

A man was stumbling through the woods, totally drunk, when he came upon a preacher baptizing people in the river. He proceeded to walk into the water and bumped into the preacher. The preacher turned around and, though almost overcome by the smell of alcohol, asked the drunk, "Are you ready to find Jesus?" The Drunk answered, "Yes, I am." So the preacher grabbed the drunk and dunked him in the water. Then he pulled him up and asked him, "Brother have you found Jesus?" The drunk replied, "No, I haven't found Jesus." The preacher, shocked at the answer, dunked him into the water again, for a little longer. Then again, he pulled him out and asked, "Have you found Jesus my brother?" The drunk again answered, "No, I haven't found Jesus." By this time the preacher was at his wits end so he submerged the drunk once more, and held him down for about 30 seconds until he began kicking his arms and legs, whereupon he pulled him up. The preacher again asked the drunk, "Well now, have you found Jesus?" The drunk wiped his eyes and caught his breath and finally said to the preacher, "Are you sure this is where he fell in?"

There's a better way to find Jesus. That's what we want to talk about tonight – you have to find Jesus or really, Jesus has to find you before you can have a **Relationship** with God. Our relationship with God was broken by man's willful choice in the Garden in Genesis 3 when we chose to sin. But God, even then, longed for and planned for our restored **Relationship**.

1 John 1:6-7 says, "*If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*" The only way we can have a restored **Relationship** is through the cross, through Jesus' blood. The price that God the Father paid for us to have this restored **Relationship** is unfathomable for us. Yet, the cross could not bring about this restored **Relationship** apart from two key truths: **Expiation** and **Propitiation**. Those are big theological words. Without them, we'd still be guilty, condemned and without hope.

What is Expiation? Expiation refers to the cleansing of sin and removal of sin's guilt. In the Old Testament sacrificial system, blood was collected from an animal's severed arteries and then manipulated in a variety of ways. It was smeared, sprinkled, tossed, and poured out. God gave Israel blood on the altar "*to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life,*" underlining the idea of substitution. The shed blood of a blameless substitute represented life for life, soul for soul.

The Day of Atonement was essentially an elaborate sin offering (Lev. 16). The one sin offering of the Day of Atonement involved two goats. After the first had been sacrificed for the sake of its blood, the other goat was symbolically loaded with the guilt of Israel's sins as the high priest pressed both hands onto the head of the goat and confessed those sins over the animal. Weighed down with the judgment-worthy guilt of Israel on its head, the goat was then driven into the wilderness. It's what we call a "scape goat." It pictured what Jesus did for us, taking our sins away from us. And while the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins (Heb. 10:4), the blood of Jesus the God-man, shed on the cross and applied by the Spirit to those who trust in Him, cleanses sinners from their sins. Jesus endured our judgment to provide us with **Expiation**.

What is Propitiation? Back in 1989 when then Speaker of the House, Jim Wright (**picture**), resigned under an ethical cloud having to do with some book deals he'd made while he was the Speaker. Jim Wright argued that he had done nothing wrong and when he resigned, he made a long speech to the House of Representatives, stating his reasons behind his resignation.

When he wrote a news article about it, he recalled what had happened back in 1989, offering his advice to the new Speaker of the House and commented on the fact that there had been so much ill will generated, that he'd resigned, "*as a propitiation for this season of ill will.*"

It may be the only time in history that the word *propitiation* has been tied to U.S. politics. Propitiation is a rare word, a word not used in every day conversation, yet when you come to the pages of the New Testament, you discover that the word propitiation is a key word that's used six times in various forms relating to the effects of the work of Christ on the cross. "*To propitiate means to turn away wrath by the offering of a gift.*"

Most of us have seen propitiation and don't even know it. Here's a man who is married. As men are prone to do, he's made a mistake and offended his wife. He's said something he shouldn't have said, or done something he shouldn't have done. He is pulling off the freeway, and as he does so, at the traffic light he sees someone selling flowers. Suddenly, when he sees the man with the flowers, a light bulb goes on in his head. Before the light turns from red to green, he pulls out his wallet, shoves \$10.00 through the window, grabs his flowers, puts them on the seat beside him, goes home, gets out of the car and goes inside. Before his wife can say a word to him, he presents the flowers to her. She smiles and he hopes that the offering of the flowers has turned away the wrath of his wife. That's *propitiation*.

When Jesus died on the cross and shed his blood, propitiation is the word used to describe the effects of the death of Christ. Hebrews 2:17, *“Therefore He had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”*

When Jesus died on the cross, the blood that He shed turned away the wrath of God and covered the sin of the people. 1 John 2:2 shows another side of the truth, *“He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”* Put these two passages together and what you have is this truth: *Jesus, in His death on the cross, on one hand is like the High Priest who made the sacrifice, offering the blood on the mercy seat. On the other hand, Jesus Christ is the sacrifice itself.*

So Jesus, when He offered himself, was both our High Priest and our sacrifice offered up to God. When Jesus hung on the cross, in great agony and great pain He cried out to God, *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* At that moment something we don’t fully understand happened. In that moment all the wrath of God was poured out on Jesus. It was as if the sewer pit of hell were emptied on Christ. He became sin for us and all of our sin and the sins of the whole world were poured out on Jesus. In that moment God turned His face away from His only Son. In that moment, Jesus took all of the wrath of God for us.

Let me give you **three truths** to summarize the effects of propitiation:

1. *Because Jesus died, God’s justice is now satisfied.* **2.** *Because Jesus died, God’s wrath has now been turned away. The price for sin has been paid.* **3.** *Because Jesus died, God’s mercy is now freely available to anyone who wants it.*

Since Christ bore the full weight of God’s wrath, we now enjoy the full blessing of God’s mercy. If you’re a Christian and are living with guilt because you think God is mad at you, you don’t understand the cross. God loves you and is merciful towards you. His wrath has been turned away.

Expiation – Jesus took our guilt away from us. **Propitiation** – Jesus took God’s wrath that we deserved upon Himself. It’s only because of Jesus, it’s only because of the cross that we can now have a restored **Relationship**.