

## **Christology: The Person and Work of Christ**

### **Lesson 7: The Work of Christ – Atonement, Part 3**

*Statement of Belief: Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Second Person of the Trinity, lived a perfect life and died a substitutionary death for the redemption of God's people.*

Often "atonement" is used only to refer to the work of Christ on the cross, dying and paying for our sins. For the sake of this class, like Wayne Grudem, we will use "atonement" to mean "the work Christ did in his life and death to earn our salvation" (*Systematic Theology*, 568).

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#### **Question #1: What is the debate over the extent of the atonement?**

The Question: When Christ died on the cross, did he pay for the sins of the entire human race or only for the sins of those who would be saved (meaning, "the elect")?

*Reformed theology* (Limited Atonement) holds that, if Christ's death actually paid for the sins of every person who ever lived, then there is no penalty left for *anyone* to pay, and it necessarily follows that all people will be saved, without exception. God could not condemn to eternal punishment anyone whose sins are already paid for: that would be demanding double payment, and it would therefore be unjust. Since the Bible is clear that not all people will be saved, the atonement must therefore be limited to certain individuals, the elect.

*Non-Reformed theology* holds that that the gospel offer in Scripture is made to all people, and for this offer to be genuine, the payment for sins must have already been made and must be actually available for all people. If the people whose sins Christ paid for are limited, then the free offer of the gospel also is limited, and the offer of the gospel cannot be made to all mankind without exception.

#### **Question #2: Which passages are used to support the Reformed view?**

- Christ died for his people (Jn. 10:11, 15; Acts 20:28; Rom. 8:32-34; Eph. 5:25)
- Christ is aware of people the Father gave him (Jn. 6:37-39; 17:9, 20)
- There is a definite transaction between the Father and Son (Rom. 5:8, 10; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; cf. Gal. 1:4; Eph. 1:7)
- The blessings of salvation are for God's people (Eph. 1:3-4; 2:8; Phil. 1:29)

**Question #3: Which passages are used to support the non-Reformed view?**

Christ died for the whole world (Jn. 1:29; 3:16; 6:51; 2 Cor. 5:19; 1 Jn. 2:2, 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9)

**Question #3: What are some points of agreement?**

Not all people will be saved.

A free offer of the gospel can rightly be made to every person ever born. It is completely true that "whoever will" may come to Christ for salvation, and no one who comes to him will be turned away. This free offer of the gospel is extended in good faith to every person.

All agree that Christ's death in itself, because he is the infinite Son of God, has infinite merit and is in itself sufficient to pay the penalty of the sins of as many or as few as the Father and the Son decreed. The question is not about the intrinsic merits of Christ's sufferings and death, but about the number of people for whom the Father and the Son thought Christ's death to be sufficient payment at the time Christ died.