

Definite Atonement (Part 2)

The idea that God demonstrates saving grace toward a select few can rub even Christians the wrong way. Rather than responding with cries of injustice, we would do better to examine the source of these emotions. If we evaluate our hearts honestly, we will acknowledge that our feelings originate from a sense of entitlement. Simply put, as depraved human beings we believe we deserve God's mercy. Since the doctrine of definite atonement removes this notion, it receives scathing responses. Jesus and His Word clearly teach definite atonement, for it maintains the unity of the Godhead and demonstrates the fullness of grace absent in any other proposed system of salvation.

I. Specific Atonement in John 3:16

- a. John 3:14–15 reference the account of the bronze serpent in Numbers 21:4–9.
 - i. This Old Testament periscope clearly prefigures Christ.
 - ii. Salvation from death comes to the Israelites who lift their eyes to the bronze serpent raised upon a pole.
- b. John 4:42 claims Jesus as the Savior of the world.
 - i. Bible unequivocally explains that not all people receive salvation and enter into His eternal rest.
 - ii. Verse 42 asserts Jesus' special status as the exclusive Savior.
- c. Verse 16, then, exclaims that Jesus Christ is the only true Savior, and His love extends beyond the boundaries of national Israel to Gentiles, with no distinction.
 - i. If Jesus died for the sins of all people, then God may not punish sinners for their iniquity without committing injustice.
 - ii. The Bible states that God punishes the unrepentant for their sin and unbelief.
 - iii. Out of an extreme depth of love, Jesus extends His atonement to all the world, not just the nation of Israel.

II. Exact Atonement

- a. John 1:38: Jesus' atonement rests in perfect alignment with the plans of the Father.
 - i. The Godhead, the Trinity, works in perfect unity
 - ii. Arminianism fragments the unity of the Godhead in salvation, for it requires that each person sets out to a save a different group of people.
 - iii. No division may exist in the Godhead, in nature or in person, and definite atonement maintains this harmony.
- b. John 6:39 confirms the harmony of the Godhead in their eternal purpose to secure eternal redemption for some by the cross.
- c. John 10: The Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep (v.11).
 - i. The sheep, called by name, recognize the voice of the Shepherd (v.3).
 - ii. The Father gives the sheep to the Shepherd before they recognize His voice (v.29).
 - iii. Not all people belong to the Shepherd's flock (v.26).
 - iv. The flock consists of both Jews and Gentiles (v.16).
 - v. The Good Shepherd intentionally lays down His life for His sheep (vv.17–18).
- d. John 11:49–52: Caiaphas unknowingly confesses Jesus Christ's intercessory role as high priest and sacrificial lamb for all His elect in Israel and scattered throughout the entire world.
- e. John 12:32–33 and the surrounding context affirm Jesus' non-discriminatory atonement.
 - i. As already shown, the possibility of universal atonement disrupts the unity of the Godhead.
 - ii. The initial response of the Greeks to Jesus predicts and looks forward to their inclusion into the flock of Christ.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Leviticus 16; Numbers 21:4–9;

John 1:10, 29, 38; 3:14–17, 17; 4:42; 6:37, 39; 7:7; 10; 11:49–52; 12:4, 19, 31–33; 13:1; 17:5, 9