

# We Have An Advocate

*1 John 2:1,2*

*With Study Questions*

*Pastor Paul Viggiano  
Branch of Hope Church  
2370 W. Carson Street #100  
Torrance, CA 90501  
(310) 212-6999*

# We Have An Advocate

1 John 2:1,2

**“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. <sup>2</sup> And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:1,2).**

## **I. The Legal Process**

People are fascinated with the legal process. To step into a courtroom and watch justice is enthralling. Writers, producers and the media have capitalized on this obsession by creating books, movies and television programs. Popular courtroom productions over the years have included: *Inherit The Wind*, *Twelve Angry Men*, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *Perry Mason*, *The Defenders*, *Judge Wopner*, *Judge Judy*, *Divorce Court*, *Law and Order*, *The Practice*, *Ally McBeel* and, of course, the O. J. trial. All have been at the top of the charts. The popular television show *Dateline* shows court trials and allows their audience to play the juror by voting guilty or not guilty via the internet.

Who is guilty? Who is innocent? What does the evidence indicate? How do the witnesses testify? How slick are the attorneys? We all await the verdict. At times we are appalled and at other times we can take a deep sigh of relief and believe that justice has been done.

## **My Little Children**

John, affectionately addressing his audience as his little children, tells us he has been writing these things (what we have studied thus far) that we may not sin. Surely, the same way a natural father wants his children to abstain from sin and its consequences, our spiritual fathers desire, or should desire, the same thing.

## **Dealing With Sin**

But he also realizes that we will sin. John realizes that there is a courtroom—the holy tribunal of the righteousness creator-judge—where the hammer will come down upon every man and the verdict will always be guilty. No man can stand before pure righteousness and litigate. Paul writes,

**“Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the**

**world may become guilty before God. <sup>20</sup> Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:19,20).**

In this event, what do we do? How are Christians to absolve their sin? We have seen, and perhaps participated in, various methods of dealing with sin. From justifying sin through excuses, to justifying sin by denying an objective righteous standard from which we have fallen. All of these miserably fail. When the jury says “guilty” the trial is over and all the pleading and excuse making in the world will not change the verdict. Every eye in the courtroom will know we’re guilty and so will we.

### **Sentence**

For a time we lived in this guilt without any noticeable consequences, perhaps so long that we began to think there would be no consequences. Of course, in this courtroom we come to realize we were merely deluding ourselves. The evidence will be given, the hammer thrown and the verdict pronounced. Then our eyes will be fixed upon the judge as he prepares to announce the sentence, and the sentence will be death. And in the presence of His marvelous light, we will, of course realize the sentence is just.

### **Attorney’s That Fail**

We turn and look back at our attorney. He is disappointed. He’s lost yet another case. He was pleading temporary insanity or mitigating circumstances and his strategy failed. He shakes his head, lifts his hands in the air as if to express, “what can I say?” And then goes to lunch. We, on the other hand, must face our sentence. The scenario is hopeless. And any honest person who has ears to hear will recognize their hopeless condition and need for help.

## **II. The Advocate**

Justification, guilt, punishment, sentences, etc., are all legal concepts. Some may piously assert that they merely have a relationship with Jesus and such cold, forensic (or legal) concepts are of little concern to them. Such a disposition undermines the gospel and belittles whatever relationship they think they have. For John tells us that Jesus is our advocate.

### **Advocate**

**“And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”** The word advocate or *parakletos* comes from two words; *para* beside and *kaleo*, to call, or to call to one’s side. It was used in a court of justice to

denote a legal assistant or counsel for the defense. We have an advocate. Our attorney is not one who makes a silly case, fails, then throws his hands up and goes to lunch. When we turn and look for our attorney, He is not behind the defendant's table but between us and the judge.

### **Jesus The Righteous**

Even then, what good can He do? We are so clearly guilty, what words will convince the Judge to set us free? Words mean very little at this point. There has been a crime and there must be punishment. But what if our advocates agrees to take the punishment in our behalf? Will not the judge say, "Who are you O man to take the punishment on behalf of another when you are in fact guilty yourself?" But such a statement will never be, for John tells us our advocate is Jesus Christ the righteous.

### **III. Propitiation**

#### **He Is The Propitiation**

**"And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins,"** He is the propitiation. What does this mean? To propitiate means to appease the wrath. The judge, being just, must condemn the sinner. Wrath must fall upon the convict or the courtroom becomes a mockery. And Jesus, by the way, doesn't merely make propitiation, He is the propitiation. Let us move now from the courtroom to the temple.

#### **The Temple**

The high priest would enter the holy of holies with the blood of the sacrifice. In doing so he would (through a foreshadow or type) cover the sins of the people. Of course, if this didn't bring people, by faith, to the promised Messiah, it accomplished nothing. Christ is not merely the Priest, but He is the sacrifice as well. It is His own righteous blood He presents before His Father on behalf of His bride. The judge can now remove His wrath from the convicted sinner because the death penalty was poured out upon Jesus the righteous.

#### **Not A Reluctant Father**

I think it is important also to note that this was not done reluctantly by the Father. It is not as if this were the Son's plan and not the plan of the Father as well. It was the Father, who so loved the world, that He sent His Son to save us and grant us everlasting life.

## **No Double Jeopardy**

I also think it is important to know there is no double jeopardy with God. If He has punished Jesus on our behalf, He will not punish us as well. There is a term which has become quite popular as of late. The term is 'closure.' We use this in regards to a relationship that has ended but still looms. Somehow we need closure. Whether the relationship is a job we quit or a spouse who left us or the death of a loved one we need closure in order to have peace with our future and go on with our lives. If I may borrow this term to express a spiritual reality. This holy, forensic, legal closure brings the ultimate peace.

Years ago I got a fix-it ticket for something on my car. I forgot all about it and the years went by. I also changed residence so received no correspondence. When I went to renew my license the ticket re-surfaced. Now instead of it costing me thirty dollars for a tail-light it cost me five hundred dollars for fees, penalties and interest. I stood in line after line trying to clear up the problem. Some told me the fines would be removed, others weren't so sure. Finally I made it into the courtroom. I sat for hours listening to the judge either accept or reject cases. I was the last person left in the courtroom when I stood up and explained my situation. She understood, waived the penalties and pounded the gavel. It was then and only then that I knew this wouldn't come back to haunt me.

When Jesus appeases the wrath of the Father we know we have peace with God. Of course this is merely the beginning. There is so much more that follows. Our advocate considers us His brother and the Father adopts us as His own and grants us His holy inheritance. But it all starts in a courtroom. Where we acknowledge our sin, cry out for mercy and look to our advocate who stands in our place and pays the price that we could not pay. If there is one thing you never want to do is stand in that courtroom alone. It would be the nightmare of nightmares. Call on the Advocate while He might be found.

## **The Whole World**

John finishes this verse by stating that Jesus makes propitiation not for our sins only but **"also for the whole world."** Some argue this verses is teaching that God has a similar love for every last person on earth. They say that Jesus died for every man equally and now it is the responsibility of men to respond. In other words, Jesus died for everybody but didn't effectually saved anybody. He merely made salvation possible, providing men put on the final touches. But an examination of this verse will deny such a teaching.

## Universalism

The verse doesn't merely say He died for the whole world. It teaches that He is the propitiation for the whole world. Now if the whole world is to be understood as every last single person then the universalist is correct and ultimately no one will spend eternity in hell. I must say if you are a universalist, you have a much bigger problem than rejecting particular atonement.

## World

I don't wish to spend too much time here but let us quickly examine the many meanings of the word *world*. In John 1:10 it includes rocks, trees, planets and human beings. In John 16:28 it means the inhabitable earth. In John 15:19 it designates unconverted people. In John 17:9 it refers to those for whom Jesus doesn't pray. In John 6:33 it refers to the elect. In John 12:19 (the Triumphal Entry) it designated those who were following Jesus at the time. In John 1:29 John the baptist says, "Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." In John 3:17 Jesus says He did not come to condemn the world but to save it. Yet we must understand that not every last person's sins have been taken away. So generally speaking the word seldom means every last single person. Why do I labor this point?

I labor this point so that men will not be deluded into thinking that the judge has a favorable disposition toward them when the wrath of the judge is in fact upon them. I labor this point that we might not falsely tell people Jesus died for them, thus giving them false assurance, and actually becoming tools of their damnation, rather than proper stewards of God's grace. God truly is our Father. But to portray Him as such to the entire pool of humanity, apart from adoption, which comes by faith, is to do great damage. He is not every man's Father but He is every man's judge. And it would be more accurate and therefore more gracious to portray Him thus. And we should pray that men might have the insight to anticipate the gazing eyes of the righteous Judge and seek refuge in their only true advocate—Jesus Christ the righteous. Seek Him while He may be found and your soul will be secure.

Paul takes great pains to paint this beautiful legal picture in his eighth chapter of Romans. Think of ourselves in the court. As the enemy of our souls, and perhaps even our own lives may seek to condemn us, I beg we will take refuge in these words.

**“What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who *is* he who condemns?**

***It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” <sup>37</sup> Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:31-39).***

Can you claim these words as your very own? Believe, repent and be baptized and wash away your sins (Acts 22:16).

## Questions for Study

1. Why does John write “these things?”
2. What does John also realize?
3. What chance does man have if he stands alone before the judgment seat of God?
4. What are some different ways people deal with, or try to absolve, sin in their lives?
5. How will these methods actual fare in God’s courtroom?
6. Why is it important for Christians to have an understanding of this legal aspect of their faith?
7. The word *advocate* is actually the word *paraclete*. What does this word mean?
8. What qualifies Jesus to be our advocate?
9. What does propitiation mean?
10. Why is it important to recognize that Jesus doesn’t merely make propitiation but is our propitiation?
11. Compare the priestly work of Jesus to the priest of the temple? What are the similarities? What are the differences?
12. Was the Father reluctant in the work of Jesus?
13. Explain the use of the word *closure*.
14. Does the *whole world* always mean every last single person? Why is it impossible for it to mean that here?
15. What is *Universalism*?
16. Why is it important not to assert that Jesus died for every last single person?