

# OpenTheo

## Propitiation & Atonement

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### **For The King** - Rocky Ramsey

The fundamental differences between the two and why that difference is worth understanding...

My guest joining me this week on the Sunday series is my brother Bryce. Bryce is getting his undergraduate degree in philosophy and hopes to get his MDiv. from a seminary after he completes his undergrad. He hopes to be a pastor shepherding Gods people one day.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/propitiation.html>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/propitiation-his-blood/>

Knowing God by: J.I. Packer (all of Chapter 18)

Reformed Systematic Theology By: Beeke Pg. 1007

A Puritan Theology By: Beeke Pg. 352

Great Doctrines of the Bible By: Lloyd-Jones BK I, Ch. 28-30

Systematic Theology By: Wayne Grudem pg 510,575,580

Key Texts: Rom. 3:21-26; Heb. 10, 2:17 ;1 Jn. 2:1-2, 4:8-10; Is. 1; Rev. 13:8; 1 Pet. 1:20; Proverbs 17:15

He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you - 1 Peter 1:20

Sunday Series Episode # 1

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## Transcript

(music) Welcome guys to the For The King podcast. It is January 31st, 2021. I'm with my brother today, actually.

I think this will be the first episode that I'm going to upload. So this is a pretty monumental moment. Really excited for it.

We're going to hop into something super easy. Nothing crazy. Just propitiation and atonement.

Nothing too hard to understand. So we just wanted... We really wanted to talk about propitiation and atonement. We think there's a gap in American, even jellicle Christianity where maybe your lay Christian doesn't think about this, you know, in your day to day.

And I know that NIV and some translations that a lot of people use don't even have this word in their Bible. It's all translated as atonement, some of the places where you would see propitiation. So we just want to talk about why it's worth understanding this fundamental difference between the two.

And it would age your faith in understanding the gospel in a greater, more like God glorifying way. So that's really all we want to accomplish today. So I'm going to add some resources and the key text that we're going to use for this episode in the notes section of the podcast so you guys can go and, you know, have some resources to learn some of the same things we learned, what we use so you can fact check us and always, like always go back to the scriptures and search them yourselves to see if these ideas and this way of looking at a few words in scripture surrounding the death, burial and resurrection of Christ makes sense and is in God's word.

So always do that and never just take something you hear on a podcast or whoever just, you know, for gospel. So first we want to lay some groundwork and define atonement. So usually if you look at most definitions, it's going to evolve an acquitting of a guilty party by another party's substitutionary act, a sacrifice of some sort.

What do you think, Bryce? Yeah, yeah, it's definitely just that covering and usually we see in the Old Testament usage as some sort of substitutionary act. Yeah, yeah, yeah, definitely agree. Cool.

So that's a good working definition. You're pretty standard. You'll find most places.

Now propitiation, it's not anything less than atonement, but it also includes in its definition a satisfaction of wrath from God. God's wrath, his righteous wrath on humanity for sin is satisfied in a propitiatory atoning sacrifice. Yeah, sound good? Yeah, okay, cool.

So this is a good working definition that we're going to work with. So keep that small

difference in your mind. Propitiation also includes a satisfying of wrath.

You'll find this in most, if not all, religions that I'm aware of have some sort of pacifying element for the God's wrath. Okay, so this is pretty standard, but Christianity, as we're going to find out through Jesus's death, burial and resurrection, actually has a glorious, you know, reality to it, and we're going to walk through that. So the word is "hysterion," that's like the Greek word that you'll find in the New Testament that is translated sometimes as purely atonement or atoning sacrifice.

I think in the NIB it's "atoning sacrifice." There is also, you'll find atonement in the ESV and other modern translations, but in four key texts that we're going to go through today, you'll find the word propitiation. So this "hysterion" word usually denotes an expiating or appeasing of some guilty party that has wronged some other party. In our instance, it's us wronging God.

So it does that word, sometimes translated as atonement, has atonement in it. Expiation is the removal of guilt, which is very similar to atonement. You can usually use those interchangeably, but it also does include propitiation, and you usually would force a translation of propitiation of that word if the surrounding text involves language that would make one think that wrath is involved in this sacrifice.

Does that make sense, Bryce? Yeah, yeah, I think that's pretty cool. Okay, cool. So the question is, is propitiation merely expiation or atonement? Expiation and atonement, interchangeable words, bring us the same thing.

We'll probably just do atonement from here on out. So is propitiation merely atonement? Is it more or less? What do you think, Bryce? Propitiation is definitely more than just atonement. It's not less, but it is definitely more, for sure.

Yeah, we have to recognize that there definitely is a real act of Christ acquitting our guilt, but there's definitely a satisfaction of wrath that always needs to be seen, and that's at the heart of the gospel message. That's what gets our toes wiggling and our voices singing. So we gotta, you know, love it.

Exactly. Yeah. Yeah, we need to understand this difference.

Okay, cool. So let's go through some Old Testament usage of atonement that we see when God instituted the sacrificial system. So we're going to turn first to Leviticus.

So we're going to go chapter one first, right? Yep, chapter one, verses four is one I want to really hit on. Okay. It says this, "He shall lay his hand," and this is referring to the priest, the one who's offering atonement, "he shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him." So you see this constant theme throughout the Levitical priesthood that there are bulls and goats that are brought forth as burnt offerings and sacrifices.

And essentially what's happening here is you see the priest who is one who represents the people before God. He comes before God in the holy places, and he offers atonement for them. So what you see here in this act of him setting his hand on the sacrifice is you see the removal of that guilt, of that sin that lied on the people, which is usually he offered the sacrifice for the entirety of the Israel, once a year, and also for himself.

And they would put his hand on the sacrifice, symbolizing that the sin is now transferring to the bull, to the goat, to the burnt sacrifice. And that's why the people are able to be covered from their sin. So that's where we see this very beautiful picture of the covering.

It's something that is not satisfying in and of itself, but it's removing the guilt and the sin from the people and putting it onto the animal. That substitutionary element. That's right.

That would be punished on our behalf. So the substitution element is very vital when it comes to understanding atonement. Cool.

So let's go to chapter 16. Yeah. Yeah.

So let's head over. Let's also have some good imagery and understanding for us how the Old Testament law interacted with the sacrificial system of atoning sacrifices. Yeah.

So here we see kind of this, this covering. So it says in chapter 16 verse 16, "Thus he shall," he referring to the priest again, "make atonement for the holy place because of the uncleanness of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sin. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleanness.

No one may be in the tent of meeting," which is, this is verse 17 now, "from the time he enters to make atonement in the holy place." So again, we're seeing this act of atonement being made for the people. And this is assuming the uncleanness of the people. It's even explicitly mentioned, the uncleanness of the people and their transgressions.

It's because of their transgressions. So this is the main thrust of what atonement is. The people are unclean.

Yeah. How do we fix that? And this is the institution of God, which as we'll see, foreshadows the greater reality of Jesus Christ. So this is always pointing forward.

Yeah. To Jesus. So a couple key New Testament passages that show how this is pointing forward is in John chapter two.

John the Baptist says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." Right? Yeah. This is referring to Jesus Christ. So this is showing that act of, of in a sense,

atonement being brought in.

And then we also see in first Corinthians 5, 7, that Jesus Christ is the Passover Lamb. So this is definitely, it's typological, what's passing forward. These sacrifices here in Leviticus were a type and Christ is the anti-type.

He's the full fulfillment of that. And we'll get into, we'll get into these things a little bit later on as well. Yeah.

So let's, you know, guys really key in on our use of the word, like a symbol foreshadowing types, anti-types, these things are all like, they're just representing some future fulfillment that God has planned always. Okay. So let's, let's, let's see where this went wrong with the Israelites and where we can go wrong understanding Jesus merely as an atoning sacrifice.

So let's go to Isaiah one. And we can also, we can find texts like this all over the Bible, but this is a good one. You can go to Psalm 53 when yeah.

So yeah, Psalm 53. Yeah. And we see David repenting and he talks about also where the blood of bulls and goats is not what God requires, but it can try and penetrate heart.

Okay. So can you, okay. So it says in Isaiah one, essentially just like you did in Psalm 56 that the blood of, of bulls and of goats do not satisfy God.

Exactly. Yeah. They're not satisfied.

Yeah. They don't satisfy or appease, pacify the wrath that God has on evil humanity. So where they went wrong here, this deep sin was that they had put their hope and their faith in the prayers of bulls or sorry, in prayers, bulls aren't praying, dude.

All right. In the prayers that they were like supplicating to God, bulls, you know, just sacrifices in general and their festivals, what they have forgotten. And what we find all over the old Testament is that God is the rock.

God is the savior. We hide under his wings. We don't hide under sacrifices that don't do anything for our wellbeing.

Right. These were just symbols looking forward to something greater that was going to come. And we have this promise back all the way back in Genesis three, you know, God's going to crush the head of the serpent and then he closed them after they sin.

You know, God is the one providing these things that you shouldn't put your hope and faith in things that don't actually satisfy or have any merit in and of themselves. Okay. Does that make sense? So anything I missed there? And yeah, just like what you said in the old Testament, we see that the bulls and the goats in and of themselves have nothing efficacious about them.

They don't do anything. And this sounds like a conundrum because obviously the Israelites practice it as if it did. So we're going to answer this question.

They kept getting into a cycle of thinking it did too. And this is, this is an issue. This is what makes the gospel gores.

Yeah. And that's why you should be pointing them to a better reality, but they forgot that reality. And that's when the sin of Israel was evident.

Exactly. So we'll answer that conundrum later on in the episode of how did, why did God institute? Yeah. What was the point if it wasn't actually doing anything for their sins in the long run? And this is why when we read, go through Hebrews, because Hebrews deals with this question, but the reason why they had to, they had to offer these sacrifices every single year.

It never was accomplishing the thing that the Israelites wanted out of it. They were always looking for a better king, always looking for righteousness, but always found themselves compromising themselves with idols, right? The surrounding nations. And again, it's looking forward to something better.

And also remember, you can't catch every single sin that you do, which is we're going to get into the why Jesus death is different because you would understand your sin. Then you would go make an offering in the old Testament. Now you sometimes don't even have a conviction for sin.

So there's no way the sacrificial system could ever at home for every single sin. You would not be able to catch it in your own evil heart. Cause sometimes you love doing your evil and you never even feel convicted about it at all in the first place, which is why Jesus covers all sin.

This is big. This is a big deal. Okay.

So the new Testament usage of like talking about atonement, the word atoning sacrifice or atonement is found in the new Testament, but the text we're going to look at is where the word propitiation is translated for some of these translations like the ESV instead. So the text where you'll find this is like Romans three 21 through 26, you'll find propitiation and Hebrews two 17, you'll find propitiation and first John two one through two, you can find propitiation and in first Sean chapter four eight to 10, you'll find propitiation. Now the word hysteria that we talked about earlier is found in other texts elsewhere, but in these places it's, it's translated as propitiation and there's a good reason for that.

So in Romans three, I'm just going to read the text starting in verse 23 for all of sin and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. And here it is folks whom God put forward Jesus Christ as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith. So you could just, plenty of

translations just say atoning sacrifice, but there's something more being, being articulated here by Paul.

So if we go to chapter one of Romans, we see that God's wrath is being stored up against the unrighteous and Paul goes on to argue also that the law is written on everybody's hearts. That judgment comes through the law, right? It is, you wouldn't know what sin is apart from the law. It's a mirror and it just caused like in James, it talks about the law being a mirror and you just look back at yourself when you look into the law.

All it does is just show your evilness. The law is perfect. It is the righteousness of God.

It's God's standard, but when you look into the law, it has no power to save. It's a teacher. It's a, it's a, what's the other word? It's a teacher.

It's a, it's like a tutor. Yeah. It's like a, like you're, it's pupil kind of, and it's teaching you.

It should just cause you to look back at yourself. And Paul argues this, that all this talk about the law, it's written on your heart. It was given to the Israelites, but they didn't follow it.

There's wrath being stored up for humanity. So then he asked this question, what advantage has the Jew now because of all these things that God has given them. And there's, there's none.

There's no one who's righteous. We even see this in Psalm 51. There's no one who does good, no, not one.

And this is David talking to the Israelites, right? This is an Oracle from God. This is a song given to God's people. It's his word, but it's also talking about all people at all times.

So even the Gentiles, including the Jews, there's no one who's good. So there's a, there's a wrath being stored up for them. You're not catching every sin and sacrificing for it at the same time.

And also you have to do it every year over and over again. And we know that in Psalm 53 and in Isaiah one, God says multiple times in the Old Testament, this is not what I require. You guys are missing the point.

It's just a symbol. This isn't the point of what I'm doing. It's just a symbol.

And it's not doing anything for your sin. So then he gets to a point where he talks about, listen guys, in verse 23, Paul says, you know, we've all sinned. We've all fallen short of God's glory, but we are justified by his grace as a gift.

And the gift is his son. Okay. And that's the redemption, which is a buying through a ransom, a purchasing whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood.

So Jesus's death is a satisfying sacrifice. Remember how we talked about the Old Testament, the hand God laid on him, the iniquity of us all. When that imagery in Isaiah 53 is kind of like that.

We kind of see that imagery of a hand. God is laying it on him and taking it from us. He's laid on him, the iniquity of all, almost like God is putting his hand, his righteous right hand in wrath against Jesus.

And yeah. So I, yeah. What do you think, Bryce? Yeah, I definitely think that's a beautiful imagery that we see in Isaiah 53.

And particularly with every time you hear about the redemption that is brought to us, it's always in conjunction with Christ's blood. You see also in Ephesians 7, is that in his redemption, the redemption by his blood that is to be received by faith. And that's exactly the same wording that we hear, that we see here.

So again, this always points back to Leviticus, it points back to the sacrificial system and it shows how it's foreshadowing to Christ. So he had to shed his blood. Yeah.

And he also had to die. It's both, it's both. Exactly.

It's not just his blood. It's not just his death. It's both.

He had to bleed and he had to die. So Atonement, remember guys, Atonement has a place in this discussion. Jesus did atone.

He got rid of the guilt through a substitution. He, he himself was the substitution in our place. But we got to remember that God was passing over.

Where's that text at Bryce? That's a couple of verses on. Yeah. Let's see.

And his divine forbearance. He had passed over former sins in verse 25. Yeah.

Yeah. I just didn't finish it. Yeah.

Because it is divine forbearance. He had passed over former sins. Yeah.

So he was passing over the sins of his people through this sacrificial system in the old Testament that you were highlighting. And now Jesus has come to like bear the weight of that wrath in full force and it's dying. It's finished.

That's why Jesus said it's finished on the cross. So then here, this kind of highlights that Proverbs verse we were looking at. You can say you're whatever you were about to say.

I'm going to go to Proverbs real quick so we can bring that up. And what we just learned there too also points back to Exodus 12 with the Passover. Christ is our Passover lamb like I already quoted in 1 Corinthians 5.7. And because of that, we see in the Passover,



Christ is foreshadowed.

Now God covers, he passes over our former sins because of his son. So we see that exact same imagery. So the Old Testament and the New Testament are very connected together.

Yeah. We need to recognize how close they actually are. Yeah.

So like here's a big conundrum in the scriptures in Proverbs 17, 15. He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike in abomination to the Lord. Yeah.

So heavy statement. Yeah. That's like, that's pretty tough with some of the, some of the things you learn in scripture, like God here we're reading and we're justified by his grace.

We all have sin and fall short of the glory of God. What does that make us? We're wicked and unrighteous. But we just read that that's an abomination to God.

If you justify the wicked and the unrighteous. And right here, literally says are justified by his grace. So God has just justified the unrighteous.

Now, propitiation is what solves this conundrum guys. That's why we're laboring this point or even making this episode and why we think it's amazing because when God satisfies that wrath, justice is served. There's a punishment.

There's a consequence for sin because God is holy. He cannot be in the presence of unrighteousness of evilness. It's a logical inconsistency for something that is holy and set apart to be near something that is of a different kind, a whole different substance than it.

God is pure. God is completely perfect and holy and set apart. And if he justifies the wicked, that makes God an abomination to himself somehow.

But we know that he has satisfied his justice in Christ as a propitiation. So that's very important to understand. He does not satisfy his wrath and purely just a toad.

And that's why we're laboring this point. Right. It's not less.

It's not less. So much more. Yeah.

That's what get your toes. They get your toes with one and going super crazy in your shoes. So let's go to Hebrews 10 now because Hebrews deals with, you know, the Old Testament sacrificial system a lot.

And before we go on to that, that's why Paul says here that God is both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus because it's completely satisfied in Christ. And that's how that conundrum is fixed. That Rocky, yeah, on in Proverbs 17.

Yeah. So Hebrews 10 shows the nature of Christ's death and why it's categorically different than bulls and goats, anything like that. So let's hit that real quick, right? Do you have it right? There's at the end of nine, we need to start there.

So let's hit on this. Yeah. And versus let's start in.

Let's start in 12. Okay. He, this is referring to Christ back in verse 11.

It talks about about Christ. He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. Verse 13, for if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ who through the eternal spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Yep. We'll go and say cut it folks. That's right.

But there's a reason we're about to answer that question from earlier. There's a reason why God did that. So let's hop on now to verses 24.

So it says for Christ has entered not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf, nor was it to offer himself repeatedly as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood, not his own for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. Yeah, that was big dirt. That's a big point.

But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And that's what Paul says in Colossians, right? God took away this record that that stood against us by nailing it to the cross, right? Yeah, Christ's propitiatory sacrifice for us. If he was purely in atonement, he would have to continue to be a sacrifice.

He would have to, just like the Levitical priesthood, he would have to keep doing that over and over and over again. The goal is for God to be just and to satisfy his own righteous wrath against sin. And Jesus doesn't have to die over and over again every single year.

Once a year provide atonement for his people, the church, his bride. No, he doesn't have to do that. He's a sacrifice through his death once and for all because he was a propitiation.

That's right. Does that make sense? Yeah. Yeah.

So I think that was Hebrews 9 guys. I said Hebrews 10. Oh, you did? Yeah, most of that was Hebrews 9, right? Yeah, I said the wrong chapter.

I still have some, some in 10 that we can read as well. Yeah, I hit that real quick. So in Hebrews 10 verses five, it says, it says, consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, and this is a quote from Psalms, sacrifices and offerings, you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me.

And then hopping on to verse eight, it says, when he said above, you have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings. These are offered according to the law. Then he added, behold, I have come to do your will.

He does away with the first order in order to establish the second. And by that will, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. So the author of Hebrews is laboring on this point.

Christ is the once and for all, propitiatory, a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins, right? John the Baptist, again, behold the lamb who takes away the sins of the world. And this is a beautiful picture right here. We have Christ as the once and for all, not the blood of bulls or goats.

Yeah. Infinite amount of their blood could ever the divine justice of God, only Christ, only the son of God. Yeah.

I think that's a good logical, just just a pure rationale argument. There's no scripture that would argue this, but I think it would make sense to our minds that if you had an infinite amount of rams or bulls or goats or whatever, and every time you, maybe you somehow had divine knowledge to catch every sin you did, even if you atone for every one of those sins, every time on the bull, the infinite amount of bulls and goats, do we really think logically that would satisfy God's wrath against sin? Right. It can't, bulls and goats aren't moral agents.

They can't bear, they can't bear that burden of your sin. It doesn't satisfy God. Right.

You can only put it all if it can't add anything to you. Exactly. Yeah.

It would just be a passing over of former sins. Right. That's, yeah, that's a big point.

And also remember, Jesus is of the order of what? Melchizedek, not, not the Levitical priesthood that has to offer over and over again, the, the order of Melchizedek lasts forever. Jesus is always like in first John, he's always standing to advocate for the father. Because he lives forever.

Right. He rose again. Absolutely.

And we're justified by that. Yeah, that's really good news. That's literally why we're Christians.

Yeah. Cool. Anything else there? Not on that.

No. Okay, cool. All right.

We're going to wrap this up. We're going to look at a few last texts that really answered that question for earlier. Why did God do this sacrificial system in the first place? Right? If it wasn't efficacious, if it actually didn't propitiate any sins, it was just a passing over.

Then what was the point? And the point was this, folks, if you go to revelation 13 eight, you're going to see this. I'm just going to read the one verse and all who dwell on earth will worship it. This is the first piece coming.

Everyone whose name had not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of the life of the lamb who was slain. So that's big guys. We're getting a glimpse into the mind of God.

And what is that? Before, what does it say? Before the foundation of the world, there was a book of life for those who would be saved, those who would not worship the beast and would love God instead. And in that book, they were what? They were, they had their sins covered by the lamb who was slain, right? That's why they're in the book of life. So Jesus was the plan.

You know, we, we see this all throughout scripture, but these, these texts speak specifically to Christ as the crucified savior that God had a plan for the whole time. So what was surprising? So tell me, what was the propitiate, what was the point of the old sacrificial system? And what was the actual propitiating force in those, in those, uh, those sacrifices? The actual propitiatory force was Christ himself. Hallelujah.

There it is. Yeah. And it points back to we're looking at the foreshadowing of it to Christ.

And as Rocky just pointed out in revelation 13, eight Christ was that lamb who was slain before the foundation of the world. And that's why we made the qualifier in and of the bulls and goats self. They added nothing to us.

There was nothing efficacious about the blood of bulls and goats. It was only as that was conjoined with Christ Christ. Yeah.

It was Christ and faith of looking forward on the promise. That's absolutely right. Exactly.

They were saved by faith as well. That's right. Saints that were partaking in the sacrificial system.

They still, what they did, they didn't have God's wrath satisfy on them yet. Right. So how, how are, how are we going to see Abraham in heaven? Because it would, Jesus also covered his sins.

That's right. Yeah. Yeah.

And in the fullest of time, God sent his son and that's they, they were looking forward to the Christ and we were looking back. So we're all of grace. We got to finish this up.

It only goes to 30 minutes. Oh really? Yeah. So you can go look at first Peter one 20 as well, but I didn't know we had to cap this at 30 minutes, but I'm going to put those resources in there.

Yeah. Look at first Peter one 20. It also talks about for our sake Christ died for us.

And that was the plan. So this whole idea of propitiation is really important guys. We hope you took something away from it.

This is the for the King podcast. I'm Rocky your host. And this is my brother, Bryce.

We appreciate you guys listening. Bye.