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CHRIST OUR PROPITIATION

It has been claimed by some, as disproving the necessity of Jesus as our *Ransomer*, and his blood (death) as our *ransom price*, that the word propitiation, used by the apostles, merely means that Jesus was the channel through which God exercised *pardon*—the mercy-seat or place of mercy—and that therefore the accepted idea, that Jesus made *satisfaction or appeasement* for our sins is erroneous, and not the proper meaning to attach to the expression, “propitiation for our sins.”

In proof of the above, they call attention to the fact that in Rom. 3:25, the same word is rendered *propitiation* which in Heb. 9:5 is rendered mercy seat. Here they leave the matter, evidently considering it *proved*.

We object, that in so construing it they are at variance with the Greek scholarship of the world. We read—“He (Jesus) is the *propitiation* for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world”; and again—“Herein is love, not that

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we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son—the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 2:2 and 4:10). In both cases the Greek word rendered propitiation is *hilasmos*. Its definition by able Greek scholars is—“What appeases”—“What propitiates.”

These are the only instances in which this Greek word (*hilasmos*) is used in Scripture, and we know of no translation which uses any other word than *propitiation* as a translation of it. As the word propitiation is but vaguely understood, we here give you Webster’s definition of its meaning—“The act of appeasing wrath and conciliating the favor of an offended person”—“atonement or *atoning sacrifice*.” Read the above texts in the light of this definition, and you will see that as John understood the subject, there was need of a *redeemer* and a *ransom*.

Concerning Heb. 9:5, and Rom. 3:25, we would say: The Greek word here used is entirely different from the above; it is *hilasterion*; nevertheless, it stands related to the former. Young translates it “*place of appeasement*.” In the Tabernacle was the Ark, and the top of it, a solid lid of gold, was the spot upon which the High Priest sprinkled the blood of the sin-offering, which God accepted as the satisfaction for sins of the under Priests and of Israel (typical of the church and of the world

also). This slab of gold forming the cover of the ark, was therefore called the “Mercy-seat” (or spot) because there, by God’s arrangement, mercy was obtained. In the Hebrew the word is *kapporeth*, meaning—“place of (sin) covering”; and in the Greek, *hilasterion*, meaning—“place of appeasement.”

With this explanation, we trust all will be able to see the true meaning of “propitiation,” and “place of propitiation or appeasement” (mercy-seat), and not allow any one to cover the meaning of these very forcible expressions.

Rotherham’s translation of Rom. 3:25 reads thus: “Whom God set forth to be a propitiatory covering through faith in his blood,” etc.

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