

Romans 3:1-19 define the whole world guilty before God. In vs. 10-18 we see the clear facts of our guilt. There is nothing we can do to be righteous. When I see verse 11 “**there is none who seeks for God**” it lays out who we are. This verse indicates man’s attempt to seek his own interests, and not the interests of God. In Paul’s letter to the Philippians (2:21) he gives the warning of men just like this, “**For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.**” When you see the world’s false religions, it is an attempt to escape the true God. Man is trying to fill a void with temporal things, self righteousness, doing “good” things and the like. He will always fall short of this (Romans 3:23).

Since man cannot seek God nor does he want to, it is God who does the seeking and saving. John 6:44 “**No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.**” God seeks you and finds you (not that He didn’t know where you were at). In the midst of your sin and rebellion, He loves and finds you. In this sense, you cannot save yourself nor can you, on your own, do enough good or enough righteous works to satisfy the justice of God. Therefore, John 3:16 comes to mean something far greater than just a verse you quote, “**For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**”

Man cannot save himself nor offer anything to satisfy the wrath of God. Therefore, an atonement is necessary.

#### **POINT #1 - A DEFINITION**

Atonement - “cover, mercy seat” (Old Testament), “atoning sacrifice, propitiation” (New Testament). The word (OT) describes the golden cover placed on the ark of the covenant; on it were two cherubim, whose outstretched wings formed the earth throne of Yahweh. Because He “lived” there, the Most Holy Place had to be filled with a cloud of incense on the Day of Atonement, lest the high priest see God and die as a result.

In the New Testament there are two words used *hilasmos*, *hilasterion*. The first instance *hilasmos* occurs only twice 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10 “**and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world**” “**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.**” Jesus is Himself the sacrifice that atones for sin. Our sins have destroyed our relationship with God, but the shed blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin and restores us to fellowship with God. 1 John 1:6-7 “**If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.**”

The other Greek word used is found in our text of Romans 3:25. Paul writes that God has presented Jesus as a “place of atonement.” We see that Jesus is represented in the NT as the priest

who does the atonement sacrifice, as the one who is Himself the sacrifice, and as the place where atonement occurs. Everything we need for forgiveness, for the removal of God's anger, and reconciliation with God can be found in Jesus.

#### **POINT #2 - THE NECESSITY OF THE ATONEMENT**

Let's first realize that it was not necessary for God to save any people at all. God could have left us to ourselves to die and pay for our sins. Hebrews 10:4 "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." Hebrews 2:17 "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." Along with 1 John 2:2; 4:10 these passages have the sense of "a sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God, and thereby makes God propitious (favorable) to us." Simply put these verses mean that Jesus bore the wrath of God against sin.

#### **POINT #3 - FURTHER UNDERSTANDING OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST**

- The penalty was inflicted by God the Father. 2 Corinthians 5:21 "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Isaiah 53:6 "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."
- Not eternal suffering but complete payment. If we had to pay for our sins we would suffer eternally. Jesus did not suffer eternally. Cf. Hebrews 9:25-28, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that in mass there is a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ.

#### **POINT #4 - THE ASPECTS OF ATONEMENT**

These four terms show how Christ's death met the four needs that we have as sinners.

- We deserve to die as the penalty for sin
- We deserve to bear God's wrath against sin
- We are separated from God by our sins
- We are in bondage to sin and to the kingdom of Satan

These four needs are met by Christ's death in the following ways.

- Sacrifice - to pay the penalty we deserve, Christ died in our place as a sacrifice
- Propitiation - to remove us from the wrath of God which we deserve
- Reconciliation - to overcome our separation from God, we needed someone to provide reconciliation and thereby bring us back to God. Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19
- Redemption - because we are in bondage to Satan, we needed someone to redeem us out of bondage. Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."