

ATONEMENT–RANSOM-PROPIATION-RECONCILIATION

The meaning of the word “*atonement*” involves the theological meaning of “covering over,” usually with the blood of a sacrifice in order to atone for sin. It infers a reconciliation with the offended party.

Adam, by his disobedience of God’s command, offended God’s justice and brought upon himself and all the human race the penalty of death. But God’s love and mercy would not be satisfied to leave man under this penalty forever. Hence, in John 3:16 we read of how God, because of His great love, provided the legal means to redeem man from the demands of justice. *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* Jesus came to earth, was born miraculously of Mary and died as a perfect human being on Calvary’s cross as an atoning sacrifice for sin, thus freeing Adam and all mankind from the penalty of death which will be experienced by all in God’s due time.

The meaning of the word “*ransom*” is the price required or demanded to release someone held captive. We read Jesus’ words in Matt. 20:28: *“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”* The Apostle Paul in 1 Tim. 2:5-6 states: *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”*

The word “*propitiation*” is a derivative of the word “*propitiatory*” sometimes rendered “*mercy seat*.” In the Old Testament during their journey to Canaan, God gave Israel instructions to build a Tabernacle in which He was to be worshipped and sacrifices were to be offered. In its innermost compartment called the Most Holy, there resided the golden Ark of the Covenant. The lid of this ark was called the “*propitiatory*” or “*mercy seat*.” On it were the figures of two cherubim. A miraculous light that appeared between the outstretched wings of the two cherubim indicated God’s presence. In their Atonement Day ritual, blood of sacrificed animals was sprinkled on the Ark representing the future blood that Jesus would shed that would make atonement for sin by which God’s mercy and love would be extended to mankind.

The word “*reconciliation*” means to re-establish a former relationship. It infers that a dispute or wrong has been settled and now things are back to the way they were before. Jesus was the means of reconciling mankind from the penalty pronounced on Adam. Eph. 2:13-14 expresses this well: *“But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us.”* This is true now for all those who believe in Jesus as their Savior. This will also be true in Christ’s coming kingdom on earth, *“... when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and come forth...”* (John 5:28-29.) This position of future reconciliation is also described in Rev. 21:7: *“He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son.”*

Jesus’ one “*ransom*” sacrifice on Calvary’s cross was all that was and will ever be needed to make “*atonement*,” “*propitiation*,” and “*reconciliation*.” Heb. 9:28 tells us: *“So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”* In Romans 8:3 we read: *“For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful*

man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man” (NIV). Jesus was and is the only sin offering that the world will ever need.

The *question* is often asked: “If Jesus has already made an atonement for mankind, then why are Adam and all his descendants still in their graves? Why hasn’t God resurrected them, and given them the blessings which Christ’s death was supposed to bring about? The answer: God in His great wisdom and love wanted not only to redeem mankind from death’s curse, but He wants to restore them back to the perfection that man had before Adam sinned. But before God does this in Christ’s future earthly kingdom, he has another purpose to accomplish. He wants to bring “*many sons to glory*” (Heb. 2:10). Ever since Pentecost God has been and still is “calling out of the world a people for His Name” (Acts 15:14), educating, training and perfecting them so that they might assist Christ in His kingdom in blessing all the families of the earth. (See Gen 12:2; Gal. 3:29). This called-out class is to be the bride of Christ (Rev. 19:7-9). Only after the Bride is complete will the promise of Acts 3:21 be fulfilled: “*Whom (Jesus) the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.*”

God’s plan is beautiful and orderly when it is understood. And so it will be that one day, in God’s due time, that Adam and all the billions who have since died will be resurrected to life in Christ’s coming Kingdom, even though the “*ransom,*” the “*atonement,*” the “*propitiation,*” and “*reconciliation*” was made approximately two thousand years ago. Let us offer up our praise and thanksgiving to our loving God and to our Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave His life for us.

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