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Propitiation - Part 1

Introduction

In any study of a Biblical doctrine with practical expectations in this earthly sojourn, a number of questions need to be asked:

- a) What does “propitiation” mean?
- b) Why is it necessary, or why do I need it?
- c) What are the qualifications of the One who provided propitiation?

What Does Propitiation Mean?

Propitiation is the term used to describe God’s perfect justice being met and God completely satisfied. Redemption and justification are blessings we receive through Christ. Propitiation is the satisfaction God receives through the work of Christ.

- a) Redemption deals with man’s enslavement to sin and Satan from which he needs to be freed to serve the Lord.
- b) Justification deals with man’s criminal record from which he needs to be cleared by the resurrection of the Lord and live a just/righteous life.
- c) Propitiation deals with God’s righteous wrath against the sinner which needs removed in order to have peace and live in the conscious peace of God. Summarized, propitiation is the righteous judgment of God which has been fully executed by the expiating work of Christ at Calvary, and thereby bringing the individual into harmony with God.

Why Is It Necessary, or Why Do I Need It?

There are two basic reasons why propitiation is necessary and why I need propitiation provided by another:

- 1) In my natural spiritual state I am under the condemnation and wrath of God.
 - a) The Scriptures plainly teach, “God is angry with the wicked every day” (Psa. 7:11). That wrath is accumulating every day (Rom. 2:5) until the sinner accepts God’s way of salvation or dies and enters Hell for all eternity.
 - b) All humanity, in their natural born state, are under the wrath of God, condemned already (Jn. 3:18). This is clear when God’s summarization of the self blinding godless individual (Rom. 1:18-31), the self righteous moralist (Rom. 2:1-16) and religious adherent (Rom. 2:17-29) is guilty before God.

“What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom 3: 9-18).
 - c) A. Pink wrote: “The wrath of God is His eternal detestation of all unrighteousness. It is the displeasure and indignation of Divine equity against evil. It is the holiness of God stirred into activity against sin. It is the moving cause of that just sentence which He passes upon evil-doers. God is angry against sin because it is a rebelling against His authority, a wrong done to His inviolable sovereignty. Insurrectionists against God’s government shall be made to know that God is the Lord. They shall be made to feel how great that Majesty is which they despise, and how dreadful is that threatened wrath which they so little regarded. (The attributes of God)”.
 - d) The unsaved stand condemned under the wrath of God which is:

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- i) A wrath that is the total eternal forsaking by God for that is what the Lord endured (Mk. 15:34)
 - ii) A wrath that is personal (Jn. 3:36)
 - v) A wrath that is proportional for it will be according to works (Rev. 20:12, 13)
 - vi) A wrath that is inescapable (Rev. 20:11, 13)
- 2) The second reason why I need propitiation provided by another is sinful man can never appease God's righteous anger against the sinner, neither can sinful man redeem his brother, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him" (Psa. 49:7). The reason no natural man can please God is, "they that are in the flesh (an unsaved individual) cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8). Man cannot change the spiritual condition into which he was born, just as I cannot change my being Irish. If I wanted to be an Italian, I could learn Italian dress like an Italian but all the outward changes in the world would never make me Italian. Likewise, neither by baptism, confirmation or any religious activity can the condition of being under the domination of Satan and the wrath of God.
- a) To the pagans, gods were aspects of creation, they saw them as angry and would fall on them without mercy if they did not appease (propitiate) him. It was a matter of diverting his anger by offering flowers, land, children to atone for their wrongs. In the doctrine of Biblical propitiation man never propitiates God! Sinful humanity could never offer to God a sacrifice that could remove the guilt of sins committed nor provide forgiveness. Biblical expiation (word not found in the scriptures but its truth is taught) is the foundation for God to be propitiated. It was a work entirely dependent on the Son of God at Calvary whereby God's justice and righteousness is perfectly satisfied. Through His work on the cross Christ is our Propitiation. I put this another way, propitiation is not man appeasing God. God has provided the way by which His wrath is appeased righteously. By the work of Christ on the cross He is our Propitiation (the One who by His sufferings righteously stilled and abolished the anger of God to the entire satisfaction of God).
 - b) Such is the fullness of the eternal efficacy of the sacrifice of the Lord that even those who sinned in the Old Testament, i.e. David with Bathsheba, Solomon with his multiple wives and idolatry, Isaiah who acknowledged his sin as did Job, or Moses when he spoke inadvisably and smote the rock a second time, all their sins are forgiven through the propitiatory work of Christ. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Rom. 3:25).

What Are The Qualifications of The One Who Provided Propitiation?

Man needs a "Propitiation" and therefore a "Propitiator" because nothing he can do can eradicate the fury of God against him. How could I, if I broke the law by stealing, eradicate the guilt of that which I had done? If while driving foolishly I failed to watch carefully and kill a child, how could the damage done be rectified? When I behave as a rebel against God, making God out to tell lies and belittle the work of His Son at Calvary, how could I have the guilt and disobedient actions removed and the God who is rebelled against have His just anger removed?

- a) That which is needed is a human being:
 - i) Who was not only born holy and sinless but lived in a world of spiritual defilement which contaminated everyone else?
 - ii) Whose moral integrity was beyond question and endorsed by God from Heaven?
 - iii) Whose sacrifice would not be coerced but willingly offer Himself to have the execution of God's wrath executed on Himself for the removal of my guilt and sins?
 - iv) Who would be able to present a sacrifice to God that would be so perfect, and because not a sin was overlooked and God's justice and righteousness would be perfectly satisfied?
 - v) By whose sacrifice God could make me His child, delighting in me and that for all eternity?
- b) In the grace, mercy and love of God such a one was provided for me in the Person of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God. That amazing and wonderful man was not born under sin and Satanic dominion, was never by birth under the wrath of God, was never because of sin in his life ever a candidate for eternal damnation.

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Concluding Thoughts

Well might we sing the wondrous truths of Charles Wesley:

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain—
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Refrain:

*Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

'Tis myst'ry all: th' Immortal dies:
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th' eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

. . . . Rowan Jennings