

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

"Propitiation"

Romans 3:25

Jan 27, 1985

INTRODUCTION

1. What a magnificent passage of Scripture--Romans 3:21-31. It is filled with great truths. Some of the most important in all of Scripture.

2. William Cowper, the well known poet, writes of his coming to Christ. He says, "the happy period which was to afford me a clear opening of the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus was now arrived. I flung myself into a chair near the window, and seeing a Bible there, ventured once more to apply it for comfort and instruction. The first verse I saw was the 25th of the 3rd of Romans immediately I received strength to believe it I saw the sufficiency of the atonement He made" No wonder Cowper later wrote the hymn "There is a Fountain Filled with Blood."

3. This infinitely lovely verse has many facets to it. Consider these:-

1. THE PERSON OF PROPITIATION "Whom"

The obvious antecedent is "Christ Jesus" in v. 24. Thus the personal Redeemer is involved, not some religious activities or expectations, but the person of God's Son. It is He and not what.

2. THE GOD OF PROPITIATION "God set forth"

It is worthy to note that it is the Father Who "sets forth" the Son. The verb is only used three times in the N.T. (1:13; here; Eph. 1:9). It is an aorist middle, hence God "set before Himself" or purposed. The prefix in the verb suggests public setting forth before the whole world. The aorist makes it an historical fact.

3. THE WORD OF PROPITIATION "A propitiation"

a. The word used

The only other N.T. use of the word is in Heb. 9:5. However, other forms of the root are found (1 Jn 2:2; 4:10; Heb. 2:17; Lk 18:13).

b. The word meaning

Mercy seat (Ex. 25:10, 11, 17, 21) is not sufficient a translation. The idea of a sacrifice is necessary. It is used in connection with the satisfaction of divine justice in drawing men to God.

c. The word significance

The entire Day of Atonement (Lev. 16) ceremony is an illustration of what is involved here. God is holy and cannot be approached by sinful creatures. The

doctrine of propitiation satisfies all this. Sin outraged His holiness, insulted His Majesty, and defied His righteous government. Thus God "set forth" Christ to glorify God first of all. What a glorious wonder.

NOTE: Christ's finished work includes:

1. Propitiation toward God
2. Redemption toward sin
3. Reconciliation toward world (sinner)
4. THE METHOD OF PROPITIATION "By (in) His blood"

Biochemistry is not the real issue here, but the actual death of Christ is. It was the pouring out of His life that is meant. The phrase is associated with the verb "set forth" i.e. the setting forth as a sacrifice took place in the shedding of His blood. Note the importance of blood and remission of sin (Heb. 9:21, 22; Lev. 17:11). Expiated (payment for sins) guilt is at the root here of blood poured out (cf. Heb. 10:19, 22).

5. THE APPROPRIATION OF PROPITIATION "Through faith"
Faith is what makes propitiation effective. It is God's way to place responsibility upon man to receive His provision (cf. v. 22).

CONCLUSION The cherubim on the mercy seat (Ex. 25:18-20) are to be compared with those in Eden (Gen. 3:24). Both demonstrate that God is a God of mercy, grace, and love. Christ is our mercy seat and sacrifice, thus our confidence and hope.

*Not all the blood of beasts On Jewish altars slain
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain.*

*But Christ, the heavenly Lamb, Takes all our sins away;
A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they.*

*My faith would lay her hand On that dear head of Thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin.*

*My soul looks back to see The burden Thou didst bear,
When hanging on th accursed tree,
And knows her guilt was there.*

*Believing, we rejoice to see the curse removed;
We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,
And sing His bleeding love.*

Isaac Watts