



Learn Your Bible

Short Study 074: Propitiation

Study Author: Bridget Greenfield

Read Romans 3:21-26

Introduction: *Propitiation* is a word rarely used in our time and in western culture, and only appears four times* in the New Testament. And yet it carries within it the core of the Good News of the Gospel. The understanding of this word brings into full focus the grace and goodness of God toward humanity. Propitiation signifies the removal of wrath by the offering of a gift.

So what does the Bible tell us about the wrath of God? What makes Him angry? Read Deuteronomy 9:7 and Romans 1:18. To what incident does the former statement refer? These verses make it clear that God has not changed His mind about man's rebellion and disobedience, in other words his sin, in both the Old and New Testaments.

Read Romans 3:23. The seriousness of sin is that it separates man from God. If all have sinned, it is impossible for man to bring an end to this separation. Nothing man might offer of himself can do this, whatever sacrifice he might bring to God. The Israelites had a system of sacrifices for sin offerings in the Old Testament, but these did not remove their sin from them. Read Hebrews 10:1-4. What *did* the sacrifices accomplish, according to verse 3? What sacrifice *was* sufficient to take away sin? (Read Heb 9:9)

They also had the law, given to them by God, so what was its purpose? Read Romans 3:20. Through the law we become aware of what is right in God's sight, and what is not, but the law cannot make us righteous, it cannot do away with the sin of man. In the Old Testament the prophet cries out to God, "In wrath, remember mercy" (Habakkuk 3:2), and in the letter to the Romans, Paul the apostle, who for years sought to diligently practise the Old Testament law, writes, "O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24)

Now read 1 John 2:2 and 1 John 4:10. God came Himself, gave Himself. Jesus came in human flesh, lived a sinless life and offered up Himself, removing our burden of sin and reconciling us to the Father. Romans 3:25 tells us that "God set (him) forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith".

Through faith in Christ and what He has done for us, we are justified before God, and no longer separated from Him. Grasping this amazing truth we can say with St. Paul, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15)

To Think About: Jesus said, "Freely you have received, freely give". Knowing that Jesus is the propitiation for my sin, do my attitudes and lifestyle reflect His goodness and grace to those around me?

To dig deeper: Read the whole of Romans 7 then meditate on Romans 8:1-8 - our response to this glorious Gospel.

* In the NKJV. The AV uses it 3 times. The NIV and some other versions use other words to translate the Greek.