

Predestination And Free-Will

What Is Limited Atonement? Is It Scriptural?

Limited atonement (also known as Particular Redemption) refers to the fact that Christ's death was not literally for every person ever born or conceived. It was a transaction whereby God paid for the sins of those He came to save and those alone:

Acts 13:48 – "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and **as many as were ordained to eternal life** believed."

"As many as were ordained" is a clear reference to limited atonement, is it not? John 17, verses 2 and 9 indicate the same thing:

John 17:2 – "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to **as many as thou hast given him.**"

John 17:9 – "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but **for them which thou hast given me**; for they are thine."

Christ was a ransom for many, but not for all:

Matthew 20:28 – "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life **a ransom for many.**"

No one would end up in hell if the ransom for their soul was paid. To do such a thing would violate God's justice. He would not punish both His son and the sinner for the same crimes.

1 Corinthians 6:20 – "For **ye are bought with a price**: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Are those who were "not ordained" bought with a price? Was the ransom payment on their behalf? No. The ransom was only for "as many as were ordained" and not one more.

Christ's atonement is limited to God's people:

That group of people whom God ordained to be saved are referred to as HIS people:

Matthew 1:21 – "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save **his people** from their sins."

Psalms 85:2 – "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of **thy people**, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah."

God's people are limited to those whom God the Father gives to Christ:

John 6:37 - "**All that the Father giveth me** shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Christ's atonement is limited to God's sheep:

The sacrifice of Christ does not apply to the goats (the non-elect). Christ only laid down his life for the sheep:

John 10:15 - "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and **I lay down my life for the sheep.**"

Christ's atonement was limited to the Church:

Ephesians 5:25 - "Husbands, love your wives, even as **Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it**"

Christ's atonement is also limited to those whom He predestinated, whom He called and whom He justified and to no one else:

Romans 8:30 - "Moreover whom **he did predestinate**, them **he also called**: and whom he called, **them he also justified**: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

So we see above that Christ did not die for everyone. His death, His atonement, was limited to the elect. They are the only ones who are justified - declared just and righteous - on account of Christ's full payment of their sin debt. Everyone else will have to spend eternity in hell paying for their sins themselves. And no one will be in hell for whom Christ died. His blood was not shed in vain for any man.

False Premises Prevent Proper Interpretation

Perhaps the reason many people do not come to proper conclusions about the biblical doctrine of limited atonement is that they conduct their studies with false notions and prejudices and incomplete information. Some of these hindrances to interpretation include:

disregarding certain verses from their study of limited atonement

explaining away verses as being irrelevant or not meaning what they say

assuming that words have only one very narrow meaning no matter what context they are used in

making false assumptions about election, predestination and other doctrines related to limited atonement

having a wrong or incomplete understanding of the attributes of God,

primarily His sovereignty
misunderstanding what the Bible means by justification

Summary: This article is a section of a much larger article on the Bible doctrines of Election and Predestination called "Who accepts Whom?". You are urged to check out that larger article for many other thought provoking questions pertaining these "Doctrines of Grace". — *RM Kane*
