

## Limited Atonement

### I. What is Limited Atonement?

1. Atonement *n.* - 1. The condition of being *at one* with others; unity of feeling, harmony, concord, agreement. 3. *spec.* in *Theol.* Reconciliation or restoration of friendly relations between God and sinners. 4. Propitiation of an offended or injured person, by reparation of wrong or injury; amends, satisfaction, expiation. b. *Theol.* Propitiation of God by expiation of sin.
2. Limited *adj.* - 1. Appointed, fixed.
3. The doctrine of Limited Atonement teaches that Jesus Christ died for and made propitiation for the sins of an appointed and fixed number of people.

### II. The necessity of Limited Atonement

1. The doctrine of Limited Atonement is plainly declared in the scriptures as will be shown in this study.
2. It can also be logically deduced given what the Bible teaches about Unconditional Election.
  - A. God elected sinners unconditionally to save them (see sermons on [Unconditional Election](#)).
  - B. Since they were elected unconditionally, their number was determined by God's will and not theirs.
  - C. Therefore, the number of the elect was fixed before the foundation of the world.
  - D. Therefore, the number of people that Christ died for was fixed before He came to this earth to make atonement for them.

### III. The Limited Atonement of Christ was pictured in the Old Testament.

1. The atonement procured by the sin offering under the law of Moses was limited to the congregation of Israel, not to men of every nation (**Lev 16:15-19; Lev 16:29-34**).
2. The congregation of Israel was God's church in the OT (**Act 7:38 c/w Exo 16:2**).
3. Therefore, the atonement for sins made under the law was only for the OT church.
4. Note: the atonement in the OT never took away sins (**Heb 10:4, 11**); it was only a shadow of Christ which was to come (**Heb 10:1**).

### IV. Christ died for and thereby made atonement for the sins of a limited number of people.

1. Christ died for the church (**Eph 5:25-27**).
  - A. The church that Christ died for is the church of the firstborn written in heaven (**Heb 12:22-23 c/w Eph 3:15**).
  - B. Those who are "written in heaven" are the eternally saved elect "written in the Lamb's book of life" (**Rev 20:12-15; Rev 21:27**).
  - C. The book of life was written before the foundation of the world (**Rev 17:8**); it is not a "living document" with amendments being made to it continually.
  - D. Some men are not written in the book of life (**Rev 17:8; Rev 20:15**).
  - E. Therefore, some men are not part of God's church for which Christ died.
2. Christ died for the sheep (**Joh 10:11; Joh 10:15**).
  - A. Some men are not sheep (**Joh 10:26**).
  - B. Therefore, Christ did not die for them.
3. Christ died for and saved all those that the Father gave Him (**Joh 17:2-4**).

- A. The Father gave Him those whom He chose before the foundation of the world (**Eph 1:4**).
- B. God didn't choose to save some men (**Rom 9:11-13; Rom 9:21-23**).
- C. Therefore, Christ did not die for them.
- 4. All of, and only, those who were predestinated (elected) are *justified* (**Rom 8:29-30**).
  - A. The elect were justified by the death of Christ (**Rom 5:8-9**).
  - B. Therefore, Jesus died only for the elect.
- 5. Christ died for those He loves (**1Jo 3:16; 1Jo 4:9-10; Joh 15:13**).
  - A. Christ doesn't love some men (**Psa 5:5; Psa 11:5**).
  - B. Therefore, Christ did not die for them.
- 6. Jesus died for the elect among the nation of Israel and for "the children of God that were scattered abroad" in every nation (**Joh 11:51-52**).
  - A. Jesus didn't die for and save all of the nation of Israel, but a remnant of it (**Rom 9:6 c/w Rom 9:27-29**).
  - B. Jesus redeemed by His death men "out of every...nation" (**Rev 5:9**).
  - C. This is the "world" that God loved and Christ died for (**Joh 3:16; 1Jo 2:2**).
  - D. Jesus didn't die for all men in every nation, but for God's children who were scattered abroad *out of* every nation.
- 7. Christ died for "us" who are the children of light, not the children of darkness (**1Th 5:4-10**).

V. The atonement of Christ must be limited *in number* or the Bible contradicts itself.

- 1. The effect of Christ's death was to put away the sins that He died for (**Heb 9:26**).
  - A. The offering of the body of Christ perfected forever (**Heb 10:10-14**) and obtained eternal redemption (**Heb 9:12**) for those for whom He died.
  - B. Christ saved *His people* from their sins (**Mat 1:21**).
  - C. By Christ's stripes His people were healed (**1Pe 2:24**).
  - D. Therefore, if Christ died for the sins of the entire human race, then the entire human race would be eternally saved.
    - i. There are men who are not saved (**Jud 1:7; Rev 20:15**).
    - ii. Therefore, Christ did not die for them.
- 2. How could a man for whom Christ died go to hell?
  - A. If Christ died for his sins, how could God punish him for them?
  - B. That would be double jeopardy, punishing the same sin twice.
  - C. God is just and therefore could not do that.
- 3. If God loves the entire human race, why would He send some of them to be tormented forever in hell?
  - A. Death cannot separate God's people from His love (**Rom 8:38-39**).
  - B. If God loves the entire human race, then when the unregenerate die and go to hell, God still loves them after they have died.
  - C. What kind of love is it to punish someone in everlasting fire forever (**Mat 25:41, 46**)?
  - D. Obviously, God doesn't love the non-elect (**Rom 9:11-13**).

VI. The ability of Christ to save is not limited.

- 1. Some claim that the doctrine of Limited Atonement limits God's ability to save.
- 2. This is false; limited atonement is the Biblical doctrine that teaches that *God limited* the number of people *He chose* to save.

3. It is Arminianism that limits God's ability to save.
    - A. Arminianism teaches that God can only save those who accept Christ or believe in Christ.
    - B. This teaching limits the ability of God to save unbelievers.
- VII. The doctrine of Limited Atonement results in more people in heaven than Arminianism.
1. The doctrine of Limited Atonement teaches that Christ made atonement for the sins of all of the elect.
    - A. According to the doctrine of sovereign grace, all true believers are elect (**1Th 1:4-5**).
    - B. According to the doctrine of sovereign grace, some of the elect are unbelievers (**Rom 11:28**).
    - C. This means that according to the doctrine of Limited Atonement all true believers *and some unbelievers* have their sins atoned for by Christ and go to heaven when they die.
  2. The doctrine of Arminianism teaches that *only true believers* are saved and go to heaven when they die.
  3. Therefore, more people end up in heaven under the doctrine of Limited Atonement than do under the doctrine of Arminianism.
- VIII. In actuality, everyone, except universalists, believes in Limited Atonement.
1. Arminians believe that the atonement of Christ was limited to only true believers.
    - A. If they claim to not believe that, then they must believe that Christ atoned for the sins of those in hell.
    - B. If people in hell are suffering for their sins, then this nullifies the effect of the atonement.
    - C. Therefore, Christ's atonement was not effective for those in hell.
    - D. Therefore, the atonement of Christ would be limited to only true believers.
  2. Sovereign Grace believers believe that the atonement of Christ was limited to the elect which consist of all true believers and all elect unbelievers.
  3. Sovereign Grace believers believe that the atonement was limited by *God's choice*.
  4. Arminians believe that the atonement was limited by *sinner's choices*.
    - A. But in actuality, since God *could have* overruled the sinners' choices and saved them anyway, *but didn't*, the Arminian atonement is still in fact *limited by God*.
    - B. The difference is that the Arminian god limited the atonement *more than* the God of the Bible.
      - i. This is the case because he restricted it to *true believers only*.
      - ii. The poor souls who never had a chance to hear the gospel before they died are eternally damned by the Arminian god who wanted to save them, but couldn't or refused to.
    - C. On the other hand, the God of the Bible elected both those who would become true believers *as well as some unbelievers* who never heard the gospel, were not mentally able to understand it, died before they had a chance to believe it, or foolishly rejected it (**Rom 11:28; Rom 3:3-4; 2Ti 2:13**).
    - D. See sermons on the [Unconverted Elect](#).