

## Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

### **The Sacrifice that Satisfied**

Scripture: 1 John 2:2

Code: 62-10

Now, tonight I just want to make a few comments before we get into looking at the Word of God together. I realize that in going through 1 John we are covering some familiar ground. But it's absolutely critical for us to do that carefully and thoughtfully and with appropriate depth and breadth. If you find the message of John to be somewhat redundant, that's exactly the way it is. In fact, you'll feel like you've been living *deja vu* all over again as we cycle our way through this epistle because John has a sort of a cyclical approach going back around the same things again and again, each time deepening and enriching our understanding. And, of course, one of the features of his writings, as it is throughout all of the New Testament is this matter of the message, this matter of the gospel.

As we come to 1 John chapter 2 and verse 2, we come to an absolutely critical verse of Scripture which embraces for us the wonderful and familiar reality of the gospel. What I'm going to say about this verse will be familiar to most of us. But I don't want to run by it without giving it careful attention because when I'm done this tape will stand alone and then it will become a couple of radio broadcasts, and then it will, down the road, wind up perhaps being translated into Spanish and preached all over the Spanish-speaking world in our Spanish-speaking outreach. And it might even get translated into Russian and be preached in Russia in the Russian language broadcasts that's going on over there and who knows where it might go from there. And so, I don't want to look lightly at verse 2, even though much of it is familiar to us. I want to give it a full treatment. If it's familiar to you, it will give you an opportunity to rejoice all over again in what the Lord has done in your life, even as it did in hearing the testimonies at Baptism tonight. There will be elements of it, I think, that will be fresh and new that will bring you some brand-new cause for rejoicing.

First John 2:2, "And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world."

Let's start out to understand this verse very basically. The Bible teaches clearly that God is holy and mankind is not. Simple enough? God is holy and mankind is not. In fact, the Bible explicitly teaches that every person who has ever lived has broken God's holy Law. Every person who has ever lived has rebelled against God, has incurred therefore His just wrath. And, has been duly sentenced to eternal punishment. That is the universal bad news.

But on the other hand, there is good news. The good news, the gospel, is that God while being just and holy, is also gracious and merciful. And so He offers complete forgiveness for all violations of His Law. And He offers complete escape and deliverance from just punishment. To whom is this given? It is given to all who have saving faith in His Son Jesus Christ. For anybody who believes in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, who repents for sin and embraces Jesus Christ, there is forgiveness, forgiveness of all sin and deliverance from the penalty of sin, eternal damnation. And instead, there's the promise of eternal blessing and holy perfection. That is the gospel. That is the good news that follows the bad news.

God then, on the one hand, to borrow the words of Paul, is just. But on the other hand, He is a justifier of sinners. This is the great core of understanding the Christian faith. God is holy, God is just, God is also gracious and merciful. Because He is holy and just, He demands punishment for sin. And every sin must be and will be punished, every sin ever committed by every person. But on the other hand, God is also gracious and merciful and eager to forgive sin. How God satisfies His justice and His grace is the great scheme of redemption.

First John 1, if you'll back a moment to verse 7, says at the end of the verse that the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If you look at verse 9, it tells us that God is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Twice, verse 7 and verse 9, we are told that there is offered for us cleansing from sin, cleansing from unrighteousness, that there is a possibility of escaping just punishment. Verse 1 of chapter 2 says if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

In other words, you can be forgiven and then because you are forgiven, because you belong to God's family, because you have been delivered from eternal punishment, you have been given a divine Advocate, your Divine Defense Attorney, as we noted last time. Whoever stands before the bar of God in the courtroom of heaven and pleads for you, this is Jesus Christ the righteous one, He is our Advocate with the Judge, with the Father who when the accuser comes into the courtroom of God and accuses us of sin, and it is true, we are sinners, when the accuser of the brethren, Satan, comes and accuses us of sin, Christ steps in to our defense and reminds the Father that we could never be held guilty because we have already been forgiven.

And then that poses the question, where we ended last time, how can He be an effective defender of those who are still sinning? We confess our sins, chapter 1 verse 9, if we say we don't sin, verse 10, we make Him a liar. So here we are saying we continue to sin. Jesus, even though we continue to sin, defends us before God. How can He be such an effective defender of those who confess to being guilty of breaking God's Law? If a criminal comes in to the court and says to the Judge, "I am guilty, I am guilty, I am guilty." What case does a Defense Attorney have?" Well he virtually has no case because the man has confessed his guilt. And yet in this courtroom, the only cases our Defender accepts are those in which the sinner confesses his guilt. How then can Jesus be a Divine Defense

Attorney for those who are confessed sinners?

The answer comes in the second verse. "It is because He Himself is the propitiation for our sins." That's the answer. He could never be our Defender if He weren't our Propitiator. So here we are given the reason that our guilt has been removed. Here we are given the reason why Jesus can make a case for us, even though we are sinners. Here we are given the reason why we are not under condemnation, why we will never be punished. It is because He Himself, that is Jesus Christ the righteous One, is the propitiation for our sins. And I want to talk tonight about propitiation. Now don't wince and think we're going to go down into some theological depth that you won't understand. You will understand. This is not intended to be complicated, this is intended to be simple and clear so that a child can understand it. And it is vital to us to know this, to understand the propitiation that has been done in our behalf. It is critical to know it. It is one of the great doctrines of Christianity, this is the heart of our salvation. And it is vital to our understanding why it is that we are to pursue a life of holiness.

Now I want to talk about five aspects of propitiation and they're all here...the nature of propitiation, the necessity of propitiation, the agent of propitiation, the source of propitiation, and the extent of propitiation. Let's talk about the nature of it. What is the nature of it?

And for that, we look at the word. It says in verse 2 "the propitiation," what is that word? That's a long theological word, I daresay you've lived your entire life and no conversation have you ever had with anybody in the secular world in which he used, or she used, the word propitiation. It is a word that is isolated singularly to the Bible. Nobody ever uses it. It doesn't belong in our culture. It did belong in ancient cultures. It belonged in cultures way back in Old Testament times. It belonged in cultures in the New Testament era. It does belong in some cultures around the world, even today where there is a need for propitiation. Let me tell you what it means. It is a Greek word *hilasmos*, it simply means an appeasement...an appeasement.

We understand that word. We understand what it is for somebody who is angry to be appeased. We understand the word to placate, you know that word? To placate somebody, essentially it's a synonym. Another word you could use is the word "to satisfy." Somebody has established a standard and requires that you satisfy that standard. Or somebody has established a law and a punishment, and determines that that punishment must be satisfied. You have to satisfy what that law requires. This is *hilasmos*, this is appeasement, this is placation, this is satisfaction. Same word is used as we'll see later in chapter 4 verse 10.

Now there are related words to *hilasmos*, a verb *hilaskomai* means to make satisfaction for someone, to make satisfaction for someone. It's used in Luke 18:13 and it means exactly that, to make satisfaction, to satisfy some just requirement. It's also used in Hebrews chapter 2 verse 17 in the same sense.

There is another word, *hilasterion*, and that means a sacrifice of atonement...a sacrifice of atonement. How does that connect? Well a sacrifice was required to satisfy God, to appease God, to placate God's wrath. *Hilasterion*, that related word meaning a sacrifice of atonement used in Romans 3:25, is also used of the Old Testament Mercy Seat. Now follow very carefully. When God gave instructions for the building of the tabernacle and later for the temple, inside the large courtyard of the temple there was a holy place and inside the holy place was a Holy of Holies which was the place where God met with His people, it was a place where no one could go but a high priest once a year on the Day of Atonement and it represented the Holy of Holies, the dwelling place of God which was not available or open or accessible to any sinful human being. The high priest could only go once a year to placate God, to satisfy God, to appease God's wrath by the sprinkling of the blood of a dead animal, the sacrifice on the Mercy Seat. Inside the Holy of Holies was a box, the box was called the Ark of the Covenant. An Ark was simply a word for a container. Inside there was the Covenant. What Covenant? The Covenant of Moses, the Law, the Sinaitic Covenant was in the box, the Law of God was there inside the box. On top...the box was made out of gold, by the way, and you can read all about its dimensions, its proportions, and its features in the twenty-fifth chapter of Exodus, it was made out of gold. It had a lid on the top made out of gold, that lid on the top of the Ark, or the top of the box, became known as the Mercy Seat, as the *hilasterion*, the place where appeasement took place. On each end of the little box there was a cherub, a cherub made out of one piece of solid gold with its wings going across the lid. Cherub were angels whose particular purpose was to guard, to be guardians of the holiness of God. And so they emphasized the holiness of God. Above the Ark was the Shekinah glory of God. Inside the Ark was the Law. And on the lid on the Day of Atonement was the blood sprinkled.

Now what is going on here is this. The Ark contains the Law. The Law is regularly by every human being, every day broken. The Covenant that God has made is violated. God is violated. His holy, just and good Law is violated. So inside the box is the broken Law. Above the box is the Shekinah glory of God in all His majesty and holiness, accented and enhanced by the presence of the Cherubim who are the guardians of that holiness. How can then holy God be reconciled with violators of His Law? How can holy God be appeased for the violation of His Law? God determined that there would be a Mercy Seat, a place where appeasement could be made between the broken Law and holy God. And it was on that Mercy Seat that the blood was splattered on the Day of Atonement.

This is really important to understand. God was angry with sinners. The Bible says God is angry with the wicked every day. And if God was going to forgive sinners and God was going to remove their judgment and deliver them from eternal damnation, He had to be appeased. He had to be satisfied. He had to be placated. Symbolically God demonstrated the need for that placation with the prescriptions regarding the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat, the flat lid atop the Ark was entirely gold and yet it was crusted after time with blood. Inside it was the broken Law. Above it was God. Therefore, in between the violators of His Law and Holy God must come an appeasement. And

that appeasement is going to be a blood sacrifice. Each year on *Yom Kippur*, you know what that means? *Yom* is the Hebrew word for day, *kippur* from *kaphar* meaning to make atonement. It's the day in which atonement is made. And God required the high priest that time, only once, to go into the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was kept and splatter the blood of the sacrificed animal all over the lid between the broken Law and the Shekinah glory of His presence, to make atonement for the sins of...listen, Israel, Leviticus 16. We'll look at that a little later.

And when the blood was splattered on that increasingly bloodied gold lid, it became a Mercy Seat. It became the seat of mercy because it was there that God was satisfied. You understand that? It was there that God was placated. It was there that God was appeased. And so Exodus 25:22, God says, "There I will meet with you, from above the Mercy Seat, from between the two cherubim on the Ark of the testimony." That's where I'll meet you. I'll meet you there.

Sacrificial blood then changed the Ark of God's broken Law which therefore could be seen as an Ark of Judgment into a Mercy Seat. Now listen carefully. The animal blood didn't do it. The animal blood didn't do it. The animal blood did not actually propitiate God. The animal blood did not actually placate God. The animal blood did not appease God. But it symbolized and represented a sacrifice that would satisfy God. The whole sacrificial system prescribed in the Old Testament by God didn't satisfy Him. It didn't satisfy Him. If it satisfied Him, wouldn't have to keep doing it. The sacrifice of *Yom Kippur*, every year, every year, every year, year after year after year after year, all the sacrifices beyond that, all of the burnt offerings, all of the sin offerings, all of the trespass offerings, all of the other offerings offered millions of times through history never satisfied God. And listen to this, none of those sacrifices every paid for one single solitary sin. They just all pointed to the sacrifice that would. The nature then of propitiation, you understand. It is a sacrifice that satisfies God.

Let's talk secondly about the necessity for propitiation. Let me point you back to the verse. "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins," not for ours only, implied, but the sins of the whole world. Here's the necessity. Sins...that's the necessity. God, the offended holy Creator, whose Law was shattered and is continually shattered by sinners, must react justly in holy anger, wrath and judgment. And I say again what I said last week, cause it's so important, every sin ever committed by every person who has ever lived will be punished. They will all be punished. The question is how. If the sinner is to escape the punishment, if the sinner is to be delivered from the condemnation for his sin, then God has to be satisfied some other way, right? God's wrath will be satisfied. In some cases by sinners in eternal hell, paying a just penalty for their sins. For God's wrath will be satisfied. But in the case of others, His wrath over sin will be satisfied by a special sacrifice pictured in the whole Old Testament sacrificial system.

Propitiation then, listen very carefully, propitiation then is God-ward...it's God-ward. This is a theological term, this is a gospel truth, this is a principle that states God's wrath must be placated and that is at the core of salvation. That's not particularly popular today, not even popular today among

many who call themselves Christians. To think of God for them is to think of simply God as love, not God as wrath and fury and vengeance and anger. But that is only part of God's nature, He is a God of punishment. If He didn't feel that way, if He wasn't angry about sin, He wouldn't be perfectly holy. So the punishment of sin which is the just penalty for violating God's holy Law and the pardon for sin which is the gracious forgiveness of God's grace have to come together. You understand that? Punishment and pardon have to come together. Justice and grace have to come together. Guilt and forgiveness have to come together. They come together in the sacrifice that propitiates God, that satisfies God. So that the same holy justice which is glorified in the eternal punishment of the sinner, may also be glorified in the eternal pardon of the sinner when God is satisfied by a just payment.

Let me say it another way. All the holy attributes of God once arrayed against us in wrath give way to all the holy attributes of God now arrayed for us in mercy. And God can't be changed from a God of wrath to a God of mercy unless He is placated, propitiated and satisfied. God wants to take the flaming sword of justice raised over our heads to strike us and melt it into a shield raised to protect us. And He can do that because there is a sacrifice that satisfied God, that paid the full penalty for sin. As I said, there are many liberal theologians that don't like this idea. They just want God to be love, love, love and that's all. And they're offended that we would consider God to be a God of anger, that we would think of God in any way like the gods of the pagans, capricious, angry, evil deities of the pagans who have to be appeased, who have to be placated by sacrifices, sometimes even human sacrifices. They read things like, well for example, the seventeenth chapter of 2 Kings verse 29, "Every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the houses of the high places which the people of Samaria had made...talking about the people who came into Samaria from all different nations...and the men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima, the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak...those are the gods that these various people made...and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim." There...that's a pagan description, all these nations coming in have all these gods and actually to placate those gods, burned up their children as human sacrifices in an effort to propitiate, or to satisfy an otherwise angry deity.

And there are many people who read that and they say, "You're not going to make God like that. You're not going to make God the kind of God whose anger has to be appeased by sacrifice." But that's exactly what the word propitiate means, that's exactly why *hilasterionis* connected to the Mercy Seat and even translated Mercy Seat because that is precisely what God requires for the satisfaction and appeasement of His wrath against sin. Scripture makes it clear. He is holy. He is wrathful. He is vengeful. He is condemning. And He must be propitiated, He must be appeased and He must be satisfied. And He will only be satisfied when all sins have been paid for and the wages of sin is death.

The reality of propitiation is clear in Scripture. The nature of propitiation is clear in the terms that I've been giving to you. And the necessity of propitiation is also clear in Scripture. It is because of sin, it is because of sin. In John 3:36, there's no mistaking this. "He who believes in the Son has eternal life,

he who doesn't obey the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abides on him." The wrath of God abides on the one who rejects Christ. That's right because if you reject Christ then the only way that God can be propitiated for your sin is to punish you eternally. Romans 3 familiar words, verse 23, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Having all sinned, we have all come, in the words of Romans 1:18, under the wrath of God. And Romans 6:23, "The wages of that sin is death." First Thessalonians 1:10 says, "Christ has come to deliver us from the wrath to come." As I said, in Psalm 7:11 it says, "God is angry with the wicked every day." And the same verse says, "He is a just God." In Ezekiel 18 verses 4, and I think it's down to verse 20, it says, "The soul that sins, it shall die."

Just a little footnote here. There's another word that sometimes you hear in connection with this subject and that's the word expiation. Have you ever heard that word, expiation? Ex...out of, expiation means to have something removed from us, guilt. It's a man-ward look. We do need expiation. We do need guilt removed from us. But there never can be expiation, guilt removed from us until there is propitiation, satisfaction brought before God. God has to be propitiated before we can be expiated. Satisfaction has to be brought to God before our sins can be removed from us.

This is not advanced theology, people, this is basic theology. This is the basic reality of our redemption which is sad to say unknown by I think many, if not most people, who claim Christ. And to many people it is shocking and it is troubling and maybe even offensive to think that God is so angry with sinners that He requires to be appeased. And if they do not acknowledge and accept the appeasement that has been offered for them, then they will get their own eternal punishment by which God will be satisfied. For some this is a stumbling block. It is a rock of offense. But propitiation is necessary because of our sins. They will be paid for, either by you or by someone else, the sacrifice that satisfied God. Without propitiation, then justice demands the sinner's everlasting punishment. With propitiation, mercy demands the sinner's everlasting blessing.

Let's go to the third point in our look at propitiation, the agent of propitiation. Verse 2, "He Himself is the propitiation," He Himself goes back to the end of verse 1, Jesus Christ the righteous one. He had to be righteous. He had to be sinless or He would not have been able to make an offering for someone else. He would have had to receive the judgment of God for His own sins, but He is Jesus Christ the righteous, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. He is the righteous one, having no sin of His own, not having to pay for any sins of His own. He is the perfect Lamb without blemish and without spot. He is the perfect sacrifice. He is, again 1 Thessalonians 1:10, "Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." He is Himself the propitiation. I love that. He doesn't make propitiation, He IS the propitiation. He couldn't be our Advocate if He wasn't our propitiation. He alone made the sacrifice that satisfied God.

Isaiah 53:5 and 6, "He was pierced through for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The chastening for our well-being, or our peace, fell on Him. By His scourgings we are healed. All of

us like sheep have gone astray, each one of us has turned to his own way, but the Lord...and here's the great statement...has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him." Christ was punished for the sins we commit. Verse 8, "He was cut off out of the land of the living." Why? "For the transgression of My people." He was punished for other people's sins though He was innocent. In verse 9 it says of Isaiah 53, "He's done no violence, neither was there any deceit in His mouth." Verse 10, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He has put Him to grief, made His soul an offering for sin."

Isaiah's telling us this. God determined what sacrifice would propitiate Him. God determined what sacrifice would satisfy, placate and appease Him. And God determined that it would be the sacrifice of one who is perfect and therefore in the universe He was limited to one who would be man and die for man and God who would be holy and perfect, His Son. And so it pleased the Lord to bruise Him because God is not just angry over sin, He is not just vengeful, He is not just by character just, He is also merciful, gracious, forgiving. And so here is the principle of substitution. God demanded to be satisfied and God determined that the death of His Son would be that satisfaction. The death of Christ was the satisfaction of divine justice.

Many years ago I preached a message entitled, "Christ died for God." And it stirred no small controversy at the time, just when people saw the title. Songs have been written from that message, but it's true...Christ died to placate God, to satisfy God's justice. Ephesians 5:2 puts it this way, "Christ offered Himself for us an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." Second Corinthians 5:21, "God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Galatians 3:13, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us." First Peter 2:24, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness." First Peter 3:18, "Christ also died for sins, once for all the just dying for the unjust." And then 1 John 2:2, "He is Himself the propitiation for our sins."

It was vicarious, substitutionary and don't ever think this, Christ was not paying an atonement price to Satan, He was paying it to whom? To God. And His death was not just an example of Love and it was not just an example of humility, and it was not just an example of self-sacrifice, it was an actual payment to satisfy the justice of God.

And as I said earlier, all of the blood sacrifices of the whole Old Testament system never satisfied God at all. Turn in your Bible to Hebrews 7, they only looked forward to the one sacrifice that would. Turn to Hebrews chapter 7, this is so important to understand. Verse 26, "It was fitting that we should have a High Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens," that's Jesus Christ. Listen, "Who doesn't need daily like those high priests in the Old Testament, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself." Boy, what a great statement.



You know, Old Testament priests were basically butchers. They were up to their ears in blood. They spent all their time when they were in their courses, priests in Jerusalem, they spent all their time bloodied by animal sacrifices. It was relentless, week after week after week, year after year after year after year. Jesus was bloodied only once. He did once for all offer up Himself and that was the sacrifice that satisfied God.

Turn to chapter 9 verse 1, "The first covenant had regulations of divine worship and an earthly sanctuary. There was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which there was the lampstand, the table and the sacred bread, this was called the Holy Place. And behind the second veil there was a special tent or tabernacle called the Holy of Holies. Inside was a golden altar of incense and the Ark of the Covenant, covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna and Aaron's rod which budded and the tables of the covenant, the Law. Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the Mercy Seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. Now when these things have been thus prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle, performing the divine worship. And they go into the second, only the high priest entering there, only once a year not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance."

So every year, every year, every year he goes in and he does it and he does it and he does it. Verse 9a says, "This is just a symbol...just a symbol because the gifts and the sacrifices offered cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience." Then verse 11, "But when Christ appeared as a High Priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands," that is to say not of this creation, "and not through the blood of goats and calves but through His own blood He entered that Holy Place once for all having obtained eternal redemption." He did what all of those sacrifices never did. He satisfied God.

Verse 13, "If the blood of goats and bulls and ashes of a heifer sprinkling those that had been defiled sanctified for the cleansing of the flesh," if they can do some kind of outward cleansing, "how much more will the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God cleanse your conscience, your inside, from dead works to serve the living God?"

So then verse 15 says, "Jesus is the Mediator of the New Covenant in order that since the death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." That's a marvelous point. Listen to this, even the people who lived under the first covenant weren't saved by the blood sacrifices. Those who were genuine believers, those who repented and believed were saved by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ which was pictured in those blood sacrifices. It is that glorious sacrifice of Christ that satisfies God.

Go to the tenth chapter and verse 4, this says it, verse 4, "It is difficult, it is...what?...impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin." There isn't any sin, not one sin ever taken away, ever expiated because God is never propitiated by an animal sacrifice. So what is God going to do? "Therefore when He comes into the world," that is Christ, "He says, Sacrifice and offering Thou hast not desired, but a body Thou hast prepared for Me." God had to prepare a body for His Son. God was not satisfied, didn't find pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin. So, "I have come," says Jesus, "I have come to do Your Will." Verse 8, "Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast not desired, nor hast Thou taken pleasure in them." And by the way, all of those verses are taken out of the Old Testament. They're all quoted out of the Old Testament from the Psalms and the prophets. Even there it said this doesn't do it.

Well what does it? Verse 10, "We have been sanctified, separated from sin through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Every priest stands daily ministering offering time after time the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. "But He having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God." Verse 14 says, "By that one offering He perfected for all time those who are separated from sin, those who are sanctified."

God is so satisfied by the sacrifice of Christ that verse 17 says, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more. Now where there is forgiveness of these things there's no longer any offering for sin." After Jesus Christ that was it, doesn't need to be, can't be any other offering. And that's exactly what John meant in 1 John 1:7 when he said, "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin, cleanses us from all unrighteousness." He is the agent of propitiation. He is the Propitiator.

Now turn to Romans 3...Romans 3, I want you to see this here in the marvelous language of the Apostle Paul. Romans 3:23, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," that's a universal fact. All human beings have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We are therefore under the just condemnation of God, no matter how religious we are, no matter how many sacrifices we may offer, we cannot offer a sacrifice that pleases God. We cannot propitiate God or appease God. Verse 24 then says, coming to our rescue, "We are then justified as a gift by His grace." Isn't that wonderful? It's a gift by His grace, "Through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." How are we going to be justified who are sinners? It has to be a gift given to us and it must be this, it must be the redemption which is in Christ Jesus...listen to verse 25, "Whom God displayed publicly as a...what?...propitiation in His blood which is appropriated through faith."

God had to do that. He had to do that. Sin had to be paid for. So Paul says in the middle of verse 25, "This...this public crucifixion of Jesus, this propitiation in His blood was to demonstrate His justice." God couldn't just pass by sin without a sacrifice. It was to demonstrate His *dikaiosune*, His righteousness, His justice, same word. "Because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed." Since creation God had been forgiving sins, passing over sins of those who confessed and those who repented. And so somebody might say, "Well He's not very righteous if He

forgives and forgives and forgives and forgives and forgives. And if all the blood of bulls and goats don't pay the price for sin, then where is the justice of God?" In order after all those centuries, all those millennia of forgivenesses, God then has to demonstrate that He is just and He demonstrates it in the propitiation of Jesus Christ. And it's upon Christ that He casts all His just wrath for sin against all who would believe.

So verse 26 says, "God demonstrates His justice so that He can be, verse 26, the just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." How wonderful. This is a gift. All you have to do is put your faith in Jesus Christ. And God accepts His sacrifice for your sin. It is a gift by His grace through the *apolutrosis*, through the ransom price paid by Jesus as a propitiation. Peter says you weren't redeemed by perishable things like silver or gold, but with precious...what?...blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ.

So the nature, the necessity, the agent of propitiation. Just briefly, the motive...the motive. You need to know this now...the motive. Some people say, "Well, you know, God is hard, God is tough, God is angry, God is vengeful. But Jesus came along, gave His life and by that propitiation won God's love for sinners." Wrong. Look at chapter 4, 1 John 4 and look at verse 10, "In this is love, not that we love God, but that...what?...He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." It was not the propitiation of a loving Christ that won the love of God. Just the opposite. It was the love of God that sent Christ to be the propitiation. Yes God is just. Yes God is holy but He is also loving. And out of that comes His grace and mercy and forgiveness.

What was His motive? Love...love, self-sacrificing desire for one's well being even though we are utterly unworthy and undeserving. One last point, we've seen the nature of propitiation as a satisfaction to God. We've seen the necessity of propitiation, our sins. We've seen the agent of propitiation, He Himself, Jesus Christ the righteous. We've seen the motive for propitiation, the love of God. Now I want to mention the extent of propitiation and this is at the heart of this verse. "He is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world." How are we to understand that? How are we to understand that? Stay with me now, just a few more minutes. This is critical.

Is this universalism? Does this mean that Jesus has literally propitiated God for the whole world? Does the whole world mean the whole world? Has Jesus actually satisfied God's justice for everybody who has ever lived? If so, then where is hell in that? Where is condemnation? Why are all the warnings and why preach the gospel?

It's not universalism. It is not telling us that the atonement was literally made for everyone. What is it saying? I'll tell you what it's saying. John was in particular Jewish and primarily wrote to a Jewish audience. In Galatians 2:9 the Apostle Paul describes his first meeting with the other Apostles. He writes, "When James, Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was

given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship that we should go to the heathen and they to the circumcision." Did you get that? So in Galatians 2:9, James, Peter and John make it clear that their ministry is to the circumcision, to the Jews.

John was an Apostle to the Jews. The recipients of his epistles would be predominantly, if not completely, Jewish. He is saying to this Jewish audience, who completely understand propitiation because they understand the sacrificial system, they understand the function of the Mercy Seat, they understand *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. And what they understand about it is to be learned from several verses in Leviticus, listen to this, verse 17 of chapter 16, "When the high priest goes in to make atonement, no one shall be in the tent of meeting until he comes out that he may make atonement for himself, for his household...listen carefully...and for all the assembly of Israel." The Day of Atonement had limitations. It applied only to Israel, only to the people of Israel. It was a sacrifice for Israel. It went on for centuries as their unique Day of Atonement. John says here, "Jesus Himself is the propitiation, Jesus Himself is the sacrifice, Jesus Himself is the bloody offering upon the Mercy Seat of God and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world." The normal, national, limitation of the Day of Atonement for Israel is no more...no more. In the Jewish context, they understood Day of Atonement, they understood the language of propitiation. John is telling them that the sacrifice that Jesus offered is not just for the nation Israel, it's now for the world because the Lord is calling out a people for His name from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

Jesus on the cross offered an atonement for those in Israel who would repent and believe and those throughout the world who would repent and believe. It is not a universal appeasement of God. Jesus didn't pay for the sins of Judas because when Judas died, he went to his own place to pay for his own sins. Jesus didn't pay for the sins of Herod. Jesus didn't pay for the sins of Pilate. Jesus didn't pay for the sins of Adolph Hitler. Jesus didn't pay for the sins of the mob that screamed for His blood. Jesus didn't pay for the sins of all that mass of humanity that show up at the Great White Throne and are cast into the Lake of Fire forever and ever where they will give their satisfaction to the offended Law of God. But He did pay for the sins of all who will believe in Israel and the world. The point is, it went beyond their normal provincial idea of propitiation. And He didn't just make salvation an option, He actually purchased salvation for all who repent and believe because they are called by God. It was an actual substitution.

Just to help you to understand that, one final passage. John 11, this is really an important text in this regard and will seal your understanding of this. John 11:51 and 52, and I have to set the setting but I'll do it quickly. In John 11:51 and 52 we have an important statement, but let's back up a little bit.

The Sanhedrin was meeting to plot Jesus' murder. And Caiaphas, who obviously was the high priest that year, verse 49, sort of states the reason. "Caiaphas," verse 49, "who was the high priest that year said to them, 'You know nothing at all. You know nothing at all.'" And he's really decrying their stupidity in his mind. Because verse 47, "The chief priests, the Pharisees got the council together,

What are we doing, this man is performing many signs? If we let Him go like this, everybody is going to believe in Him and the Romans are going to come and take away our place and our nation." What's going to happen is there's going to be an insurrection, the Romans are going to see Him and the people that follow Him as a threat and the Romans are going to come in, there's going to be a war, people are going to die, we're going to lose our power. We're going to lose the position that we've gained under the Roman occupation. This could be a disaster. We could have a horrible situation.

And Caiaphas essentially says, "You don't know anything, you're all stupid." Don't you understand? Verse 50, "It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation should not perish." They were all concerned about the volatility of the political scene. The Zealots were stirring, you remember, the people against the Romans, messianic expectation was high. It did reach a fever pitch on Palm Sunday, as we remember. They were afraid the Romans would see this as an insurrection and a rebellion and that Jesus would be viewed as a new ruler and a new king and they were all following. And they would come in and there would be this horrible destruction and death. And the Romans would not only kill and slaughter people, they would also literally take away the power of the people who had been in the religious leadership. The Sanhedrin was afraid because they had courted the favor of the Romans and it was to their great benefit. They didn't care who Jesus was, they didn't care about His miracles. They didn't care about His message. They just wanted to maintain their peace with Rome, live their lives and stop any revolt that could be negative to their favorable circumstances.

So Caiaphas says it's better, it's expedient for us if we want to maintain our spot here that one man should die for the people to save the people rather than the whole nation perish. He's not talking theologically here. He's talking politically. If we get rid of Jesus, we'll save our nation and our position.

And then John gives commentary. Oh I love this, verse 51, "Now this he didn't say on his own initiative..." He said something so profound he didn't even know what he was saying. He said, "One man should die for the people and so the nation isn't going to perish." He actually declared that Jesus would die for sinners in their place and therefore by His death they would be delivered. He was talking in an earthly political way, he didn't even know what he was saying. But because he was the high priest, God used him to prophesy that Jesus...listen to this...was going to die for the nation. And listen to this, here's a direct parallel to 1 John 2:2, "And not for the nation only, but that He might also gather together in one the children of God who are scattered abroad." It's the same concept exactly. First John 2:2, that He is the propitiation for our sins as a nation, Israel. But not for ours only but also for all the sins of the world, or the sins of the whole world. Same thing here. Jesus dies not for the nation only, but for the children of God scattered abroad, Gentiles.

Please notice, He died for the children of God. He died for the children of God. Those God determined to be His children from Israel and from the whole world. So without even knowing it,

Caiaphas prophesied that Jesus would die and that His sacrifice would propitiate God for the sins of all His children in the nation Israel and scattered over the face of the earth. And that's precisely what 1 John 2:2 is saying. The design of the atonement is the end of the atonement. Or to put it another way, the end of the atonement is the design of the atonement because whatever God wants to be the outcome will be the outcome. Whatever God purposes, He accomplishes. It's never ever thwarted. God designed an actual atonement for all the children upon whom He sets His love, then He affected that atonement in their behalf.

Listen to Isaiah 46:8, "Remember this and be assured, recall it to mind, you transgressors, I am God, there is no other, I am God, there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying My purpose will be established and I will accomplish all My good pleasure." God purposed a propitiation on behalf of His children and He accomplished it whether His children were part of the nation Israel, or the whole world.

Well, one final comment back at 1 John. Is this not a glorious redemption? Are you thankful? Are you thankful that you are named among the children of God from the whole world? Some of you are the children of God from Israel, are you thankful? If you're thankful then respond to this, "My little children, I'm writing these things to you that you may not...what?...sin." That's where you demonstrate your gratitude.

Father, again the Word comes to us with such power, it comes to us with such clarity, it comes to us with such compelling glory. We thank You. The love of Christ constrains us because He died for all and He died for all that they who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. And so, Lord, it is our desire that because of this glorious propitiation we would manifest our gratitude by not sinning, by not abusing such generous eternal grace. May You be pleased with the lives we live in response to the glory of Your gift of salvation. In Jesus name. Amen.

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