

## JESUS CHRIST HAS REMOVED GOD'S ANGER AGAINST SIN

Modern liberals teach that Christ has somehow conquered the power of sin, death, and the power of the devil, but they reject the real doctrine of the vicarious satisfaction of Christ. A common liberal view is that Christ's death had a beneficial effect upon human beings, but not upon God. Liberals generally say that God's wrath was not appeased by Jesus' death, and Christ did not die to pay any ransom to God. They commonly reject the thought of atonement made by blood as if it were an ugly remnant of the gruesome rituals of bygone ages.

The Bible, however, clearly teaches that Christ is not only the victor over sin, but that He also fully appeased God's wrath for sin and satisfied the demands of God's justice by His blood. God is both holy and a loving God. Since He is holy, He cannot tolerate sin. All people have sinned, and no one can wipe away the guilt of his own sin (Ps 14:4; Eccl 7:20; 1 J 1:8). God had decreed that, because human beings had sinned, they would suffer everlasting punishment (Romans 6:23). But then God in His great love sent His Son to suffer and die in the place of all human beings. Jesus Christ satisfied the demands of divine justice by His perfect obedience to the Law and by His death on the cross.

Jesus is called a "priest." Psalm 110:4 says, "*You are a Priest for ever.*" Zechariah 6:13 called Him "*a Priest upon His throne.*" Hebrews 5:6 also called Him "*a Priest for ever.*" When He took on the form of a slave (Ph 2:5-7), He reconciled the whole world to God, 2 Cor 5:19.

Jesus Christ reconciled the world to God by offering Himself as the propitiation to God for the sins of all people. Propitiation means turning anger into mercy by removing guilt. Paul declared that Jesus "*gave Himself a ransom for all*" (1 T 2:6). John wrote that Christ "*has paid for our sins, and not for ours only but for the whole world*" (1 J 2:2). His sacrifice has wiped out our sins, and has changed God's anger against sinners to love. Isaiah prophesied about the coming Messiah, the Servant of the Lord, "*Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, everyone, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all*" (Is 53:4-6).

Peter told his readers: "*...You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*" (1 P 1:18-19).

The two ideas of sacrifice and propitiation lie at the root of the teaching of the Bible generally. The central action on the great Day of Atonement for the Israelites of the Old Testament (Leviticus chapter 16) was the entry of the high priest into the holy of holies once each year. He laid aside his official ornaments, and dressed himself in simple white linen. He sacrificed a bullock as a sin offering for himself and the priests. He took a censer of live coals from the altar. Then he entered the Holy of Holies and burned the incense so that the smoke would cover the mercy seat, the golden lid of the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the two copies of the Law, that Moses had received at Mount Sinai. Then he brought the blood of the slain bullock and sprinkled it on the mercy seat, which in the Greek translation called the "Septuagint" is simply called "the propitiation", and sprinkled some of the blood on the floor as well. This completed the atonement for the priesthood.

Next he took the two goats that the nation had provided and cast lots for them. He slaughtered the one as a sin offering for the people, and brought its blood within the veil into the Holy of Holies. He sprinkled that as before to make atonement for the Holy of Holies. By similar rites he made atonement for the Holy Place and the altar of burnt offering. Then he took the other goat, laid his hands on its head, and confessed over it the sins of the people. This action symbolised that the sins of the people were laid on its head. It was made the sin-bearer of the nation. Carrying guilt that was not its own, the goat was driven away into the wilderness. The Hebrew name for this "scapegoat" was Azazel, a name that means "entire removal."

After that, the high priest put his official clothes on again, offered his burnt offering and that of the people, and also the fat of the sin offering. The flesh of the bullock and the goat were carried outside the camp and burnt. The Epistle to the Hebrews says that the entry of the high priest into the Most Holy Place once each year, and not without blood, foreshadowed the entrance of Jesus, the great High Priest, once for all into heaven, after He had purchased eternal salvation for us (H 9:1-12; 24-28). In this series of actions there are a number of important features: the accusing voice of the Law against the sins of priest and people, the transfer of guilt to a substitute, and, in God's awful presence, the removal of God's wrath against sin by the shedding and sprinkling of blood.

Paul wrote to the Romans, "*...being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness,*

*because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed” (R 3:24-25).* In this passage it is clear that when Paul used the word “propitiation” for Christ, he was thinking of the mercy seat, the golden lid of the Ark of the Covenant of the Old Testament tabernacle and temple. God’s wrath, righteousness, and mercy meet in this action.

It is impossible to eliminate from this last passage the double idea of 1) a sacrifice, and 2) propitiation. Some in the early church spoke about the ransom that Jesus paid as a ransom paid to the devil, who had human beings in his power. However, when we ask, on the basis of this verse, “Who has been propitiated?” the answer can only be “God.” It is impossible to separate this propitiation from the death of the Son. In Romans 5 Paul combined the dual concepts of justification and reconciliation. The deliverance of human beings from God’s wrath is just another way of describing God’s action of declaring that the wicked are righteous in His sight. He wrote, “...*having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (R 5:9-10).*

Right at the centre of the Christian Gospel is the vicarious satisfaction for sin by Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus Christ gave Himself as a sacrifice to pay the ransom to God in order to free human beings from eternal damnation.