitiation

Throughout the history of the church the reality of the atonement and its impact has been the foundation upon which the faithful have built their faith and evangelized the lost. In fact, it was the atonement, particularly the matter of the nature of the one who had to die to save us, that enabled the church to come to full agreement on the nature of Jesus Christ as the *theanthropos*, the God-man. How so? Since those who were to be saved, or redeemed, are us, men (generic), then the one who must redeem us had to be a man. The one who saved us, must of necessity take our place and suffer our condemnation for God's righteous standards must be met; someone had to pay the price.

Not only must the one who saved man be a man himself, but he must also be God, if he is going to supply the salvation that man needs. However, this raises a problem. Since all men are tarnished by sin and defilement due to the fall, no man could serve as a perfectly holy sacrifice. Further, since the punishment for sin was to be eternal condemnation or judgment, and the sins were innumerable, then the one who had to suffer must be able to suffer infinitely. Also, since the standards that had to be met were God's, the one who met those standards must have been as good as God.

Thus, the only one able to meet God's standards in such a way would have been God Himself. But this raised a critical issue, however, for God was not man. Therefore, for us to be saved God had to become man. In Him becoming man, however, He had to become all man, meaning He had to have a complete and full human nature,¹ yet He must also remain totally and completely God, else He could not fulfill God's standards nor lift us up to God. Thus the one who died for us had to be very God of very God, and very man of very man—the hypostatic union, the God-man (Mt. 1:21; Ro. 1:1-8; Phil. 2:5-11).

Yes, the atonement and a proper understanding of the atonement was and still is essential to the Christian faith. Although this is the case, sadly, many in the church today do not understand the nature of the atonement, beyond the fact of Jesus' death, and thus they fail to fully grasp the weight and significance of their own faith. One of the key facets of the atonement taught by the authors of Scripture is the reality of propitiation. We have no doubt come across this word, but have we fully comprehended its meaning and weight. Central to its meaning is the divine reality of mercy. Yes, mercy, the very basis of our salvation and right standing before God. We claim God's mercy, but do we understand what had to happen for us to experience it? My subject matter, propitiation, was selected by Elder Ward himself and it is my hope that we would gain a clearer understanding of both it and the atonement in our study this year.

Roger W. F. Skepple

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¹This does not necessitate sin, because sin was a later addition to man; in other words it is not necessary to be by nature a sinner to be fully man. Otherwise would could not have called Adam a man until after he had fallen, which is ludicrous.

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Introduction: The General Context of Propitiation

I. The Need for Propitiation

- A. The Nature of God – The Majestic Holiness of God
 - 1. The Foundation of Biblical Holiness
 - Distinction/Apartness
 -
 -
 -
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 - 2. The Holiness of God
 - a. Purity
 - b. Uniqueness
 - c. Majestic
- B. The State of Man – The Radical Sinfulness of Man
 - Radical =
 - The Book of Ephesians
 - The Context of Ephesians 2:1
 - 1. Death: The Nature of This Condition
 - 2. Spiritual Death: The Character of This Condition
 - a. Understood from the Context
 - b. Understood from Biblical History
 - c. Understood from Paul’s Direct Statements
 - d. Implications
- C. The Response of God – The Judicial Condemnation of Man
 - Overview of Romans 1-3
 - Meaning of Romans 3:19-20
 - The Law Condemns
 - The Law Cannot Justify

II. The Context of Propitiation: The Atonement

- Review of the Need for Propitiation
- The Need for the Atonement
- The Book of 1 Peter
- A. It Was Penal and Triumphant (3:18a–for sins)
 - 1. Its Penal Nature (3:18a)
 - 2. Its Triumphant Nature (3:18a)

- B. It was Final (3:18a)
- C. It Was Substitutionary and Vicarious (3:18a)
 - 1. Who Could Substitute: The Spotless Lamb (3:18a)
 - 2. Whom Were Substituted For (3:18a)
- D. It Was Conciliatory (3:18b)
 - 1. The Agent of Reconciliation (3:18b)
 - 2. The Action of Reconciliation (3:18b)
 - 3. The Objects of Reconciliation (3:18b)
- E. It Was Satisfactory (3:18c)
 - 1. The Judicial Nature of Christ's Death (3:18c)
 - 2. The Vindicated Nature of Christ's Death (3:18c)

III. The Act of Propitiation

- A. The Meaning of the "Righteousness of God"
- B. The Medium of Faith
- C. The Matter of Sin
- D. The Means of Grace
- E. The Medium of Purchase
 - redemption – apolutrosis –
 - Manumission
 - 1. The Currency of the Purchase
 - Propitiation
 - Mercy Seat
 - Expiation
 - Propitiation
 - Reconciliation
 - 2. The Immediate Purpose of the Purchase
 - 3. The Ultimate Purpose of the Purchase