

The Five points of Calvinism: Limited Atonement

What is atonement?

Atonement is the satisfaction, reparation, reconciliation, or amending of a wrong. Christ's atonement for sin is what brings reconciliation between man and God.

What is limited atonement (particular redemption)?

The doctrine of limited atonement teaches the biblical understanding that Christ's redeeming work was definite in design and accomplishment - that is Christ's work was intended only for the elect, and Christ's work actually secured salvation for these individuals and for no one else.

Another way to put it is that Christ dies for those whom He actually applies the benefits of His redemptive work. This doctrine of limited atonement is also called definite atonement or particular redemption.

It is important to note that the redemptive work of Christ is sufficient to save all men, but it is only effective for those that God predestined.

What is the general atonement (universal redemption)?

General atonement is the doctrine which holds that the redeeming work of Christ made it possible but not certain for everyone to be saved. It did not actually secure salvation for anyone, and its effectiveness is limited to those who choose God.

Why is the doctrine of limited atonement important to understand?

Understanding limited atonement helps to magnify our view of God as we see that all the work that God does is always efficacious and never fails. God is not at the mercy of man choosing Him, but God is sovereign over all things. Everything he designs and wills cannot be frustrated and thwarted by man.

The general atonement view says that the redemptive work of Christ is only efficacious for those who choose Him and fails in everybody else who rejects Him. This certainly takes away and minimizes the power and work of Christ.

What are some passages that teach that Christ died efficaciously only for the elect?

(Matthew 1:21)

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for **he will save his people from their sins.**"

(Matthew 26:28)

for this is my blood of the covenant, which is **poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.**

(John 10:14-15)

[14] I am the good shepherd. **I know my own and my own know me,** [15] just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and **I lay down my life for the sheep.**

(John 17:2)

since you have given him authority over all flesh, to **give eternal life to all whom you have given him.**

(John 17:9-10)

[9] I am praying for them. **I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.** [10] All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.

(Revelation 5:9)

[9] 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,**

What are some passages that are *seemingly* in objection against limited atonement?

(John 1:29)

[29] The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, **who takes away the sin of the world!**

(John 3:16-17)

[16] "For **God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son,** that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. [17] For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order **that the world might be saved through him.**

(2 Corinthians 5:19)

that is, **in Christ God was reconciling the world** to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

(1 John 2:2)

He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but **also for the sins of the whole world.**

(Titus 2:11)

For the grace of God has appeared, **bringing salvation for all people,**

(Romans 5:18)

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for **all men.**