

THE ATONEMENT – Part II

by Author Pink

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Pink in Part I draws the contrast between the two mainstream views of the atoning work of Christ. He states, "...the one which affirmed that the Atonement effected to make certain the salvation of all who believe; the other which supposed that atonement was made in order to make possible the salvation of all men. Pink then very clearly argues that the 'all' statements of Scripture simply cannot and do not "always mean all and that is all all ever means."

Having shown [see *Sound of Grace*, Volume 4 Number 8] that this latest theory of the Atonement cannot be true—cannot because it manifestly clashes with the twelve scriptures quoted above and with others that might be quoted—we shall now examine some passages which are appealed to in support of it.

1. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. (Isa. 53:6) Notice that this verse **does not** say, "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of all" which is what some men twist it to mean. No, instead of so saying, the "all" is definitely and carefully qualified thus: "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of **us** all." Who the "us" refers to is made plain in the next verse: "For the transgression of **My people** was He stricken." (Isa. 53:8) If further proof be required that the "all" is limited, it is furnished by another statement in the same chapter, for in v. 12 we read, "And He bare the sin of **many**." This restriction is meaningless if Christ bore the sin of everybody.

2. "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) Again we ask the reader to note carefully the exact wording of this sentence: it is not (as so often misquoted) "The Lamb of God which taketh the sins of the world." but "the sin of the world." The word sin is used in the New Testament in several ways. Sometimes the reference is to the sinful **nature**, as in Heb. 4:15, 1 John 1:8, etc. Sometimes it is the sinful **act** which is in view, as in James 1:15, etc. At other times "sin" refers to the **guilt** or **penalty** of sin, as in Rom. 3:9; 6:10; 2 Cor. 5:21. It is in this last sense "sin" is used in John 1:29. The definite article (in the Greek and in the English) makes this clear. The Lamb of God which beareth away the guilt and consequent penalty, is the thought.

But now what is meant by "taketh away the sin **of the world**"? Does it mean that the Lamb of God took away the guilt of the whole human race? If it does, then the whole human race will most certainly be saved, unpunished sin (and its defilement) is the only thing which would keep any man out of heaven. But if "the world" does not mean the whole human race, what does it refer to? We answer, It is a general, an indefinite expression, used, first, contrastively with Israel. "It is not the 'Lamb of God who taketh

away the sin of Israel' but the sin of 'the world'—**of any** kind of men." (Mr. F.W. Grant)
The "world" here takes in believing sinners of the Gentiles, as well as believing Jews.

That "the world" is a general and indefinite expression, rather than a synonym for the whole human race, is clear from its meaning in other passages in John's Gospel. For example, in John 7:4, "Show myself to **the world.**" Did they mean, "Show thyself to the whole human race?" Surely not. Again, "Behold **the world** is gone after him." (John 12:19) Did they mean the whole human race had gone after Him? Of course not. "I come not to judge **the world** but to save **the world.**" (John 12:47) Did Christ mean that He had come to save the whole human race? How could He, when multitudes were even then in hell!

The Greek word for "world" in John 1:29 is "kosmos," and in its application to humankind in the New Testament, we find there are **two** "worlds"—a world of believers and a world of unbelievers. In 2 Peter 2:5 this expression is used, "Bringing in the flood upon **the world of the ungodly.**" Contrariwise wise, there is a **world of the godly.** This is the meaning of John 1:29: it was the sin (penalty) of the world of believers—Jewish believers and Gentile believers—that the Lamb of God took away. This is no novel interpretation of ours, but one so given by the Reformers and Puritans.

3. "He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:18) That refusal to believe in the name of God's Son is a ground of condemnation is not disputed. The question at issue is whether this is now the only ground of condemnation. John 3:18 does not say it is. Nor does any other passage. If it did, the Scriptures would contradict themselves, for as shown above, there are many passages which affords positive proof that God does reckon men guilty of other sins. The truth is, that man is "under condemnation" long before he ever hears of Christ: he is under condemnation from the hour of his birth. He is not only "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin" (Psa. 51:5) but he is also "**estranged** from the womb." (Psa. 58:3) We not only inherit Adam's depravity, but we are also "by **nature** the children (not merely of "corruption") but **of wrath.**" (Eph. 2:3) The unregenerate are not only devoid of any spiritual nature, they are also "**alienated** from the life of God." (Eph. 4:18)

4. "God was in Christ, reconciling **the world** unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Cor. 5:19) This verse need not detain us very long. Like John 1:29, a right understanding of it turns upon apprehending the true meaning and scope of "the world." The "world" which God reconciled by Christ was the **world of believers**. That **unbelievers are not** "reconciled" is clear from Eph. 4:18 (and other scriptures) which speaks of them being "**alienated** from the life of God." Again, in Rom. 5:10 we are told, "Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." That is plain enough: those "reconciled" **shall be** saved! Further proof that the world here said to be reconciled does not take in the whole human race, is found in the fact that we are expressly told God does not impute "their trespasses unto them." But He **does** "impute" trespasses unto the children of disobedience, as is clear from Eph. 5:6, etc. Psa. 32:1 tells us that the man is

"blessed" unto whom the Lord "imputeth not iniquity." But the unbeliever is not "blessed," but **cursed**.

5. "And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:2) This is the passage which, apparently, most favors the view we are now rebutting, and yet if it be considered attentively it will be seen that it does so only in appearance, and not in reality. Below we offer a number of conclusive proofs to show that this verse does not teach that Christ has propitiated God on behalf of all the sins of all men.

In the first place, the fact that this verse opens with "and" necessarily links it with what has gone before. We, therefore, give a literal, word for word translation of I John 2:1 from Bagster's Interlinear: "Little children my, these things I write to you, that ye may not sin; and if any one should sin, a Paraclete we have with the Father, Jesus Christ (the) righteous." It will thus be seen that the apostle John is here writing **to and about the saints** of God. His immediate purpose was two-fold: first, to communicate a message that would keep God's children from sinning; second, to supply comfort and assurance to those who might sin, and, in consequence, be cast down and fearful that the issue would prove fatal. He, therefore, makes known to them the provision which God has made for just such an emergency. This we find at the end of v. 1 and throughout V. 2. The ground of comfort is twofold: let the downcast and repentant believer (1 John 1:9) be assured that, first, he has an "Advocate with the Father"; second, that this Advocate is **"the propitiation for our sins."** Now **believers only may take comfort from this**, for they alone have an "Advocate", for them alone is Christ the propitiation as is proven by **linking** the Propitiation ("and") with "the Advocate!"

In the second place, if other passages in the New Testament, which speak of "propitiation" be compared with 1 John 2:2, it will be found that it is **strictly limited** in its scope. For example, in Rom. 3:25 we read that God set forth Christ "a propitiation **through faith** in His blood." If Christ is a propitiation "through faith," then He is not a "propitiation" to those who have no faith! Again, in Heb. 2:17 we read, "To make propitiation for the sins of the people." (Heb. 2:17, R.V.)

In the third place, **who** are meant when John says, "He is the propitiation for **our** sins"? We answer, **Jewish believers**. Part of the proof on which we base this assertion we now submit to the careful attention of the reader.

In Gal. 2:9 we are told that **John**, together with James and Cephas, were apostles "unto the circumcision" (i.e. **Israel**). In keeping with this, the Epistle of James is addressed to "the twelve tribes, which are scattered abroad" (James 1:1) So, the first Epistle of Peter is addressed to "the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion." (1 Peter 1:1, R.V.) And John also is writing to saved Israelites.

Evidences that John is writing to saved Jews are as follows. (a) In the opening verse he says of Christ, "Which we have seen with **our** eyes ... and **our** hands have handled." How

impossible it would have been for the apostle Paul to have commenced any of his epistles to Gentile saints with such language!

(b) "Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which **ye had from the beginning.**" (1 John 2:7) The "beginning" here referred to is the beginning of the public manifestation of Christ—in proof compare 1:1; 2:13, etc. Now these believers, the apostle tells us, **had the "old commandment" from the beginning.** This was true of **Jewish** believers, but it was not true of Gentile believers.

(c) "I write unto you, fathers, because **ye have known** Him from the beginning." (2:13) Here, again, it is evident that it is **Jewish** believers that are in view.

(d) "Little children, it is the last time: and as **ye have heard** that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. **They** went out from us, but they were not of us." (2:18, 19) These brethren to whom John wrote **had** "heard" from Christ Himself that Antichrist should come (see Matt. 24). The "many antichrists" whom John declares "went out **from us**" were all **Jews**, for during the first century none but a **Jew** posed as the Messiah. Therefore, when he says "He is the propitiation for **our sins,**" he can only mean for the sins of **Jewish believers.**

In the fourth place, when John added, "And not for ours only, but also for the **whole world,**" he signified that Christ was the propitiation for the sins of the **Gentile believers too**, for, as previously shown, "the world" is a term **contrasted** from Israel. This interpretation is unequivocally established by a careful comparison of 1 John 2:2 with John 11:51, 52, which is a strictly parallel passage: "And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." Here Caiaphas, under inspiration, made known **for whom** Jesus should "die." Notice now the correspondency of his prophecy with this declaration of John's:

"He is the propitiation for our (believing Israelites) sins." "He prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation." "And not for ours only." "And not for that nation only." "But also for the whole world."

That is, Gentile believers scattered throughout the earth. "He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

In the fifth place, the above interpretation is confirmed by the fact that no other is consistent or intelligible. If the "whole world" signifies the whole human race, then the first clause and the "also" in the second clause are absolutely meaningless. If Christ be the propitiation for everybody, it would be idle tautology to say, first, "He is the propitiation for our sins and also for everybody." There could be no "also" if He be the propitiation for the entire human family. Had the apostle meant to affirm that Christ is a universal propitiation he had omitted the first clause of v. 2, and simply said, "He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world."

In the sixth place, our definition of "the whole world" is in perfect accord with other passages in the New Testament. For example: "Whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel; which is come unto you, "all the world." (Col. 1:5, 6) Does "all the world" here mean, absolutely and unqualifiedly, all mankind? Had all the human family heard the Gospel? No; the apostle's obvious meaning is that the Gospel, instead of being confined to the land of Judea, had gone abroad, without restraint, **into Gentile lands**. So in Rom. 1:8: "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout **the whole world**." The apostle is here referring to the faith of these Roman saints being spoken of in a way of **commendation**. But certainly all mankind did not so speak of their faith! It was the whole world of believers that he was referring to! In Rev. 12:9 we read of Satan "which deceiveth **the whole world**." But again this expression cannot be understood as a universal one, for Matt. 24:24 tells us that Satan does not and cannot "deceive" God's elect. Here it is "the whole world" **of unbelievers**.

In the seventh place, to insist that "the whole world" in 1 John 2:2 signifies the entire human race is to undermine the very foundations of our faith. If Christ be the propitiation for those that are lost equally as much as for those that are saved, then what assurance have we that believers too may not be lost? If Christ be the propitiation for those now in hell, what guarantee have I that I may not end in hell? The blood-shedding of the incarnate Son of God is the only thing which can keep any one out of hell, and if many for whom that precious blood made propitiation are now in the awful place of the damned, then may not that blood prove inefficacious for me! Away with such a God-dishonoring thought.

However men may quibble and wrest the Scriptures, one thing is certain: The Atonement is no failure. God will not allow that precious and costly sacrifice to fail in accomplishing completely, that which it was designed to effect. Not a drop of that holy blood was shed in vain. In the last great Day there shall stand forth no disappointed and defeated Savior, but One who " **shall** see the travail of His soul and be satisfied." (Isa. 53:11)

These are not our words, but the infallible assertion of Him who declares, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure." (Isa. 46:10) Upon this impregnable rock we take our stand. Let others rest on the sands of human speculation and theorizing if they wish. But to God they will yet have to render an account. For our part we had rather be railed at as a narrow-minded, out-of-date hyper-Calvinist, than be found repudiating God's truth by reading the divinely efficacious atonement to a mere fiction.

Was the sin question finally settled at the Cross? For every believer, **Yes**. For unbelievers, **No**, as they shall yet find to their cost.