



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

1 JOHN 4:10 - "IN THIS IS LOVE"

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*Christ's redeeming love for us is the wonder of the gospel! Since God, in His sovereign mercy graciously revealed His love by sending His only Son Jesus Christ... dare we love less than Christ? Oh may the cross of Christ, His redeeming love and the love of our Heavenly Father compel us to this same love for one another.*

## I. 1 JOHN 4:10 - "IN THIS IS LOVE"

*(7) "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." (8) "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." (9) "By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him." (10) "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (11) "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." 1 John 4:7-11*

John has not yet reached the heights of explaining God's love for us. John goes on to show how God revealed His love to us. This is seen not in the glory of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, but in the glory of the Crucifixion. The God Who did not spare His Own Son, "gave Him up for us all". (Romans 8:32) The incarnation of Jesus was not an end in itself. The ultimate manifestation of God's love is not seen at Christmas, at Bethlehem, but rather at Calvary.<sup>1</sup>

Here in John we don't have a loving son turning aside the wrath of His angry Father. No! Here we see the God Who is love, sending His Own and dearly loved Son to be the "propitiation for our sins." (1John 4:10) Remember too that Jesus the Son was not a reluctant sacrifice. Jesus said this in John 10:14-18, "I am the Good Shepherd...and I lay down My life for the sheep...No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My Own accord." We must understand that the Son, dearly loved by His Father, as His Son, in obedience to the Father's will, freely offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins.<sup>2</sup>

## A. "NOT THAT WE LOVED GOD..." - 1 JOHN 4:10A

*"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:10*

John will now set forth an incredible truth that we seldom think about in this way. John will tell us exactly what is this love from God, "in this is love...". The love that sent the Son is related to the self-sacrifice of the Incarnate Son, Jesus.

Just to make sure there is no misconception that God could or is in any way, loved by fallen humanity, John says, "not that we loved God." With his use of "we", John marks the contrast

between sinful humanity and the loving God. Fallen humanity, you and I, are not naturally in love with the God Whom the Son came to reveal.<sup>3</sup> Let that truth sink in.

## B. "BUT THAT HE LOVED US..."-1 JOHN 4:10B

*"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:10*

John marks the contrast with the use of the word "but", pointing to the truth that God Himself loved us in spite of our hatred toward Him, "not that we loved God, but that He loved us..." As Romans 5:8 says, "But demonstrated His own love toward us that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." There could be no greater difference between sinful human beings and the loving God. Fallen humanity is not naturally in love with the God Whom the Son came to reveal.

"But that He loved us", with the emphasis placed on that "He loved us", "He Himself", continues the contrast between the preceding "we" and "God". God took the initiative in revealing His love for us. We had no love for Him. God's love was original and is the source of all other love.

And it is interesting to note that "loved" is in the aorist tense in the Greek which is a verb that points to a past action to which there is no question that the past action was a real event. It refers to the reality of an event. That event here in 1 John 4 is the historical, redemptive work of Christ's death and resurrection. This is regarded as a distinct landmark. The Gospel centers on that specific act of redeeming love.<sup>4</sup>

## C. "AND SENT HIS SON..." - 1 JOHN 4:10C

*"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:10*

The redemptive nature of God's love demonstrates for us the depth and breadth of it, made clear by the fact that He sent Jesus, His only Son. How could we ever measure the greatness of this great love of God? John helps us. God "sent His Son". God gave the very best there was to give and **nothing** could ever exceed that "incredible gift" as Paul would write in 2 Corinthians 9:15.

God did not merely send Jesus as a great teacher to tell us about God, though that would have been great. If God had sent Jesus to merely be our example, that would have been good, even though none of us could ever live up to His example. But the incredible thing is that God didn't just stop

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with those things, rather, He sent His Son to die the death of a felon, on a cross, that He might save us from sin and death. This fact is overwhelming and speaks to the depth of His love.<sup>5</sup> (Romans 8:31-32, 38-39)

### D. “TO BE THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS.” 1 JOHN 4:10

*“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John 4:10*

With this statement, John summarizes the mission of Jesus Christ in coming at His first advent.

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“**propitiation**” Greek “**hilasmos**” a noun that means satisfaction, used as appeasement of any angry deity by offerings to turn away wrath.

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Propitiation is an appeasement of the wrath of God by the love of God through the gift of God, His Son Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup> By Jesus Christ’s sinless life and sacrificial death on the cross, He satisfied the demands of God’s justice, thus appeasing and satisfying His holy wrath against sinners who believe in Him.

The Old Testament has a term used for “*propitiation*” and that is “*mercy seat*” used in the sacrificial system found in Exodus 25:10-22. (Leviticus 16:15) The mercy seat was located on top of the Ark of Covenant and was the cover or lid. God’s divine Shekinah glory cloud was above the Ark and in the Ark lay the tablets of stone with the Law written by God on them. The priest would sprinkle the mercy seat with blood from their sacrifices and it was the place where atonement for sin was secured. The sprinkled blood stood between and before God (the Shekinah glory cloud) and His broken law (the stone tablets). Now the sacrificial blood of animals were never enough to satisfy God, (Hebrews 7:26-28, 9:6-15, 10:1-18) but looked forward and pictured the future sacrifice of Christ Who would fully satisfy God the Father’s wrath. (Hebrews 9:23-28, Isaiah 53:6, 10) If the Old Testament sacrifices and the whole sacrificial system had appeased God’s wrath once and for all, the Jews would not have continued endlessly to bring burnt offerings, sin offerings and trespass offerings over these many centuries.<sup>7</sup> But it is Jesus Christ Who fulfilled the sacrificial system of the Law. Jesus Christ is the mercy seat.

On the cross, Jesus turned away God’s righteous anger and satisfied the demands of God’s divine justice. He averted our

punishment in a substitutionary manner and took away our sins. And the fact that God accepted Christ’s sacrifice for sin, that God was appeased by His Son’s substitutionary death on the cross was verified by Christ’s resurrection from the dead. If Christ had not been raised from the dead, it would have shown that God did not accept His sacrifice. But Christ’s resurrection is so important because it verified that God was appeased and satisfied by His Son’s blood shed on the cross for atonement.

John will insist that the Son, Jesus Himself is the propitiation for our sins as he stated already in 1 John 2:2. Jesus was not merely sent to be “*the propitiation*”, like the high priest under the Mosaic Law. Rather, Jesus Himself became both the Propitiation and the Propitiator, our sacrifice and our High Priest, by shedding His Own blood instead of animal blood, for the remission of sins to cancel our penalty completely.

Christ’s self-sacrifice for sin enabled God to pardon the sins for those who would believe in Him and to restore them to acceptance and fellowship with Himself. It is important to note that the death of Jesus Christ did not change the heart of God, as if One Who hated us and now loves us. Rather it opened the floodgates so that the love of God for sinners could be poured out to them through Jesus Christ.<sup>8</sup>

John closes this verse bearing witness to everyone’s personal need for the propitiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It was for “*our sins*”. Christ did not die for the lovely important people. No Christ died for “*sinner*”, for those who rebelled against God and hated Him. They were the ones who would crucify Him. God gave His Son to die for each of us, “*sinner*”, and none are any better than that.

John is not saying that Christ’s propitiation means that all sins are automatically forgiven, but rather that there is a pardon offered to all, and that pardon is enjoyed by those who repent and believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus’ death is sufficient to deal with every believer’s sin. May we take time to contemplate that incredible reality. Think about the far-reaching scope of Christ’s redeeming work through all of human history. The death of Christ reaches out as far horizontally into history and the future as it reaches up vertically into heaven. And it reaches out to all as a universal offer.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Hamilton, Ian, *Let’s Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg. 60.

<sup>6</sup> Hamilton, Ian, *Let’s Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg. 60.

<sup>7</sup> Hiebert, D. Edmond, *The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary*. Bob Jones University Press: Greenville, SC, 1991. Pg.202.

<sup>8</sup> Hiebert, D. Edmond, *The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary*. Bob Jones University Press: Greenville, SC, 1991. Pg.202.

<sup>9</sup> Boice, James Montgomery, *An Expository Commentary: The Epistles of John*. Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 1979. Pg. 115.

<sup>6</sup> Stott, John R., *The Epistles of John*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, MI, 1964. Pg. 88.

<sup>7</sup> MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg. 47.

<sup>8</sup> Pentecost, Dwight, *The Joy of Fellowship*. Zondervan: Grand Rapids; 1977. Pg. 109.

<sup>9</sup> O’Donnell, Douglas Sean, *Reformed Expository Commentary: 1-3 John*. P&R Publishing Company: Phillipsburg, NJ, 2015. Pg. 37.