

Definite Atonement in 1 John 2:1-2

October 21, 2018

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if **anyone** does sin, **we have an advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. **He is the propitiation** for our sins, and not for ours only but also **for the sins of the whole world.** (1Jn 2:1-2)

Part 1: For whom is Christ an advocate?

Advocate: 1) one who pleads the cause of another; 2) one who defends or maintains a cause or proposal; 3) one who supports or promotes the interests of a cause or group. *Merriam-Webster*

παράκλητον (parakleton) – The paraclete

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another Helper** (parakleton), to be with you forever, (Joh 14:16)

παράκλητος, ου, ό a verbal adjective with a basic meaning one called alongside to help; (1) as a legal technical term, as one who appears in another's behalf advocate, defender, intercessor (1J 2.1); (2) as one who gives protection, help, and security helper, comforter, counselor

An advocate is one who publicly supports a cause, a policy, or a person. Synonyms would include a backer, a promoter, a fighter, a crusader, and **an intercessor.** *Friberg, Analytical Greek Lexicon*

Consider the following:

God does not hear the prayers of just anyone if anyone means any single person:

The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous. (Pro 15:29)

But no one is righteous:

as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; (Rom 3:10)

If no one is righteous, how does God hear any person's prayers:

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2Co 5:21)

Christ intercedes for those who draw near to God:

Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God **through him**, since he always lives to make intercession for **them.** (Heb 7:25)

Only those whom the Father draws are able to come:

No one **can come** to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. (Joh 6:44)

And all that the Father gives to Christ will come:

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. (Joh 6:37)

So, when we look at the full light of Scripture, what John is communicating in 1 John 2:1 becomes very clear:

1. Jesus serves as an advocate for sinners.
2. Not all sinners, though. He makes intercession for those who draw near to God through him. "We" have an advocate means that some do not.
3. And no one draws near to God unless it is God who draws him.

4. And all that the Father gives to Christ come.
5. So, all that the Father gives to Christ are the ones who come and the ones to whom Christ serves as an advocate.
6. This group of people is known as the “elect”

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died--more than that, who was raised--who is at the right hand of God, **who indeed is interceding for us.** (Rom 8:33-34)

Part 2: For whom did Christ achieve propitiation for sins?

Remember our discussion of atonement: included in its meaning are elements of reconciliation (bringing peace between two parties), expiation (making reparation for guilt), and **propitiation (appeasing the wrath of God).**

If we interpret 1 John 2:2 using the term expiation – making reparation for guilt, we get:

He is the payment of reparation for our guilt for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

If we interpret 1 John 2:2 using the term propitiation – appeasing God’s wrath, we get:

He is the appeasement of God’s wrath for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Given those translations, who is the “whole world”?

Arminians: every single person without exception

Calvinists: the elect

Consider:

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the **wrath of God remains on him.** (Joh 3:36)

Translation: Unbelievers have not had their sins propitiated. Therefore, Jesus is not the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, if “whole world” means every single person without exception. Unbelievers are part of the “whole world” in that definition and have not had their sins propitiated.

Arminian solution: The propitiation described only becomes effective once a person comes to faith.

Calvinist Response:

John Owen: from “The Death of Death in the Death of Christ”

The Father imposed His wrath due unto, and the Son underwent punishment for either:

- 1) *All the sins of all men;*
- 2) *All the sins of some men; or*
- 3) *Some of the sins of all men.*

In which case it may be said:

- 1) *If the last be true all men have some sins to answer for, and so none are saved;*

2) *That if the second be true, then Christ, in their stead suffered for all the sins of the elect in the whole world, and this is the truth;*

3) *But if the first is the case, why are not all men free from the punishment due unto their sins? You answer, Because of unbelief. I ask, Is this unbelief a sin, or is it not? If it be, then Christ suffered the punishment due unto it, or He did not. If He did, why must that hinder them more than their other sins for which He died? If He did not, He did not die for all their sins!*

1. Consider that there is no potentiality in the verse. It is a declarative statement that Christ **IS** the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Not the potential propitiation if one comes to Christ.
2. If Christ **IS** the propitiation for the sins of every single person without exception, then every single person without exception is right with God – has had his guilt paid, has been reconciled, has been declared righteous.
3. The writer of 1st John 2:2 wrote John 3:36, so either John has written contradictory Scripture and has created an errant Bible, or the same John who described God’s wrath remaining on unbelievers did not intend “whole world” to encompass all men without exception.

Consider other verses John wrote:

*But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one **the children of God** who are scattered abroad. (Joh 11:49-52)*

*And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God **from** every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." (Rev 5:9-10)*

*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for **our** sins. (1Jn 4:7-10)*

Note that the context of 1 John 4:7-10 is clearly believers – not all people without exception. John is writing to those who have been born of God – because it is only those people who know love (God). The “our” in “our sins” are those who have been born again.

And, likewise, as we expand our text to verse 3, you will see that 1 John 2:2 is surrounded by the context of believers: My little children; those for whom Jesus is an advocate; and note in verse 3 the test that the people of whom he is writing meet the standard – by this we know that we have come to know him – if we keep his commandments.

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. (1Jn 2:1-3)

Christ is an advocate and IS THE propitiation for believers throughout the whole world!

NEXT WEEK: IRRESISTIBLE GRACE