

# The Atonement - Adult SS - Lesson 3: The Intention of the Atonement

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let me pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the cross of Christ.

We thank you for our Saviour and all that he has done for us! We thank you that he is our great high priest, the one who has made atonement for our sins.

We thank you for the forgiveness that we have in him. And as we consider his cross today, as we consider the atonement, help us to understand these things that are far too deep for us.

But by your Spirit, please give us some understanding of this, a greater appreciation of all that the Lord Jesus has done. And we ask this in his name. Amen.

So if you're new or you're just jumping in to this series, this term, we're thinking about the atonement. So that's the title of this term, the atonement.

[ 0 : 56 ] And what the atonement means, we're thinking about what Christ was doing on the cross. Okay? What Christ was doing on the cross. And just a heads up, we're going to be doing it.

Usually I do every Sunday School series in half terms. So usually we'd finish by this coming half term. I'm actually going to extend this over two half terms. This is going to be like a mega, mega series. So we're going to do all of this, this term, this half term and next.

So there's lots more to come. And last session, we saw what the cross is all about. So the first one, we saw the need for the atonement. And then we saw what the cross was all about.

What's happening on the cross. And we saw Christ's death is not just a random death. It's not just an unfortunate death. No, Christ's death is a sacrifice that makes us one with God.

So just like the Old Testament priests would make sacrifices, in that same way, Christ was a sacrifice. So on the cross, all our sin and guilt and the debt all went on to Christ on the cross.

[ 2 : 05 ] So this is his people here. All the debt went on to Christ. And he substituted in for us. That's the little dotted line. So he substituted, swapped in for us and identified with our sin.

And the sin of debt went on to him. And so he bore the wrath of God. The wrath of God that is rightly deserved, the penalty for our sin.

That was all diverted and borne on to Christ. Christ, he paid the penalty that was deserved for our sins. And by doing so, he reconciled us to God.

So that broken relationship because of the debt and the wrath, we weren't reconciled. And so we needed to be reconciled. And so on the cross, Christ was reconciling us back to God.

And so he achieved three things. Redemption, meaning ransom. He paid for our debt. Propitiation, which means he appeased God's wrath.

[ 3 : 03 ] Ended God's wrath because it was diverted away from us. And he reconciled us. So these three things. And this is atonement.

When we speak of atonement, it means at-one-ment. Making us at one with God. And what does that involve? That involves these three things. They're kind of the three ingredients to atonement, you could say. And this is what happened with the Old Testament sacrifices we saw last week.

And this is what happened to Christ. The Old Testament kind of gives the shape of what Christ is doing. But today, I want us to ask an important question. If this is what Christ was doing, if this is what was happening on the cross, and this is what Christ was achieving, who was he doing it for? Who are these people here? I want us to answer the question today, who did Christ die for?

Or if you want to be grammatically correct, for whom did Christ die? That's the correct term. That's kind of how people phrase it. I know whom is the correct term, but it feels weird saying it.

[ 4 : 12 ] Like, no one says whom. You're going to get laughed at if you say whom. Who did Christ die for? Okay? And you may not have thought about this question. Or maybe you think it's a bit of

an odd question to even bring it up.

But I want us to see that this is really important to understand the atonement. It's important to appreciate all that Christ has done on the cross.

And so, who did Christ die for? I wanted to jump straight in. There are three major views. Okay? View one. You can see this at the top left of your page.

View one. Christ died for everyone. Okay? So, Christ actually died for every single person. Actually paid for all their sins. And so, reconciled every single person on the planet, throughout history. Every single person. He reconciled back to God. And so, to jump to the conclusion of this. That means that there'll be no one in hell. That there's no judgment falling on absolutely anyone.

[ 5 : 17 ] And so, everyone will be in the new creation. Okay? And I'm going to just quickly dismiss this one. Because that is just unthinkable. Okay? Right? We have our doctrine of hell.

We have our doctrine of judgment. We have our understanding of the need for the gospel. If everyone's going to the creation, there's no need for the gospel. Don't worry about it. Why would Christ tell anyone to preach the gospel?

Okay? So, view one does make any sense at all. We can't think that. And so, we're not going to get into that today. Okay? You can ask me more afterwards if you want.

But view two, we're going to consider a bit more. So, view two is that Christ died hypothetically for everyone. Okay? So, this says that Christ died generally for everyone.

There was an intention that he generally died for everyone. He died to make salvation possible for everyone. He died to make humanity savable. But the cross is only made effective to the elect.

[ 6 : 21 ] To those whom God chooses. So, in this view, the cross is a bit like a medicine box. Right? So, when Christ died, he made this medicine box with, you know, a trillion pills.

Right? I've made this for everyone. Christ died generally for everyone. But not everyone will actually get one of those pills. Okay? It's only those who receive it, who believe, who God has chosen.

Okay? So, that's view two. But view three is that Christ died for his people. So, Christ died for a specific number of people.

Not everyone. But his people. And all those people will be saved. There's not a question about it. And this view is often called limited atonement.

Or definite atonement. I'm going to use the word definite atonement. I think that's a better term for... Well, we'll find out why that's a better term. And I want us to see today and be convinced of this third position.

[ 7 : 23 ] All right? Christ died for his people. Who are these people? Who are the people Christ died for? It is his chosen people. You could say it's the elect.

But today, I also want to address why people might have issues with this position. And maybe you're coming with questions and maybe it's not sitting right at the moment.

I want to address some of those issues. And the common issues are often... What about the all verses? Okay? So, 1 Timothy 2.

Christ gave himself as a ransom for all. Romans 5. One act of righteousness leads to justification in life for all men. Okay? So, what about the all verses?

What about the world verses? So, the famous one. 1 John 2. He's the propitiation for our sins.

[ 8 : 19 ] And not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. Huh. What's going on there? And another common objection is... What about evangelism? So, if Christ didn't die for all people...

If that's not how we're going to say it... Then, how can we offer the gospel to all people? And another objection would be... Well, it's to do with the name limited atonement.

Right? That's what it's often called. How can we say that Christ's cross is limited? Doesn't that say Christ's mercy is limited or his power is limited?

And small in some way. And some people say, we don't want to limit the cross. So, we're not going to go with limited atonement. Well, how do we answer all this? Well, I want us to see why positively...

First of all, positively... Why we must think of the atonement as this third position is definite atonement. And I want us to make a case for that. And then we can answer some of these questions.

[ 9 : 21 ] Like, what about the alls? What about the world? And I'll try to answer maybe the limited atonement question along the way. But I want us to jump in. And I want us to think about all this in the right way.

And to do that, we need to see Christ went to the cross with two things on him. He went with two things on him. Christ went to the cross with a belt and a treasure chest.

Okay? So, to understand definite atonement, to understand the cross, you need to understand that Christ died for his people. And to see that, you need to understand a belt and a treasure chest. So, the first point, Christ died for his people.

So, two things I want us to see. The first is a belt. Christ went to the cross wearing a belt. I mean, metaphorically, right?

He wasn't actually wearing a belt. So, if you cast your minds back to our Sunday school on covenants, on the two giants. Don't worry if you weren't there. But if you were, try to cast your mind back on the two giants, Adam and Christ.

[10:25] So, do you remember there are two giants of the Bible? Adam and Christ. And on the belt of these two giants, attached to these two giants, are people.

So, you are either in Adam or you are in Christ. So, Romans 5. For as by the one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners. Adam's disobedience made many sinners. But the one man's obedience, the many will be made righteous. So, two people, two effects on two different people. So, 1 Corinthians 15.

For as in Adam all die. Everyone attached to Adam will die. So, also in Christ shall all be made alive. And Thomas Goodwin, a theologian, he phrased it like this.

This is a helpful way to picture it. In God's sight, there are two men. Adam and Jesus Christ. And these two men have all other men hanging from their girdle strings.

[11:22] Belt. Okay. Right. So, all of humanity across all time and space. They are split into two groups. And they're hanging from two different belts.

Adam and Christ. And so, whatever happens to these two giants happens to everyone attached to them. So, if Adam falls, if the giant falls, everyone falls with them.

If a giant stands, if Christ stands, everyone stands with them. And I want us to see being attached to these giants. This doesn't just mean at the end of time, everyone will eventually end up on these giants.

No. I want us to see everything that Christ did in his ministry, he did with a specific people already attached to his belt.

And that includes dying on the cross. And I want us to see that. We've got a big breakout section. So, look at the dotted box. Lots of questions.

[12:19] Lots of verses. Break out into groups. Answer these questions. And I want us to see this giant in action in the Bible. I'll give you five minutes for this.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[14:40] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[17:10] Thank you. There we go.

One more minute. it sounds like people are finished maybe we'll wrap up in a few seconds okay let's wrap it up there so first question i won't pick on anyone let's just think about this according to the new testament who has christ come to save that let's just look at the language it's quite specific isn't it he didn't come to save every single person in the world not everyone will enter the kingdom no jesus came to save his his specific people matthew 1 he came to save his church his bride his friends that's who he's laying his life down for and that is a specific known people and so so think about john 10 so he speaks of his sheep he says he knows his sheep right that's not every single person he has sheep that belong to him and he knows who they are it's the flock that he knows and it's and it's those he is laying his life down for and also it's a specific people known by the father too do you see that so the father has given jesus a people the father has said here is a people now go and save them right so that's the language that we see in the new testament and how does christ save these people so he's got people to save how does he save them it is through the cross so the

bible is clear that the cross does something so the cross is how jesus saves his people and so if jesus came to save a specific people and the cross is how he saves them then there is a very specific intention to the cross and that's key it's the intention behind going to the cross right jesus says i am going to the cross to save my people the specific people that i know and that the father has given me they're the ones i'm going to the cross for because they are the ones i'm going to save and the cross is how i save them and this this isn't out of the blue this isn't us trying to kind of cram this onto the new testament's phrasing no this is the exact shape of the atonement in the old testament so according to the old testament when the priest made sacrifices who were they intended for intention what was the intention behind the sacrifices so look look back to the day of atonement leuiticus 16 the high priest made atonement for the people for god's specific people and so notice it doesn't say that he uh it doesn't say he uh he doesn't kill the goats uh it doesn't say he kills the goat for israel and the philistines and the assyrians and the egyptians does it and he doesn't say this sacrifice is generally for all nations or just generally for anyone ambiguously um but really only israel are going to see it and know about it and therefore it'll apply to them no the priest doesn't even have the philistines in mind when he's doing this no the sacrifice is intended for a specific people god's people and so related to that whose sin did the sacrifice atone for right what was the effect um uh what did who did the sacrifice can um apply to in effect well even on the individual scale we see this here in in that verse when one person sins any atoning sacrifice that is made it covers their specific sin so the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin so it's not just a vague sacrifice that just covers sin in general and then he comes along and maybe the sinner trusts in it and then it covers his sin no that there was a specific intention it covers his specific sin or think of the day of atonement with the goat remember we thought about that last week so the priest lays his hands on a goat and confesses specific sins onto that goat that the goat doesn't just bear sin of the world generally around us no it doesn't just suffer in general it suffers for those specific sins of that specific people and so when the high priest made the sacrifices and then entered the holy place was he just acting for himself or just acting vaguely in general as a vague priest no he was carrying people with him so that the 12 tribes were written on his breastplate so you could say the people specific people were written on his heart and that people came in with the high priest and he sacrificed and made atonement for them that the people on him so not the philistines not the egyptians not generally all people are on his heart no god's people so so the priest represents a specific people so we can see here whenever a sacrifice is made it isn't just generally made and then it's up for grabs for whoever may or may not take it it's not like a medicine box with lots of pills where there it is just go and grab it maybe some will grab it maybe some won't no whenever a sacrifice is made it is always intended for a specific people and that is how we need to think about the cross christ died not just for a general people but carrying a specific particular definite number of people with him and so we can think of him wearing a belt so just like adam and christ you know the two giants wear belts think of christ wearing a belt on the cross metaphorical belt so just like the priests wore a breastplate making sacrifices and then entering into god's presence with god's people on him not the whole planet well christ on the cross he is like a giant wearing a belt on that cross carrying a people carrying his people his bride his church his flock and dying for them so on the cross he was wearing a belt so let's draw a belt here right that's a belt there are lots of hooks on that belt on that hook for all his people all his people that he's substituting him for and so you can think when you're in christ you can say you can think he was carrying you on his belt on the cross he was carrying me with him on the cross on his belt and everyone who will be in his kingdom was on that belt his people we can say he died for us for our sins and so yes christ is a substitute we thought about that last week he's a substitute for sinners but but on the cross he's even more than that he's a representative for his people he's not only substituting he's representing them and so think of a substitute in football so we thought about that last week so if you come off the pitch and someone else substitutes on for you and they play um that and let's say that person goes and scores a goal right uh and they win the game uh they win it for you don't they they're representing the whole team when they sub on and score the goal they're winning it for their team and not all teams not the other team right that they're subbing in and representing your team well that is just like christ he represents us and wins atonement for his people and this is what the confession articulates so have a look at westminster confession 11 4 god did from all eternity decree to justify all the elect his people his flock and christ did in the fullness of time die for their sins whose sins the elect and rise again for their justification nevertheless they are not justified until the holy spirit doth in due time actually apply christ unto

them think of last sunday school and the holy spirit and so i think you can see here that this is linked to election i know this might be opening up a whole nother topic um this is linked to to election and that's important god knows who he will save that the father already had a people to save and so he gives that people to christ to save now we don't have a list of who those people are that is a secret for god to know that that is in the mind of god hidden but god does know that and so he's chosen to save that people and this is why it's called limited atonement or sometimes called limited atonement not because it's limited in power or limited a limit of god's mercy like oh yeah god's not that merciful it's not limiting god's mercy he's not saying it's small but it's called limited atonement because the cross is limited limited to a specific number of people but there are not those who will never be in a new creation there are not these people also included it is limited to his people and that's why i think definite atonement is probably a better term uh um i think that yeah try to use that term uh definite it suggests that there is something definite and intentional about the cross and that's i think key to how to think about this it's the intention what is christ and god's intention going to the cross it's to save the people on his belt and so think of a belt but also and i'll stop for questions at the end uh also think of a treasure chest so uh you remember a sin debt hangs over our heads doesn't it and that debt that is what is owed to god that debt is our lives remember the soul that sins shall die and so what happened on the cross jesus paid that debt for us with his own life he redeemed us paid that debt by dying and so uh let's just keep thinking about that think of uh being in debt to a bank okay so let's say you owe a bank a trillion trillion pounds right just just infinite money and you just can never repay it this is this is the this is the parable jesus makes in matthew 18 and you can just never repay it uh well the cross is like jesus carrying a treasure chest full of wealth infinite wealth into that bank into your bank going to your bank account and just handing over that treasure chest and paying it all for you paying all that debt wiping it out and it's an infinitely valuable treasure chest because if you come back to the cross he is the treasure chest it's his life it's infinitely valuable and so the cross is like jesus going to the bank and actually paying your debt it's a payment and so the cross actually does something the cross doesn't just potentially save people it doesn't just potentially pay a debt it actually pays a debt it is the payment into uh into the account it intentionally saves people so look at revelation 5 for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for god ransomed redeemed redemption paying the debt mark 10 for even the son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom a payment a redemption for many and tied to christ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and so christ actually did something on that good friday he didn't just make us redeemable he didn't just potentially redeem us no he actually redeemed us something was handed over to god in on that day a payment was actually made and so if you think of a treasure chest a treasure chest christ was actually handed over on that good friday he didn't just pay a debt in general and say okay now it's up for grabs some people may have their debts wiped out maybe not take it or leave it no debt is always specific to sin and that's just like the old testament sacrifices it's linked to personal guilt right it's payment for specific sins of specific people so just like the one peter two he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree our personal sins were on there our personal debt whose sins ours his people the people on his belt jesus hands over the treasure chest of his life for the people on his belt and the confession again is summarizes this well look at 8.5 the lord jesus christ by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself which he through the eternal spirit once offered up unto god hath fully satisfied the justice of his father fully satisfied debt ended and purchased not only reconciliation but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for all those whom the father who's whom the father hath given unto him so christ made a perfect and complete payment for us and that payment settled the debt the treasure chest and the treasure chest it was so valuable in fact do you see it purchased something so it not only settled the debt and it not only achieved reconciliation not only reconciliation but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for all those whom the father hath given unto him so do you see that there is a link between who christ died for and who will actually be saved the debt is paid for those who will be in the everlasting kingdom and if we're to say otherwise okay let's just zoom out and just maybe kind of put on the other hat all right let's say this isn't the case or let's say um someone believes this isn't the case it presents two really big problems because think about it let's say christ died for all people [ 33 : 41 ] every single human being that will ever live and that's the way the father designed the cross even i'm not talking about saving absolutely i'm talking about hypothetically dying for all people and let's say that's the way the father designed the cross and christ goes to the cross and he's thinking i'm laying down my life for everyone ever i'm producing a medicine box for everyone

with a with a trillion plus pills but it turns out not everyone will actually be saved by this it presents two really big problems that means first of all the cross isn't powerful enough he went to save them he had them in mind but they didn't get saved he redeemed them from sin but it didn't work because their sins then remain on them basically the treasure chest isn't valuable enough which is just unthinkable to say of christ's death so that's the first thing and the second problem is that if christ pays the debt for everyone so some something was actually happening on the cross not potentially it was actually happening and he actually paid the debt of everyone hypothetically right and then potentially everyone will um kind of come and accept that uh that payment of debt if christ pays that debt but some don't accept the payment and then they go to hell let's say like these type of people that means they also have to pay the debt for their sins and so uh think of it like this so let's say let's say christ died for everyone this is everyone this is everyone who lived in the past in the future absolutely everyone let's say christ in kind of went to the cross intentionally for them this is view number two and then all that debt went on to christ that that's what we've seen uh uh happened on the cross so all that debt went on to christ he substituted in for everyone and represented everyone but let's say someone because this is everyone someone doesn't accept that payment and they uh so they go to hell okay and so they go to hell that they face god's judgment what are they doing there in judgment that they are first of all receiving god's wrath okay this is just the teaching of hell and they're also in doing so in facing god's wrath in spending eternity in hell they are paying something they are paying for their sins they are paying their own treasure chest right and so have a look if that is the case so christ paid for them on the cross but then they step out of that don't accept the payment and then they have to pay it in hell how many payments will be made for their sins there's two how many treasure chests are there there's two his life christ's life and their life and that wouldn't be just if christ has satisfied god's justice but then they go to hell and have to pay again then christ hasn't satisfied god's justice on the cross because it's paid twice and so that would simply be unjust and couldn't square with god's character but that isn't what happened no something remarkable happened on the cross

a treasure chest was handed over and every sin of his people was actually paid for so the cross doesn't potentially save it actually does all those attached to his belt and that is why with his last breath what does jesus cry it is finished the debt is over guilt ended no more payment no more punishment and so it is impossible for christ to die for someone and then for them to have to pay for their sins again it completely undermines the justice and the satisfaction and all that christ was doing on the cross we must say christ died for his people and this isn't just kind of a niche theological debate and i was trying to kind of like with the argument no this is a huge confidence and comfort for us this means we can look at the cross and we can say christ actually died for me he went to the cross with me written on his heart and something actually happened with my sin on that day christ redeemed me he went to the cross for me i was written on his heart and he was carrying me on his belt and so my redemption is certain because he went to die for me and i want us to see this is definite atonement okay this is it's biblical and this is what is happening on the cross okay but what about the whatabouts let's get on to that let's just finish with that i can't get on to every kind of single puzzling text but i'll kind of give you a way to think about them and i'll do some examples so anything that includes all or every old world i can't touch on everything but i hope even before we get on to the the puzzling text i hope what we can see already should already kind of clarify what it can't mean right so if we come across and christ died for all or um god so loved the world we've got to be careful already because we know how we kind of we need to think so we've got to realize what it can't mean okay but let's see what they do mean what about the all verses so what about 1 timothy 2 who christ gave himself as a ransom for all one act of righteousness leads to justification in life for all men he who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all how will he not also along with him graciously give us all things well the first thing to say is just because you see the word all it doesn't necessarily mean and automatically mean all people right every single person ever it doesn't necessarily mean that and it just have a look at romans 8 32 okay so do you see how will he not also so it says gave him up for us all okay question mark what does all mean how will he not also along with him graciously give us all things now when he says all things clearly he doesn't mean literally all things christ doesn't give us every ferrari in the world at every second all the time does he and he doesn't give us lightsabers he doesn't give us infinite money right so it can't already we've got to think it can't mean all all right so we need to be careful with all he means all types of things that we need and so for one timothy let's have a look at

one timothy he's saying christ gave himself for all types of people so jew gentile rich poor male female in fact that this is his point in one in one timothy two he's saying pray for kings pray for the people in high authority because christ's salvation is for all types of people like don't neglect even the kings okay uh no it's for uh it's not for each and every all person it's for all types of people and that's the same with world okay so what about world verses so look at one john two he is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world i think this may be the one that catches us most off guard so john let's think about the context john is writing as an apostle and he's saying propitiation salvation is not just for us apostles and not just for us jews and not just for a special sect of people which is the problem going on in one john if you if you remember in home groups it's kind of a special sect of people saying this is true christianity no he's not just saying and not just apostles not just jews not just a special sect of people no christ's propitiation is for all types of people across the world all types of people everywhere that's the same with john 3 16 for god so loved the world god didn't set his love on jupiter or pluto or mars no he set his love on this world this sinful world and that includes all types of people whoever do you see whoever believes will have eternal life uh and so if you ever come across all or world just think not every single person it's all types of people uh the people hanging on christ belt are you can think they are all types of people aren't they all sorts we are all types of people here okay but what about preaching and evangelism so a common objection is to say well if christ didn't die for all people how can we offer the gospel to all people well the first thing to say is it's just not our place to know who the father has chosen okay what we're saying here isn't that we know who these people are and that we therefore we don't need to worry or care no we are just called to preach the gospel we know god has a people and we are our duty is just to preach the gospel but actually definite atonement so believing that christ died for his people this actually gives us even more confidence to share the gospel because definite atonement says we can present a message that says it is really with christ that's not looking this is the wrong way to think it is really with christ on the cross that is that is where you will find atonement there is no evil too great no sin too bad that that treasure chest cannot perfectly pay for because whoever believes in him you can really say christ died for me not generally but for my specific sins he was on the cross for me and so definite atonement it actually empowers evangelism it gives confidence it gives us confidence that the cross actually does save it's not just hypothetically maybe it saves some people no when people believe the gospel their sins really are atoned for and so you can kind of think of it this way it's like saying trust in jesus and you will find you were on his belt the whole time we don't know who's on there but when you trust in him you realize you were there the whole time and this is why this isn't just a random debate this isn't this isn't just kind of a niche thing to think about no this actually gets to the heart of the atonement definite atonement it gives real meaning to the heart of the gospel message that's been passed down to us but what is the heart of the gospel christ died for our sins according to the scriptures that's what we're seeing it's definite atonement let's do one or two questions you