

Lesson for August 23, 2009

Review of Our Spiritual Assets

Reconciliation, Propitiation and Atonement

Reconciliation

There are two words for reconciliation in Greek. One word “diallasso” means to reconcile two parties who are mutually hostile toward one another. The second word “katallasso” means to reconcile two parties where only one party is hostile toward the other. “Katallasso” is the word used for reconciliation to God. This means that it is man who is “hostile” towards God and has become rebellious by means of his inherent sin nature. It means that mankind is the enemy of God and it is man who needs to be reconciled to God.

Literally, “katallasso” means to change or to exchange (originally referring to money). It came to mean a change from being one’s enemy to being one’s friend. This is the meaning throughout the New Testament. At salvation, the believer is reconciled to God. This means that the believer is no longer God’s enemy but that peace has been made as a result of the person’s change of mind towards Christ (the true meaning of repentance). (Romans 5:10)

Mechanics of Reconciliation (Ephesians 2:14-18)

Reconciliation is accomplished by the removal of a barrier that exists between God and man. Once this barrier is removed, the possibility exists for peace between God and man. The barrier that separates God from man is sin. Every person is born with a sin nature, which is passed down genetically from the father. Man also possesses Adam’s original sin, which is imputed to him at birth by God. It is Adam’s original sin that condemns man. Personal sins are committed because man possesses a sin nature.

Since God can have nothing to do with sin, the “sin barrier” must be removed so that mankind can have a relationship with God. Jesus Christ is the Sin-bearer, which means that He was judged for our sin (Adam’s original sin and our personal sins). The judgment of sin satisfied the righteousness and justice of God. The person who accepts Jesus Christ as his “Sin-bearer” is immediately reconciled to God, having been placed in union with Christ. This means that the believer is no longer God’s enemy, but peace now exists between this individual and God. Since God is not a “respector of persons,” (He is impartial and unprejudiced) anyone (both Jew and Gentile) who believes in Christ as Savior (the Sin-bearer) will be reconciled to God.

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What Paul shows us in Ephesians 2:14-18 is that everyone in the Church Age (from the Day of Pentecost to the Rapture) who personally believes in Jesus Christ as Savior becomes part of the body of Christ. Generally speaking, the Jews believed in one God and were very moral. The Gentiles, on the other hand, believed in many gods and were very immoral. Paul shows us that there is no distinction in the body of Christ. There is no racial distinction, no social distinction and no gender distinction. (Galatians 3:28)

The Results of Reconciliation (Colossians 1:21-23)

Reconciliation takes place instantaneously at salvation. The results cannot be felt or seen; it takes place spiritually. Notice that Colossians 1:21 says we were “aliens and enemies in our minds.” The Greek word for enemy is “echthros” and primarily denotes hatred or hostility. The word also means adversary and is used of Satan. The Greek word for *aliens* is “apallotrioo” and means to be estranged from. This means that prior to salvation we were estranged from and the enemies of God. Since this hatred is in the mind, it is our thinking that needs to be transformed before and after salvation. When a person responds to the message of the Gospel, they automatically change their mind (the true meaning of repentance) **from** lack of faith in Christ **to** faith in Christ. For the believer in Christ, peace now exists between him and God and he is no longer estranged from God.

The context of Colossians 1:23 tells us that this verse is not talking about positional truth, but experiential truth. The “if” clause in verse 23 tells us that it is only potential...“maybe you will be presented blameless and maybe you won’t.” The other result of reconciliation is that the believer is now qualified for a resurrection body. Even though reconciliation takes place while we are in this body, we will be presented to Christ in our resurrection body. The believer now has **the potential** of being presented blameless, without reproof (unreproveable) before Jesus Christ. The word for blameless and unreproveable in Greek is “anenketos” and means “with nothing laid to one’s charge after public investigation.” It depends on whether or not you continue in doctrine (the faith), being grounded and settled in the full confidence of the Gospel.

The Greek word for *grounded* is “themelios” and would be better translated foundation or founded. The Greek word for *settled* is “hedraios” and means seated, as in your mind. The word for *continue* in Greek is “epimeno” and means to remain. In other words, you will be presented with “nothing laid to your account” if you remain on track by building a foundation of accurate doctrinal truth in your mind and not sliding into reversionism.

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Propitiation

The Greek word for *propitiation* is “hilasmos” and means to appease the wrath of an offended party or to satisfy the just demands of someone that has been offended. The Greeks used the word for appeasing their pagan gods. The Greeks had to do this by some righteous act, which would demonstrate their true good character.

The Necessity of Propitiation

Since God is absolutely righteous, He must judge sin wherever He finds it. The Bible is very clear that all human beings are born with a sin nature and are spiritually separated from God. We know from Scripture that no one possesses the righteousness necessary to spend eternity with a perfectly righteous God. In other words, God’s perfect righteousness cannot have fellowship with man’s relative righteousness. God is offended (not shocked) by the lack of righteousness and subsequent sinful condition of man. It is this offense and, therefore, God’s wrath that must be appeased. God’s wrath is an anthropathism (language of accommodation ascribing to God human emotions that He does not possess) to explain His policy with regard to man’s sin. God is never angry, as we think of anger. (John 3:36; Romans 3:10-12, 23; 6:23; Isaiah 59:2, 64:6)

God’s integrity (holiness) must be satisfied. God’s integrity is made up of His righteousness and His justice. God’s righteousness is the standard or principle of His integrity and must condemn sin. The judgment that God pronounced upon sin was spiritual death. Mankind, therefore, comes under the wrath and impending judgment of God. (Romans 3:9, 23)

We cannot forget that the other half of God’s integrity is justice. Justice is the function or action of God’s integrity. Therefore, what the righteousness of God condemns, the justice of God judges. In the case of human beings, God’s righteousness and justice must be satisfied (propitiated). Mankind is born physically alive but spiritually dead (separated from God). Under the sentence of spiritual death, man is helpless to remedy the situation. (Romans 3:25-26)

Since the sentence that God pronounced on sin is spiritual death, only spiritual death could satisfy the just demands of God’s righteousness. Only one Person in history was qualified to meet this just demand. Jesus Christ literally became the propitiation for the sin of the entire world. By His impeccable (sinless) life and spiritual death, Jesus satisfied the perfect righteousness of God that was demanded by the Law of Moses. (1 John 2:1-2, 4:10)

Atonement

The word in Greek for *atonement* is “katallage,” a word closely associated with propitiation and reconciliation (same root word). Propitiation is the *principle* of satisfying the righteousness of God and atonement is the *function* of satisfying the righteousness of God. Together they reconcile us to God. The word atonement is used in the New Testament only once. (Romans 5:11) Similar to the meaning of reconciliation, atonement means to exchange, to adjust, or to restore to favor. Caught up in the doctrine of atonement is the substitutionary spiritual death of Christ, a person’s adjustment to God’s standard of righteousness and the restoration of God’s favor towards that person.

The Effects of the Atonement

The phrase “at-one-ment” describes, in a simple way, the effect of the Atonement. Because of the Atonement, those who choose to believe in Christ become one with Him. The Atonement was the single act that satisfied (propitiated) the righteousness of God. Atonement is the just act of God in pouring out the sins of the entire human race (past, present and future) upon Jesus Christ and judging Him in our place. Atonement accomplishes for us that which we could not do for ourselves. The barrier of sin is removed, thus creating the potential for peace with God (Reconciliation). The righteousness of God is imputed to the believer at salvation and God’s justice declares the believer to be righteous as a result.

Atonement in the Old Testament

The doctrine of atonement is found throughout the Old Testament to describe the Mercy Seat that covered the Ark of the Covenant. The Mercy Seat of solid gold was the lid (covering) for the Ark of the Covenant. Two cherubim angels guarded either end of the Mercy Seat, symbolizing God’s presence and judgment against any illegitimate approach to God. This was God’s throne upon which He sat symbolically and it pictured His grace and mercy toward His people. The one time a year that the high priest was allowed into the Holy of Holies where the Mercy Seat was located, he was to sprinkle blood on it to signify that an atonement had been made for the sins of the nation of Israel. It was above the Mercy Seat that the Shekinah Glory of God resided. Christ became our Mercy Seat having satisfied the righteousness and justice of God by His substitutionary spiritual death on the Cross (Doctrine of Propitiation). The Greek word for Mercy Seat is “hilasterion” and literally means a lid or a covering. According to Romans 3:25, Christ is our Mercy Seat (our covering for sin). In the same manner that an animal as a type of Christ was judged for sin, Christ Himself was the reality of that type. (Exodus 25:17-22; Numbers 7:89; Hebrews 9:1-28)