

1 John 2:1-2

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. *NKJV*

Jesus is our Substitute. Taking the side of someone in an effort to stand with him in a court of law is one thing, but to voluntarily bear the full brunt of the law on his behalf is an entirely different role. John emphasizes to us that it is Jesus Christ Himself Who, as the Advocate for our case, (which is a sentence of guilt) voluntarily impedes the movement of God's just wrath upon the guilty sinner as the substitution for the guilty one.

There is no word in the secular Greek world like the word "propitiation." It is a strictly theological word, and in ancient times is found only in the Greek New Testament. It is a word with deep sacred meaning, hailing back to the old covenant of the Jewish nation and specifically their biblical pattern of worship.

Propitiation is similar to the concept of sacrifice. In our culture it is difficult for us to understand the transference of guilt from an offender to one who is innocent. We have pictures of valiant courage and self-sacrifice in many of the professional careers of our day, such as medical and military personnel, yet even these similar concepts of self-sacrifice do not complete the picture of propitiation in biblical terms.

To more fully understand the truth of propitiation, we must survey the practices of their Jewish covenant religion, namely, the continual sacrifices for the covering of sin through Temple worship. These blood sacrifices (and specifically the annual Day of Atonement) were offered regularly as an act of appeasement for continual sins, both individual and national.

John wisely alludes to this old covenant of continual sacred acts, and draws it into his description of the work of Jesus Christ the "Propitiator." **In declarative terms using "is the" John sets a mark upon Jesus as the One Who has arrived to be the definitive propitiation for our sins.**

Furthermore, the word *propitiation* is founded upon the act of appeasement. In order for the one who stands guilty before the just and holy God to have his sentence of guilt and penalty removed, justice must be served. Jesus, our strong defense, laid down His life on the cross as that One Who fully absorbed the just wrath of God on behalf of those who will place their faith in Him. **So extensive was His sacrifice that no part of the wrath of God circumvents Him to reach that one who places his faith in Him.**

Because Jesus Christ is "righteous" (v. 1) we have a perfect substitute. He did not need to receive the wrath of God as punishment for His *own* sins. Therefore, He is able to take upon Himself the sins of you and me, and perfectly appropriate the wrath of God upon Himself as an innocent substitute, now declared guilty of *our* sins.

So satisfactory was His substitution that the invitation for anyone in the world to trust in Him is broadcast ("but also for the whole world" v.2). **John is careful to note that it isn't the whole world that has been forgiven, but that the whole world is capable of being delivered from the wrath of God if each will look upon Jesus Christ in faith as the necessary and personal substitute for the guilt of his own soul.**

In this substitutionary transaction, God expiates, imputes, exchanges, transfers the guilty sentence of the sinner to the righteous reputation of Jesus Christ, and His righteousness is given to the sinner as though he had never sinned—like Christ!

It is with this security and confidence that the Christian stands before a holy God and relates to Him on a deeply personal level. Sin has been removed from his account and replaced with a righteous record.

This is our Jesus. This is our God. The Advocate. The Propitiator...the Propitiation.

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- 1. Why must sin have a penalty?**
- 2. Is there any other way for sin to be dealt with than at the cross?**
- 3. What is the Old Testament picture for propitiation?**
- 4. Why is it necessary for a substitute to be perfectly righteous?**
- 5. Is there any other substitute that can appease the just wrath of God upon a sinner?**
- 6. What are unacceptable substitutes for the sinner and how do they fall short of the propitiation that God has provided?**
- 7. Has the whole world been delivered from their sinful condition through salvation in Jesus Christ?**

8. What point is John making to say that Jesus has appeased the just wrath of God for the whole world?

9. Have you placed your personal faith in the only acceptable means of salvation for your soul—Jesus Christ?