

Some words we looked at last week but not in great detail were redemption, ransom and reconciliation. God has reconciled us to himself by the atoning work of Christ. But the word that carries the deepest theological truth about this is propitiation. Our salvation is more than we think. The depths of what God did for us to appease his wrath are not applicable to the human mind.

## 1. CONTEXT FOR PROPITIATION

The word is mentioned four times in the NT. Cf. Romans 2:1-11, God's wrath is holy and executable on those who reject him. The propitiation of the blood satisfies the wrath of God. The first part of Romans 3 is the argument that, "ALL" are under sin, Jews, Gentiles and the alike. But because of God's propitiated atonement, the wrath of God is appeased by the blood, cf. Romans 5:9-10. What has happened? If we're all under sin? The wrath of God was effected through the death of Christ.

Let's look at it this way, the blood, that is the sacrificial death of Christ, abolished God's anger against us and ensured his treatment of us as children not enemies. So what does the phrase "propitiation by his blood" express? His wrath has been propitiated.

## 2. WHAT IS PROPITIATION?

God's wrath was propitiated at the cross. The same idea was expressed in the offerings and atonement in the OT. But God's anger or wrath is not capricious, arbitrary, bad-tempered or conceited anger as the pagans attribute to their god. It's not malicious, resentful or sinful anger which we find among humans. God's wrath is a function of his holiness which is required against those who reject his ways.

## 3. PROPITIATION DESCRIBED

Propitiation is the work of God himself. Romans 3:25 "[whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood.](#)" John Murray quotes in his book *The Atonement*, "God loved the objects of His wrath so much that He gave His own Son to the end, that by His blood should make provision for the removal of His wrath."

What averts God's wrath on us? The propitiation of Christ's shed blood, cf. Romans 3:21-24

What brought about this propitiation? The love of God, thus, we did not do anything to earn His love. He loved us first, cf. 1 John 4:7-8. It is God's purpose to propitiate His wrath through Christ.

## 4. PROPITIATION WAS MADE BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST

Blood, as we see, is a word pointing to the violent death of animal sacrifice in the OT. God Himself instituted these sacrifices by His own command. The atonement, the propitiation, was the shedding of blood in death. We see this in the OT this principal instituted by God, Leviticus 17:11 "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life." The death of Jesus is the atoning event and is known as representative substitution, the innocent taking the place of the guilty. Genesis 3:21 "Also for Adam, and his wife, the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them."

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. How? By becoming a curse for us, cf. Galatians 3:13. In the OT the perfect animal to be offered for sin was first symbolically constituted a representative by the sinner's laying his hand on its head and identifying it with him. Then it was killed as a substitute for the offerer, the blood being sprinkled before the Lord, as a sign that propitiation had been made, averting wrath and restoring fellowship. Cf. Leviticus 16 and the Day of Atonement which was represented by the two goats, one killed and the other going free.

## 5. PROPITIATION MANIFESTS GOD'S WRATH

Let's go back to Romans 3:25,26. The word demonstrate in vs. 25 means "a public display." Paul points to the public spectacle of the cross, the propitiation, through the blood, was made public for all to see. And in Romans 4:25 we see this hope, "Who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification."

The gospel tells us that our creator became our redeemer. Christ has shielded us from retributive justice by becoming our representative substitute. As the goat was a substitute for the sins of the people, so Christ is ours.

We are reconciled - Colossians 1:21-22 "And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup> he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him."

Rescued and ransomed from danger or captivity - Revelation 5:9-10 "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

In closing, propitiation, ransom, redemption, reconciliation all have to do with the averting of God's wrath, that was accomplished by the death of Jesus. (This is my story, this is my song.)