

# Propitiatory Shelter

(Essay no 5b)

BY USING THESE TWO WORDS TOGETHER, in effect making them to be a single term, (propitiatory-shelter) we solve any uncertainty as to the significance which may be judged to exist when the word *propitiation* is used alone. At the same time, the distinction between our term and **justification** becomes most evident. Thus each branch of teaching will fall into its own category in the ways of our God and Father, especially as all His ways centre in the glory of His SON.

In effect, this procedure defines the Greek word by referring it to the Hebrew word against which it is used in the Septuagint. We thus *escape the influence* and the effect in regard to Greek terms which Latin words came to make upon them, in the early A.D. centuries, as the evangel spread westwards along the coast of Africa. The father known as Tertullian was the agent, for he provided the Latin against the Greek, and these tended to accompany the western spread of the evangel.

Tertullian's viewpoint differed from that of Origen. Tertullian regarded man in relation to God, seeing man as on probation, with God as the magistrate, along with punishment for sin. Tertullian preceded Augustine, and the providing of satisfaction to God assumed sway. God and His grace, with the counsel of His will, came to decline. Origen came to be viewed as the heretic.

With the word PROPITIATORY so defined, it is readily evident that there is a full distinction between it and the term JUSTIFY. We are able to restrict each word to its own category, and so to realise that there is every reason to consider the teaching of JUSTIFICATION as resting on a definite basis, one which will not admit any suggestion that it rests on fiction. Such a charge has tended to give preference to the teaching which regards pardon and justify as being equivalents.

To a very great extent, it has become lost to sight that the term *propitiatory shelter* comes out of the Hebrew Scriptures, together with the existence of *law*, along with the means of approach to IEUE, as set forth in the book of Leviticus. Yet the term *justify* comes to be used out of the matter given in the judge's court-room of Romans, chapter two, into three.

We must start back with the *law*, for then we will the more easily discern the connections around *propitiatory shelter*, for it is from there that necessity comes to speak of the idea. Under the law there was the call for *forbearance*, since the law made sin to be taken into account. How was Israel to continue to exist in the face of the law, except there be some measure of respite from the law?

To Moses, when he desired to be shown the glory of God, it was made clear that the Deity's glory (Exod. 33:18) *was greater than the law*, for He would be gracious to whom He would be gracious and show mercy on whom He will show mercy. Thus any lack around the law *could be supplied by God's glory*.

During the era of the law, the *propitiatory shelter* may be regarded as the factor which allowed or sustained *forbearance on the part of the Subjector*. This thought is that which is pointed to in the end words of Romans 3:25 C.V., that is, the passing over of the penalties of sins which occurred before in the *forbearance of God*.

Behind this idea of *forbearance* is the position that, though there was ceremonial cleansing of sins, yet the sins were *NOT* eliminated: they persisted from year to year, requiring both daily and yearly repetition of the same sacrifices. Even the live goat, said to bear all the depravities confessed over it, and sent into the land of severance, it was not any more effectual, except as it gave vividness to the type.

This position is, then, the reason why "*forbearance*" needs to be mentioned as that called for on the part of the Subjector. One teacher has given the term "suspense account" to this feature. It is, however, to be noted that the position is always *within the circle of the law*, and is thus *distinct* from the matter of justification, of which there can be *no type* in the sacrifices.

The situation is made very clear in the Hebrew epistle. Yet that epistle also makes evident that the *great*

*sacrifice* did make a *propitiatory shelter* which allows pardon, for it eliminates and repudiates sins, so that they come not into the mind of God, for He remembers them no more. This will be the case under the new covenant.

In this new situation, coming from the purposing of Christ as the *propitiatory shelter*, there is displayed the Subjector's *righteousness*, reflected *back* into the *propitiatory shelter* corresponding to the era of the *law*. There is also provided the *same righteousness* for the *propitiatory shelter* of the *future*. Meanwhile, it was available for the needs and requirements of the ministry which comes within the scope of, and correspondence to, the epistles of John.

This requires "faith in His blood", even as Romans 3:25 states. Though John's epistles do not speak exactly thus, yet they are based on Christ's blood. In this *propitiatory shelter* there is provision for a pardon, one which is sure and certain. But the *propitiatory shelter* does not allow any one to say they do not stand in need of the *new values* of the *propitiatory shelter*. The old and decrepit were ready for disappearance.

Related to this *propitiatory shelter*, there is *life eonian*. But the emphasis is rather to the life viewed as possessed by the saints, and as manifested and seen in Christ in His life on earth (1 John 1:2).

The *propitiatory shelter* requires a *chief priest* to have performed it (Heb. 2:17). This requirement constitutes it a most distinct matter from that which is agreeable to God's Evangel. No priest can give the verdict "not guilty". It is thoroughly outside that office. And so is fully outside God's evangel.

## **JUSTIFICATION.**

The realities agreeable to the verdict to fill the requirements of justification, they reject every element which contains the least semblance of the thought that the penalty of sins has been borne by Another in order to allow the verdict. The verdict must be *just and true*, so there cannot be the intrusion of the idea that there has been even a cleansing of sins. That is the case in regard to the *propitiatory shelter*.

The element which does warrant the verdict 'not guilty' is the *faith of Jesus*. In His obedience to the cross, Christ was enacting *God's righteousness*, and this inhered the faith of Jesus Christ. His faith was not exercised amidst some lofty remove from the possibility of suffering, but, rather, in the face of circumstances of suffering *sufficient to deter faith*. Their extent was such that His blood became the outward evidence of the glory resident in His faith (Romans 5:9). In *no* sense was His faith illusory.

In the faith of Christ, sins were transmuted by contact with the righteousness of God, for God's righteousness was requiring His faith. It was *perfect* faith, mature and complete. *Out of it came the glory of God's righteousness to the one who believes God's evangel concerning His Son*.

We should not intrude anything from Romans 5:12-19 into this question of *justification by faith*. Those verses deal with *racial* matters, within which we do come, in the wider sense expressed, but now we are having regard to the believer who receives the righteousness of *Jesus Christ's faith*.

The statement of Romans 6:7 should not be brought into the case: *that* Scripture is dealing with *sin* (not sins, which are our actions). Hence the point of this verse is "justified *from*", and it is by dying with Christ on the cross.

This "justified *from*" is a necessary accompaniment to conciliation, which has its relation to the death of God's Son. For our "offenses" (not sins) He was "given up" (Roms. 4:25). Thus *from* our offensiveness (sin) we have been justified, and this effect is *actual reconciliation*, when it is understood in its completeness, that is, viewed as a mutual matter.

## **A SUMMARY OF DETAILS.**

**FORBEARANCE** is a *past* matter corresponding to the period of the law. It was necessary during that era, for the animal sacrifices could not deal with sins. It was impossible for the blood of bulls and he-goats to be eliminating sins. The cleansing effected was *ceremonial*, and the sin was still on the *conscience*, requiring further daily and yearly repetition of the same sacrifices.

**JUSTIFICATION:** this is the *present* matter, and is apart from law. It comes through the *faith of Christ*, in which faith He enacted God's righteousness, and thus it was made possible to pronounce the *just verdict – not guilty* - to those who are believing. In His faith, the believer contacts God's righteousness, for this transmuting glory resides in the *faith of Jesus*.

**PROPITIATORY SHELTER:** This is *future*. Its basis is the sacrifice of Christ: it is for the kingdom of Israel, when God is propitious to them and no more remembers their sins. It is the *new covenant*. It is also the major item in the evangel which Israel will take to the nations in the era of the millennial kingdom.

**SUBSTITUTION:** It would take us too far afield to deal extendedly with this idea, but we would add a strong denial that it is any scriptural idea. *For* is never *instead*. There is much distinction between acting *for* another *instead* of another. *Instead* requires two parties of equal status, whereas *for* is satisfied when one is the greater. We may speak *for* God, but never *instead* of Him. Even so, any speaking must be inspired. Christ does not bear the penalty, *but the sin itself*. He did not seek to satisfy justice and set the guilty free. In fact, He was so high above us all that He could not take our place. Yet He was ever the sympathising Companion and Helper.

**PUNISHMENT:** From theology there comes the impression which requires the Scriptures to speak extensively of this matter. But this is an idea from the versions, *not* from the Scriptures themselves, or from a concordant version of them.

The word punishment does not even represent God's discipline. Yet the notion extends itself into our thinking that punishment is a leading matter in the ways of the Deity. Thus the thought is generally entertained that Christ bore the punishment for all. This is a crude notion which denies itself when given due and full regard.

Even the **GREAT WHITE THRONE** is made to come within such an idea, whereas, it is rather, in its essence, the means whereby eonian life is withheld. Prior to the GREAT WHITE THRONE, all the "rest of the dead" will have been paid according to their acts. Those who emerge from the second death will do so leaving sin behind them. The tyranny of sin will be passed, and its unprofitableness will be understood. They will understand that they are blest *in His just award*.

**PUNISH**, in the Hebrew, is really to NOTE. This is the first movement, and then more particularly it resolves into "visit on" whatever may be necessary to effect a rectifying and correcting.

This really ranges with the idea of the word JUDGE, for this is to correct after there has been due and proper noting of the matter. Especially is there judgment for the widow and orphan!

What we are saying here concerning the matter of punishment surely rules out that there can be any reality in the idea of the vicarious bearing of it. It makes for so much confusion of thought, that our attempts to understand the ways of God, in Christ, they tend to become defeated. The pathway and its elements and features are at cross purposes. The result is not at all clear, and they cloud the ways of our God and Father.

E. H. Clayton July, 1971.

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