

Fundamental Truths – Propitiation & Substitution Ian Gibson 2004

Propitiation

Luke 18v9-14 – Propitiation dispenses God’s mercy (v13)

Romans 3v21-26 – Propitiation declares God’s righteousness (v25)

1st Timothy 2v4-6 – Propitiation discloses God’s provision (v6)

Hebrews 2v16-18 – Propitiation displays God’s faithfulness (v17)

1st John 2v1-2 – Propitiation denotes God’s forgiveness (v2)

1st John 4v9-11 – Propitiation demonstrates God’s love (v10)

Propitiation is the provision made for God by Christ, the righteous ground on which God can dispense His mercy to the undeserving (Luke 18v13).

The background to propitiation is man’s sins & God’s holiness and righteousness. Propitiation is the satisfaction of a holy God regarding man’s sins. Christ’s death met the demands of God’s holiness & righteousness.

Propitiation is not the appeasing of an irate God, but rather the satisfaction of a holy God, to satisfy the demands of God’s throne regarding sins.

Propitiation is the NT equivalent of OT atonement, but goes further, more than covering over sins, but complete expiation of sins by an acceptable & accepted sacrifice, with consequent vindication & satisfaction of God.

Romans 3v25: The Place where Propitiation is Displayed

In the tabernacle (see Exodus 25), the mercy seat was the place where atonement was displayed, a meeting place for man with God.

The sacrifice of Christ and His shed blood now answers to that mercy seat, Calvary is the place where propitiation was made & is displayed.

Calvary was the displaying & setting forth of the mercy of God, in providing a mercy seat, a propitiatory, a meeting place for sinners.

The responsibility of sinners is to believe, “through faith” in the Person set forth. If there was no blood on the mercy seat, there would be no atonement, Israel would have been exposed to divine judgement, but one drop of that which spoke of the blood of Christ satisfied God (see Leviticus 16 re Day of Atonement).

“His blood” signifies the giving up of His life, and all its efficacious power derives from the greatness & preciousness of His Person.

“His blood” also linked with the declaration of God’s righteousness in passing over sins of a past age, committed before Calvary was an accomplished fact.

Hebrews 2v17: The Work in making Propitiation

The work that made propitiation was the finished work of Calvary, so propitiation was made at the cross, not in heaven.

Christ our High Priest has been merciful manward & faithful Godward, He has met our need in relation to the throne of God in making propitiation for our sins.

1st John 2v2: The Unlimited Scope of Propitiation

Jesus Christ the righteous One is, in His own Person, the propitiatory offering for our sins, a sinless & perfect offering, an offering that fully and eternally has satisfied the claims of divine justice and the holy throne of God.

Propitiation is not limited in its scope to only believers, it embraces the whole world, there is no "limited / selective atonement". No-one will be able to say, at the Great White Throne of judgement, "there was no provision made for me".

Propitiation is not the bearing of God's wrath for a certain quantity of sins, it is the satisfying of a holy God in relation to sins, the ground for mercy to be available to all, the unlimited potential in Christ's death to meet all man's need.

Romans 3v22: The righteousness of God is "unto all" in terms of scope and direction, the offer is available unto all of mankind without exception. But it is "upon all them that believe" in terms of bestowal, dependent upon faith.

1st Timothy 2v4-6: The disposition of God, His desire for all men without exception to be saved, possible because of the unlimited provision in Christ's death, He paid the price "for (HUPER, on behalf of, in the interest of) all".

1st John 4v9-11: The Divine Motive of Love in Providing Propitiation

Propitiation finds origin & source in the heart of God and His almighty love.

It becomes an intensely practical truth, which finds expression in our love for one another (1st John 4v7,v11,v21).

Substitution

Genesis 22v9-14 – The Ram a Substitute for Isaac

The ram took the place for Isaac, and Christ was the sinless Substitute for sinners. His death was vicarious, His suffering in the stead of others (1st Peter 2v24, 3v18). The believer acknowledges the penalty for their sin was exacted upon Christ.

Matthew 20v28 – The Son of Man a Substitute for "many"

The "many" in terms of the final outcome (John1v12, Heb2v10, Rom8v29, 5v19). Christ paid the ransom price "for" (ANTI, instead of) the many who ultimately receive Him as their Saviour.

When I received Christ as my Saviour, His sacrifice and death that hitherto was on my behalf, once I believed it became in my stead – the fundamental difference between propitiation and substitution.

Galatians 2v20 – The Son of God a Substitute for "me"

Christ's death was a sacrificial death, He "gave Himself", and it was a substitutionary death, says Paul He was a substitute "for me".

Christ was the perfectly willing Substitute, who voluntarily took the sinner's place, a glorious voluntary self-surrender, motivated by His love.

One so great as the Son of God gave Himself for such an unworthy object as me.