

INTRODUCTION.

- A. This term, expiation, is also found in Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias under the words propitiation, atonement, reconciliation, and redemption.
- B. Our task in this lesson is to define the word, look at its usage, and then make it applicable for preaching, teaching, and living!

I. TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS.

- A. Some definitions:
 1. Webster's New World Dictionary
Expiation--to make satisfaction or atonement. From the Latin *ex-* meaning out, and *piare* meaning to appease. It is to make amends for wrongdoing or guilt, or to pay the penalty of or suffer for.
 2. W.E. Vine's Dictionary of Expository Words
Hilaskomai (propitiation) was used among the Greeks with the significance of earning the good will of the gods. Good will was not the natural attitude of the Greek gods, it had to be earned or appeased. However, the word is not used in this way in the NT. Rather, it is God who is propitiated by the vindication of His holy and righteous character through the provision He has made in the sacrifice of Christ.
Kaphar is an OT Hebrew word translated 'mercy seat.' It is used in connection with the sin offerings of the priest in Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35. There is a definite relationship between the expiation of sins and the ark's mercy seat in the OT.
 3. Colin Brown's Dictionary of NT Theology
To make gracious or be gracious.
 4. An Encyclopedia of Religion (Ed. Vergilius Ferm).
To render favorable to the one alienated.
 5. The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible
An atoning action which obliterates sin from God's sight and so restores to holiness and divine favor.

II. EXPIATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

- A. The Hebrew equivalent for *hilaskomai* appears twice in the OT (Num. 35:33; Deut. 32:43).
(Num. 35:33) 'So you shall not pollute the land in which you are; for blood pollutes the land and no can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.'
(Deut. 32:43) "Rejoice, O nations, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And will render vengeance on His adversaries, And will atone for His land and His people."
- B. And the word "expiated" appears 4 times in the marginal readings of:
 1. 1Sam. 3:14;
"And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."
 2. Isa. 6:7; 22:14; 27:9;
(Isa. 6:7) And he touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven."
(Isa. 22:14) But the LORD of hosts revealed Himself to me, "Surely this iniquity shall not be forgiven you Until you die, " says the Lord GOD of hosts.
(Isa. 27:9) Therefore through this Jacob's iniquity will be forgiven; And this will be the full price of the pardoning of his sin: When he makes all the altar stones like pulverized chalk stones; When Asherim and incense altars will not stand

- C. Extra-ritual expiation.
1. Expiation is a direct act of God. He is the subject who expiates or atones. The object of the act of expiation is the sin or offense, which is thus “covered” or “erased” by God Himself (Psa. 32:1; 51:9; Isa. 43:25; 44:22; Jer. 18:23). Once the sin has been expiated it has the sense of “to treat as covered (or wiped away)” and hence “to be forgiven.”
 2. This should express the clear realization that only God can remove man’s sin, and that God’s forgiveness is not conditional upon any human act of expiation, but springs from His own initiative--in His own mercy and grace (Psa. 78:38; 79:9; Mic. 7:18).
 3. These instances also set forth the principle that God does not, in forgiving sin, condone it. Expiation may involve an expression of divine wrath and a participation on the part of some representative (to be punished) in God’s righteous anger.
- D. Expiation and the Levites:
1. OT expiation is closely associated with the Levitical rites. In such cases the subject who makes the expiation is the divinely appointed priest or high priest (Lev. 4:20, 26, 31,35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7; 7:7; 16:6, 11, 16-18, 24, 32-33; 1Chr. 6:49; 2Chr. 29:24; Neh. 10:33; Ezek. 43:20, 26). Even when only an offering is mentioned (Ex. 30:15-16; Lev. 1:4; 17:11; Num. 31:50; 35:33), by implication it is the high priest who is offering it.
 2. The common “ritual” means by which expiation is made is sacrifice. God Himself provides the means of expiation (various sacrifices), through which His forgiveness is made real and appropriated.
- E. For OT expiation to take place there must be two things:
1. A priest to offer the sacrifice.
 2. A sacrificial victim to be punished.

III. EXPIATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

- A. In the NT, God is not being expiated, man is being expiated. In classical Greek it is God (or the gods) who must be appeased or covered so that man can have access to them. But in the NT it is man who needs to be pardoned, forgiven, or expiated so that he can have a restored fellowship with the righteous and holy God. The Greek word *hilaskomai* appears four times in the NT as is explained in each passage as follows:
- B. The place of expiation (Rom. 3:25).
...whom God displayed publicly as a in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;...
1. Heb. 9:5 translates *hilaskomai* as “mercy seat” leading some interpreters to make the connection of Jesus’ death and shed blood at Calvary to spiritually anti-type the blood being poured out on the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant by the high priest.
And above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail.
 2. Jesus is the propitiation, that is, He is the One whom God has put forth through whom forgiveness is granted. If men will turn to Jesus, He can be the satisfaction of God in forgiving them their sins.
 3. The place of expiation for man in the OT was in the holy of holies upon the mercy seat, but now the place of expiation is at Calvary’s cross.
- C. The act of expiation (Heb. 2:17).
Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make for the sins of the people.
1. The Hebrew writer portrays Christ as the great High Priest whose work is “to make expiation for the sins of the people.” Christ is represented as performing an atoning act by which man’s sin is “covered” or “blotted out.”
 2. This means that Jesus is both the priest and victim (Jn. 1:29) in His sacrifice for sin.
 3. The act of expiation was Jesus willingness to, as high priest, offer a sacrifice for the world.

- D. The sacrifice of expiation (1Jn. 2:2; 4:10).
1. Due to John's earlier reference in 1:7 about the blood of Jesus cleansing us from all sin, it would seem that John's use of *hilaskomai* is in reference to Christ being the "sin offering."
(1Jn. 2:2) ...and He Himself is the for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.
 2. Jesus is seen as a "sin offering" which is the divinely ordained sacrifice most closely related to the expiation of sin. It would seem that to substitute the words "sin offering" for "propitiation" would not necessarily harm the text, but may prove to more clearly bring out the meaning. '
(1Jn. 4:10) In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the for our sins.
- E. Conclusion.
1. In this way Christ "fulfills" the OT conception of expiation. He is both Priest and sacrificial Victim, and at the cross, atonement is made for the sin of the world.

IV. MAKING IT APPLICABLE.

- A. Roberts, in The Living Word Commentary on 1John says, "While 'propitiate' looks to the one offended, 'expiate' refers to the offense of the one being in disfavor."
- B. If this be correct:
1. Christ is the propitiation--He is the one whom man has offended with sin. God has propitiated man by providing him with a perfect high priest who can offer the sacrifice.
 2. Man is the expiation--we are the ones in disfavor due to sin. Jesus is the expiation by being a man and dying as the sacrificed one.
- C. The cross as expiation means:
1. God's wrath against sin has been satisfied.
 2. The penalty (death) for sin has been paid.
 3. God has been merciful and gracious to sinful mankind.
 4. Mankind has a great high priest (Christ) able to offer a pleasing, sin offering to God.
 5. Jesus is the sacrificial victim on which all sin has been laid.
 6. Those alienated by sin now have access through Christ to God's holiness and favor.
- D. Because the cross is God's propitiation, and my expiation, I can live each day knowing there is a satisfaction of the wrath of God against the sin in my life. Praise be to God for His indescribable gift (2Cor. 9:15)!
- E. Hebrews 9:11-14;
- But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; **12** and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. **13** For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, **14** how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

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