

Doctrine of the Propitiation of Christ

1. John urges us to a sin-judged life, but he has also said that we have an advocate in case we sin. That raises some questions.
 - First, the competence of the Advocate. Is He competent for the task of serving as our advocate with the Father?
 - Second, the ground of His advocacy. Is it sufficient?
 - Third, the sufficiency of His advocacy. Is it simply available for us, or is it fair to say that what Christ has accomplished is available for all, whether Jews or Gentiles?

2. The Advocate is competent for the task of serving as our defense attorney because:
 - He is Jesus, which means, “Savior.” *Matthew 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.* When the heart thinks of Jesus in this way, it cannot help but pray, “Jesus, save me from my sin, not just the penalty, but the power of the indwelling principle of sin.”
 - He is Christ, which speaks of His Mediatorship as the Messiah. He is the One who stands between the wrath of God and pleads for mercy. He stands for His people. He does not mediate on the basis of a plea bargain but on the basis of justice satisfied.
 - He is the Righteous One. *1 John 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* Jesus Christ does not act like a cunning shyster lawyer. He is the Righteous One advocating a righteous cause.

3. The Advocate is not only competent for His great task as defense attorney, but He has a basis for His important work. The ground on which He argues is sufficient because:
 - He has something to offer the Judge. As the High Priest, Jesus acts for the people of God. And, as the writer of Hebrews notes, the priest must have something to offer. He must have an offering and He does. *Hebrews 5:3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.* He offers Himself. That is the ground of His advocacy.
 - He is the Substitute for Sinner. *John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.* The penalty for sin has been paid by Christ at Calvary. Therefore, if the Father will impute His righteousness to the sinner, then there is a legal basis for forgiveness because the Law has been propitiated, the Law has been *satisfactio*, which is Latin for, satisfied. The soul that sins must die, and has died, legally, in Christ at Calvary.

- He is the Continual Propitiation. The text does not say that Jesus was, past tense, the propitiation, but that He is, present tense, the propitiation for sin. Moment by moment, day after day, year after year, for all eternity Jesus is the continual satisfaction for sin. His satisfactory work at Calvary allows sin to be forgiven and fellowship or communion with God the Father to be constant.

Special Note.

God is not satisfied because He is mean and cruel and demands a bribe. God is satisfied because justice has been rendered and He is free to be merciful, kind, and forgiving. There is mercy in God in allowing a substitute for sin. Salvation is of the Lord. Salvation, forgiveness of sin, is the plan of God the Father, executed by God the Son, and applied by God the Holy Spirit to those who are the heirs of redemption.

4. With the Lord's death at Calvary the work of redemption was completed. But there is an unfinished work and that is the work of intercession. That work continues and in that endeavor, Jesus Christ the Righteous One will not, indeed, cannot fail.
5. Lest anyone despair, John writes that Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and also for the whole world.

Special Note.

The term "world" has at least ten meanings in Scripture, some believe thirteen. "To affirm that it means everybody without exception is, again, to beg the question. One must prove that. The contexts give us the clues. There isn't anything in the context that suggests this. In fact, if it means everybody without distinction, it makes perfectly good sense. That is either Jews or Gentiles" (S. Lewis Johnson).

6. This does not mean that Christ is the propitiation for every person in the world without exception, for not all men will be saved. But the text does mean that Christ is the propitiation for every person without distinction.
7. Jew and Gentile, rich or poor, free or slave can come to Christ. The way of salvation is the same. The ground of salvation is the same.
8. For a person who asks, "Am I one for whom Christ has died? Am I among the elect?", the answer is simple. *Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*
9. When addressing the question of, "For whom did Christ die?" John Owen said the following.

"The Father imposed his wrath due unto, and the Son underwent punishment for either, one, all the sins of all men. Two, all the sins of some men, or three, some of the sins of all men, in which case it may be said, if the last be true, all men have some sins to answer for, and so none are saved.

That if the second be true, that is that he died for all the sins of some men, then Christ in their stead suffered for all sins of all the elect of the whole world, and this is the truth. But if the first be the case, he died for all the sins of all men, why not all men free from the punishment due unto their sins? You answer because of unbelief. I ask is this unbelief or sin? Or is it not? If it be, then Christ suffered the punishment due unto it, or he did not. If he did, why must that hinder them more than their other sins for which he died? If he did not, he did not die for all their sins."

10. The conclusion of the matter is that in the Old Testament, the atonement and the priesthood existed together.
11. Jesus Christ died for those for whom He exercises His priesthood, and He exercises His priesthood for the people of God.
12. Christ has died for all men in an ethnological sense. He has died for the Jew and for the Gentile. He has died for all men without distinction but not for all men without exception.
13. If Christ died for all men without exception then:
 - His work of redemption has failed for not all men are saved.
 - there is no basis on which to judge the unbeliever for all sin of all men has been satisfied, including the sin of unbelief.
 - there is no distinction between the elect and the non-elect and Universalism can be advocated.
14. Rather than diminish the atoning work of Christ and its sufficiency to save, let the Church believe that, "The substitution set forth in the Word of God is always an effectual substitution" (J. I. Packer).
15. There is a point on which both Calvinist and Arminians agree and that is salvation is by faith in Christ. *Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*