

Sermon #34 — 1st John Series

Title: **CHRIST OUR PROPITIATION**

Text: 1 John 4:10

Subject: *Christ Propitiatory Sacrifice*

Date: Tuesday Evening — May 7, 2013

Tape# *1st John #34*

Readings: *Exodus 25:1-40*

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Introduction:

My text is 1st John 4:10. While you are turning to my text (1 John 4:10), I want to read a few verse to you from the book of Exodus. You turn to 1st John 4:10; and I will read Exodus 25:17-22.

Exodus 25:17-22 And thou shalt make a mercy seat *of* pure gold: two cubits and a half *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. ¹⁸ And thou shalt make two cherubims *of* gold, *of* beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. ¹⁹ And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: *even* of the mercy

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seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. ²⁰ And the cherubims shall stretch forth *their* wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces *shall look* one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. ²¹ And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee.

²² **And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony,** of all *things* which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.

That mercy seat in the tabernacle and later in the temple typified Christ our Propitiation; and that is my subject. — **CHRIST OUR PROPITIATION.** You have my text before you — 1st John 4:10.

1 John 4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved

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God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

God the Holy Ghost tells us that God the Father “*sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*” Once before in 1st John 2:2 we are told, “*He is the propitiation for our sins.*” — **A propitiation is a sacrifice offered to God to appease his wrath and make him propitious.** Jesus Christ is called our Propitiation because he satisfied the righteous demands of the law of God as our representative upon the earth, and he turned God’s anger away from us by his substitutionary atonement, suffering in our place the punishment due to our sins.

THREE TIMES

This word “*propitiation*” appears only three times in our in the entire Bible. It is found here in 1 John. And it is used once in Romans chapter three and verse

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twenty-five. — “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God.” There the Apostle Paul teaches us that **justification is accomplished through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ**. It is an act of divine grace, which could never have been possible except by Christ’s blood atonement. To be justified freely by his grace means that God justifies the sinner without any works or merit on their part. Justification is the work of God’s grace alone. He showed mercy to men who merited nothing but wrath. This is God’s work alone!

IMPORTANCE

Though the word “*propitiation*” is used only three times in the Book of God that does not mean that the subject is unimportant. Oh, no! In fact, there is nothing taught in all the Word of God that is of any greater importance.

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You see, even God cannot arbitrarily put away sin and discharge the sinner of his guilt apart from the work of his Son upon the cross. A holy and just God must have a suitable satisfaction for sin before he can receive sinners into fellowship with himself. Therefore, he declares that “*without the shedding of blood there is no remission for sin.*” Only upon the grounds of Christ’s propitiatory sacrifice can God be just and yet justify the ungodly. Only by Christ our Propitiation is it possible for the Holy Lord God to be what he declares himself to be — “**A Just God and a Savior!**” Mercy must flow out to hell-deserving sinners through the blood of Christ. Only through the blood of the cross can God in justice pardon the ungodly.

In **Hebrews 9:5** the Greek word translated “*propitiation*” in 1st John and Romans is translated “*propitiation*” is translated “*mercy-seat,*” because the mercy-seat was the type of Christ our Propitiation. **In**

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each of these places (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 9:5; 1 John 2:2, and 1 John 4:10), reference is made to our Lord Jesus Christ. The mercy-seat was the place of propitiation by which God the Holy Spirit set forth the all-glorious Person and saving, redeeming work of the Lord Jesus Christ, our God and Savior.

Proposition: This is the thing that I want show you from the Word of God in this message: — **The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was sent into the world by his eternal Father to be the propitiation for our sins, sinful men and women like you and me might obtain mercy.**

Divisions: I want to raise and answer these four questions:

1. Why do I need Christ as my Propitiation?
2. How is the Lord Jesus the Propitiation for our sins?
3. What kind of Propitiation is he?

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4. How are we to make use of Christ our Propitiation?

PROPIIATION NEEDED

In the *first* place — **Why do I need Christ as my Propitiation?** I have already hinted at the answer to this question, so I will address it only briefly; but it must be addressed. Before anyone will value the propitiatory work of Christ, he must recognize his own need of that work. — **FIVE REASONS**

1. I need Christ as my propitiation, because **God is holy and I am guilty.** — Every person knows the guilt of his own heart. It is true; he does not fully know the extent and vileness of his guilt. But he does know that he is guilty, no matter how much he tries to deny it. And all men know that one day they must give an account of their guilt to a holy God. It is just for this reason that we need Christ as our Propitiation. **We need someone to stand**

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between a holy God and our guilty souls.

- Our hearts are full of evil lusts.
- Our minds are defiled with wicked thoughts and abominable imaginations.
- Our lives, all of our lives, are marked by ungodliness. Were we all honest, we would all confess, “I am sin, nothing else but sin.” Pride, selfishness, self-righteousness, deceit, craftiness, anger, wrath, envy, covetousness, adultery, and murder are our daily habits of life.

2. I need Christ as my Propitiation, because **God is just.** — I know that God is just. Justice and truth are the habitation of his throne. A just and true God must punish sin. He will by no means clear the guilty. He has sworn, “*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*” And God cannot lie. — “*The wages of my sin is death.*”

3. I need Christ as my Propitiation, because **I cannot, by any possibility, satisfy God’s justice.** — **I do**

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not have the ability to obey God's holy law. — I know what I should and should not do. I know what God requires. But I have no strength to obey. And God has said, *“Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.”*

4. Even if I could, from this day forward, perfectly obey God's law, **I can never atone for my past transgressions.** — I cannot redeem myself, and no mere man can redeem me. Were I to suffer the infinite wrath of the eternal God in hell forever, I could never satisfy that wrath. — *“None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth forever) (Psalm 49:7-8).*

- Away with the confessional!
- Away with the mass!
- Away with sacramentalism!

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5. I know that “without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.” So I need Christ to shed his blood on my behalf, to satisfy God’s just wrath, and win for me the forgiveness of sin. Without Christ to stand as my Propitiation before God, I have no hope.

HOW SO

In the *second* place, — **How is the Lord Jesus Christ the Propitiation for our sin?** — We need to know what the Apostles mean when they speak of Christ being our Propitiation. He was sent of God to be such, but what does that signify?

First, when John says that God “*sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins,*” he means that **Jesus Christ was sent by God to be our Mercy-Seat.** — We have read the law of God regarding the mercy-seat in Exodus 25:17-22. In the Levitical order of the Old Testament, we are able to see the purpose and

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usage of the mercy-seat, and how this was a clear representation of Jesus Christ in his work of redemption for us.

The mercy-seat was a golden lid that covered the ark of the covenant. The ark of the covenant was a simple wooden box overlaid with gold, in which the tables of the law were kept. This was placed in the most holy place of the tabernacle. The high priest of Israel alone was allowed to enter that most holy place, and he only once a year, and then only with the blood of a sacrifice on the day of atonement. On that day, he sprinkled blood on the mercy-seat to make atonement for the sins of the people. It was above this mercy-seat that God manifested his glory between the cherubs.

The mercy-seat was a covering sprinkled with blood to keep the tables of the broken law from the sight of the Divine Glory. If the law had been brought into sight against the sins of the

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congregation, it would have demanded their death. That mercy-seat and the whole ceremony associated with it was typical of Christ. **He is our Mercy-seat.** Let me briefly show the beauty of this type.

The mercy-seat was **made of pure gold**, symbolizing the divinity and perfection of our Savior. Though he was a man, he was truly God. And though he was truly a man, Jesus Christ was perfect, pure, and without any spot of sin. He is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

The mercy-seat was **just as long and just as wide as the ark** which kept the law, completely covering the broken law.

- Christ, by his submission and obedience to the law, perfectly fulfilled every requirement of the law's righteousness.
- By voluntarily submitting himself to the curse of the law in our stead, Christ fully satisfied the demands of the law's justice.

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As the mercy-seat covered the ark and was between the pure eye of God and the broken law, so **Christ stands as a Mediator between us, sinners and transgressors of the law, and the wrath and vengeance of the holy God, which we deserve.** This lid was called the mercy-seat because it was the blessed place of mercy, where the wrath of God was appeased. **This was the place where God met with his people** (Exodus 25:22). Even so, Jesus Christ is the means of divine mercy to us. God meets with sinners in Christ to show them mercy.

As the mercy-seat was **the place where the presence and glory of God were manifested in the Shekinah,** so Christ our Mercy-Seat is the place where the glory of God is manifest. The glory of God shines unto men in the face of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:4-7 The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest

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the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. ⁵ For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

And so the word “propitiation” suggests that Jesus Christ is our Mercy-Seat. **This word also has reference to Christ as our propitiatory sacrifice.** It means that Christ is not only the place where mercy is found, but that he is also the sin-offering and sacrifice which has made that mercy possible. Our sin-offering, our trespass offering, our paschal Lamb, our propitiatory sacrifice is Christ. **These were all shadows of which Christ is the Substance.** —

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“Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (2 Corinthians 5:7). — “He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Our dear Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ did not die as a martyr for a worthy cause. He did not die as an example of moral goodness. The Son of God died the Innocent in the place of the guilty, the Just in the stead of the unjust, as our Substitute.

Hail, thou once despised Jesus,
Hail, Thou Galilean King!
Thou didst suffer to release us,
Thou didst free salvation bring!
Hail, Thou agonizing Savior,
Bearer of our sin and shame,
By Thy merits we find favor,
Life is given through Thy name.

Paschal Lamb, by God appointed,

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All our sins on Thee were laid:
By almighty love anointed,
Thou hast full atonement made:
All Thy people are forgiven
Through the virtue of Thy blood;
Opened is the gate of heaven,
Peace is made twixt man and God!

- The Son of God took upon himself our guilt and sin.
- The Lord of Glory voluntarily subjected himself to the violent, infinite wrath of God in our stead.
- Immanuel died under the curse of the law, satisfying the debt of our sin, and enduring the just torments of our hell!
- As God made his Son sin for us and imputed our sins to him, as our propitiatory Sacrifice, so he has made us to be the righteousness of God in him and imputes to us his righteousness. This is how Christ was made the Propitiation for our sins.

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WHAT KIND

Now in the *third* place, I want to show you, at least in part, the answer to the question — **What kind of Propitiation is he?** — The mercy-seat of the Old Testament was only typical; and the propitiatory sacrifices were only typical. These things had to be constantly repeated. Their continual presence told the people that those things could never put away sin. **But Jesus Christ is the true Mercy-Seat and the true Sacrifice. In him, mercy is accomplished! By him, sin is put away!**

Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain.
But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away;
A sacrifice of nobler name

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And richer blood than they.

What kind of Propitiation is Christ?

APPOINTED PROPITIATION — **He is the Propitiation appointed by God.** The cause, the reason why Christ became our propitiation is this: — *“God loved us and sent his Son.”* So great is the love of God toward us that he set forth his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

- Christ was set forth to be our Propitiation in the purposes and decrees of God in the covenant of grace (Acts 2:23, 4:28; 1 Peter 1:19-20).
- Christ was set forth in the promises and prophecies of all the holy prophets from the beginning of the world (Psalm 89:19; Isaiah 53:10).
- Christ was set forth, as we have seen, to be our Propitiation in the types and shadows of the law.
- Christ was set forth as our Propitiation in the fullness of time by God actually sending him

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into the world to redeem us from the curse of the law.

- The Lord Jesus Christ is evidently set forth as our Propitiation every time the gospel is preached and made effectual to sinners.

ACCEPTED PROPITIATION — Christ is the Propitiatory Sacrifice accepted by God. God accepted the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, because he was the sacrifice God had appointed. And he publicly owned his acceptance of Christ as our Propitiation by raising him from the dead.

- Christ was accepted as our Sacrifice of Propitiation, because he was a **spotless** sacrifice, a Lamb without spot or blemish.
- God accepted the Lord Jesus as our Propitiatory Sacrifice, because he was a **slain** sacrifice.
- Christ is our accepted Propitiation because he is an justice **satisfying** Propitiation!

Before sin could be washed away, blood must be

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shed. The Lamb could not atone for sin unless it died. And Christ died to make an atonement for sin. It is true, “**He saved others, himself he cannot save!**”

- God accepted Christ as our Sacrifice, because he was a **voluntary** sacrifice.

Under the Levitical system men had to be willing to offer their sacrifices. But the sacrifices themselves had to be tied to the horns of the altar. Not so with Christ! — He was both the offering and the sacrifice, and as both he was willing. What he voluntarily agreed to in the covenant he voluntarily performed on the tree (Psalm 40:7-8; Isaiah 50:5-9; John 10:18; Ephesians 5:25).

- God accepted Christ as our propitiation, because he is an **effectual** sacrifice.

ALONE PROPITIATION — **Jesus Christ is the only Propitiation for sin** (Hebrews 9:25-28, 10:11-

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14).

Hebrews 9:25-28 ²⁵ Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; ²⁶ For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: ²⁸ So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Hebrews 10:9-14 ⁹ Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. ¹⁰ By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. ¹¹ And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering

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oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: ¹² But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; ¹³ From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. ¹⁴ For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Jesus Christ did all that God in justice required for our salvation. We can add nothing to Christ's once for all work. To try to add anything to Christ's finished work is to deny the sufficiency of his sacrifice. If you are to be saved from the guilt of sin and the curse of the law, you must renounce all self-worth, all self-righteousness, and trust Christ as your only Propitiation.

As Christ is the only Propitiation, so he is the all-sufficient, effectual propitiatory sacrifice.

1. He turned God's judgment from us.
2. He reconciled God and man.

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3. He justified the ungodly.

4. In Christ, God is pacified toward us from all that we have done (Ezekiel 16:63; Hebrews 8:12).

Ezekiel 16:63 That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth anymore because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord GOD.

Hebrews 8:12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

UNIVERSAL PROPITIATION — **In the next place, Jesus Christ is a universal Propitiation.** Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean to imply that Jesus Christ is a propitiation for the sins of every man in the world. No! If that were true, we would be forced to conclude that all men will be saved; or else we would be compelled to teach, as modern religion

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does, that Christ only removed the obstacles, making propitiation possible, thus making propitiation with God the work of the sinner's will. The Word of God makes no allowance for either of these things. The Lord Jesus Christ is our Propitiation. He has actually obtained eternal redemption for us, by the price of his own precious blood. When I say that Christ is a universal Propitiation, I mean this: — **Christ is the Propitiation for sinners of every race, nation, and tongue** (1 John 2:2).

- He is a Propitiation for all who trust him and receive him as their Propitiation.
- This is good news for sinners. We have an Advocate! We have a Sacrifice! We have a Propitiation for us! Jesus Christ is the Propitiation for sinners!

Christ is the Propitiation for sinners of every category and able to remove sins of the deepest dye!

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Following this same thought, what kind of Propitiation is Christ, I say, **Jesus Christ is a complete Propitiation.** In order to have a total propitiation, **three things are required**; a priest, an altar, and a sacrifice. Now Jesus Christ is all of these. — The sacrifice which he offered was his human nature, both body and soul (Isaiah 53:10; Hebrews 10:5, 10). The altar which sanctified the gift was his Divine Spirit, his Divine nature (Hebrews 9:14). As Christ is our Propitiation, he is also our Altar. — As the God-man mediator, Christ was the Priest who made the sacrifice to God (Hebrews 5:1).

- As our Priest, he was taken from among men.
- He was ordained of God to be a Priest.
- He was a Priest for men.
- He made an offering of things pertaining to God.
- And he made a sacrifice for sin.

Once more, I must tell you that **Jesus Christ is a continual, or perpetual Propitiation.** He made one sacrifice for sins forever, and sat down on the right

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hand of the Majesty on high. But **his one sacrifice for sin has a perpetual virtue and efficacy**. No other atonement can be made, and no other atonement needs to be made. It is a mockery of Christ's propitiatory sacrifice for the priests of Rome to pretend to make a new sacrifice for sins in the mass.

- Through his blood the Lord Jesus intercedes for us continually.
- The blood of Christ prevails for the salvation of sinners continually.
- The blood of Christ prevails for his people, so often as they sin, for cleansing and forgiveness (Zechariah 13:1; 1 John 1:9, 2:1-2).
- Christ alone completely saves from all sin, past, present, and future.

PROPIIATION USED

In the last place, I want to answer this practical question. — **How are we to make use of the Lord**

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Jesus Christ as our Propitiation? All that I have said will be of no value to you, unless you use Christ as the Propitiation for your sins. So I ask you to hear me a little longer in this most important matter.

You must receive Christ as your Propitiation. Knowing yourself to be a sinner, and knowing that the God of heaven is holy and just, you must receive Christ as your Propitiation. If Christ is not your Propitiation, there is no hope for your soul. If you will not receive him, God will not receive you. You must receive Christ personally, for yourself. You must trust Christ. No one else can trust him for you. And nothing else but simple faith can bring this Propitiation to you.

We must do what the Israelite did when he brought his lamb or young bullock to make atonement for sin.

- He came and **laid his hand upon** the beast

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(Leviticus 1:4). So we must lay the hand of faith upon Christ, trusting the merits of his righteousness and shed blood. There must be a personal faith in the Son of God.

- **He confessed his sin** (Leviticus 5:5), thereby acknowledging that if he had his just desserts he would die and not the lamb. — Yes, we must confess our sin, not to a man, but before God. — *“If any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going down into the pit, and his life shall see light (Job 33:27-28). Like David, we must confess, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight” (Psalm 51:4). Like the prodigal, we must confess, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son” (Luke 15:21). With grief of heart and shame of face, we must “look upon him whom we have pierced.”*

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- **And the Israelite went away rejoicing in the atonement made, comforting himself with God's promise of forgiveness.** — This is called receiving the atonement. We rejoice in the promise of God and rest in the finished work of Christ (Romans 5:11).

If you despise the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, then your eternal damnation is both just and sure!

- The eternal, infinite, inflexible wrath of God will fall upon you.
- You will suffer eternal pain of body and soul in hell.
- You will be made to endure eternal shame.

We who are the children of God must also make use of Christ as our Propitiation.

- Look always to the merits of Christ. He alone is our acceptance before God.
- Whenever you sin, trust Christ our Propitiation.

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- Whenever you do any good, trust Christ our Propitiation.
- Whenever you pray, trust Christ our Propitiation.
- Is Christ our Propitiation? Then let us love him.

APPLICATION

I finish with these two things.

1. **A Word of Warning** — Sinner, you must soon stand before the judgment bar of God! How dare you stand in that day without Christ? (2 Corinthians 5:10-11).

2. **A Word of Comfort** — My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, in the day of God's terrifying judgment, we will have no fear, because Christ is the Propitiation for our sins.

1 John 2:1-2 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus

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Christ the righteous: ² And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world.*

1 John 4:9-10 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. ¹⁰ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

Amen.