

Unlimited vs. Limited Atonement

It is vital for someone to understand that, unless you are a universalist you believe in a limited atonement because you don't believe everyone goes to heaven. **The question then becomes not "Is the atonement limited?" but "How is the atonement limited?"** Is the atonement limited by the free will of man or the free will of God? The answer is found in the definition of "atonement." If Christ atoned for the sins of everyone, then everyone goes to heaven. For that is the meaning of "atonement." (from www.gotquestions.org.)

Verses apparently supporting unlimited atonement:

John 1:29b "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

Notice, that if "world" here means every individual, this would mean universalism.

For if Christ takes away the sins of every individual in the world, then everybody would be saved (for their sins would be gone).

1 Timothy 2:5-6 "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ^{1Ti 2:6} who gave himself as a ransom for all men

AND 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ^{2Co 5:15} And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

Like the word "world," "all" doesn't always mean "every individual without exception," but "some people from all groups." It means "both Jews and Gentiles" but not "every Jew and every Gentile." Read Mark 1:5. Does "all" in this verse mean every individual in the world?

1 Timothy 2:6 Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for all classes and groups of people.

Hebrews 2:9 "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

If we do use the word all to mean "every individual without exception," we mean "every individual within a certain group." For example, if I say to our Bible study group "is everybody here?" I do not mean "every individual to ever walk the face of the earth." I mean everybody who is in our group. Hebrews 2:9 "Every" means "every believer."

1 John 2:2 "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

(For definition of "whole world" see Revelation 13:3; 12:9; Romans 1:8) *He prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to*

gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad (John 11:51-52).
"Whole world" (1 John 2:2) therefore means "the children of God who are scattered" throughout the world (John 11:52-53).

If Jesus died for the sins of unbelievers in the same way that he died for the sins of believers then what are unbelievers in hell for?
If you say "unbelief," then you are saying that Jesus died for all sins except the sin of unbelief. But the Bible says that sinners in hell pay for many sins. See Colossians 3:5-6 and other passages.

Verses supporting Limited Atonement – Definite Atonement – Particular Atonement

Acts 20:28 "Be shepherds of **the church** of God, which he bought with his own blood.

Matthew 20:28 "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as **a ransom for many.**"

John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, that he **lay down his life for his friends.**

John 17:6, 9 "I have revealed you to those **whom you gave me out of the world.** They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.
⁹ I pray for them. I am **not praying for the world**, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.

John 10:14-16 "'I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—
^{Jn 10:15} just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and **I lay down my life for the sheep.** ^{Jn 10:16} I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

Ephesians 5:25-26 "just as Christ **loved the church** and gave himself up for her.."

Hebrews 9:28 "so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins **of many** people;

"If you say to me, then, that at the cross Christ only accomplished for me what he accomplished for those who will suffer hell for their sins, then you strip the death of Jesus of its actual effective accomplishment on my behalf, and leave me with what?—an atonement that has lost its precious assuring power that my sins were really covered and the curse was really lifted and the wrath of God was really removed. That's a high price to pay in order to say that Christ tasted death for everyone in the same way. (John Piper in sermon: "For whom did Jesus Taste Death.")