

## A Simple Guide to Big Words

**Text:** 1 John 2:1-2

**Topic:** Propitiation

**Big Idea:** Jesus is the propitiation for our sins.

**Application Point:** Propitiation means that God is for us. Because of Christ's sacrifice for our sins, we are able to live in restored relationship with God.

### Talking Points:

1. Expiation and propitiation are two sides of the same coin. The differences are subtle but important. Expiation took away something, and propitiation added something. When our sin and guilt were removed (expiation), God then gave us something in place of that sin and guilt. He gives us a relationship with him. "The prefix pro means "for," so propitiation brings about a change in God's attitude, so that He moves from being at odds with us to being for us. Through the process of propitiation, we are restored into fellowship and favor with Him. ... Expiation is the act that results in the change of God's disposition toward us. It is what Christ did on the cross, and the result of Christ's work of expiation is propitiation— God's anger is turned away.
2. The book of 1 John was written to believers who in John's absence had been taught by false teachers. They found themselves doubting that Jesus really was God in a body. John is reminding his reader that, indeed, Jesus is God! It is all true. A Christian can "walk in the light" and be confident that Jesus's blood "cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). John goes on to remind us that we shouldn't deceive ourselves into thinking we've got it figured out. We should be intentional, seeking to not sin against God, but that when we do mess up, God is faithful to forgive us when we confess our failings to him (1 John 1:9). If we do sin—or, more accurately, when we sin—we can be confident that we have an advocate in Jesus (1 John 2:1). Jesus is righteous, and "he is the propitiation for our sins," and more so, he is the propitiation "for the sins of the whole world" (v. 2). There is not one person who has sinned so big that Jesus's blood can't cover it. There is nothing that can come between someone and God—unless they choose not to believe and not to submit to him as Savior.
3. When we first talked about atonement, we used the example of a judge trying a guilty suspect. Propitiation brings further clarity to this illustration. When a defendant is found guilty, they must pay the penalty owed. The goal (at least in theory) is to provide a punishment that fits the crime in hopes that the offender would be reformed and return to normal life as a contributing member of society. As people who have messed up and not followed God's plan for humans, we are sinners. Sinners deserve the death penalty; that is the due punishment. However, propitiation means that Jesus has paid that penalty, allowing us to regain favor with God. Jesus took care of what was owed. He paid the price for our sin. We are able to live, rehabilitated and restored, through the work of Christ.
4. Many evil things in history have been committed under the guise of religious zealotry. One reason it's so important to grasp what biblical propitiation is, is so that we can make sure our plan is the biblical one rather than one of our own making. In daily life there is a constant temptation to seek other ways of cutting little deals with God to curry his favor and appease his wrath. This is a frivolous attempt and takes way too much onto your own shoulders. You're not big enough or good enough to bear the load. And your own resources are inappropriate. Your sin isn't small enough to be set aside by human offerings.
5. In 2000, Jarrett Adams was wrongfully accused and convicted of sexual assault. Thanks to the Innocence Project he was exonerated after serving seven years of a twenty-eight-year prison sentence. Since his release, he has completed his law degree and has devoted his life to helping others through the same organization that helped to free him. Adams was freed because he didn't commit the crime. We are freed because, though we are guilty, Jesus paid the price as the propitiation for our sins. Just as Adams has devoted his life to helping others experience the same freedom, the believer can live a life that encourages others to experience the freedom from sin and right relationship with God that Christ has offered us.