

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 12-25-11 AM NOTES
"JESUS WAS BORN TO SHOW GOD'S LOVE FOR SINNERS"
1 JOHN 4:9-10
#4 in Series, "Connecting Bethlehem and Calvary"

Hebrews 2:9 (ESV) "But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone."

"The more I study the New Testament and live the Christian life, the more convinced I am that our fundamental difficulty, our fundamental lack, is the lack of seeing the love of God."
—Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Romans 5:6-8 (HCSB) "6 For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. 8 But God proves His own love for us in that **while we were still sinners** Christ died for us!"

I. God's Love for Sinners Was Manifested in the Sending of His Son (v. 9)

A. The Person of God's Son Who Was Sent (v. 9a)

John 1:14 (NKJV) "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of **the only begotten of the Father**, full of grace and truth."

B. The Purpose of God's Son Who Was Sent (v. 9b)

Ephesians 2:1 (NKJV) "And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

Luke 19:10 (NKJV) "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

*I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Savior true,
No, I was found, was found of Thee.*

—Anonymous

II. God's Love for Sinners Was Manifested in the Sacrifice of His Son (v. 10)

A. The Source of Love (v. 10a)

1 John 4:8b (NKJV) "...God is love."

1 John 4:7 (NASB) "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."

Romans 5:5b (NIV) "...God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

B. The Sacrifice of God's Love (v. 10b)

Propitiation—"A sacrifice that bears God's wrath to the end, and in so doing, changes God's wrath toward us into favor."
—Wayne Grudem

Romans 3:24-26 (NKJV) "24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

Hebrews 2:17 (NKJV) "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

1 John 2:1b-2a (NKJV) "1 And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins..."

Romans 1:18 (NKJV) "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men..."

"The doctrine of the propitiation is precisely this: that God loved the objects of His wrath so much that He gave His own Son to the end that He by his blood should make provision for the removal of His wrath. It was Christ's so to deal with the wrath that the loved would no longer be the objects of wrath, and love would achieve its aim of making the children of wrath the children of God's good pleasure."
—John Murray

John 3:16 (NKJV) "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

2 Corinthians 5:19a (NKJV) "that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself..."

"If He fulfilled not justice, I must; if He underwent not wrath, I must to eternity."

—John Owen

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Previous messages in this series: “Jesus Was Born to Be Our Mediator”, “Jesus Was Born to Bring Us to God”, “Jesus Was Born to Destroy the Devil”.

Christmas was not observed as a holiday in the early church. It wasn’t until the fifth century that Christmas was given any kind of official recognition. The early church celebrated the resurrection of Christ, but not His birth. It is interesting that the early Puritans in Colonial America rejected Christmas celebrations all together. They deliberately worked on December 25 to show their displeasure with the whole Christmas concept. We may think that the Puritans were a little extreme, but Christians today have gone to the other extreme. We have by and large bought in to the world’s ways regarding Christmas. We get caught up in the materialism that runs so rampant in the world during this time. It’s probably too late to do anything about this year, but here is a suggestion for next year that perhaps you can discuss as a family today. Why not cut way back on what is spent and give what is saved to the Christmas offering for international missions? What better way is there to honor Christ than to give generously to get the message of His Gospel to a lost world during the season that we celebrate His birth?

In this series, we are emphasizing that the birth of Christ was a means to an end. The reason He was born was to die. **Hebrews 2:9 (ESV)** “But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels [His incarnation], namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.” We must never separate His birth at Bethlehem from His death at Calvary.

Today we are going to see from Scripture that in Jesus’ birth and death we clearly see God’s love for sinners. There is probably no attribute of God that is more misunderstood than the love of God. One of my favorite Bible commentators, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, “The more I study the New Testament and live the Christian life, the more convinced I am that our fundamental difficulty, our fundamental lack, is the lack of seeing the love of God” [Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in Christ, Studies in 1 John*, page 430]. How can we see the love of God? I think it requires two things. First, it requires seeing our sinfulness and unworthiness. Second, it requires seeing the great sacrifice God made that could be motivated only by His sovereign love. Before we get into the text in 1 John, let me explore those two things a bit more. Someone used an analogy that sounded good when I first heard it, but then I saw how wrong and warped it was. Someone said that God didn’t send His Son to die for frogs; He died for human beings and that sacrifice shows how valuable we are. Think about that for a minute. That is just Christianized humanism that minimizes God’s love and grace. In a sense, we are worse than frogs. Frogs have not sinned! Frogs have not rebelled against their creator and treated Him as inconsequential and irrelevant. God didn’t have to sacrifice for frogs; they aren’t bad enough! We are! There is only one reason that God would make such a sacrifice for mankind – it is His amazing, unmerited, unexplainable love. When we minimize our unworthiness and our depravity and our inability, we minimize His love and grace. This love is even more amazing when we see the amazing cost of His sacrifice. It cost Him His only begotten Son. When such an amazing sacrifice is made for such an unworthy object, the love of the giver of the sacrifice is magnified and our vision of the love of God becomes clearer. The apostle Paul described this amazing love in **Romans 5:6-8 (HCSB)** “⁶For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. ⁸But God proves His own love for us in that **while we were still sinners** Christ died for us!” What could our God do to prove more convincingly that He loves sinners?

We are going to focus in on this great sacrifice that was given in 1 John 4:9-10. One Bible scholar said that these two verses are a perfect and complete synopsis of Christian theology (Martyn Lloyd-Jones,

Page 430). I would have a hard time arguing with that. Here in these two verses, we see why Jesus was born. Jesus was born to show God's love for sinners.

I. God's Love for Sinners Was Manifested in the Sending of His Son (V9)

Verse eight has informed us that God is love, but verse nine tells us that He has manifested that love to us. His love is not some abstract concept; it is manifested. That word "manifested" means to be made visible, to be made public or put on display. The opposite of this would be to hide or to make secret. If a person's concept of God's love does not include the manifested truths of verses 9 & 10, they do not have a Biblical concept of God's love.

A. The Person of God's Son Who Was Sent (V9a)

The word "sent" is the word we get the word "apostle" from. It is the idea of being sent on a mission. The fact that He was sent assumes His preexistence. You cannot send someone who does not already exist! His conception in a virgin's womb and His subsequent birth at Bethlehem was not His beginning; it was His **incarnation** (when the eternal God the Son became flesh).

Who did the Father send? It was His "only begotten Son". Four other times in His writings, John calls Jesus the "only begotten" Son. **John 1:14 (NKJV)** "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the **only begotten** of the Father, full of grace and truth." In addition, there is John 1:18, John 3:16, and John 3:18. That phrase "only begotten" means unique, one of a kind son. Every saved person is an adopted son of God, but Jesus Christ is the unique, one of a kind, only begotten Son. This is John telling us that God sent on a mission the eternal Son of God, co-eternal, equal with God, the brightness of the glory of God, the express image of God's person, and the second person of the Trinity. The mission He was sent on was to die for sins. Don't let the magnitude of this escape you because of your familiarity with it. You that are parents know the love you have for your child. Multiply that love by infinity and that is the love of God the Father for God the Son and still He sent Him on this painful mission into a world saturated with sin, knowing that the outcome would be a cross. This great sacrifice was not prompted by man's value, man's potential, or man's love for God. It was prompted by the sovereign love of God.

Understanding the person of Christ is essential to understanding the love of God.

B. The Purpose of God's Son Who Was Sent (V9b)

We have already spoken of His mission to die for our sins, but let's enlarge on that a little. Let me paraphrase verse 9 like this: "Here is how the love of God is made visible and put on display. God has sent on a mission His unique, one of a kind, eternal, co-equal Son who is the fullness of the Godhead in a body (Colossians 2:9) into a world that the Father knew would reject Him and nail Him to a cross, in order that we who were dead in trespasses and sins would be made alive in Him." You see, if His coming was to make us alive, it assumes that apart from Him we were dead. **Ephesians 2:1 (NKJV)** "And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins". Jesus did not go to the cross to make bad people good; He died to make dead people alive! Notice who takes the initiative to make the spiritually dead sinners alive in **Luke 19:10 (NKJV)** "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Dead people were not seeking Him; dead people cannot seek anything! An anonymous poet wrote:

*I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Savior true,
No, I was found, was found of Thee.*

The clear teaching of the New Testament is that we were as Romans 5:8 says, "still sinners", and we were as Romans 5:10 says, "enemies" of God. We did not love God; we did not seek God; we opposed God, and we were all deserving of His wrath. It was in that state that He loved us and sent His Son to us to die for us. You cannot even begin to measure the love of God until you see how undeserving of His favor and mercy and grace we all were. God sent His only begotten Son to give life to spiritually dead sinners who were His enemies.

II. God's Love for Sinners Was Manifested in the Sacrifice of His Son (V10)

A. The Source of Love (V10a)

The source of this great love is in God Himself. John tells us in **1 John 4:8b (NKJV)** "...for God is love." This God kind of love is impossible for us to work up! **1 John 4:7 (NASB)** "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." We cannot love with this giving, unselfish love of God unless we are born of God. God has a monopoly on this kind of love and He gives it to those who are made alive in His Son so that they may love with His love. **Romans 5:5b (NIV)** "...God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." Until we have been changed by His love, we can love with a human love, but this supernatural God kind of love is not a possibility. We cannot supernaturally love our spouse, our enemies, or even God Himself until we have been to the cross and experienced the ultimate manifestation of God's love.

B. The Sacrifice of God's Love (V10b)

The One whose birth we celebrate today was born to die and His death was a propitiation for our sins. One of my favorite theologians, J. I. Packer calls the doctrine of propitiation "the heart of the Gospel". It is impossible to even begin to comprehend the love of God apart from comprehending the doctrine of propitiation. When we climb this mountain of propitiation, we get a view of the whole Bible. Let's look first at the meaning of the word "propitiation" and then we will examine the doctrine of propitiation and see in it the love of God manifested. The word translated "propitiation" literally means appeasement or satisfaction. It is the idea of appeasing the wrath of one who has been wronged by the paying of a price. When propitiation is applied to God, here is a good definition by Wayne Grudem: "A sacrifice that bears God's wrath to the end and in so doing changes God's wrath toward us into favor" ["Systematic Theology", Page 575]. It is interesting that when the Old Testament was translated into Greek (the Septuagint) this was the word used for the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant. The mercy seat was the golden slab on the top of the Ark of the Covenant where the blood was poured on the Day of Atonement symbolizing the payment of life to appease for the sins of the nation. This was of course a picture, a type, an illustration of Jesus who is our mercy seat and shed His own blood to satisfy the wrath of God for our sins.

While the concept of propitiation is all through the New Testament, the word itself is used four times.

1. In Romans 3:24-26, we see propitiation as the reason God can still be just and yet justify sinners. **Romans 3:24-26 (NKJV)** "²⁴being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God set forth as a **propitiation** by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, ²⁶to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

2. In Hebrews 2:17, we see propitiation as the reason God the Son became flesh. **Hebrews 2:17 (NKJV)** "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make **propitiation** for the sins of the people."

3. In 1 John 2:2 the emphasis is the heavenly ministry of Christ before the Father. **1 John 2:1b-2a (NKJV)** "...if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the **propitiation** for our sins..."

4. In our text, propitiation is the manifestation of the Father's love for us.

Wow! Do you see how the doctrine of propitiation is the heart of the Gospel? Let's drop back a moment and review some things about the wrath of God to help us better understand this glorious doctrine of propitiation. **Romans 1:18a (NKJV)** "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men..." God's wrath is not a divine temper tantrum. It is the judicial revulsion of God's being against that which is the violation of His holiness. His wrath includes His divine displeasure and righteous anger toward His creatures who have sinned by the breaking of His holy standards, the law. His wrath always results in His justice in properly dealing with sin. Here we see what must be satisfied in order for man to ever be reconciled to God. God's wrath, God's anger, God's justice, God's holiness must be satisfied, appeased or propitiated. Until you understand the depth of our

separation and alienation from God because of sin, you will never really begin to appreciate and comprehend the love of God.

We must understand exactly what happened on that cross when Jesus died. On the cross, what happened is that God the Son took the wrath of God the Father for our sins. He shed His blood, gave His very life to appease, to satisfy the wrath of our just and holy God. In our day there are huge numbers of professing Christians and especially preachers who are denying this truth and even speak with revulsion about this doctrine of propitiation. Many are saying that the death of Christ was just an example for us. Well, He did give us an example of ultimate love but that is far from the primary purpose of the cross. Others who are a little more orthodox in their beliefs say that the whole reason He died is that we could be forgiven. His death did result in the forgiveness of all who savingly believe in Him, but that leaves out something really important. Jesus died primarily for the Father that His wrath, His anger, His justice, His holiness could be satisfied. There are two primary objections liberal theologians have to this truth of propitiation. The first objection is that propitiation is no different from pagan views of their gods. That objection couldn't be farther from the truth. The pagan view is that there are various gods with power to make your life hard or easy. If they get upset with you, they work against you by manipulating circumstances to your hurt. To placate these angry gods, you must make an offering. The greater the offering, the more likely you are to placate them. Here are the differences. The one true God is not fickle and whimsical. He has clearly stated what He expects and what the penalties are for disobedience. Here is the main difference: It is God who propitiates His own wrath by the sending of His only begotten Son. John Murray says it well: "The doctrine of the propitiation is precisely this: that God loved the objects of His wrath so much that He gave His own Son to the end that He by His blood should make provision for the removal of His wrath. It was Christ's so to deal with the wrath that the loved would no longer be the objects of wrath, and love would achieve its aim of making the children of wrath the children of God's good pleasure" [Quoted in J. I. Packer, "In My Place Condemned He Stood" Page 36]. A second objection is that propitiation pictures a kind Son placating a fierce Father in order to coax Him to love man. That view is ridiculous! **John 3:16 (NKJV)** "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." It was God the Father's love that moved Him to send His Son into the world. **2 Corinthians 5:19a (NKJV)** "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself..." There is nothing in the pagan world even remotely similar to the Biblical concept of propitiation.

CONCLUSION

Jesus was born for the cross. It was the plan of God from before the earth was created (Revelation 13:8b). God's love toward us was manifested at the cross. At the cross, God's love joined hands with His wrath, His holiness, and His justice. The Gospel is not that God overlooks our sin and arbitrarily forgives us; the Gospel is that Jesus took the wrath, satisfied the justice and allowed the love of God to be manifested in forgiving us not because He ignored our sin, but because our sin had been judged in Christ. The Puritan John Owen said it well in the 1600's: "If He fulfilled not justice, I must; if He underwent not wrath, I must to eternity" [Quoted in Packer, Page 26].

When the doctrine of propitiation really sinks in, we recognize that the only explanation for such sacrifice, such suffering on our behalf is that "...He loved us and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins." When this begins to sink in, no sacrifice is too great for a God such as this.

Love so amazing, so divine,

Demands my soul, my life, my all!

Jesus Christ was born to show God's love for sinners. (3204)