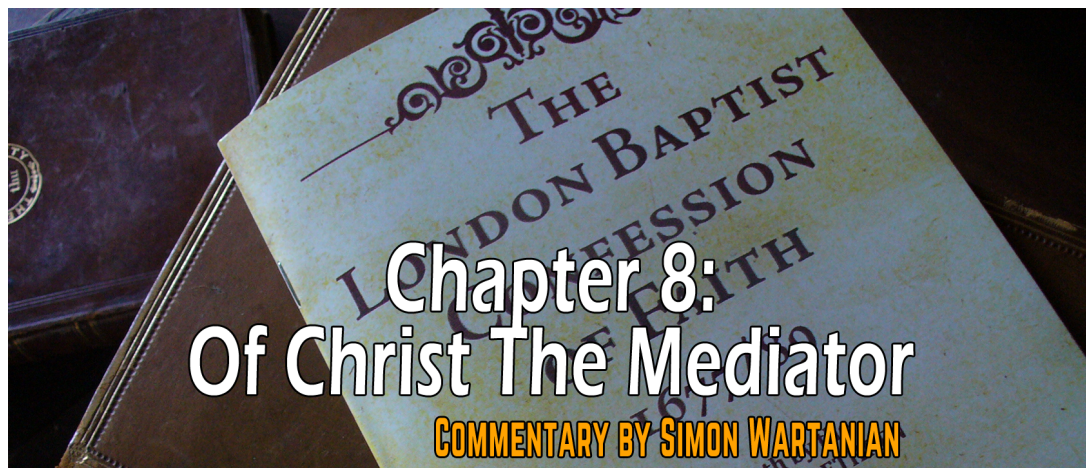


1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION CHAPTER 8: OF CHRIST THE MEDIATOR - COMMENTARY

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CHAPTER 8: OF CHRIST THE MEDIATOR

What are the threefold offices of Christ? What does it mean that Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant? What is Christ's Active and Passive Obedience? Did Christ, by His death, atone for the sins of all mankind or only for His elect? What is 'limited' in 'Limited Atonement'? What about passages used against Limited Atonement?

§1 It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus

1. It pleased God, **1** in His eternal purpose, **2** to **choose and ordain the Lord Jesus**, his only begotten Son, according to the **covenant made between** them both, **3 to be the mediator** between God and man; the **prophet, priest, and king**; head and saviour of the church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world; **4** unto whom he did **from all eternity give a people** to be his seed and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified. **5**

1. Isa. 42:1; John 3:16^[1]

2. 1 Pet. 1:19-20

3. Ps. 110:4; Heb. 7:21-22; Isa. 42:1; 1 Pet. 2:4-6

4. 1 Tim. 2:5; Acts 3:22; Heb. 5:5-6; Ps. 2:6; Luke 1:33; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23; Heb. 1:2; Acts 17:31

5. Rom. 8:30; John 17:6; Isa. 53:10; Ps. 22:30; 1 Tim. 2:6; Isa. 55:4-5; 1 Cor. 1:30

The **only begotten Son** was from all eternity **chosen and ordained** (Isa. 42:1; 1 Pet. 1:19-20) to be **the mediator between God and man** (1 Tim. 2:5). This means that having Christ to be the Savior of sinners and the Incarnation were not afterthoughts in God. God did not plan them after the Fall of man, but set them in motion after the Fall. This choosing and ordaining of Christ as mediator was **according to the covenant made between them both**, i.e., the Covenant of Redemption (see [chapter 7:2](#)). Even before sin and before the world was, the Lord Jesus was to be the Savior of His people. The Confession goes on to name the threefold offices of Christ as **prophet, priest, and king**. He is also the **head and savior of the church** (Col. 1:18; Acts 5:31). The **heir of all things** (Heb. 1:2), Who will inherit everything and believers are co-heirs with Him (Rom. 8:16-17). He is also the One Who will **judge** the living and the dead (Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Tim. 4:1). All these offices and functions were agreed upon by the Persons of the Trinity even before the foundation of the world. God **from all eternity gave a people to be His seed and to be by Him in time redeemed** (John 17:2, 6; Isa. 53:10)

and given all the blessings of redemption. All these considerations make the Fall a necessity within God's decree. For if there is no Fall, then it means that there is no sin and therefore, no need of a savior. But if Christ is said to be ordained as Savior even before the creation of the world, then this means that there will be sinners who will be saved by Him, which makes the Fall an important part of God's plan.

Christ the Elect

Our Confession states that the Lord Jesus was chosen, called and ordained by God to the office of the mediator. He was chosen by God for this office according to the Covenant of Redemption between them (see chapter 7 on the [Covenant of Redemption](#)). We said in chapter 7 that the Covenant of Redemption was the eternal covenant between the Persons of the Trinity, which laid out their roles in the self-glorification of God and the redemption of God's elect. The Father was to elect a people and give them to the Son. The Son was to redeem the people whom the Father gave to Him. The Spirit was to apply the benefits of Son on their behalf to them and indwell them.

Christ was chosen by the Father from before the foundation of the earth to be the Savior of God's people. God's plans had Him as the center. In Ephesians 1:3-6, we read that before the foundation of the world we were chosen and predestined in Christ for salvation, meaning that Christ was already then chosen to be the Savior of God's elect. He is the only One who can save us. We also read about the Servant Messiah in Isaiah's prophecies. In Isaiah 42, we read—

Isa. 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold, **my chosen, in whom my soul delights**; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.

The Servant of the Lord is none other than the Lord Jesus Who is prophesied about before He came on the scene. He is the Lord's chosen and He is in whom God delights (Matt. 3:17; 17:5, etc.). We also read of Christ being the chosen of God and in whom God delights in the New Testament Scriptures often with allusions to the Old Testament (John 6:27; 1 Pet. 2:4-6). Christ is the prime elect of God, and all the believers have been elected in Him and when they come to faith, they become united with Him.

Christ the Priest and Mediator

Our Lord is not only the prime elect of God, the Son of God, God the Son, the Savior and Awaited One, but He is also the High Priest of God's people. The task of the priest is to be a mediator between God and man. This was the case in the Old Testament also, for example, when the people would come with their sacrifices to the Levitical priests, or on the Day of Atonement when the High Priest would intercede and make atonement for the people of Israel (Lev. 16). Christ the Lord is the High Priest and mediator of the New Covenant (Heb. 8:6; 12:24). The priests were to stand between God and man, but the problem with the Levitical priesthood was the fact that the priests themselves were not pure. They themselves were full of weaknesses and sin and they were to stand between sinful man (themselves being sinful) and holy God. That's problematic.

After the Order of Melchizedek

The Book of Hebrews (which is now my second favorite epistle after Romans) lays great stress, especially in chapter 7, on Melchizedek and his priesthood. Melchizedek comes on the scene in the life of Abraham after the slaughter of the kings in Genesis 14. He comes at once on the scene and the text tells us that "He was priest of God Most High" (Gen. 14:18). Even at that time, there were more people who knew God other than the ones we meet in the Bible. Melchizedek was a priest of God the Most High. He comes here on the scene and for centuries we hear nothing about him until we come to the Messianic Psalm 110:4.

Ps. 110:4 The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

Here, Yahweh promises to David's Adonai (Lord) that He would be a priest forever. The strange part that His priesthood would not be after the order of Levi and Aaron, as it was the only acceptable form of the priesthood under the Law, but "after the order of Melchizedek." The significance of the Melchizedekian priesthood lies in the various statements about him in the book of Hebrews:

Heb. 7:2-3 and to him [Melchizedek] Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his

name, **king of righteousness**, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, **king of peace**. 3 He is **without father or mother or genealogy**, having **neither beginning of days nor end of life**, but **resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever**.

Heb. 7:5-8 And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brothers, though these also are descended from Abraham. 6 But this man who does not have his descent from them **received tithes from Abraham** and **blessed him who had the promises**. 7 It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the **superior**. 8 In the one case tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case, by **one of whom it is testified that he lives**.

It is not my purpose to give an extensive exegesis of these texts here, but we should notice a few things about this Melchizedek. Let's start with Hebrews 7:2-3. This Melchizedek, at least typologically, points to Christ, if it is not the pre-incarnate Christ Himself! The significance is seen in the meaning of his name and function. His name Melchizedek, which means king of righteousness. It is the Lord Jesus in the New Testament Who is the King of God's people. He is the righteous Davidic King Whom we adore and await to see fully and visibly reigning on the New Earth. Even now He is reigning, but He will more manifestly reign when He comes back to usher in the New Heavens and New Earth. Furthermore, this king of righteousness reigned in the city of Salem, which under David became Jerusalem. Salem means *peace* and thus he was the king of peace. Again resembling and pointing to the Lord Jesus Who was prophesied to be the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6).

We should likewise not forget that Melchizedek was introduced to us as a priest of the Most High. Not only was He the king of righteousness, king of peace, but he was also a priest of the true God. He was a priestly king, just like the Lord Jesus. This was unheard of under the Mosaic Law and Levitical priesthood. Furthermore, in v. 4, we read of Melchizedek's lack of genealogy, which was essential to the Levitical priesthood. You had to prove through genealogy that you were a Levite to be able to participate in the priesthood. But concerning the genealogy of Melchizedek, we do not read a single syllable in Genesis or anywhere in the Bible, pointing to our Lord's divine nature, which is without beginning and without end.

Now let us turn to vv. 5-8. Under the Law, the people of Israel were to pay tithes to the priests, but the father of the Israelites, Abraham himself, gave tithes to this Melchizedek. Moreover, Melchizedek blessed the one who had the covenant and the promises. It is obvious, the Author of Hebrews reasons, that this shows the superiority of Melchizedek over Abraham. If Melchizedek was superior to Abraham, then he is superior to Levi and his priesthood.

The Necessity of the Melchizedekian Priesthood

But the Author of Hebrews also gives us the answer as to why Christ was not to be a priest after the order of Levi:

Heb. 7:11 Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?

The Author has just spoken of Melchizedek and of his superiority even over Abraham, but now comes back and deals with the priesthood that his readers are familiar with. The argument is, if the Levitical priesthood was good and through it, the people could attain perfection, i.e., righteousness, then why would God speak of the Messiah's priesthood as being according to the order of Melchizedek? Well, the obvious answer is that because the Levitical Priesthood is unable to justify and perfect a sinner (Heb. 7:18-19; 9:9; 10:1). It is because the Levitical priesthood and the covenant under which it was, was faulty (Heb. 8:7-8). It was not meant to justify, but to point to the sinfulness of man and the need of the Savior (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:23-24). The necessity of having a priest not after the order of Aaron and Levi demonstrates the faultiness of the Mosaic Covenant under which the Levitical priesthood was instituted.

Guarantee of A Better Covenant

Heb. 7:22 This makes Jesus the **guarantor of a better covenant**.

The fact that the Lord Christ is the mediator and High Priest of the New Covenant makes it a better covenant from the Old. But not only that, Christ is the surety (KJV) of the New Covenant. He is the guarantee that this covenant will not fail, but succeed, unlike the Mosaic Covenant (Heb. 8:6-13). Albert Barnes explains, 'The word "surety" - ἑγγυος - enguos - occurs nowhere else in the New Testament nor is it found in the Septuagint. It properly means, a bondsman; one who pledges his name, property, or influence, that a certain thing shall be done. When a contract is made, debt contracted, or a note given, a friend often becomes the "security" in the case, and is himself responsible if the terms of the contract are not complied with.'^[2] As Phillip Schaff observes, Christ "has pledged Himself for the maintenance of it, and for the fulfilment of its promises."^[3]

This New Covenant is better because Christ is its mediator. It is Christ Who stands between sinful man and perfectly holy God (1 Tim. 2:5). Christ is sinless (Heb. 4:15; 7:26), man is sinful and God is holy, but now Christ can stand between God and man because Christ is fully divine and fully human. In His one person, He shares both the nature of man and of God, and He is, therefore, capable to be the go-between of God and man. 1 Timothy 2:5 lays the stress on the humanity of Christ when it tells us that He is the only mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5). Do you, O believer, feel helpless and lost and therefore cannot approach God or meet His perfection? Do not despair! for Christ is the surety and guarantor that this better covenant and its promises are applicable to you!

His mediation and intercession make the New Covenant superior and better than the Old Covenant. The priests under the Old Covenant were many because they died and had to be replaced. On the other hand, the mediator of the New Covenant has an indestructible life (Heb. 7:16) and continues forever. Death has no power over Him and thus He is able to finish His work and make perfect atonement and intercession for His people. After arguing thus, the Author of Hebrews tells us—

Heb. 7:25 Consequently, **he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him**, since he always **lives to make intercession for them**.

To make intercession is to entreat the favor of God upon us, not based upon our works, but based upon His finished work (Heb. 7:27) on behalf of His people for whom He purchased all the blessings of God. The Lord Christ does not offer Himself repeatedly, rather in His intercession He points to His finished work as the basis of His appeal for us (Heb. 9:24-26). He is able to save, He is mighty to save—all who have boldness in and through Him to come to the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16). The reason for that is that Jesus intercedes and prays for God's elect that their faith may not fail (Rom. 8:34; Luke 22:32). Their drawing near to Christ is through the work of God in them and does not originate in themselves (John 6:44). The Lord Jesus "constantly presents the merits of his death as a reason why we should be saved."^[2] Matthew Poole comments on this place are also helpful:

Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them; since he always exists and lives a High Priest for the good of those who wait on him, having life in himself, and quickening them; compare Rom 8:6; and, as their Advocate, 1Jo 2:1,2, answereth all charges against them, suing for those penitent believers, and pleading for all promised them by the Father in him. He sitting at God's right hand must ever be in his presence: and appears as the general Representative of his, and useth all his interest with the supreme Lawgiver, Judge, and Governor, for them, {see Heb 9:24} as it was foretold he should, Isa 53:12, even for them who cannot plead their own cause through guiltiness or weakness; he will manage it for all of them who believe in him, and apply themselves to God by him, atoning him for their sins by his sacrifice, performing their duties and person by the incense of his merits, and presenting them to God, answering in heaven his type on earth, Exo 30:1-10; compare Rev 8:3,4; Ro 8:31-36.^[4]

Ministry in Heaven

Heb. 8:1-2 Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have **such a high priest**, one who is **seated at the right hand** of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 a **minister in the holy places**, in the **true tent that the Lord set up**, not man.

The Lord's priestly ministry is not on the earth since that would have been unacceptable under the Mosaic Covenant (Heb. 7:13-16; 8:4), but it is in heaven. The Lord Christ did not begin His priestly ministry as a priest in the Herodian Temple, rather His priesthood is a heavenly priesthood. He serves in the true Temple in heaven, not the replica and shadow that stood in Jerusalem under the Mosaic Covenant (Heb. 8:5). The Lord Jesus ministers now in the true tent of God, in the true tabernacle and temple in heaven, where God is. He has entered into the holy places and the most holy place (Heb. 9:11-12, 24) in heaven for our sake. But not only has He entered into the holy places in heaven where God is, but He is *seated* at the right hand of power. In the Temple or the Tabernacle, where the Most Holy Place was, there were no seats. This was because the high priest had to finish his job quickly and go outside. But we read here that Christ is seated at the right hand of God, i.e., in the Most Holy Place in heaven, pointing to the fact that unlike the Levitical priests and their sacrifices, Christ's once for all time sacrifice cleanses us from all sin and makes perfect atonement for God's people (Heb. 9:24-28; 1:3). He is seated because He has finished that which He set out to accomplish, namely, procure redemption for His people (Heb. 9:12).

His ministry, moreover, is directly contrasted with the ministry of the Levitical priesthood and it is obvious that Christ's ministry is much more excellent and superior:

Heb. 8:6 But as it is, Christ has obtained a **ministry that is as much more excellent than the old** as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.

The line of argumentation goes like this:

1. Christ's ministry is better because
 - the covenant under which He ministers is better because
 - it is established on better promises

What makes the ministry of Christ better is not only the amazing person and worth of the Lord Jesus Christ, our precious and loving Savior, but it is also the New Covenant promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34. It is a covenant which is not a ministry of condemnation, but of life and righteousness (2 Cor. 3:9). The promises of the covenant include, but are not limited to, the forgiveness of sins, the personal and salvific knowledge of God for everyone in the covenant, the writing of God's law upon the heart and not stone, the Lord becoming our covenant God and we becoming His covenant people in an intimate way (Heb. 8:10-12).

In the words of Barnes, Christ received a "service of a higher order, or of a more exalted nature. It was the real and substantial service of which the other was but the emblem; it pertained to things in heaven, while that was concerned with the earthly tabernacle; it was enduring, while that was to vanish away."^[2]

Summary

Christ is the great High Priest of God's people. He is a priest not after the order of Aaron and Levi, but of Melchizedek, the priestly king. This was necessary because of the failure of the Mosaic Covenant and the Levitical priesthood. He has made atonement for His people. He intercedes for us and stands as the bridge between God and His people. He intercedes and prays for us and on our behalf before the Father on the basis of His finished work. See [paragraph 10](#) for our benefit from this office.

Christ the Prophet

Deut. 18:15-18 "The LORD your God will **raise up for you a prophet like me from among you**, from your brothers—it is to him **you shall listen**— 16 just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.' 17 And the LORD said to me, 'They are right in what they have spoken. 18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And **I will put my words in his mouth**, and **he shall speak to them all that I command him**. 19 And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.

Since the time of Moses, who could be called the prophet of the Old Testament, God promised His people about the coming of the true and prime prophet of God. Moses prophesied about the coming of the true prophet of God, the One Who would reveal to us who God is. He would speak the words of God to us and explain Him as He is. In this prophecy, Moses foretells that God Himself, the God of Israel, will raise a prophet like Moses, that is, one that would teach the people the will of God, be a mediator of the covenant and lead the people of God to freedom. This prophet will be raised from among the Old Covenant community, He will not come from outside of Israel, but will come from within Israel. This prophet shall be a brother to the Israelites. Indeed, in Matthew 1, we read of Abraham as the Lord's ancestor (Matt. 1:1). He indeed was descended from Abraham, the father of the Jews. The prophet that will arise in the time to come (from the perspective of Moses) will speak the very words of God and be obedient to God. This is exactly what we find to be the case with the Lord Jesus:

John 3:31-34 He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. 32 He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. 33 Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. 34 For he whom God has sent **utters the words of God**, for he gives the Spirit without measure.

See also John 5:19; 7:16; 8:28-29, 38, 40; 12:47-50; 14:10.

The Lord did speak all that the Father commanded Him. In fact, John 1:18 says that He has "exegeted," explained and revealed the Father to us. Barnes explains that "This verse proves that Jesus had a knowledge of God above that which any of the ancient prophets had, and that the fullest revelations of his character are to be expected in the gospel. By his Word and Spirit he can enlighten and guide us, and lead us to the true knowledge of God; and there is no true and full knowledge of God which is not obtained through his Son"^[2].

Whoever does not believe on the Son and obey Him, will have to face the judgment of God. That likewise is clear in the New

Testament. Let's take for example John 3:36—

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; **whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life**, but the wrath of God remains on him.

See also John 3:17-18

Not only do we see these correlations between Deuteronomy 18 and what we find in the New Testament, but we also have direct citations and allusions to Deuteronomy 18 concerning the Promised Prophet. Philip's reaction upon meeting the Lord Jesus was to tell everyone about Him and this is how he did it:

John 1:45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have **found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote**, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Philip is happy to finally have seen and met the Awaited One after many centuries. This is the One of Whom Moses wrote. This is definitely an allusion to the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:15-19. See also John 6:14; 7:40. This promise was perhaps also in the mind of the Samaritan woman when she said that the Christ will tell us all things (John 4:25). The Prophet will declare God's very words to us. In Acts 3:19-26, the promise is cited as having an obvious fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Who had recently been crucified, raised and ascended to heaven. Most people in His earthly ministry did acknowledge Him as a prophet (Luke 7:16; 24:19; Matt. 21:11; John 4:19; 6:14; 7:40). We conclude that indeed the Lord Jesus had and has the office of Prophet. He is the prime Prophet in Whom and through Whom God is revealed (John 1:18; Heb. 1:3). See [paragraph 10](#) for our benefit from this office.

Christ the King

I would refer you to our discussion of the [Davidic Covenant](#) and its fulfillment in Christ in [chapter 7](#). See [paragraph 10](#) for our benefit from this office.

Christ the Savior

He is the Savior of His church, of His people. He gave Himself up for her, to save and purify her. This point is very clear in the Bible. The purpose of Christ in dying on the cross was to save His church from the deserved wrath of God and to atone for her sins.

Eph. 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, as **Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her**, 26 that he might **sanctify her**, having **cleansed her** by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might **present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle** or any such thing, that she might be **holy and without blemish**.

It is clear from this glorious passage what effect the death of Christ has. He died for His bride. His love drove Him to give Himself up for her, so that He may be glorified in them, His own people. That He may make them brothers and sisters of His, holy and blameless. The Lord Christ is twice called the Savior of the world (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14). He is the only hope that the world has for redemption. He is the only One Who can save us from the wrath of God due to our sins. He is the only One Who can reconcile us back to God in a harmonious relationship. In fact, it is through the shedding of His blood that He has redeemed for God definitely and not hypothetically, people from every corner of the world (Rev. 5:9) because He has died for them (John 11:49-52; 1 John 2:1-2). It is through His sacrifice and perfect life that we are counted righteous and forgiven of all our sins. He is Christ the Lord, the Anointed One to save His people (Matt. 1:21).

It is important for us to remember that when we speak of Christ as our Savior, we speak of Him as our Savior from God's judgment and wrath (Rom. 5:9). The wrath of God was set against us, and the Lord Jesus came to willfully and freely take upon Himself our sin so that the righteous and dreadful wrath of God could be atoned for. Christ did not come to save us from our problems or our miserable lives, but He came to save us from the wrath of God!

Christ the Head

A handful of texts speak of the Lord Christ as being the head of the church. In this section, I want to explore what that means. The Confession, following the Reformed tradition and Sola Scriptura, abhors the doctrine that the Roman Catholic Church holds concerning the Pope being the head of the church and denounces it with very strong words:

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, in whom, by the appointment of the Father, all power for the calling, institution, order or government of the church, is invested in a supreme and sovereign manner; neither can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof, but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God; whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. [\(1689 26:4\)](#)

The Lord Jesus Christ is described as the head of the body, that is, the church—

Col. 1:18 And he is the **head of the body, the church**. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

The context in Colossians 1 testifies to the Lord Jesus' divinity and greatness. Paul does not forget to mention the magnificent truth that the Lord Jesus is the head of the church and is preeminent in everything. But what does that mean? The Greek word used in the texts that refer to the Lord Jesus as the head is the noun κεφαλή (*kephale*, G2776). It means literal head whose loss is the loss of life, but metaphorically it also means "anything supreme, chief, prominent."^[5] The Lord Jesus is the Supreme and Chief One Who is over the church from whom the church receives its authority and power. This does not only show that the church's authority is derivative from Christ, but that Christ alone is the head of the church and thus has authority over it to rule and govern it as He pleases. The way in which the Lord rules His church is by Word and Spirit.

Ephesians 4:15-16; 5:23-24; Colossians 2:19 speak also of this headship of Christ over the church. But there are also a couple of texts which speak of Christ's authority and sovereignty over all creation, not only the church.

Eph. 1:20-23 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 **far above all rule and authority** and power and dominion, and **above every name that is named**, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And **he put all things under his feet** and gave him as **head over all things to the church**, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Col. 2:9-10 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him, who is the **head of all rule and authority**.

Christ the Lord, through His obedience, redemptive work, death, and indestructible life is seated at the right hand of God, the hand of power and might (Matt. 26:64). All other authorities on the earth derive their authority from God (Rom. 13:1ff; Dan. 2:21). The Lord Jesus, the Lord of glory, is seated, i.e., in the position of ruling and resting from His completed work of redemption, above all the authorities that are in the world. He is above them and moreover, He rules over them. Revelation 1:5 describes Him as "the ruler of kings on earth." He is above everything that is created and everything that is feared and esteemed in this world by mortal men. The Father has put on display the everlasting love He has for His Son by putting everything under His feet to do with it as He pleases and carry out God's eternal decree.

Now we come to our word κεφαλή (*kephale*) in v. 22. In the previous verses, we read of Christ being head of the church, but here we read that He is head over all things *to* the church, for the sake of the church. Indeed, this confirms His promise that He is with us and we are not to fear in the discipling of the nations, because first of all, He has all rule and authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18-20). He is given to us as head over all authority, for our sake and for the good of His body, the church. He is head, supreme, chief and prominent over all the world and everything that is created and exists. He is head over the ungodly world even as He is head over His body, the church, and He exercises His sovereign reign for the sake of His church and His glory. John Gill notes on Ephesians 1:22:

And this headship of Christ is the gift of God; and it is an honourable gift to him, as Mediator; it is a glorifying of him, and a giving him in all things the pre-eminence; and it is a free grace gift to the church, and a very special, valuable, and excellent one, and of infinite benefit and advantage to it; and which is expressed in his being head "over all things" to it; to overrule all things for its good; to communicate all good things to it; and to perform all the good offices of an head for it: the Syriac version reads, "and him who is above all things, he gave to be the head to the church" even him who is God over all, blessed for evermore.^[6]

Christ the Heir

Heb. 1:2 but in these last days he has spoken to us **by his Son**, whom **he appointed the heir of all things**, through

whom also he created the world.

The Lord Christ is the heir to all that He has created as the first chapter of Hebrews goes on to demonstrate the full deity and creatorship of the Lord Jesus. But how is He heir? Well, the verse tells us. By the fact that He is the “Son” of God. Because an heir is a “person who inherits or is entitled by law or by the terms of a will to inherit the estate of another.”^[7] He is an heir by right also since He was involved in the creation of the world. In fact, He was the Agent of creation. As John tells us:

John 1:3 **All things were made through him**, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

He is the heir of the creation that He has made. As we have seen above, the Lord Jesus is the head of all rule and authority, supreme and sovereign over all the cosmos that He created. He already owns everything and is the ruler of everything, but this, I believe, refers to the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise (Rom. 4:13), fulfilled by the One to Whom the promises were given (Gal. 3:16). Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown’s Commentary on Whole Bible says the following concerning Christ’s heirship:

His heirship follows His sonship, and preceded His making the worlds (Pro 8:22-23; Eph 3:11). As the first begotten, He is heir of the universe (Heb 1:6), which He made instrumentally, Heb 11:3, where “by the word of God” answers to “by whom” (the Son of God) here (Joh 1:3). Christ was “appointed” (in God’s eternal counsel) to creation as an office; the universe so created was assigned to Him as a kingdom. He is “heir of all things” by right of creation, and especially by redemption. The promise to Abraham, that he should be heir of the world, had its fulfillment, and will have it more fully, in Christ (Rom 4:13; Gal 3:16; Gal 4:7).^[8]

Christ is not the only heir, in fact, the New Testament teaches that we have become *fellow* or *co*-heirs with Christ, receiving that which the Father has promised Him:

Rom. 8:16-17 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—**heirs of God** and **fellow heirs with Christ**, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Gal. 4:7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then **an heir through God**.

Through Christ and God’s amazing grace, we, after becoming children of God by adoption, share in the blessings and promises made to Christ. Unfathomable grace!

Christ the Judge

Acts 17:30-31 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now **he commands all people everywhere to repent**, 31 because he has fixed a day on which **he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed**; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

Christ is not only the Savior of the world (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14), but He is also its righteous Judge. The Lord Jesus will come in vengeance toward those who have not obeyed the gospel and demand from them an account for every sin and transgression of His Law (2 Thess. 1). The Bible tells us that the Lord Jesus will judge both the living and the dead (2 Tim. 4:1). Both believer and unbeliever will stand before Him, everyone must give an account (Acts 10:42; Matt. 25:31-46; John 5:22-23; Rom. 2:5, 16; 14:9-10; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:1). See [chapter 32](#).

Some may object that only God can judge and God is the judge, but then how could Christ be the judge? Well...the simple answer is because *He is* God. Only God can judge and furthermore, the Father has appointed and wants the Son to be the judge so that people will honor and worship the Son just as they honor and worship the Father, thus showing His full divinity and equality with the Father—

John 5:22-23 The Father judges no one, but **has given all judgment to the Son**, 23 that **all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father**. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

He is our Savior also. On the day that He will come, the believers will not be condemned by Him, but hear the words of commendation and the words of love—

Matt. 25:34 Then the King will say to those on his right, '**Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.**

But those who will stand on his left will be righteously judged according to the fruit of their hearts—their works, and be condemned by Him to the flames of Hell—

Matt. 25:41 "Then he will say to those on his left, '**Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire** prepared for the devil and his angels.

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31) and to stand before Him Who can see you as you are (Rom. 2:16) and require an account of everything (Matt. 12:36).

Dear reader, do not face the Lord in judgment while today is the day of salvation. Repent, therefore, and place your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and His righteousness alone so that when He comes you will not be terrified, but rejoice with the saints and not be taken away by judgment—

2 Thess. 1:9-10 They will **suffer the punishment of eternal destruction**, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, 10 when **he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints**, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

Christ's Seed

The Bible does not speak of the Messiah being married to a woman nor are any references in the New Testament which suggest such an idea. But the Bible does refer a few times to Christ's "offspring" or "children." Obviously, those are His church—the believers. The first reference that we will look at occurs in the great Messianic Servant song in Isaiah 53. There we read—

Isa. 53:10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, **he shall see his offspring**; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

Here Isaiah speaks of the Messiah's death and then of His resurrection. Yahweh willed and was pleased to crush His Servant and He has made Him an offering for guilt—an atonement for sin, indeed. Yet even through His distress and death, the Servant will be encouraged to see the fruit of His work, to see His spiritual offspring. Those whom He has redeemed for God. As the Lord Jesus Himself says, it is necessary that He die that the fruit and reward of His work may be seen (John 12:24). Hebrews 2 also makes mention of Christ's children and seed—

Heb. 2:11-13 For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, 12 saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." 13 And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and **the children God has given me.**"

We are both children of Christ as He is the One Who freed us from sin and died for our redemption, and we are also brothers of Christ with respect to our adoption by God into His family. John Gill says the following concerning this verse:

...the saints are children with respect to God, who has adopted them, and with respect to Christ, who is their everlasting Father; that they were given to Christ as his spiritual seed and offspring, as his portion, and to be his care and charge; and that this is worthy of attention, and calls for admiration, that Christ and his people are one, and that he is not ashamed to own them before God and men....^[6]

The following comments are likewise helpful to understand this verse:

Behold I and the children, c.— (Isa 8:18). “Sons” (Heb 2:10), “brethren” (Heb 2:12), and “children,” imply His right and property in them from everlasting. He speaks of them as “children” of God, though not yet in being, yet considered as such in His purpose, and presents them before God the Father, who has given Him them, to be glorified with Himself. Isaiah (meaning “salvation of Jehovah”) typically represented Messiah, who is at once Father and Son, Isaiah and Immanuel (Isa 9:6). He expresses his resolve to rely, he and his children, not like Ahaz and the Jews on the Assyrian king, against the confederacy of Pekah of Israel, and Rezin of Syria, but on Jehovah and then foretells the deliverance of Judah by God, in language which finds its antitypical full realization only in the far greater deliverance wrought by Messiah. Christ, the antitypical Prophet, similarly, instead of the human confidences of His age, Himself, and with Him GOD THE FATHER’S children (who are therefore His children, and so antitypical to Isaiah’s children, though here regarded as His “brethren,” compare Isa 9:6; “Father” and “His seed,” Isa 53:10) led by Him, trust wholly in God for salvation. The official words and acts of all the prophets find their antitype in the Great Prophet (Re 19:10), just as His kingly office is antitypical to that of the theocratic kings; and His priestly office to the types and rites of the Aaronic priesthood.^[8]

§2 The Son of God, the second person in the Holy Trinity, being very and eternal God

2. The Son of God, the second person in the Holy Trinity, being **very and eternal God**, the brightness of the Father’s glory, of **one substance and equal with him** who made the world, who **upholdeth and governeth all things** he hath made, **1** did, when the fullness of time was come, **2 take upon him man’s nature**, with all the essential properties **3** and common infirmities thereof, **4** yet **without sin**; **5** being **conceived by the Holy Spirit** in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit coming down upon her: and the power of the Most High overshadowing her; and so was made of a woman of the tribe of **Judah**, of the seed of **Abraham** and **David** according to the Scriptures; **6** so that two whole, perfect, and **distinct natures** were **inseparably joined together in one person**, without conversion, composition, or confusion; which person is **very God** **7** and **very man**, **8** yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man. **9**

1. John 8:58; Joel 2:32 with Rom. 10:13; Ps. 102:25 with Heb. 1:10; 1 Peter 2:3 with Ps. 34:8; Isa. 8:12-13 with 3:15; John 1:1; 5:18; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8-9; Phil. 2:5-6; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 5:20
2. Gal. 4:4
3. Heb. 10:5; Mark 14:8; Matt. 26:12, 26; Luke 7:44-46; John 13:23; Matt. 9:10-13; 11:19; Luke 22:44; Heb. 2:10; 5:8; 1 Peter 3:18; 4:1; John 19:32-35; Matt. 26:36-44; James 2:26; John 19:30; Luke 23:46; Matt. 26:39; 9:36; Mark 3:5; 10:14; John 11:35; Luke 19:41-44; 10:21; Matt. 4:1-11; Heb. 4:15 with James 1:13; Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; 2:40, 52; Heb. 5:8-9
4. Matt. 4:2; Mark 11:12; Matt. 21:18; John 4:7; 19:28; 4:6; Matt. 8:24; Rom. 8:3; Heb. 5:8; 2:10, 18; Gal. 4:4
5. Isa. 53:9; Luke 1:35; John 8:46; 14:30; Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19; 2:22; 1 John 3:5
6. Rom. 1:3-4; 9:5
7. See point 1 above
8. Acts 2:22; 13:38; 17:31; 1 Cor. 15:21; 1 Tim. 2:5
9. Rom. 1:3-4; Gal. 4:4-5; Phil. 2:5-11

The Son of God is **very and eternal God** (e.g., John 1:1; 20:28; Rom. 9:5). He is God from all eternity. He is **one substance and equal with** (Phil. 2:6; John 5:18) God the Father and the Holy Spirit ([see chapter 2](#)). He **made the world** (John 1:3) and furthermore, He **upholdeth and governeth all things he hath made** (Heb. 1:3). He does not only create, but also preserve all that He has made and lead them to their predetermined end. This eternal and blessed God, **when the fullness of time was come** (Gal. 4:4), took **upon Him man’s nature** (Phil. 2:6-7; Heb. 2:14; 4:15). This is the miracle and wonder of the Incarnation. He truly became man and was not half man and half God. He took human nature with **all the essential properties and common infirmities** thereof, except for **sin** (Heb. 4:15), for that is not an essential

property of human nature (Heb. 2:14). Sin is a distortion of human nature as it was created by God. He took upon Himself all things which make humans human and including our limitations. These things were perfectly present in the Lord Jesus Who is God *and* man.

The Lord Jesus in His nature was **conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary** (Luke 1:35). His human life had a beginning in time 2000 years ago. But His divine nature is without beginning. Furthermore, His conception was not a human work, but a divine miracle by the Holy Spirit. He was not born by “ordinary generation” ([chapter 6:3](#)). In this way, the promise of the Protoevangelium was fulfilled in the birth of the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). He was from **Judah** (Gen. 49:10), **of the seed of Abraham** (Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Gal. 3:16) **and David** (2Sam. 7:12-16; Rom. 1:3), as the Scriptures promised and taught. His divine nature, as well as His human nature, is **perfect**. They are **distinct** and **inseparably joined together in one person**. Jesus does not have a divine person and a human person. Rather, He is one person with two distinct natures. Then the Confession goes on to explain what this joining of the two distinct natures *is not*. It is not the **conversion** of one nature to something else. It is not the **composition** (adding, combining) of two natures into one, thus creating something new. Nor is it the **confusion** (fusing, mixing) of the natures. The Lord Jesus is one **person** Who is **very God and very man**. He is truly God and truly man. Nonetheless, there is but **one Christ**. There is not a human Christ and a divine Christ. There is only one Christ Who is both divine and human. Therefore, He is the **only mediator between God and man** (1 Tim. 2:5), being able to represent both parties.

The Son of God, Eternal God

The Son of God is God from all eternity, in and of Himself. His deity is not derived or dependent upon the Father or the Spirit. Each Person of the blessed Trinity is divine in and of Himself. The Son has been God forever, see for example John 1:1, 14; 17:5; Isaiah 9:6. See also our discussion of [the Trinity](#) in chapter 2 of the Confession.

The Brightness of the Father’s glory

The Lord Jesus is the physical representation of God. Truly, to see Him was the same as to see God the Father (John 14:9-10). He is described as the One Who has “exegeted” the Father to us (John 1:18). Hebrews 1:3 describes Him as the “radiance of the glory of God”. In the Lord Jesus, God is most clearly revealed. He shows us what and Who God is. As the High Priest and Prophet of the people of God, He teaches us about God and brings us to God as He is revealed in Himself.

Upholds and Governs all things

It is God alone Who governs and controls all that takes place in time. But the Bible declares that the Lord Jesus has this right and does this, therefore, proving His deity. To uphold and govern all things means to carry history to its appointed end. It means that He is the Sovereign controller of all things. All things He carries by His will to fulfill His purpose.

Heb. 1:3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and **he upholds the universe by the word of his power**. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

This verse declares the great majesty and glory of the Lord Jesus, Who is God Incarnate. The fact that He is equal with God the Father is seen in that He is the “exact imprint of his nature”. He has the same nature as the Father. As the Father is sovereign, free, independent, omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent, omnipresent, fully God, gracious, merciful, just, patient, loving and so on—so also is the Son. Furthermore, this is proved also by way of attribution of the work of Creation to the Son. He is said to uphold the universe by the word of His power. He holds it into existence and being, not through hard work and effort, but by His word. I find it amazing how the work of the Son is described here. He only has to speak and creation obeys. He does not have to work hard to maintain the world, but He maintains and governs the world sovereignly by His word, by His command.

The verb for “upholds” in the Greek is the word $\varphi \epsilon \rho \omega$ (*pheroo*, G5342), which is translated as “sustaining” in the HCSB, “holds” in the ISV and “upholding” in the KJV. This word’s basic definition is “to bring or carry”^[9]. This upholding of the universe by the word of the Lord Jesus points to the fact that He is working out His purpose in everything and carrying the world to its appointed end and purpose. It is the Son Who has this task, which is only proper to God, therefore proving that He is fully God.

Another passage that points to the Lord Jesus’ upholding and governing of the universe is Colossians 1. It’s a great passage filled with high Christology.

Col. 1:15-17 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For **by him** all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created **through him** and **for him**. 17 And he is before all things, and **in him all things hold together**.

He is the image, the exact nature, as Hebrews 1:3 puts it, of the Father. He represents the Father as He is, explains and reveals Him to us as John 1:18 puts it. He is the firstborn, not meaning first created as that is contradictory to what is said in the next verse and to the rest of the Bible (for example John 1:1-18). But *firstborn* here means having the right of heirship and dominion over the world. Barnes notes on Colossians 1:15:

Among all the creatures of God, or over all his creation, occupying the rank and pro-eminence of the first-born. The first-born, or the oldest son, among the Hebrews as elsewhere, had special privileges. He was entitled to a double portion of the inheritance. It has been, also, and especially in oriental countries, a common thing for the oldest son to succeed to the estate and the title of his father. In early times, the first-born son was the officiating priest in the family, in the absence or on the death of the father. There can be no doubt that the apostle here has reference to the usual distinctions and honors conferred on the first-born, and means to say that, among all the creatures of God, Christ occupied a pre-eminence similar to that.^[2]

The text goes on to say that everything that exists, both visible and invisible, was created by Him. He is the Creator of everything that exists. That is enough to establish Him as “God over all, blessed forever” (Rom. 9:5). But not only that, He is the purpose for which they were created. The purpose of their creations lies within Him and His will. All things were created “for him” (v. 16). He is before everything that was created because He is eternal as the Father is eternal (John 17:5). He did not begin to exist at a point in time but was eternal. Without beginning and without end, unlike everything that was created by and for Him.

Now we come to the portion of most importance for my point. In v. 17b, we learn that everything that was created, that is, everything in the universe, holds together in the Lord Jesus and because of Him. If He were not to hold creation into being and hold it together, it would turn into chaos. It's not like He created everything and left it to chance, no. He governs and upholds everything according to His pleasure. If He were not to do that, the universe would turn into chaos. The KJV translates $\sigma\upsilon\nu\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\eta\kappa\epsilon\nu$ (*synesteken*, G4921) with “consists.” All things have their basis in Him. They owe their existence to His will. They owe the purpose of their existence to His purpose. He is the One Who makes the universe rational and not chaotic. It is His power and His will which upholds it in order. It is His power which unites the universe in order and not chaos. Barnes observes on this passage that “The meaning is, that they are kept in the present state; their existence, order, and arrangement are continued by his power. If unsupported by him, they would fall into disorder, or sink back to nothing.”^[2]

About God's and Christ's sovereignty see [chapter 3 on God's Decree](#) and [chapter 5 on God's Providence](#).

The Incarnation

The single most amazing event in history was the incarnation of the Son of God. The incarnation refers to the becoming human of the divine Son of God. The incarnation refers to the teaching that the eternally divine Son of God became human when He was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Christians said it in the following way: He became what He was not while not ceasing what He was. The Son of God took on human nature and body, while not laying aside His divinity. This is the single greatest miracle in history. The second Person of the Blessed Trinity becomes human and enters into His own creation. He becomes one of His own creatures. The Creator becomes a creature. I would like us to look at a couple of texts about the Incarnation. These are Philippians 2:5-11 and John 1:14.

Philippians 2:5-13

Phil. 2:5-11 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though **he was in the form of God**, did not count **equality with God** a thing to be grasped, 7 but **emptied himself**, by **taking the form of a servant**, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he **humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death**, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This passage is glorious. Words cannot express the truths and glories contained here, but I would like to take a few things from this text. Paul calls on the Christians to look as an example of humility to their Lord—Jesus Christ, the God-man. He is

the greatest example of humility. He is the One Whom Paul describes as existing in the form of God. That is, He was truly God before Him becoming human. This speaks of a time before His incarnation and conception in the womb of Mary. This speaks of a time before the point when He willingly decided to take on the form of man.

He was equal with God the Father. He had every authority that the Father had and He was as much divine as the Father and the Spirit are. But because of the purposes of God the Father and the [Covenant of Redemption](#) wherein He would grant an elect people to the Son to be redeemed from sin by Him and the Spirit would apply the benefits of Christ to them, the Son had to become man. He was equal with God, yet did not count that as something to be grasped, or something to be held onto. Some people like to say that Jesus was an angel or a plan before His incarnation, but that is absurd. If He was an angel or anything less than God Almighty, then there is no humility in the fact that He became man. There is only humility when the Creator becomes a creature and enters into His own creation. Laying aside His prerogative and His privileges and for the sake of the Father and His elect, becoming man. As Barnes notes on v. 6, "If he was truly divine, then his consenting to become a man was the most remarkable of all possible acts of humiliation."^[2] Mathew Poole notes on the words "who" and "being" in Philippians 2:6:

Who, i.e. relative to Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God by nature, very God extant with his Father before the beginning, Joh 1:1; Gal 4:4; 1Ti 3:16; 6:14-16; Tit 2:13; the express image and character of his Father's person, which implies a peculiar subsistence distinct from the subsistence of his Father, Joh 8:42; 2Co 4:4; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3; concerning whom, every word that follows, by reason of the Socinians, and some Lutherans, is to be well weighed.

Being; i.e. subsisting, in opposition to taking or assuming, Phi 2:7; and therefore doth firmly prove Christ pro-existing in another nature to his so doing, namely, his actual existing of himself in the same essence and glory he had from eternity with the Father, Joh 1:1,2; 17:5; 2Co 8:9; Rev 1:4,8,11.^[4]

The point is, He was fully divine.

His self-emptying was not by laying aside His divinity, but rather as the text tells us—He emptied Himself *by* becoming man—by becoming one of the creatures that He Himself made. That is the humility of the Creator. The Creator entered His own creation and communicated with it. This is glorious. This humbling also manifested itself in His complete obedience to the will of God the Father (economic Trinity) to die on the cross. He went there like an obedient servant of God. Jesus was at the same time both God and the servant of God. This may sound a bit weird, but think about what Dr. James White has often said: if God becomes man would He be an atheist or an agnostic? Obviously, if God were to become man, He would be a believer. Furthermore, Christianity does not teach Unitarianism, but Trinitarianism as we sought to prove in [chapter 2](#), which means that there are three distinct Persons within the One Being of God. Thus when the Lord Jesus would pray, His human side is not praying to His divine side, rather, He is communicating with and praying to the Father and the Spirit.

Because of His perfect obedience to the Father according to the Covenant of Redemption within the Trinity in eternity past (see [chapter 7](#)), the Father has been pleased to put His beloved Son on display. Everything that the Father demands of people they are also to do to His Son (John 5:23), so as to display the equality in the Trinity. The promise that every tongue will confess and every knee will bow comes from the Old Testament where the One speaking is Yahweh and He is demanding that for Himself (Isa. 45:23), therefore proving that Jesus is, in fact, Yahweh as Yahweh is the name of the divine Being as I sought to prove in [chapter 2](#).

Therefore, in this passage, we see the beautiful truth of our Lord's incarnation, His eternal divinity, and His humanity.

John 1:1, 14

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the **Word was God**.

John 1:14 And the **Word became flesh** and **dwelt among us**, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

This passage is likewise glorious as Philippians 2. It points us to the divinity of Christ and also of Him taking on of flesh. Verse 1 is one of the clearest proofs of the Lord Jesus' divinity. It is pretty straightforward and clear. It is good to understand that the first part of verse 1 speaks of the eternality of the Logos. The word ἡ ὥν (én, G2258) refers to a point even further back than "the beginning". It is saying that even in the beginning, i.e., the beginning of time, space and matter, the Word "was." Meaning, that the Word did not start at the beginning, rather even at the beginning He *already* existed. The Son of God existed from all eternity, indeed as John 17:5 testifies. See [chapter 2](#) for our [discussion of this passage](#). Albert Barnes infers from the first part the eternality of the Word:

In the beginning - This expression is used also in Gen 1:1. John evidently has allusion here to that place, and he

means to apply to “the Word” an expression which is there applied “to God.” In both places it clearly means before creation, before the world was made, when as yet there was nothing. The meaning is: that the “Word” had an existence before the world was created. This is not spoken of the man Jesus, but of that which “became” a man, or was incarnate, Joh 1:14. The Hebrews, by expressions like this, commonly denoted eternity. Thus, the eternity of God is described Psa 90:2; “Before the mountains were brought forth, etc.,” and eternity is commonly expressed by the phrase, before the foundation of the world.” Whatever is meant by the term “Word,” it is clear that it had an existence before “creation.” It is not, then, a “creature” or created being, and must be, therefore, uncreated and eternal. There is only one Being that is uncreated, and Jesus must be therefore divine. Compare the Saviour’s own declarations respecting himself in the following places: Joh 8:58; Joh 17:5; Joh 6:62; Joh 3:13; Joh 6:46; Joh 8:14; Joh 16:28.^[2]

This Word, which was with God the Father before the beginning, was Himself fully divine. He was fully divine and from eternity with the Father. Divine as much as the Father, yet He could communicate with Him and literally, He was “face-to-face” with God the Father in eternity past. Charles J. Ellicott expresses this relationship in this way:

With God.—These words express the co-existence, but at the same time the distinction of person. They imply relation with, intercourse with. (Comp. the “in the bosom of the Father” of Joh. 1:18, and “Let us make man” of Gen. 1:26.) “Throned face to face with God,” “the gaze ever directed towards God,” have been given as paraphrases, and the full sense cannot be expressed in fewer words. The “with” represents “motion towards.” The Being whose existence is asserted in the “was” is regarded as distinct, but not alone, as ever going forth in communion with God. (Comp. the use of the same word “with” in Mat. 13:56; Mat. 26:11; Mar. 6:3; Mar. 9:19; 1Co. 16:6-7; Gal. 1:18; Gal. 4:18.)^[10]

It is this Word that became flesh. The Word which was fully divine became man. Took on flesh and dwelt among us. Barnes notes that ‘The word “flesh,” here, is evidently used to denote “human nature” or “man.” See Mat 16:17; Mat 19:5; Mat 24:22; Luk 3:6; Rom 1:3; Rom 9:5. The “Word” was made “man.”’^[2] The word used for “dwelt” in the Greek is ἐσκήνωσεν (*eskénésen*, G4637), which is defined as “to fix one’s tabernacle, have one’s tabernacle, abide (or live) in a tabernacle (or tent), tabernacle”^[11], which takes us back to the promises of God and the Lord’s tabernacle with Israel in the wilderness. Now the Lord whom we sought has come and made His tabernacle among us (Mal. 3:1). Notice that the Word did not cease being the Word or being divine when He became human. Rather, these two natures were united in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, Barnes notes:

Was made - This is the same word that is used in Joh 1:3; “All things were made by him.” It is not simply affirmed that he was flesh, but that he was made flesh, implying that he had pre-existence, agreeably to Joh 1:1. This is in accordance with the doctrine of the Scriptures elsewhere. Heb 10:5; “a ‘body’ hast thou prepared me.” Heb 2:14; “as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.” 1Jo 4:2; “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.” See also 1Ti 3:16; Phi 2:6; 2Co 8:9; Luk 1:35. The expression, then, means that he became a man, and that he became such by the power of God providing for him a body. It cannot mean that the divine nature was “changed” into the human, for that could not be; but it means that the λόγος Logos, or “Word,” became so intimately united to Jesus that it might be said that the Logos, or “Word” “became” or “was” a man, as the soul becomes so united to the body that we may say that it is one person or a man.^[2]

Other passages could be called upon to prove the incarnation of the Lord Jesus, but I think that these two are sufficient.

Common Infirmities of the Human Nature

The Son of God in His incarnation truly became human. He did not seem like He was human, but He was truly, in every essential sense, man. It is enough to acknowledge the fact that He was born. God, by definition, does not have a beginning. But the fact that the Lord Jesus in His human nature did have a beginning and that from a human, from Mary, proves that He truly was human. Humans beget humans. But this is also proven by the way that the Bible describes the Lord Jesus.

Body

The Lord Jesus, contrary to the Gnostic heretics, did truly have a human nature and body. He could be touched (Matt. 14:36; Mark 6:56). Even as an infant, He had a true human body, which could be touched and was not a phantom or a ghost or something that looked *like* a human body but actually was not (Luke 2:28). He did take flesh and the form of man as we saw above (John 1:14; Phil. 2:6; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 2:14). He became man and to be truly man is to have human nature obviously.

Development

One thing that is common to humans and creatures is development. God in Himself is sufficient, all-knowing and all-perfect.

God does not develop, but a creature develops. Becomes older, becomes more knowledgeable, becomes more obedient and so on. This was also the case with the Lord Jesus. Luke says that the child, i.e., the Lord Jesus, grew up and grew in His knowledge of wisdom (Luke 2:40, 52). But God is all-wise and all-knowing and does not need any development or teaching, yet the Lord Jesus in His human nature had to develop and learn as any human does, otherwise He would not have been a true human.

Emotions

Emotions are common to all people. We all have been happy or sad at times. It is the experience of all humans. Even in this, the Lord Jesus was truly human.

- He experienced trouble (John 12:27; 13:21).
- He wept (John 11:35; Heb. 5:7).
- He was sorrowful (Matt. 26:38).
- He was greatly distressed and troubled (Mark 14:33).
- He was deeply moved (John 11:33-35).
- He felt agony (Luke 22:44).

The experience of these emotions, which in essence are excluded from God, proves that He was truly human. Though God is sometimes described like this in the Bible yet this is only because He “baby talks” to us.

Eating and Drinking

The Lord Who created it all, food and water, was Himself hungry (Matt. 4:2; 21:18; Mark 11:12; Luke 4:2) and thirsty (John 4:7; 19:28). These things cannot be experienced by the divine nature as that is spiritual and is in need of no nourishment, unlike us humans who need food and drinking otherwise we would die. In this way also, the Lord Jesus “partook of the same things” that we do (Heb. 2:14), thereby demonstrating His full humanity. He became like us even in our need for eating and drinking.

Tired and Sleeping

The Lord Jesus is said to be tired (John 4:6) and sleeping (Matt. 8:24; Mark 4:38; Luke 8:23). But the Scriptures says that “he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep” (Ps. 121:4). The divine nature cannot be tired and cannot sleep, yet humans do get tired and sleep. Even in this, He fully shared in our human nature and human limitation.

Yet Without Sin

The Lord Jesus did truly become man, but not *sinful* man. Some may object by saying that He is then not truly man, but this objection can only be raised if someone assumes that sin was created in us and is essential to our humanity and not a *diversion* and *distortion* of our humanity. In many places, the Bible describes Him as sinless, pure and free from sin (Isa. 53:9; Heb. 4:5; 7:26; John 8:46; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5). He was truly as God desired man to be. He truly did only that which is pleasing in God’s sight (John 8:29). We may be tempted to think that because He was sinless He does not understand how we feel when we are tempted and sin, yet the Bible warns us not to think in such a way:

Heb. 4:14-16 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to **sympathize with our weaknesses**, but one who **in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin**. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The fact that He was sinless is here used as an *encouragement* to look to Him and to see Him as a friend in time of temptation and trouble. We are to look to Him Who was tempted by Satan throughout His life, not only in the wilderness, with the same aspects and things that we deal with, yet withstood these temptations. It is obviously harder to withstand the temptations than to give in and thus He understands and He sympathizes with our weaknesses when we fall and He is willing to help us and grant grace that would cleanse us from all our unrighteousness (1 John 1:8-9).

The Virgin Birth

One doctrine that is essential to orthodox Christianity that was confessed (Apostles’ Creed, Nicene Creed) from the earliest days along with the divinity and humanity of the Lord Christ is His virgin birth. The virgin birth teaches that the mother of Jesus, Mary, was a virgin when she conceived the Lord Jesus in her womb. She did not have any intercourse with any man prior to giving birth to the Lord Jesus. The doctrine is important to the truthfulness of the Scriptures and to the sinless

humanity of Christ. This doctrine is obviously difficult to the natural mind as anyone would admit. Just because we, as Christians and Bible-believers, accept this doctrine doesn't mean we find it normal or ordinary. We believe that it was supernatural and a miracle, that's why it happened only once in history. The God Who created all existence is able to create life without intercourse between a male and a female. That Mary was a virgin before giving birth to Christ is obvious to the one who can read the Bible. It's not a point of controversy to those who accept the work of God within history. Those who have a problem with the virgin birth are they who have a problem with the involvement of God in history. It was not something natural, rather supernatural, wrought by the Spirit of God.

Luke 1:34-35, 37 And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since **I am a virgin?**" 35 And the angel answered her, "The **Holy Spirit will come upon you**, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore **the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God**...37 For nothing will be impossible with God."

The angel tells Mary of the great promises about the Messiah. That He will be the Son of the Most High and the Son of David. But obviously, Mary wasn't born yesterday. She knew for a birth to occur there needs to be sexual intercourse between a male and a female. That's why she questions the angel's proclamation that she would bear a son. She objects that this is impossible because she has not sexually known any man and obviously to have a son you need sex. Literally, the text says "'How shall this be, seeing a husband I do not know?'" This *knowing* refers to sexual intimacy as in Genesis 4:1, for example. The birth of this child shall be supernatural. It shall come to pass by the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, God the Spirit, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity will do a work within Mary in order that which is unnatural shall happen to her and in her. Barnes notes that "This evidently means that the body of Jesus would be created by the direct power of God. It was not by ordinary generation; but, as the Messiah came to redeem sinners - to make atonement for "others," and not for himself it was necessary that his human nature should be pure, and free from the corruption of the fall. God therefore prepared him a body by direct creation that should be pure and holy."^[2]

The virgin birth is also important for the Lord Jesus' sinlessness. This is because without an earthly father, he would not have Adam as His federal head, but He Himself will be the beginning of a new humanity. All those who are in Adam have already sinned in him (Rom. 5:12-14). Therefore, if Adam was the federal head of the Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus would have been born in sin. But the Bible nowhere indicates that the Lord Jesus was under the headship of Adam or that He sinned. The Lord Jesus was born under the Mosaic Law (Gal. 4:4-5), but not Adamic headship. Furthermore, the promise of the seed of the woman in Genesis 3:15 is likewise confirmed and established by the Lord Jesus' virgin birth. That idea of "the seed of the woman" occurs only once in the Old Testament. There are many passages that speak of men's seeds or offspring, but this is the only one which promises that the Serpent's-Head-Crusher will be from the seed of the woman, and not the man as is usual in the Old Testament.

The Lord Jesus' Earthly Descent

The Confession specifically mentions that the Lord Jesus was a descendent of Abraham, Judah, and David. Why is this necessary? Because of the promises made to those individuals. David was promised the kingdom and Abraham was promised the kingdom people. See [chapter 7](#) on the [Davidic](#) and [Abrahamic](#) covenants. The genealogies trace His descent to Abraham and David (Matt. 1:1; Luke 3:23-38). His earthly descent further confirms His true and full humanity. His humanity was obviously from His mother's side, as He had no earthly begetting father.

Very God and Very Man

The Christian creeds teach that the Lord Jesus was truly man and truly God. The Chalcedonian Creed (451 A.D.) teaches:

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the **same perfect in Godhead** and also **perfect in manhood**; **truly God** and **truly man**, of a reasonable **[rational] soul and body**; **consubstantial [coessential] with the Father** according to the Godhead, and **consubstantial with us according to the Manhood**; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, **to be acknowledged in two natures**, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather **the property of each nature being preserved**, and **concurring in one Person and one Subsistence**, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has been handed down to us.^[12]

That Jesus is fully God, I have tried to show in [chapter 2 on the Trinity](#); that He is also man I have tried to show above in

this paragraph. But what do we do with both these truths? We obviously have no other option than believing that the Lord Jesus is both truly (in every sense) God and man.

That the Lord Jesus is *now* human is seen in the fact that He ascended *bodily* to heaven. The Bible says nothing about the Lord's body disappearing and therefore, Jesus still possesses His glorified body. Furthermore, 1 Timothy 2:5 speaks of the "man" Christ Jesus being the mediator now. But obviously, Paul also knows that Jesus is God (e.g., Rom. 9:5; Tit. 2:13). Therefore, we are to accept and confess both truths. There was a time when I did not know that Jesus still was human, not because of study, but because of my ignorance on this topic. The Chalcedonian Creed confesses the single person of Christ in two distinct natures. This is also what the 1689 teaches.

Human nature and divine nature are obviously two distinct natures. Yet these natures unite only in the person of Jesus Christ. They unite perfectly without compromise or confusion. The divine nature and the human nature retain their properties. This is necessary for the work of redemption because we need an infinitely worthy substitute to die on our behalf. But God, cannot die. How then can this work then be accomplished? Answer: By the incarnation of the Son. The divine nature is unable to die, is sinless, is not subject to suffering and is infinitely worthy, yet there is no such inability within human nature against death, suffering or sinlessness. But for God to accomplish redemption, He became a man Who could substitute for His brothers (Heb. 2:14), He could die, yet at the same time, He is infinitely worthy to satisfy God's wrath. Because no mere human is worthy or able to withstand God's wrath. In the words of the lyrical theologian shai linne:

See, only a human can substitute for human lives. But only God can take the wrath of God and survive. ([Hypostatic Union](#))

When He became man, He did not lay aside His divine properties, rather He added and united the divine nature to His (new) human nature. He did not mingle the two natures and thereby was not truly God and neither truly man, but a mixture of the two. No. He took human nature and *added* it to His Person (which was eternally divine). The Lord Jesus, the Son of God incarnate, has two natures, the divine and the human in His singular Person. This is not an easy subject and therefore, obviously, there have been wrong teachings on it. Therefore, I would like, with the help of Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology (pp. 554-556), to take a look at three wrong ways to understand the humanity and divinity of our Lord.

First up is **Apollinarianism**, which teaches that the Lord Jesus had a human body, but a divine mind and spirit. Therefore, He is not truly man and truly God. He is a mixture. But the Scriptures teaches that He was human in every way except sin (Heb. 2:14, 17; 4:15). If in every way, therefore He had a human mind and spirit. The second is **Nestorianism**. Nestorianism teaches that Jesus has two persons in one body. A divine person and a human person, not merely two natures, but two persons in a single body. But the Bible always speaks of Christ as one person and not two persons in one body. The third is **Monophysitism** or **Eutychianism**. Monophysitism means "one nature." Jesus had a mixture of a divine and human nature. Jesus' nature was neither fully divine nor fully human, but rather a third kind of nature—a mixture of elements from the divine and human nature.

Now that we have looked at some wrong ways to understand the Lord Christ's person, that can help us to understand what it is *not*. Since there are no divine-human persons walking around with us, the Lord Jesus is the only God-Man, therefore in many ways, we must talk in the negative. See how the creed and the Confession speak of what the nature of Christ is not. Both say what it is not, the 1689 says that it is not a "conversion, composition, or confusion" of the divine and human nature. Contrary to the **Apollinarian** error, the creed teaches that Christ did indeed have a rational soul and body, that is a *human* soul and body. He was *consubstantial* with us, that is He shared in our nature. He had the same nature as ours, yet spotless and free from sin. Therefore, He was truly human. Contrary to the **Nestorian** error, the creed teaches that the human and divine nature were united in one Person. Both the divine and human nature with their distinctions and properties concur with the one Person of the Lord Christ. Contrary to the **Monophysite** error, the creed teaches that Christ has to be acknowledged in two natures. Each nature retains its properties and there is not a mix of both natures in the person of Christ.

The person of Christ is both divine and human at the same time. That was not always the case, but that began to be so when He became man 2000 years ago and the Lord Jesus will remain the God-Man throughout eternity. Grudem also notes that when we agree that the Lord Jesus was truly man and truly God, then we can speak about the "communication" of attributes. By this, he means that some qualities or abilities that were given ("communicated") from one nature to the other. It is a sin to worship any creature, we must worship God (Matt. 4:10). Yet when people saw the incarnate Christ, it was not sin for them to worship Him (Matt. 2:11; 14:33; 28:9, 17), but the fact that He was (and still is and will be) divine, made that a most proper response and act. God is unable to sin, yet there is no such inability within our wills as humans now. We also know that the Lord Jesus was without sin (Heb. 4:15), therefore this could be properly said to be communicated from the divine nature to the human nature. The divine nature is unable to suffer and die, yet most assuredly the Lord of glory suffered and died for our wickedness. Therefore, this is one thing communicated from the human nature to the divine in the singular person of Christ. This doctrine is also called *communicatio idiomatum*, meaning, the communication of properties.

§3 The Lord Jesus, in his human nature thus united to the divine

3. The Lord Jesus, in his human nature thus **united to the divine**, in the person of the Son, was **sanctified and anointed with the Holy Spirit** above measure **1**, having in Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell, to the end that being holy, harmless, undefiled, and full of grace and truth, he might be thoroughly **furnished to execute the office of mediator** and surety; **2** which office he took not upon himself, but was thereunto **called by his Father**; who also put all power and judgement in his hand, and gave him commandment to execute the same. **3**

1. Acts 10:38; Ps. 45:7; John 3:34

2. Col. 1:19; 2:3; Heb. 7:22, 26; John 1:14

3. Heb. 5:5; John 5:22, 27; Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:36

The Lord Jesus, being both **human** and **divine**, was **sanctified** (set apart) and **anointed by the Holy Spirit** (Acts 10:38) that **He might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of mediator and surety**. The Father appointed and gave Him as the God-Man all things necessary for Him to be an effective mediator and a powerful savior. This **office of mediator and surety** of the New Covenant (Heb. 7:22), the Lord Jesus did not take **upon Himself**, but was **called by His Father** unto this office (Heb. 5:5). This was in accordance with the eternal agreement between the Son and the Father. He is not only the only mediator, but also the One Who has **all power and judgement in His hand** and Who has the authority **to execute the same** (John 5:22). It is important here not to forget that these things are spoken of not of the Son of God considered without His Incarnation. But these things are spoken about the Lord Jesus as divine and human. These things are spoken of **the Lord Jesus, in His human nature thus united to the divine**.

Sanctified and Anointed with the Holy Spirit

The Lord Jesus in His Person, which has a divine and human nature, was set apart by God the Father and given the Spirit above measure. He possessed the fullness of the Spirit. The Spirit, in a special manner, came upon Him at His baptism:

Matt. 3:16-17 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and **he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him**; 17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

This was in accordance with the prophecy in Isaiah 11:2. The Spirit manifestly and visibly came upon Him and God the Father bore testimony from heaven about Him before all who were present there. He was anointed by the power of God. As truly man, He would have been a worshiper of God as humans are created for the worship and glory of God and therefore He would need the Spirit. From the beginning of His human life, the Holy Spirit was involved (Matt. 1:18). Throughout His earthly life and miracles, the Spirit was powerfully present with Him. In fact, His ministry began by the Spirit. After being baptized by John to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15), the Lord was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil (Matt. 4:1). Albert Barnes observes on Matthew 3:16 that "The gift of the Holy Spirit, in this manner, was the public approbation of Jesus (John 1:33), and a sign of his being set apart to the office of the Messiah. We are not to suppose that there was any change done in the moral character of Jesus, but only that he was publicly set apart to his work, and solemnly approved by God in the office to which he was appointed."^[2] This was the starting point of His ministry. Furthermore, "This was to John the sign by which the Messiah should be recognised."^[13] He first had to be tested and then would go to seek His disciples and teach them. After the 40 days of His temptation, the Scriptures tell us:

Luke 4:14 And Jesus returned **in the power of the Spirit** to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.

The Spirit and His power were with the Lord Jesus. The Spirit visibly came upon Him in His baptism, the Spirit drove Him to the wilderness and He came back victorious in the power of the Spirit. The One Who has the Spirit wholly is also the One Who will baptize God's people with the Spirit. This was John the Baptist's message. John's baptism was merely

foreshadowing the baptism with which Jesus would baptize—a “baptism with the Holy Spirit” (Mark 1:8; Matt. 3:11). The Lord Jesus throughout His life was in communion with the Spirit and Father. He rejoices in and through the Spirit and thanks to the Father for His sovereign grace (Luke 10:21). His miracles were done by the power of the Spirit (Matt. 12:28). The Lord Jesus taught through the Holy Spirit, by His power and guidance (Acts 1:2). The same blessing, through grace, He bestows upon us. Luke writes:

Acts 1:4-5, 8 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but **you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit** not many days from now.” 8 But you will **receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you**, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Acts 2:33 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the **promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out** this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

The Spirit of God came upon the Lord Jesus to enable Him and anoint Him to do the work of God and fulfill His ministry. In the same manner, the Spirit comes upon them that are dead in sin and makes them alive in Christ. He prepares us to do the work of God just like He prepared our Lord.

Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge

He is the fountain of all that is good. He is the fountain of all knowledge and wisdom. This statement is based on Colossians 2:3.

Col. 2:1-4 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of **full assurance of understanding** and the **knowledge of God’s mystery**, which is Christ, 3 in whom are **hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**. 4 I say this in order that **no one may delude you** with plausible arguments.

Paul’s desire is that Christians have the full assurance of understanding God’s truth. His desire is that they may truly know Him and keep learning about Him from the true source of knowledge, which is Christ. John Calvin observes:

The meaning, therefore, is, that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ — by which he means, that we are perfect in wisdom if we truly know Christ, so that it is madness to wish to know anything besides Him. For since the Father has manifested himself wholly in Him, that man wishes to be wise apart from God, who is not contented with Christ alone.^[14]

The mystery of God—that which was hidden in past ages but now revealed (1 Pet. 1:20), is the Lord Christ. It is He Who is the goal, end, and purpose of the whole creation. It is Him for Whom creation was made (Col. 1:15-18). It is through being in union with Him that the believers are able to have assurance and understanding of His person and His work. He is the fountainhead of all knowledge and wisdom. This is essentially no different than what Solomon says:

Prov. 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Prov. 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

We must search wisdom in the One of Whom the text says “in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (Col. 1:19). Jesus is Yahweh, therefore, to have true and God-honoring knowledge, we should begin with Him. We should acknowledge Him always. We should seek to honor Him (1 Pet. 3:15) and treat Him as the Lord that He is over all things given to the church (Eph. 1:22).

These treasures of wisdom and knowledge are “hidden” in Christ and He is the only mediator through Whom we may receive access to these treasures. Barnes comments on this part in v. 3 in this way:

Are hid - Like treasures that are concealed or garnered up. It does not mean that none of those “treasures” had been developed; but that, so to speak, Christ, as Mediator, was the great treasure-house where were to be found all the wisdom and knowledge needful for people.^[12]

Called by the Father to be the Mediator

That He has the Spirit without measure and is the fountainhead of all wisdom and knowledge, all the more qualifies Him as the faithful High Priest and mediator of His people. This office was not taken by Himself, but God called Him to this office as He did Aaron. It is God the Father Who was pleased to appoint the Son as the God-Man to be the High Priest and Mediator of God's people. It was something that God called Him to do. Of this we read in Hebrews 5—

Heb. 5:4-6 And no one takes this honor [high priesthood] for himself, but **only when called by God**, just as Aaron was. 5 So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but **was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you";** 6 as he says also in another place, **"You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."**

For more about the Lord's office as mediator, [see above](#).

§4 This office the Lord Jesus did most willingly undertake

4. This office the Lord Jesus did most **willingly undertake**, **1** which that he might discharge he was made under the law, **2** and did perfectly fulfill it, and **underwent the punishment due to us**, which we should have borne and suffered, **3** being **made sin and a curse for us**; **4** enduring most grievous sorrows in his soul, and most painful sufferings in his body; **5** was crucified, and died, and **remained in the state of the dead**, yet saw no corruption: **6 on the third day he arose from the dead with the same body** in which he suffered, **7** with which he also **ascended into heaven**, **8** and there sitteth at the right hand of his Father **making intercession**, **9** and shall **return to judge men and angels** at the end of the world. **10**

1. Ps. 40:7-8 with Heb. 10:5-10; John 10:18; Phil. 2:8
2. Gal. 4:4; Luke 2:21-27
3. Matt. 3:15; 5:17; 1 Pet. 2:21; 3:18
4. Matt. 26:37-38; 27:46; Luke 22:44; Gal. 3:10-14; 2 Cor. 5:21
5. Matt. 26-27
6. Phil. 2:8; Acts 13:37
7. John 20:25, 27
8. Acts 1:9-11
9. Rom. 8:34; Heb. 9:24
10. Acts 10:42; Rom. 14:9-10; Acts 1:11; Matt. 13:40-42; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6

This office refers to "the office of mediator and surety" from the previous paragraph. He was "thereunto called by his Father" and He **most willingly undertake** it (Heb. 10:5-10). Which meant that He had to become man. This also meant that He had to be **made under the law** to **perfectly fulfill it** (Gal. 4:4-5), even **undergoing the punishment due to us** (Gal. 3:13). Christ took the punishment of death and the curse of the law upon Himself so that those in Him, the elect, should not take it. He was **made sin and a curse for us** (2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13). The sufferings of Christ were not due to His personal sins, but due to our sins which were put upon Him and counted as if they were His own. Furthermore, the sufferings of Christ were not only physical **in his body**, but also spiritual in His **grievous sorrows of His soul** (Matt. 26:38). The Lord Jesus suffered in body and soul for our wickedness. What a gracious redeemer! After the beatings and torturing, He was **crucified, and died, and remained in the state of the dead** for three days. He really was dead and did not appear to be dead. This is further confirmed in the fact that He **remained in the state of the dead**, or as Peter says it based on Psalm 16, He went "to Hades" (Acts 2:27, 31). Even though He truly was dead and was even buried, nonetheless, He **saw no corruption** for **He arose from the dead with the same body in which He suffered on the third day**. The body was not changed. In fact, the holes could still be seen (John 20:25, 27)! Yet it was a glorified body. With this same body, **He also ascended into heaven** 40 days after His resurrection (Acts 1:3). And now, as the ascended and victorious Lord, He **sitteth at the right hand of His Father**, waiting for the fulfillment of Psalm 110 and **making intercession** for His people. His posture of sitting indicates that His work is finished and that He is resting. But He will not remain sitting there. There will come a time when He **shall return to judge men and angels at the end of the world** (Acts 1:11; 10:42; [see chapter 32](#)).

Christ Fulfilled the Law

Christ willingly and joyfully accepted the Father's will, thereby taking on human nature and was born as an Israelite under the Law of Moses. Of this, we read in Galatians 4:4—

Gal. 4:4-5 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, **born under the law**, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Christ became man at God's appointed and perfect time. As a true Israelite, He was born under the authority of the Mosaic Law and in the Mosaic Covenant. The text says that the Son was born under the law, that means that He was subject to the Law. The Lawgiver was subject to His own Law! He was circumcised on the eighth day according to the Abrahamic Covenant. He kept the Law of Moses perfectly throughout His life, while He definitely broke many of the *traditions* of the Jews, but never once the Law of God. The purpose, says Paul, that He was born under the law was to redeem those who were under the law. Is this referring only to Jews as they are subject to and under the Law? I have difficulty with this view primarily because of the "we" in v. 5. Paul is writing to a largely Gentile audience about the dangers of placing the Jewish traditions and laws above the Gospel of Christ. The way that I understand this is in the same way that I understand Romans 2:12-14 (see [here](#) and [here](#)). Both Jews and Gentiles are under the Law and possess it, yet in a different sense. Jews possess the fullness of the *written* Law, while Gentiles only have the moral law written on their hearts. Therefore, the way that I understand Galatians 4:4-5 is that the Lord Jesus was indeed born under the Mosaic Law to redeem those who were under the Law. But the Law of Moses is itself an expansion of the Law of Creation given to us through Adam our federal head. In essence, it is the same as the Mosaic and has the same moral law as the Decalogue. Therefore, both Jews and Gentiles could properly be said to be under the law and thus were redeemed through Christ. Matthew Poole comments on this phrase:

This makes it appear, that Christ's being under the law must be understood as well of the moral as of the ceremonial law, that is, subject to the precepts of it, as well as to the curse of it; for if the end of this being born under the law, was to redeem those that were under it, that he had not reached by being merely under the ceremonial law; for the Gentiles were not under that law, but only under the moral law; and they also were to be redeemed, and to receive the great privilege of [adoption.]^[4]

The Expositor's Greek Testament puts it in this way:

The description *under Law* includes Gentiles as well as Jews: for though they had not *the Law*, they were not without Law to God (cf. Romans 2:14...): they have indeed been expressly specified in Galatians 3:14 as included in the redemption from the curse of the Law.^[15]

The Lord Jesus fulfilled the Law on our behalf. This is part of His active obedience. The Lord Jesus, the federal head of the New Covenant people of God, was fulfilling the Law for us and in our place. Since we could not fulfill the Law, we were doomed, but when Christ fulfilled the Law for us, both in its commandments and curses, we were set free! The purpose of Christ's coming was not to destroy the Law but to fulfill it.

Matt. 5:17-19 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the **Law or the Prophets**; I have not come to abolish them but to **fulfill them**. 18 For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, **not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished**. 19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Perhaps in the context that the Lord, as the new Moses, was giving a Law to His people on the mountain, people might have gotten the idea that He was doing away with the Mosaic Law. The Lord is emphatic. He by no means is destroying, abrogating or doing away with the Law. Rather He is come to fulfill the Law. To do it and to be the true representation of it. To be a true keeper of the Law of God and work the Law in the hearts of His people. The Lord also speaks of the Scriptures in the phrase "Law or the Prophets." He has come so that the many types, shadows, and prophecies from the Old Testament may have their fulfillment in Him and His people (2 Cor. 1:20). He had to identify Himself with His people and that is why He

was baptized. To identify Himself with His people who needed to repent. He tells John that it was “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15). Christ summarized the Law with two things, 1) loving God and 2) loving your neighbor. Who but Christ the Lord has perfectly fulfilled this? Therefore, He truly did fulfill the Law and demonstrated what it truly means to obey the Law. Christ did not only actively fulfill the Law, that is by obeying God, but He also passively obeyed the Law by being the subject of its curses. For more on Matthew 5:17-19, [see here](#).

The Penal Substitutionary Atonement of Christ

The Lord Jesus most willingly took the office of a mediator and took it upon Himself for the sake of His people. Mediatorship was part of the priesthood. He is the High Priest of God’s people. He is the High Priest to Whom all the high priests pointed. Of His High Priesthood, we have written in paragraph 1. We just wrote of Christ fulfilling the Law. Doing what the Law says and having in Himself and His people, the fulfillment of the types and shadows of the Old Testament covenants, promises, and prophecies. Now we turn our attention to Christ’s passive obedience in taking the curse of the Law upon Himself. Not only did Christ by His perfect obedience ([paragraph 5](#)) fulfill and obey the Law, but He also by passive obedience, i.e., being acted on, fulfilled the Law in its curses.

Christ bore our sin upon Himself and therefore, at that moment on the cross, He was no longer sinless, but deserved God’s wrath for the sin that was placed upon Him. Not because of any actual sin committed by Himself, but because He was counted sin on behalf of His people (2 Cor. 5:21). This is the doctrine that we call the (Penal) Substitutionary Atonement. Christ took upon Himself our sin and was punished on our behalf. God the Father punished the spotless, now carrying-the-sins-of-His-people Son instead of us. This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Penal substitutionary atonement refers to the doctrine that Christ died on the cross as a substitute for sinners. God imputed the guilt of our sins to Christ, and he, in our place, bore the punishment that we deserve. This was a full payment for sins, which satisfied both the wrath and the righteousness of God, so that He could forgive sinners without compromising His own holy standard.^[16]

I would like to go over some passages of Scripture which speak of His suffering and bearing of sin done on our behalf. In [paragraph 8](#), I will attempt to make a case for the Reformed doctrine of Particular Redemption, i.e., Christ only died to purchase the elect, not every single human being on the planet. That Christ suffered for us and in our place is clear in many passages, I would only be scratching the surface here. It is generally accepted in Evangelical/Protestant Christianity that Jesus died on our behalf and in our place to take our sin and its punishment upon Himself. I would like to take a look at Isaiah 53; Galatians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Isaiah 53

Isaiah 53 is unquestionably one of the clearest prophecies concerning Jesus’ death and life. It speaks of Him being rejected and despised by the people, but more importantly, it speaks of His atoning death on behalf of us.

Isa. 53:4-6 Surely he has **borne our griefs** and **carried our sorrows**; yet we esteemed him **stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted**. 5 But he was **pierced for our transgressions**; he was **crushed for our iniquities**; **upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace**, and **with his wounds we are healed**. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the **LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all**.

Do not think that I will be able to successfully unpack all the glories that are here contained. It is such a rich and glorious passage, and you get awestruck by the fact that this was written 700 years before the birth of our Lord. It explicitly and clearly describes His atoning death on our behalf. Isaiah, writing to the old covenant people of God, those who were looking to the coming of the Servant of Yahweh, says that it is sure and certain that this Servant is the One who has taken upon Himself our grief and sorrows. He was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3). He bore upon Himself our sorrows and grief, even though they were not His. In bearing our sorrows and griefs, we saw Him as Someone that was stricken by God. As someone who was being punished by God. That was certainly what the Jews thought was happening, seeing the Lord of glory helpless on the cross. He was being afflicted, but v. 6 says it was not for His own sins. It was rather for *our* transgressions and iniquities. He certainly was being crushed, afflicted and smitten by God, but for sin not His own. For our sin. For our transgression of God’s Law, for our guilt before God. He was the spotless Lamb of God. He could not have been justly punished by God because He was sinless. There would be nothing in Him to arouse the wrath of God or to cause God to punish Him, but every reason to pour out His love upon the sinless Son. But because the spotless Son of God bore our sin upon Himself, now He was the object of divine justice. Moreover, the punishment that He underwent was amazingly the source of our peace. It is through His punishment on our behalf and His suffering that He has brought us peace. The peace that we have in God, comes from the fact that He was punished in our place.

Rom. 5:1 Therefore, since we have been **justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Our peace comes from the fact that Jesus atoned for our sin and we receive the benefits of that atonement through faith. It is because of the fact that Jesus died as a substitute that we can now come to God with the empty hand of faith. When we do so, we will have peace—the *shalom* of God. That *shalom* of God comes only through the Lord Who died on our behalf, just like Isaiah said centuries before Paul penned Romans 5:1. His wounds and bleeding are the source of peace, justification, and cleansing from sin. His wounds healed us from our sin and its punishment. His wounds paradoxically healed us from our spiritual sickness. Peter, having in mind Isaiah 53, says—

1 Pet. 2:21-25 For to this you have been called, because **Christ also suffered for you**, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself **bore our sins in his body on the tree**, that we might **die to sin** and **live to righteousness**. **By his wounds you have been healed**. 25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Christ's suffering for us should motivate us in our suffering too. We should see that as an example for us to follow. He was sinless, yet was treated as if He was sin itself. He was the Truth, yet was accused of misrepresenting God. Throughout His suffering and crucifixion, His hope was set on the Father, so likewise should ours be when we suffer for His name's sake. It is He, says Peter, Who bore and carried our sins in His body, that is in the physical punishment being afflicted on Him by the Romans. He bore our sins in His body on the tree, that is, the cross. When He was in pain, He was in pain for us. When He was crucified, He was crucified for us. When He was spit upon, He was spit upon for us. The purpose of His suffering is so that we would die to sin and live to righteousness. The purpose is so that we would leave our old life. So that we no longer would be slaves of sin, but slaves of Christ. His wounds have healed us of our sin. It was His suffering that did it. Because we like sheep went away from our Shepherd, but He laid down His life for the sheep and He will seek them and bring them to His fold.

Now we turn to look at the last portion of Isaiah 53:6. The LORD—Yahweh laid on Him our iniquity and sin. It was God who did this. It was God who wanted the Messiah, the Servant, to suffer. It was ultimately God who killed Jesus. It was God who laid upon Him all our wrongdoing and rebellion so that He would be punished instead of us. It was God's work. John Gill comments on v. 6 in this way:

and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all; that is, God the Father, against whom we have sinned, from whom we have turned, and whose justice must be satisfied; he has laid on Christ, his own Son, the sins of all his elect ones; which are as it were collected together, and made one bundle and burden of, and therefore expressed in the singular number, "iniquity", and laid on Christ, and were bore by him, even all the sins of all God's elect; a heavy burden this! which none but the mighty God could bear; this was typified by laying of hands, and laying of sins upon the sacrifice, and putting the iniquities of Israel upon the head of the scapegoat, by whom they were bore, and carried away. The words may be rendered, "he made to meet upon him the iniquity of us all" (r); the elect of God, as they live in every part of the world, their sins are represented as coming from all quarters, east, west, north, and south; and as meeting in Christ, as they did, when he suffered as their representative on the cross: or "he made to rush, or fall upon him the iniquity of us all" (s); our sins, like a large and mighty army, beset him around, and fell upon him in a hostile manner, and were the cause of his death; by which means the law and justice of God had full satisfaction, and our recovery from ruin and destruction is procured, which otherwise must have been the consequence of turning to our own ways; so the ancient Jews understood this of the Messiah. R. Cahana (t) on these words, "binding his ass's colt to the choice vine", Genesis 49:11 says,

"as the ass bears burdens, and the garments of travellers, so the King Messiah will bear upon him the sins of the whole world; as it is said, "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all", "Isaiah 53:6.^[6]

Verse 8 asks a rhetorical question:

Isa. 53:8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?

Who would have thought that He, on the cross was really being punished for the sins of God's people? Who would have

thought of this? The unbelieving Jews thought that He was being punished by God because of His own sins, while those who followed Him were confused and thought He was unrighteously delivered into the hands of the Romans by their leaders. Yet this was God's plan all along. It was the will of the LORD, says v. 10 to have the Servant being crushed so that His soul would be an offering for the guilt of God's people. This passage is glorious and in it, the penal substitutionary atonement of the Messianic Servant most clearly shines even in the Old Testament.

Galatians 3:13 – Christ the Curse

Paul, in Galatians, is set against the Judaizers who were seeking to put people under the yoke of the Mosaic Law again. They were teaching people that they would need to be circumcised and keep the whole Mosaic Law to be saved. Paul is strongly against that. He argues here that no one is able to keep the Law, but also that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, how? By becoming a curse in our place.

Gal. 3:10-14 For **all who rely on works of the law are under a curse**; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." 11 Now it is evident that **no one is justified before God by the law**, for "The righteous shall live by faith." 12 But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them." 13 **Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us**—for it is written, "**Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree**"— 14 so that in Christ Jesus the **blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles**, so that we might receive the promised **Spirit through faith**.

It is clear, Paul says, that everyone who relies on the works and "good deeds" of the law is under a curse. That means, that anyone who depends on the law for their justification is actually under a curse. For they do not understand the purpose of the law nor the righteousness of God. The purpose of the Law was to lead to Christ (Gal. 3:24-25) and to reveal sin (Rom. 3:20), not to justify since no one is able to perfectly obey. They are under a curse because for eternal life and justification the law demands not sincere, but full, perfect and constant obedience. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 27:26 to make his point clear. The Law demands perfect and total obedience. Therefore, anyone who has not perfectly and always obeyed all that is written in the Law, some count 613 commandments, they are cursed. They are under a curse for not obeying everything that God has commanded. The punishment for disobedience is rejection by God and death (Rom. 3:23). Death is the penalty for every and any sin in the eyes of God. Every sin deserves death as it is an affront against a most holy and just God.

Jesus freed us from the curse, by becoming the curse for us. By dying and suffering in our place. By bearing our curse upon Himself and suffering the punishment that we actually deserved in Himself, thereby removing it from our account. It is clear that this was the case, says Paul because the Law explicitly says that anyone who is hanged on a tree, i.e., the cross, is cursed by God. Therefore, the observation of the Jewish unbelievers was correct that He was being punished and cursed by God, but they were wrong to conclude that it was for His own sins. Rather, the Lord was cursed for our sake. To redeem and free us from the curse of the Law—death, and separation from God. John Gill comments on the Lord being a curse on v. 13:

made a curse for us; the sense of which is, not only that he was like an accursed person, looked upon as such by the men of that wicked generation, who hid and turned away their faces from as an abominable execrable person, calling him a sinner, a Samaritan, and a devil; but was even accursed by the law; becoming the surety of his people, he was made under the law, stood in their legal place and stead and having the sins of them all imputed to him, and answerable for them, the law finding them on him, charges him with them, and curses him for them; yea, he was treated as such by the justice of God, even by his Father, who spared him not, awoke the sword of justice against him, and gave him up into his hands; delivered him up to death, even the accursed death of the cross, whereby it appeared that he was made a curse: "made", by the will, counsel, and determination of God, and not without his own will and free consent; for he freely laid down his life, and gave himself, and made his soul an offering for sin:^[6]

Christ became a curse, accursed and sin (2 Cor. 5:21) for us! Charles J. Ellicott comments:

Being made a curse.—Being treated as if He were accursed. Comp. 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For he hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin"—i.e., treated as sinful One who was not sinful. The idea is somewhat strengthened by the use of the substantive for the adjective. The curse identifies itself with its object: seizes, as it were, upon the person of its victim.

For us—i.e., "on our behalf," "for our sakes," not "in our stead." It is impossible to escape the conclusion that St. Paul, like the rest of the Apostles, regarded the sufferings of Christ as undergone *in our stead*. The idea is, indeed, distinctly expressed in this very passage; but it must be gathered from the context, not from the use of the preposition. The preposition which means "instead" is found in Matthew 20:28; 1 Timothy 2:6.^[10]

Christ redeemed *us* by becoming a curse for *us*. Amazing love, amazing grace!

2 Corinthians 5:21 – He made Him sin

2 Cor. 5:21 For our sake **he made him to be sin who knew no sin**, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

God the Father was pleased to crush the Son (Isa. 53:10). It was God the Father Who made the spotless Son sin on our behalf. He was punished by God, He became a curse not because of sin in Himself, but because of sin laid upon Him. For our sake, for us. For us who were against God, for us who were dead in sin (Eph. 2:1-3), for us who were in enmity with God (Rom. 8:7-8), for us who did not search for God (Rom. 3:11). It is for the wicked that the Son was made sin. It is for me. Some commentators also remind us that Christ was made a *sin offering* for us. Calvin writes:

To *know no sin* is to be free from sin. He says, then, that Christ, while he was entirely exempt from sin, was *made sin for us*. It is commonly remarked, that *sin* here denotes an expiatory sacrifice for sin, and in the same way the Latin's term it, *piaculum* **(566)** Paul, too, has in this, and other passages, borrowed this phrase from the Hebrews, among whom אָשָׁם (*asham*) denotes an *expiatory sacrifice*, as well as an *offense* or *crime*. **(567)** But the signification of this word, as well as the entire statement, will be better understood from a comparison of both parts of the antithesis. *Sin* is here contrasted with *righteousness*, when Paul teaches us, that *we were made the righteousness of God*, on the ground of *Christ's having been made sin*.

...

(566) The Latin term *piaculum* is sometimes employed to denote a *crime requiring expiation*, and at other times, an *expiatory victim*. — Ed

(567) Thus in Lev 5:6, אָשָׁם, (*asham*,) denotes a trespass-offering; and in the verse immediately following, it means an offense or trespass. See Calvin's *Institutes*, volume 2. — Ed. ^[14]

He made and counted Him as sin so that He would be punished and bear our punishment. Matthew Poole comments on this place:

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin: Christ *knew no sin*, as he was guilty of no sin; *Which of you* (saith he, Joh 8:46) *convinceth me of sin?* 1Pe 2:22, *He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:* but God *made him to be sin for us*. He was numbered with the transgressors, Isa 53:12. Our sins were reckoned to him; so as though personally he was no sinner, yet by imputation he was, and God dealt with him as such; for he was made a sacrifice for our sins, a sin offering; so answering the type in the law, Lev 4:3,25,29; 5:6; 7:2. ^[14]

The purpose is clear so that in and through Him we would receive and become the righteousness of God. So that God would credit us the perfect righteousness of Christ. So that we would be white as snow before God. God had a purpose in making Christ who was sinless, sin. The purpose was that we would be made the righteousness of God. So that we would receive the righteousness of God. So that we would receive the merit of the work of Christ done on our behalf.

Paul elsewhere says—

Rom. 5:19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the **one man's obedience the many will be made righteous**.

It is by His doing and obedience that we have become righteous. It is through His work. Christ most certainly took our sin upon Himself.

My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!

My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

(Horatio Spafford – It Is Well With My Soul)

Remained in the State of the Dead

Thankfully, the Confession did not follow the early creeds in saying that Jesus descended into Hell, in whichever way that may be explained. That would indicate that the atonement was not really finished as the Lord declares from the cross (John 19:30). Rather, the Lord was truly dead. He was not really wounded but survived, rather He truly died. This does not mean that He went to Hell, God forbid such a thought, but He assures the thief on the cross that He will be with him in Paradise "today" (Luke 23:43). The Lord, entered the presence of the Father when He gave up His spirit.

The Resurrection of Christ

Paul sees the resurrection of Christ as the hinge on which our faith rests. If it was false, then we are hopeless.

1 Cor. 15:16-19 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And **if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins**. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, **we are of all people most to be pitied**.

Do you follow Paul's argumentation? Some were saying that there is actually no resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:12). But if they would have carried their claim to its logical conclusion, then that would have meant that even Christ is not raised, therefore there was actually no vindication of Christ's claims from God. If Christ is still dead and was not raised then it would mean that He failed on the cross and was not victorious. If He failed, then He did not satisfy the wrath of God against ourselves. If this is right then we are wrong to say that God raised Jesus from the dead and we are hopeless. Clearly, Paul regarded the resurrection as the hinge on which Christianity rests.

Christians, from the earliest days, believed and confessed the bodily resurrection of our Lord Jesus after three days from His death on the cross and His subsequent burial.

1 Cor. 15:3-4 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that **he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures**,

This is believed to be a creed arising a few years after the resurrection of our Lord. It was something that was given and delivered to Paul. It is not something original to Paul. From the earliest days, the believers confessed the bodily resurrection of the crucified Lord. That Jesus was raised from the dead is clear to anyone who can read Scripture. There is not an iota in the Bible that would lead us to think that He was not bodily raised. There are many anti- and unbiblical ideas that He was not bodily raised from the dead, but those come from unbiblical presuppositions and not from the exegesis of the text. I would like to look at a few places in the Bible that speak of the Lord's resurrection.

The Gospels and the Old Testament

The Gospels are biographies of Christ's mission. In the Gospels, we read of His birth, teaching, death, and resurrection. All four Gospels speak of the Lord's resurrection (Matt. 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20). It was amazing despite how many times the Lord predicted His death and resurrection (e.g., Mark 9:9, 31), they still did not expect Him to die and rise. It was against their expectations, which gives more credibility to the account of His death and resurrection. They did not expect the Messiah to be a Suffering Servant, but they expected someone that would throw down the Roman system and put Israel as the center of the world. The Jews were not expecting someone who would suffer and die. More than that, they were not expecting the resurrection other than at the end of the world. The disciples may have believed that Jesus would rise, but this resurrection would have been on the last day (John 11:24), not three days after His death. This was something that they certainly were not looking for. It was unacceptable to the Jews who were expecting the resurrection to be on the last day. It was not something that came into their minds. John speaks of this fact in chapter 20. The Lord is raised early Sunday morning, but the disciples did not understand or accept that. They did go to the tomb to check on Him when they did not see Him the first thought was not that He was raised from the dead, but that His body was stolen despite the many times that He told them that He would be raised.

John 20:6-9 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; 9 for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

The “other disciple”, who was John, believed and remembered the Lord’s words and the Scriptures. But Peter and the other disciples did not believe or understand what was happening. They were so much focused on a conquering Messiah that neither His death nor resurrection ever entered their minds. What Scriptures spoke of Him being raised? References to Him being raised include: Psalm 16:10 (quoted in Acts 2:25-32; 13:32-39); Psalm 22:22-23; Isaiah 53:10-12; Hosea 6:2. Of these the most noteworthy is **Acts 2:25-32**. The case that Peter makes there is that it was Jesus ultimately of whom David spoke in Psalm 16:8-11. This is so because the patriarch David was not raised from the dead, in fact, his body was still with them, rotting in the grave. But David, being a prophet and a recipient of God’s covenant promises, knew that God would raise for him Someone who is from his descent who would forever sit on his throne. The Holy Spirit-inspired Peter says that with the fact that the Lord was always before Him, he foresaw the resurrection of Jesus. The Lord spoken of by David is the risen Lord Jesus, just like in Psalm 110. David knew that God would not abandon his descendant and his Lord to the grave. He would not remain in the state of the dead as the confession says but will be raised. It was not possible for death to hold the Son of God down (Acts 2:24).

The Epistles

The epistles, especially **Paul’s**, are filled with references to the resurrection of Christ. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15, makes a case from the resurrection of Christ to our own resurrection at the Parousia of Christ. He combats those who rejected the resurrection. Paul sees the resurrection of Christ as God’s declaration of Christ as being the Son of God and the Lord (Rom. 1:4). His resurrection shows that God was satisfied with what the Son did. His resurrection is the proof that God was pleased with the work of the Son. It was the proof that He did not die as a failure but was vindicated. Paul assures us in Romans 6:5 that just like Christ’s death was not for His own sin and for Himself, but rather we were united in His death, so likewise we will be united with Him in a resurrection like His. We will be raised in a resurrection body just like His, glorified, free from sin and victorious. Our resurrection, based on the fact that Jesus was raised, was Paul’s and should be our hope (Phil. 3:10-11; Acts 24:15). In the resurrection, God demonstrated His infinite love to the Son by declaring Him to be victorious and accepting His work, likewise, we will be revealed to be the sons of God (Rom. 8:23). Part of proclaiming the gospel is to proclaim Jesus Christ as risen from the dead (2 Tim. 2:8; 1 Cor. 15:3-4). This demonstrates the fact that God was satisfied with His work and He vindicated the Lord Jesus.

The book of **Hebrews** sees the resurrection as something that is basic and elemental to the Christian faith (Heb. 6:2). It is one of the basic things to Christianity. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, it is the hinge on which our faith rests. **Peter** says that the great mercy and grace of God demonstrated in regeneration was through the resurrection of Christ from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3). It was because of the resurrection that we were born again to a living hope. To be right with God. To have a harmonious relationship with Him, one of love, not enmity.

The Same Physical Body

That the Lord suffered and was raised in the same physical body could be illustrated by the fact that people recognized Him and also by the holes in His hands. Let’s go through John 20.

Mary Magdalene, weeping outside the tomb because her Teacher was dead and she supposed that His body was stolen, hears a voice. The voice was that of the two angels who asked her for the reason of her weeping (John 20:13). She answers because they have stolen the body of the Lord and hidden it somewhere. Again, they had no concept of resurrection other than at the end of days (John 11:24). But then she turns and hears yet another voice. She thought it was the gardener and she asks him if he knows the place of the body that he would tell the location. But then, at the moment of the truth, when the voice calls her name, “Mary”, she directly recognizes that it was her Teacher Who was speaking to her and she joyfully calls out: Rabboni! (John 20:15). As any human would do, she ran to Him to hug and cling to Him, yet the Lord tells her not to cling to Him. The fact that she could cling to Him demonstrates that the Lord had a tangible body, which would be recognized by them who walked with Him during His earthly ministry. We continue on. The same day on which He was raised, the first day, He also appeared to His disciples. The disciples were hiding because of fear that came upon them from the Jews. They supposed that they, like their Rabbi, would be taken out and crucified. They were scared. They had locked the doors, but Jesus was able to come inside. Either by unlocking the doors or through simply appearing in their midst. I do not know. But the fact that He had a physical body is clear:

John 20:20 When he had said this, he **showed them his hands and his side**. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

He showed them His wounds. This not only proves that the Lord had a physical and resurrected body, but it was the same body with which He was crucified but is now glorified. Barnes comments, “In this manner he gave them indubitable proofs of his identity. He showed them that he was the same Being who had suffered; that he had truly risen from the dead, and had come forth with the same body. That body had not yet put on its glorified form. It was necessary first to establish the proof of his resurrection, and that could be done only by his appearing as he was when he died.”^[2]

At this time, Thomas was not with the disciples but was away. So when he comes back and the disciples tell him what happened he declares:

John 20:25 ...“Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and **place my finger into the mark of the nails**, and **place my hand into his side**, I will never believe.”

Thomas demanded hard, observable and tangible evidence. He could not buy this “story.” He wanted to see and check the facts for himself. He was not expecting the resurrection to happen in the middle of history. A week later, on Sunday, the Lord comes again to the disciples, all of them including Thomas. The Lord challenges Thomas—

John 20:27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”

We are not told if Thomas indeed did check, but His response was clear:

John 20:28-29 Thomas answered him, “**My Lord and my God!**” 29 Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Upon seeing the Risen Lord before Him, Thomas cannot but confess Him as his Lord and his God. He is bowed down to the floor by His Majesty and is no doubt ashamed because He doubted the report of his brethren and the prediction of his Master. On both Sundays, the disciples were able to recognize Him directly and to know that it was indeed their beloved Jesus.

Furthermore, **Luke 24:36-43** is also very clear about the physical nature of our Lord’s body. There, the Lord says what a spirit is, an entity without flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). But the One by Whom they were frightened could not have been a spirit because He had a physical form. He even showed them His wounded hands and feet so that they would recognize Him and be assured that it was their Master and not a ghost. Heinrich Meyer comments on v. 39:

In the first half of the verse Jesus desires to remove from His disciples their consternation, and that by means of their being required to convince themselves that it is He Himself (no other); in the second half He desires to oppose the notion of a πνεῦμα [*pneuma*, spirit], and that in such a way that they should be persuaded that it is He bodily.^[17]

The text goes on to say that they still disbelieved so that the last thing that the Lord does is eat before them (Luke 24:41-43). A spirit having no flesh or bones, being something that is immaterial is unable to eat. But the fact that He is able to eat demonstrates that He is not a spirit. Ellicott says, “Here again there is an agreement with St. John (21:5). A new crucial test is given of the reality of the resurrection-body. It could be no shadow or spectre that thus asked for food.”^[18] He was raised bodily and it was the same body with which He died and was buried, but now glorified. As for those who point to the Emmaus road discussion to say that they did not recognize Him, they would do well to closely read the text. There, it is explicitly said that “their eyes were kept from recognizing him” by God for His purposes (Luke 24:16). Later says Luke that their eyes were opened to recognize Him, and they did recognize Him (Luke 24:31).

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15, speaks of our resurrection body, which he, in another place, says is to be like “his glorious body” (Phil. 3:21). Look at this table, which shows the difference between the regular body and the glorified body:

Regular Body	Resurrection Body
Perishable (1 Cor. 15:42)	Imperishable (1 Cor. 15:42)
Sown in dishonor (1 Cor. 15:43)	Raised in glory (1 Cor. 15:43)
Sown in weakness (1 Cor. 15:43)	Raised in power (1 Cor. 15:43)
Sown a natural body (1 Cor. 15:44)	Raised a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:44)
Man of dust (1 Cor. 15:48)	Man of heaven (1 Cor. 15:48)
Bears the image of the man of dust (1 Cor. 15:49)	Will bear the image of the man of heaven (1 Cor. 15:49)
Perishable body (1 Cor. 15:53)	Imperishable body (1 Cor. 15:53)
Mortal body (1 Cor. 15:53)	Immortal body (1 Cor. 15:53)

Paul sees continuity between the regular/natural body and the spiritual/glorified body. He uses the sowing and reaping example to teach us about the resurrection body. There is both continuity and discontinuity. While this is not the place to speak of the resurrection body, I would like to cite Wayne Grudem on the meaning of “spiritual body” in 1 Corinthians 15:44 since some have tried from there to argue that Jesus did not have a physical body. Grudem writes:

By “spiritual body” Paul does not mean “immaterial,” but rather “suited to and responsive to the guidance of the Spirit.” In the Pauline epistles, the word “spiritual” (Gk. pneumatikos) never means “nonphysical” but rather “consistent with the character and activity of the Holy Spirit” (see, e.g., Rom. 1:11; 7:14; 1 Cor. 2:13, 15; 3:1; 14:37; Gal. 6:1 [“you who are spiritual”]; Eph. 5:19). The RSV translation, “It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body,” is very misleading, because Paul does not use the word that was available to him if he had meant to speak of a physical body (Gk. s?matikos), but rather uses the word psychikos, which means, in this context, “natural” (so NIV, NASB), that is, a body that is living in its own life and strength and in the characteristics of this present age but is not fully subject to and conforming to the character and will of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, a clearer paraphrase would be, “It is sown a natural body subject to the characteristics and desires of this age, and governed by its own sinful will, but it is raised a spiritual body, completely subject to the will of the Holy Spirit and responsive to the Holy Spirit’s guidance.” Such a body is not at all “nonphysical,” but it is a physical body raised to the degree of perfection for which God originally intended it.^[18]

Philip Schaff comments on the nature of the body:

it is sown a natural body—Gr. ‘an animal body,’ animated by the same vital principle which we have in common with the entire animal kingdom,—**it is raised a spiritual body**—not meaning a body simply of finer material than the present (the contrast does not lie in that), but a body whose animating principle is “the spirit,” or rational nature in its entirely purified and perfected condition; a body all whose organs and properties will be adapted to the inner and higher nature whose handmaid it is to be.^[3]

The Resurrection and Justification

Paul, in Romans 4, writes—

Rom. 4:23-25 But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, 24 but for ours also. It will be counted to us who **believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus** our Lord, 25 who was **delivered up for our trespasses** and **raised for our justification**.

The resurrection was necessary for our justification because His resurrection was the basis of us being born again (1 Pet. 1:3). Because His resurrection declared Him to be the victorious Risen Lord of all. Wayne Grudem explains this verse this way:

If God “raised us up with him” (Eph. 2:6), then, by virtue of our union with Christ, God’s declaration of approval of Christ is also his declaration of approval of us. When the Father in essence said to Christ, “All the penalty for sins has been paid and I find you not guilty but righteous in my sight,” he was thereby making the declaration that would also apply to us once we trusted in Christ for salvation. In this way Christ’s resurrection also gave final proof that he had earned our justification.^[19]

John Gill writes:

was raised again for our justification; he was raised again from the dead by his Father, to whom this is often ascribed; and by himself, by his own power, which proves him to be the mighty God; and this was done not only that he might live an immortal and glorious life in our nature, having finished the work he undertook and came about, but for “our justification”. He died in the room and stead of his people, and by dying made satisfaction for their sins; he rose again as their head and representative, and was legally discharged, acquitted, and justified, and they in him. Christ’s resurrection did not procure the justification of his people, that was done by his obedience and death; but was for the testification of it, that it might fully appear that sin was atoned for, and an everlasting righteousness was brought in; and for the application of it, or that Christ might live and see his righteousness imputed, and applied to all those for whom he had wrought it out.^[6]

Ellicott observes the connection between His death and resurrection for our justification:

The death of Christ is the proper cause of justification, or means of atonement, according to St. Paul; the resurrection of Christ is only the mediate or secondary cause of it. The atoning efficacy lay in His death, but the proof of that efficacy—the proof that it was really the Messiah who died—was to be seen in the Resurrection. The Resurrection, therefore, gave the greatest impulse to faith in the atoning efficacy of the death upon the cross, and in this way helped to bring about justification. Comp. especially 1Co. 15:17, “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins”—i.e., you have no guarantee that your sins have really been remitted; if the death of Christ had not been followed by His resurrection, the inference would have followed that it was merely the death of an ordinary man, and without any special saving efficacy.^[10]

Here I end our brief study of Christ’s resurrection.

The Ascension of Christ

Luke tells us that the Lord Jesus taught His disciples about the Kingdom of God for forty days between His resurrection and ascension. With the same body, He blessed His disciples and was taken up from them:

Acts 1:8-11 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” 9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, **he was lifted up**, and **a cloud took him** out of their sight. 10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 11 and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was **taken up from you into heaven**, **will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven**.”

The account is straightforward. As the Lord was speaking with His disciples, the time for Him to depart came. Therefore, He blesses them and gives them the promise of the Spirit and then is carried by a cloud into heaven. It was necessary for the Lord to depart so that the Holy Spirit would come. The Lord told His disciples—

John 16:7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: **it is to your advantage that I go away**, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, **I will send him to you**.

Indeed, after ten days, on Pentecost, the Spirit did come in power and glory. The ascension of Christ demonstrates that His mission was complete. He did what He was supposed to do on the earth. Now He will continue *His* work from heaven through the Holy Spirit. The resurrection and ascension of our Lord are connected with His enthronement as the King of the Universe. In Matthew, before departing He says—

Matt. 28:18 And Jesus came and said to them, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.**

All power is in His hands. It is He Who now sits on the throne of God (Rev. 3:21) and at the right hand of Power and Majesty (Acts 2:33-34; 5:31; 7:55-56; Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22). The right hand symbolizes the place of power and authority, and that is exactly what the Lord Jesus has. His ascension was also the inauguration of the kingdom given to Him in Daniel 7:13-14. As Daniel describes, the Son of Man went up to the Ancient of Days in His throne room, that is, God the Father and He received from the Father the kingdom and glory that belongs to Him and that He deserves. After His humiliation the Father highly exalted the humiliated Lord to the high position, so that everyone would bow down before Him and confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:5-11). On earth, was His time of humiliation, but now He reigns in majesty, power, and glory waiting for all His enemies to be made a footstool for His holy feet (Heb. 10:12-13). See also John 17:5.

That He is now in heaven does not mean that He is doing nothing, rather Scripture teaches us that He is the High Priest in heaven (Heb. 9:24-25). He exercises His priestly office from heaven. He intercedes for us. He mediates for us. He prays for us. Scripture also teaches that we spiritually share in the reign of Christ (Eph. 2:6).

Christ the Intercessor

Christ’s intercession is part of His priestly office. Christ as the High Priest of God’s people is there to help us and pray for us.

To intercede means “to plead on another’s behalf”^[20] and intercession means “Entreaty in favor of another, especially a prayer or petition to God in behalf of another.”^[21] Christ is up in heaven, sitting at the right hand of God, having finished His atoning work, having died in our stead now is in heaven representing us before the Father. Praying for us and pleading for us. He is not being sacrificed and offered over and over again, rather He points to the once-for-all-time sacrifice. There are a couple of places which speak of the intercessory work of Christ. I would like to take a look at both passages.

Romans 8:34

The first passage wherein we find something about Christ intercession is found in Romans 8. There we read:

Rom. 8:28-35 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33 **Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect?** It is God who justifies. 34 **Who is to condemn?** Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, **who indeed is interceding for us.** 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

After describing the indestructible golden chain of redemption, now Paul turns to encourage the believers. They are not to fear since the Sovereign God is on their side. There is no one to rightly bring a charge against us before God since it is God who through the merit of Christ and through faith in Christ has declared us righteous before Himself. Verse 33 is in a courtroom scene. God has already put His stamp of justification on His elect. Who is to condemn us? No one! Verse 1 says—

Rom. 8:1 There is therefore now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus.

It is impossible for us to be condemned by God since we are in Christ Jesus and Christ Jesus will not be condemned. Our status of “no condemnation” is solely based on the fact that we are in Christ. Christ was condemned and punished in our place so that we would not be condemned and punished. Christ purchased our peace. The direct reasons given in verse 34 that we will not be condemned are that 1) Christ died for us, 2) Christ was raised and 3) Christ is interceding for us.

1. That Christ died for us and in Paul’s writings, the death of the Lord is substitutionary as we saw **above**. Therefore, it would be unjust for God to punish Christ for our sins and yet still punish and condemn us for the same sins Christ died for.
2. Christ was raised, which demonstrated God’s vindication of Christ and the satisfaction that He had in the work of the Son on our behalf. Romans 4:25 says that He was raised for our justification, that is, His resurrection assured us that God was satisfied with His work and as we are in union with Christ when God was pleased with the work of the Son, He was also pleased with us for His sake.
3. The third reason given is something that Christ is doing now. The previous two were things done in the past, yet the third is in the present. Christ is now interceding for us. Even when we sin, we may get the thoughts from the Accuser that we are condemned and that we are not children of God, yet John assures us that we have an Advocate with the Father who is more than willing to accept and cleanse us since He is the propitiation for the whole world (1 John 1:8-2:2).

The intercessory work of the Son is His prayer based on His finished work on Calvary for all His elect. We read in Romans 8:26 of the intercessory work of the Spirit. The Spirit prays with us and intercedes according to God’s will. So likewise the Lord Jesus, based on His finished work on the cross, prays that the benefits purchased for us on the cross be applied. The Father who did not spare His Son will likewise give us all good things necessary for us. Those good things were procured for us on the cross and are bestowed upon us as the Son intercedes on our behalf.

Albert Barnes comments on the intercessory work of Christ, “Who pleads our cause; who aids and assists us; who presents our interests before the mercy-seat in the heavens. For this purpose he ascended to heaven; Heb 7:25. This is the fourth consideration which the apostle urges for the security of Christians drawn from the work of Christ. By all these, he argues

their complete security from being subject to condemnation by him who shall pronounce the doom of all mankind, and therefore their complete safety in the day of judgment. Having the Judge of all for our friend, we are safe.”^[2] Calvin notes that Christ being our mediator ensures us that He is favorable toward us and we should not be dreadful:

Who intercedes, etc. It was necessary expressly to add this, lest the Divine majesty of Christ should terrify us. Though, then, from his elevated throne he holds all things in subjection under his feet, yet Paul represents him as a Mediator; whose presence it would be strange for us to dread, since he not only kindly invites us to himself, but also appears an intercessor for us before the Father. But we must not measure this intercession by our carnal judgment; for we must not suppose that he humbly supplicates the Father with bended knees and expanded hands; but as he appears continually, as one who died and rose again, and as his death and resurrection stand in the place of eternal intercession, and have the efficacy of a powerful prayer for reconciling and rendering the Father propitious to us, he is justly said to intercede for us.^[14]

And oh, do not underestimate the power of Christ’s prayer! No prayer of His was unanswered. He foretells that Peter will backslide and then since that, He says that He has prayed for Him (Luke 22:32). Now what we would expect is if the Lord told Peter, “I have prayed for you, and if you turn back, strengthen your brothers.” But the Lord says no such thing, yet in full assurance declares: but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And **when you have turned again**, strengthen your brothers.” He is certain that Peter will turn and this certainty is based on the fact that the Lord of glory has prayed that Peter’s faith may not fail.

Hebrews 7:25

The second passage to look to is in the book of Hebrews. The book of Hebrews is very clear and straightforward about Christ’s priestly office. It speaks about the New Covenant which He inaugurated, of Him being the mediator and High Priest of God’s people. So, no wonder that we would find something about His intercessory work here.

Heb. 7:20-27 And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, 21 but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘**You are a priest forever.**’” 22 This makes Jesus the **guarantor of a better covenant**. 23 The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, 24 but **he holds his priesthood permanently**, because he continues forever. 25 Consequently, **he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him**, since he **always lives to make intercession for them**. 26 For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. 27 He has **no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily**, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since **he did this once for all** when he offered up himself.

The argument from v. 25 is the fact that Jesus is the eternal High Priest of God’s people. He is the priest after the of Melchizedek, not Aaron. His is a different kind of priesthood, though not radically different. The fact that He is a perfect Savior Who will save completely, to the end and uttermost is based on the fact that His priesthood is forever and therefore, He is able to always make intercession for those who draw near to God through Him (cf. John 6:44). His intercessory work is not a new type of work, rather it is simply the continuation and flows from of His finished work on the cross. Verse 27 says that there is no need for Him to present a new sacrifice daily, but His sacrifice was once for all time 2000 years ago. That sacrifice is perfect and is sufficient to save all God’s people. His intercessory work is part of His priestly office. The intercessory work of Christ is based upon His sacrifice, through which He bought for the elect the benefits that God wills to bestow upon them. He has made a sacrifice and now He intercedes for the same group of people for whom the sacrifice was made. Both in Romans 8:34 and in Hebrews 7:25 the group under question are the believers. The wicked run away from God (e.g., Rom. 3:11), but believers delight to be in His presence and He draws them to Himself (John 6:44). The “us” in Romans 8:34 are the same group of people who are spoken of in the Golden Chain of Redemption (Rom. 8:29-30), who have God on their side (Rom. 8:31), for all of whom God gave up His Son and gives them all things (Rom. 8:32). They are then explicitly called “God’s elect” (Rom. 8:33) and the “us” for whom Christ is interceding (Rom. 8:34).

He is able to save us completely since we receive forgiveness of sins based on His finished work. We are forgiven because of the fact that He pleads with God on our behalf. Based on His sacrifice, He does not present God with a new sacrifice but points to the once-for-all-time sacrifice on our behalf. Concerning v. 25b Gill writes:

seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them; Christ ever lives as God, he is the living God; and though he died as man, he is risen from the dead, and will not die again, but live for evermore; and he lives as Mediator and Redeemer, and particularly as a priest; one branch of whose office it is to intercede for his people: this he does now in heaven; not by vocal prayer and supplication, at least not as in the days of his flesh; or as if he was supplicating an

angry Judge; nor as controverting, or litigating, a point the court of heaven; but by the appearance of his person for them; by the presentation of his sacrifice, blood, and righteousness; by declaring his will, that such and such blessings be bestowed on such and such persons; and by recommending the prayers of his people, and removing the charges and accusations of Satan: the things he intercedes for are, the conversion of his that are in a state of nature; the consolation of distressed ones; fresh discoveries of pardoning grace to fallen believers; renewed strength to oppose sin, exercise grace, discharge duty, and bear up under temptations, and deliverance out of them; perseverance in faith and holiness, and eternal glorification; and he intercedes for these things; not for all the world, but for all the elect, even though transgressors; and he is very fit for this work, as the following verse shows; he is the one and only Mediator; and he is a very prevalent intercessor, he always succeeds; and he does this work readily, willingly, cheerfully, and freely; and all this proves him to be able to save; for though the impetration of salvation is by his death, the application of it is owing to his interceding life; had he died and not lived again, he could not have saved to the uttermost; his life is the security of his people's, and he lives for them, and as their representative; the blessed, effects of which they constantly enjoy.^[6]

Barnes comments on the intercession of Christ in this passage, in these words:

He constantly presents the merits of his death as a reason why we should be saved. The precise mode, however, in which he makes intercession in heaven for his people is not revealed. The general meaning is, that he undertakes their cause, and assists them in overcoming their foes and in their endeavors to live a holy life; compare 1Jo 2:1. He does in heaven whatever is necessary to obtain for us grace and strength; secures the aid which we need against our foes; and is the pledge or security for us that the law shall be honored, and the justice and truth of God maintained, though we are saved. It is reasonable to presume that this is somehow by the presentation of the merits of his great sacrifice, and that that is the ground on which all this grace is obtained. As that is infinite, we need not fear that it will ever be exhausted.^[2]

Christ's intercession is the reason we overcome sin and are able to stand in the battle against sin.

Christ the Returning Judge

See [Christ the Judge](#) above.

§5 The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself

5. The Lord Jesus, by his **perfect obedience** and **sacrifice of himself**, **1** which he through the eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, **2** hath **fully satisfied the justice of God**, **3** procured reconciliation, **4** and **purchased an everlasting inheritance** in the kingdom of heaven, **5** for **all those whom the Father hath given unto Him**. **6**

1. Rom. 5:18-19; Eph. 5:2
2. Heb. 9:14, 16; 10:10, 14
3. Rom. 3:25-26; Heb. 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10
4. 2 Cor. 5:18-19; Col. 1:20-23
5. Heb. 9:15; Rev. 5:9-10
6. John 17:2

How did the **Lord Jesus** purchase **an everlasting inheritance** for **all those whom the Father hath given unto Him** (Heb. 9:15; Rev. 5:9-10)? By His **perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself** (Rom. 5:6-10, 18-19). His **perfect obedience** refers to what theologians call the *active obedience of Christ*. This is His obedience to the law of God to provide our righteousness. Through faith in Christ, His obedience to the law and to God is counted as our own. We stand clean in His righteousness. The **sacrifice of Himself** theologians call the *passive obedience of Christ*. It is passive because the sufferings came upon Himself. He endured the wrath of God due to our sin, was crucified and died in our place. It is through His active and passive obedience that Christ **fully satisfied the justice of God**. He brought us **reconciliation** with our God. By faith, we are no longer enemies of God, but children! He gave us an **everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven**, i.e., in eternity and in the new world. All these things and every spiritual blessing and grace are thanks to the twofold obedience of Christ.

The Active Obedience of Christ

The active obedience of Christ is

...Jesus' actively fulfilling all the law of God. This active obedience is imputed to the believer when he believes, that is, God reckons to the believer the righteousness of Christ when the believer trusts in Christ and His work.^[22]

This is the doctrine which teaches that the Lord never broke a commandment and obeyed the whole Law of God is His active obedience. He had to obey, He was active in obeying God. In contrast, His passive obedience was in receiving the curse of the law on our behalf. It was something done to Him, not by Him. The main passage that speaks of the Lord's active obedience is Romans 5:18-19. Therefore, now I will attempt to give a case for Christ's active obedience based on the exegesis of this passage.

Rom. 5:18-19 Therefore, as **one trespass led to condemnation for all men**, so **one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men**. 19 For as by the **one man's disobedience the many were made sinners**, so by the **one man's obedience the many will be made righteous**.

Paul in Romans 5:12ff speaks first of the federal headship of Adam and then of Christ. To be a federal head means to be a representative for a group of people. In the case of Adam, it is for all those who descended from him (aside from the Lord Jesus Christ, [see above](#)). In the case of Christ, He is the federal head of all believers. For all who are in the covenant of which He is the mediator. Adam's one trespass, i.e., eating from the forbidden fruit, brought condemnation and damnation upon all whom he represented in the Garden, i.e., all men. This is the doctrine of Adam's federal headship and it has implications upon a lot of things including Total Depravity ([see chapter 6 of the confession](#), especially paragraphs 1-2). But Christ's one act of righteousness, which is best seen to represent His perfect obedience throughout His life is the source of justification and life for all men. Obviously, it does not mean that justification and life have come upon every single human being without exception. But it means that He earned, and His obedience leads to, the justification and life for all who are *in Him*. As He is the representative of the elect alone. He represents the people for whom He died. As the High Priest, He offers the sacrifice on behalf of the people in His covenant. He prays for those in the covenant. He mediates for those in the covenant. He intercedes for those in the covenant. In v. 19, Paul focuses on the group of people for whom Christ purchased life and justification for. Here he calls them "the many." As we had Adam as our federal head that means that we were under God's wrath and condemnation, but God by sending His Son who obeyed in our place and for us has made us righteous. The text says that just like the disobedience of Adam led to the condemnation of "the many", so likewise Christ's obedience will lead to the justification of "the many." In v. 19, Paul speaks of one group, i.e., "the many" and he speaks about their condemnation under Adam and their later justification under Christ.

The necessity of Christ's active obedience is explained by Wayne Grudem, in this manner—

If Christ had only earned forgiveness of sins for us, then we would not merit heaven. Our guilt would have been removed, but we would simply be in the position of Adam and Eve before they had done anything good or bad and before they had passed a time of probation successfully. To be established in righteousness forever and to have their fellowship with God made sure forever, Adam and Eve had to obey God perfectly over a period of time. Then God would have looked on their faithful obedience with pleasure and delight, and they would have lived with him in fellowship forever.

For this reason, Christ had to live a life of perfect obedience to God in order to earn righteousness for us. He had to obey the law for his whole life on our behalf so that the positive merits of his perfect obedience would be counted for us. Sometimes this is called Christ's "active obedience," while his suffering and dying for our sins is called his "passive obedience." Paul says his goal is that he may be found in Christ, "not having a righteousness of [his] own based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ the righteousness from God that depends on faith" (Phil. 3:9). It is not just moral neutrality that Paul knows he needs from Christ (that is, a clean slate with sins forgiven), but a positive moral righteousness. And he knows that that cannot come from himself, but must come through faith in Christ. Similarly, Paul says that Christ has been made "our righteousness" (1 Cor. 1:30). And he quite explicitly says, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19).^[23]

Another passage that speaks of Christ's active obedience is Matthew 3:15. Christ had no need to earn His righteousness, as

He was already perfectly sinless, but to identify Himself with His people He went and was baptized on their behalf, to “fulfill all righteousness.”

Sacrifice of Himself

See Hebrews 7:27; 9:12, 14. The Scriptures speak of Christ being both the High Priest Who brings the offering and also of Himself being the Offering. He alone is the only fit, capable and worthy One of standing between man and God and He is also the only One by Whose blood He can satisfy the wrath of God.

Fully Satisfied the Justice of God

The fact that the Lord Christ was raised from the dead, ascended and exalted at the right hand of God proves beyond doubt that God was pleased with the sacrifice of His beloved Son. The justice of God was certainly satisfied for the ones for whom Christ died. Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10 speak of Christ being a propitiation. “The word propitiation carries the basic idea of appeasement or satisfaction, specifically toward God. Propitiation is a two-part act that involves appeasing the wrath of an offended person and being reconciled to him.”^[24] Christ certainly satisfied the wrath of God on behalf of those for whom He died. Although Christ earned our justification on the cross, the fruits of salvation are not applied until God grants us faith and repentance, as it is through faith that He is our propitiation (Rom. 3:25). Christ was the once-for-all-time sacrifice that satisfied the wrath and justice of God.

Reconciliation with God and Particularity

Christ the Lord, by the sacrifice of Himself, has cleansed us from sin, imputed His perfect righteousness to us and brought us into a loving and harmonious relationship with God. That is what it means that Christ has reconciled us. To “reconcile” means “To reestablish a close relationship between...To make compatible, harmonious, or consistent.”^[25] How a relationship is reestablished is seen from the federal headship of Adam. In him, before the Fall we too were, as he was our representative, righteous before God. But as he fell from the state of his innocence, so likewise we fell with him and lost the harmonious relationship we had in him with God.

There are a couple of passages that speak about Christ’s reconciliation of us to God. I would like to look at one specifically. The text is 2 Corinthians 5:18-19. The other text which speaks of God reconciliation is found in Colossians 1:20-23 and is to be interpreted in the same way that 2 Corinthians 5 is interpreted. There is no major difference.

2 Corinthians 5:14-21 – through Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself

This is going to be a little bit lengthy and that because I decided that we cannot rightly deal with verses 18-19 if we do not understand the clear context of Christ’s death for a specific people. The context speaks of the ministry of reconciliation, which we as believers and evangelists, have received to share with the world. We are to call everyone to repentance and faith in Christ. In verse 14 Paul says that the love of Christ controls, constrains and compels us based on the fact that Christ has died for all. But we must dig deeper to understand the meaning of the word “all” in this context. To better understand the passage, we can illustrate what vv. 14-15 are saying in a table:

The Action	The Result
One has died for all	All have died
He died for all	“...no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised”

Christ’s death was not His death alone, but also the death of “all” for whom He died. How can this be if this speaks of all men without exception? For all men were already dead in sin and trespasses because of Adam (Eph. 2:1-3), but this speaks of Christ’s substitutionary death. This is seen from the fact that Paul speaks of us being united to Christ in His death. See for example Galatians 2:20—

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Who else but the elect can say these words? Can any reprobate truly say that they were united with Christ in His death and they frustrated the purpose of His death? Because from Galatians 2:20 it is clear that the result from being united with Christ in His death is to live with and for Him. So much so that Paul says that he no longer lives, because he considers himself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ (Rom. 6:11). When the Lord Christ died on the cross for our sin, we also died with Him. We were united with Him in His death and that is the assurance to Paul in Romans 6:5 that we also will be united with Him in the

resurrection. Now we go back to 2 Corinthians 5, there the *all* are *all who are in Him*. All who are in the covenant which the Christ mediates. All whom He represents, namely, all the elect. This is not the only time that Paul uses such a language, just take a look at a passage from 1 Corinthians 15—

1 Cor. 15:22-23 For as **in Adam all die**, so also **in Christ shall all be made alive**. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming **those who belong to Christ**.

It is clear what Paul is saying here. No need to go crazy about the “all’s” because they are self-explanatory. What Paul is saying is clear. What he says is that in Adam all humanity, which was represented by him in the Garden, died (Rom. 5:12ff). But in Christ, all shall be made alive. There is not a single reason to believe that Paul had here in mind any other than the elect. This is seen from those who will be resurrected. First of all, Christ was raised, but when He comes, at His Parousia, those who belong to Him will also be raised. Not everyone who has ever lived. But specifically, those who belong to Him, who have His Spirit in them (Rom. 8:9), i.e., the elect, the Christians. They are the “all” who “shall be made alive” of v. 22. See [1 Corinthians 15:22-23, ‘in Christ shall all be made alive’](#).

So likewise, in 2 Corinthians 5, Paul uses the same language. He does not mean every single human being, but all who are under the federal headship of Christ the Lord. When He died, we died with Him, united to Him so that we may share in His resurrection and life (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:3, 8; Col. 2:20; 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:11). **Verse 15** gives us the purpose of His death. This is seen from the use of the ἵνα (*hina*) purpose clause. The ἵνα gives us the purpose and goal for a thing. Do not think that the rendering of ἵνα as “might” or “may” gives conditionality or uncertainty about a thing. The ἵνα (*hina*, G2443) may be translated as “that, in order that, so that.”^[11] It shows the purpose of the thing done. The purpose of Christ’s death was that the group for which He died, the “all”, may no longer live for themselves, i.e., in sin, but live for and in Him who for their sake died and was raised. Unless we want to say that God is frustrated in His purposes, which is impossible (Job 23:13; 42:2; Prov. 19:21; Isa. 14:27; 46:10; Dan. 4:35; Eph. 1:11), we must accept that the group for which Christ died were the elect, i.e., the believers united with Him on the cross. Many are the texts which speak of Christ’s specific and atoning death for the believers and that we will discuss when I try to present my case for Limited Atonement. But v. 15 says that not only did our Lord die for us, but He was raised for us. As He died for us and we were united with Him in His atoning death, so likewise we will share with Him in a resurrection body like His (Rom. 6:5). [See above for Romans 4:25](#). As we were united with Christ in His death, so likewise we are united with Him in His resurrection, which is the guarantee for ours.

In **v. 17**, Paul concludes based on what was said in vv. 14-15 that if we indeed are in Christ, i.e., in the group of the “all”, therefore we are a new creation. Each of us. We have been made new by the death of Christ. Our old stony heart was destroyed and replaced by a heart of flesh, which loves God and His Law. **Verse 18**: This blessing which we have received is from God, and therefore not from man. It is He that has reconciled us to Himself. It is not we who have approached God and were reconciled to Him. He, the offended party, has come to us thanks to the death of Christ and forgiven us and brought us into a loving relationship with Him, our Redeemer. It is He who has received us into His favor. It is a thing done by Him based on Christ’s death on our behalf. God imputed our sin to Him and His righteousness to us. Not only has God reconciled us to Christ, but He has given the ministry of reconciliation to the believers, that through them God may reconcile the *world* to Himself.

Verse 19: Paul speaks of Christ’s reconciliation of the world to Himself as a past action. God was reconciling the world to Himself. He did that on the cross of Calvary. The way in which He did reconcile the world to Himself was to not count their trespasses and sins against them, i.e., forgive them of their wickedness. Now we should pay attention to the word “world.” It is here that the non-Calvinists see universal rather than particular atonement. This is the reason that I did not start the exegesis of vv. 18-19, which is the subject at hand in v. 18, but went back to v. 14. I believe that I fairly demonstrated the particularity of the death of Christ in vv. 14-15. It is not for every single human being that was made. His death was particular, which is the basis of this reconciliation. For God to be righteous and not count our sin against us means that He has counted them against a Substitute and punished them in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). Unless we believe that Paul contradicts himself within a few sentences we must throw away the very simplistic understanding of the word *world* meaning the whole humanity without exception. The same group, which was made a new creation, for whom Christ died, is still under discussion, but now Paul speaks in the context of evangelism. We have the message that God on the cross reconciled the world to Himself and that is the basis that we plead with people and God makes His plea through us that people should be reconciled to Him.

The use of the word “world” gauds against the error to believe that we should not preach the gospel to anyone we do not think is elect. The message of reconciliation is to be preached to everyone and God will draw His elect to Christ. That the word *world* is not used to mean “all humanity without exception” may be seen from Luke 2:1; John 7:4; 12:19; 13:1; 14:17; Acts 19:27; Romans 1:8; Colossians 1:6; Revelation 12:9; 13:3, 7-8. The word *world* here means humanity **without distinction**, instead of all *without exception*. Meaning, all people from everywhere and not all Jews or all who we think are the elect. It is proper to use the word “world” when speaking of Christ’s death as the Bible does that. But we must not go to the simplistic understanding, which contradicts the context of the present passage. It is proper to speak of Christ’s death for

9 And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and **by your blood you ransomed people for God** from every **tribe** and **language** and **people** and **nation**, 10 and **you have made them** a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

The death of Christ is both *particular* and *universal* here. But obviously in two senses. It is *particular* in the sense that Christ is here spoken of to have shed His precious blood for a purpose. That purpose was to ransom a specific people for God. To purchase them for God. It is not an “iffy” purchasing and ransom which is spoken of, but a definite one. It is to purchase people from every tribe, language, people and nation. It is not, pay attention, to ransom every tribe, language, people and nation, but to ransom people *from* every... Here is seen the particularity of the atonement. All those whom He has purchased for God He has in the proper time made a kingdom and priests to God. In the present time. The *universality* is seen from the fact that Christ has ransomed people for God for all four corners of the world. From every place, Christ has died for people and bought them for God. Those for whom He died, He will not fail to bring to be priests and a kingdom for our God. If we see, as I said the particularity and the universality of the atonement in Revelation 5, we may properly and biblically speak of Christ’s death being for the whole world and yet at the same time not thereby meaning also for the reprobate.

Verse 20 in light of Revelation 5:9 gives us the motivation to go and seek people for God. It is God who works through us to call His people. **Verse 21:** We have briefly dealt with [this verse above](#). The particularity is clear and enforces our understanding of the word “world” in v. 19. He was made sin for “our sake” the same people for whom Christ died in vv. 14 and 15. So that, not maybe, perhaps, if they like it if they so choose. No, ἵνα (*hina*), in order that, for the purpose of that, so that we surely will become the righteousness of God in Him.

Thank you, Lord, for this great message of reconciliation that you have to give us that we may have the honor to represent you in the world. Thank You that You have reconciled us to Yourself. The offended party coming to us and cleansing us from our sin and bringing us into a loving relationship with You. Glory be to the Triune!

The Believers’ Inheritance in Christ

The Confession uses the terminology of Hebrews 9:15 to speak specifically of our inheritance in Christ in God’s kingdom, both the present and the future. The phrases Kingdom of Heaven and Kingdom of God are used interchangeably in the Bible (e.g., Matt. 19:23-24). Here I would like to take a look at some passages that speak of us being heirs of God through Christ and what our inheritance in Him actually is. When we speak of inheritance one famous passage comes to mind. In Matthew 5:5, the meek, i.e., the believers, are promised that they will inherit the earth. This promise comes from the Psalms—

Ps. 37:7-11 Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! 8 Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. 9 For the evildoers shall be cut off, but **those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land**. 10 In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there. 11 But **the meek shall inherit the land** and delight themselves in abundant peace.

This promise is given in a context where the people of God are being persecuted. The promise is to the effect that they may be at peace and not look at things from a temporal perspective, but an eternal perspective. The wicked may persecute the righteous in this life and in the present earth, but they will be shaken off from the world by God’s judgment. They will not inherit the blessings to come upon the people of God. They will not be at peace (Isa. 48:22). The promise in Psalm 37 seems to be specifically about the land of Canaan, but the Lord in Matthew 5 expands it to include the whole earth (cf. Ps. 25:13; 37:22, 29, 34; Isa. 60:21; especially Rom. 4:13).

The Bible also speaks of us inheriting and receiving the consummated **Kingdom of God** and **eternal life** (Jas. 2:5; 1 Cor. 15:50; Matt. 25:34; 19:29; 1 Pet. 3:7). It is not that we now do not have eternal life, but we will experience eternal life in all of its fullness and be in the Kingdom which was prepared by God for our sake from eternity past. Ephesians 1:11-18 is a long section in which Paul tells us that the **Spirit** is the guarantee that we will indeed acquire possession of the inheritance, which is the Kingdom to come (cf. Matt. 25:34). So that Christ might be magnified not only in this age but in the age to come. Hebrews 6:12 calls us to endurance and faith so that we may have the full assurance of hope until we **inherit the promises**. All the promises of God, which are in Christ, are the believers’ also (2 Cor. 1:20). This does not only speak of the consummated Kingdom, but also of our eternal life, eternal happiness, and joy, our fellowship with the Triune God in harmony, our resurrection, worldwide peace, cleansing us from every bit of sin, living in perfect righteousness before God, etc...

1 Peter 1:4 speaks of “an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for” us. This is our **complete redemption**. Our resurrection and finished sanctification are what Peter has in mind here (1 Pet. 1:5, 9, 13). Romans 8:17 speaks of us being **co-heirs with Christ**. That which He has inherited, we may also share with Him in it. For example, as He sits on the throne of the Universe ruling everything, so likewise Ephesians 2:6 says that we are seated with Christ in heavenly places. As He received glory after His suffering, so likewise the believers will be glorified and honored by God for their suffering for His sake (e.g., Rom. 8:18, 21, 29).

Galatians 3:29 tells us that we are **children of Abraham** based on the fact that we are in Christ. As Gentiles that he was largely writing to, it would have been crazy to say that non-Jews are children of Abraham. But that is not so with Christ. As He was a true Jew, so whoever is in Him, i.e., whoever is represented by Him, is also a Jew through Him. All Christians are children of Abraham not because they are physical descendants of Abraham, but because they are united to Christ, the true child of Abraham, and through Him, they are also children of Abraham. It is in light of this that Paul calls believers the **Israel of God** in Galatians 6:16. This is likewise the case of the believers, both Jewish and Gentile being the Israel of God. As they are in Him who is the Servant of the LORD in Isaiah, who is called Israel (Isa. 41:8; 49:1-7), so likewise as they were through Him children of Abraham, they are also the Israel of God. This is also seen from Ephesians 2:11ff, where we are told that believing Jews and believing Gentiles, have become **one new man**. That would be the New Israel or Spiritual/True Israel. We were made citizens of “the commonwealth of Israel” in Christ (Eph. 2:12-13, 19).

From Ephesians 2, Paul continues the discussion underhand concerning believing Jews and Gentiles. In Ephesians 3:6, Paul speaks of a mystery, something that was hidden, but now revealed. This mystery is the fact that the believing Gentiles belong to the same body as the believing Jews, that is, they belong to the **commonwealth of Israel**. They belong to Abraham to whom the promises of God were made concerning having offspring as the stars of heaven. The believing Gentiles will inherit along with the believing Jews the promises made to Israel in the OT as all the promises of God find their Yes (fulfillment) in Him and His body (2 Cor. 1:20).

Our inheritance consists of us obtaining eternal life, the New Heavens and New Earth, i.e., the consummated Kingdom of God—the New Jerusalem. Becoming spiritual Jews in Christ. Becoming the Israel of God in Christ. Becoming co-heirs in everything that Christ has inherited from the Father. Glory to the God Who has planned this from long ago and purposed to bless us, undeserving sinners in the Beloved.

§6 The virtue, efficacy, and benefit thereof were communicated to the elect in all ages

6. Although the price of redemption was not actually paid by Christ till after his incarnation, yet the **virtue, efficacy, and benefit thereof were communicated to the elect in all ages**, successively from the beginning of the world, **1** in and by those **promises, types, and sacrifices** wherein he was revealed, and signified to be the seed which should bruise the serpent's head; **2** and the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, **3** being the same yesterday, and to-day and for ever. **4**

1. Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 4:1-9
2. Gen. 3:15; 1 Peter 1:10-11
3. Rev. 13:8
4. Heb. 13:8

The **price of redemption** was **paid by Christ...after His incarnation**, at the cross (Gal. 3:13; 4:4-5). But this does not mean that its effect did not apply to those who were in happy communion with God. In fact, **chapter 7:3** it is said of the Covenant of Grace that “it is alone by the grace of this covenant that all the posterity of fallen Adam that ever were saved did obtain life and blessed immortality”. This is the covenant of salvation by Christ. **Chapter 7:2** says the following about this “covenant of grace, wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life, his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.” This is the New Covenant. All the elect before the Incarnation and cross shared in the blessings of the New Covenant even though it was not yet established. They enjoyed the **virtue, efficacy, and benefit** of having Christ as their High Priest and being in His covenant. All these things were communicated to them before the cross. Redemption by Christ was revealed in the various **promises, types, and sacrifices** which God gave **from the beginning of the world**. Even in the promise of **the seed which should bruise the serpent's head**, which is also called the Protoevangelium (Gen. 3:15). He was the sacrifice that would save anyone who would put their faith in Him. He was **the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world** (Rev. 13:8 KJV), meaning that He was the sacrifice for God's people even before the creation, **being the same yesterday, and to-day and for ever** (Heb. 13:8). This is the certainty of God's plan and redemption of sinners that the saints before the Incarnation shared in the same blessings as we now do even though the

price of enjoying these blessings was not yet paid. Yet so certain was God's plan and promise that these saints of old could participate in the blessings of Christ and His covenant as if the price was paid.

The Retroactive Blood of Christ

Retroactive means "Influencing or applying to a period prior to enactment".^[26] The blood of Christ was active even in the Old Testament. The only way by which people are saved is by faith, and that faith is based on God and His promises, and that was no different in Old Testament times. In the time of Adam, after the Fall, it was in the Seed who would crush the head of the serpent, who was the object of hope (Gen. 3:15). In the time of Noah, the Ark functioned as a picture of being engrafted in Christ to escape the judgment of God. In the time of Abraham, it was the promise that through his Seed the nations would be blessed. Under Moses, it was the sacrifices and types of the Temple. With the Davidic covenant, the people were expecting a King. All those covenants pointed to the one central covenant of Scripture, the New Covenant, whose mediator is Christ the Lord. It is by virtue of this covenant that anyone who was ever saved is saved. Because this is the covenant which Christ mediates. This is the covenant which has as its head Christ the Lord and promises of eternal life and complete forgiveness (Heb. 8:6-13).

Okay, but how were the promises of the coming New Covenant a reality for the Old Testament saints? By virtue of the Covenant of Grace. In 1689 Federalist understanding, the Covenant of Grace is the New Covenant in promise form, i.e., it was the New Covenant before it was established. We reject the Westminster understanding of the covenants in the Old Testament being administrations of the one Covenant of Grace. Rather we believe that the covenants of the Old Testament were of works or dichotomous and only the New Covenant is purely and truly the Covenant of Grace. For more on this see my case in [chapter 7 for 1689 Federalism](#). It is by virtue of the Covenant of Grace in promise form that all the elect prior to the death of Christ and the establishment of the Covenant of Grace in time, i.e., the establishment of the New Covenant were saved. The Lord God did not count the sin of the elect under the Old Testament against them but cleansed and regenerated them based on the certain finished work of Christ on their behalf in the future. This is seen, for example, from **Romans 3**—

Rom. 3:23-26 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are **justified by his grace** as a gift, **through the redemption that is in Christ** Jesus, 25 whom **God put forward as a propitiation by his blood**, to be **received by faith**. This was to show God's righteousness, because **in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins**. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Let us notice a few things about this glorious passage of Sola Fide. I think it is absolutely clear that Paul argues here that justification has always been by faith. But not only that, but this justification is likewise by grace and it is a gift. This is based on the redemption that is in Christ, i.e., His atoning death. God, who put Christ as a propitiation, i.e., a sacrifice that satisfies divine wrath and brings divine favor, purposed for Him to be received by faith. This was by believing according to the knowledge they had in the types and shadows. They obviously did not possess as much knowledge as we have been privileged with, yet still, salvation was by grace and thanks to Christ. Justification by faith under the OT was based upon Christ's future propitiatory death. Justification by faith in New Testament times is based upon Christ's past propitiatory death.

God, in His patience, passed over those sins committed by the elect prior to Christ, not punishing them immediately because He had in eternity purposed to save those people, but waited until Christ the Lord was sacrificed on their behalf. Paul says the fact that God passed over former sins is to show His righteousness. It would not have been righteous if God passed over their sins without the proper punishment for those sins. But Paul had already declared that Christ was the propitiation—Christ was the sacrifice for sin and He was to be received by faith. It is based on Christ's sacrifice that God can forgive and yet remain most just. From this, we learn that every sin will be punished either in the Substitute or in the sinner in Hell.

Another way to understand this passage, which some commentators defend (Schaff, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, Henry Alford) is that there is a distinct difference between this passing over and forgiveness. Passing over sins and offenses is connected with God's patience, but forgiveness is a matter of grace.

Barnes comments may be viewed as support for the first view by pointing to Hebrews 9:15:

Paul has the very same idea in Heb 9:15, "And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might

receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” It may be noticed also that the expression in Heb 9:20, “at this time,” that is, in the gospel age, requires us to understand the other clause, “sins that are past,” as pointing to sin committed under former dispensations. Nor is there any fear of lending support to the doctrine of universal salvation. if we espouse this view. the sins remitted in past ages being obviously those of believers only.^[2]

Let us now turn our attention to **Hebrews 9:15**.

Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that **those who are called** may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that **redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant**.

John Owen comments on the calling in this way in his great exposition of Hebrews:

It was the design of God, in this whole dispensation, that all the called should receive the promise; and if they do not so, his counsel, and that in the greatest work of his wisdom, power, and grace, is frustrated. They are the “called according to his purpose,” Rom 8:28; — those who obtain the inheritance “being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,” Eph 1:11. God here puts forth his almighty power, that his purpose, or the counsel of his will, may be established, in giving the inheritance unto all that are called: “Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified,” or gave them the whole eternal inheritance, Rom 8:30.^[27]

He subsequently mentions that this *calling* does not only concern them from the Old Testament, but all the called of God. Though, in my opinion, the Old Testament saints are foremost in the passage especially in connection with the “first covenant” that is mentioned.

Barnes also comments that this concerns believers from both testaments:

For the redemption of the transgression that were “under the first testament - The covenant or arrangement under Moses. The general idea here is, that these were offences for which no expiation could be made by the sacrifices under that dispensation, or from which the blood then shed could not redeem. This general idea may include two particulars.

(1) that they who had committed transgressions under that covenant, and who could not be fully pardoned by the imperfect sacrifices then made, would receive a full forgiveness of all their sins in the great day of account through the blood of Christ. Though the blood of bulls and goats could not expiate, yet they offered that blood in faith; they relied on the promised mercy of God; they looked forward to a perfect sacrifice - and now the blood of the great atonement offered as a “full” expiation for all their sins, would be the ground of their acquittal in the last day.

(2) that the blood of Christ would now avail for the remission of all those sins which could not be expiated by the sacrifices offered under the Law. It not only contemplated the remission of all the offences committed by the truly pious under that Law, but would now avail to put away sin entirely. No sacrifice which people could offer would avail, but the blood of Christ would remove all that guilt.

That they which are called - Alike under the old covenant and the new.^[2]

Lastly, Schaff’s comments are in the same vein and help us see the passage in its context:

And for this cause (for the reason that His blood is thus efficacious, Heb 9:14, or because He has performed this great work, Heb 9:11-14) **he is mediator of a new** (emphatic) **covenant, in order that, death having taken place** (viz. His own) for redemption from (or expiration of) **the transgressions under the first covenant, they that have been called** (‘partakers of a heavenly calling,’ chap. Heb 3:1) **may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance**. The first covenant left its transgressions unforgiven. It waited for the offering that had efficacy. The death of Christ, therefore, has a double work. It is offered once for all, and extends its efficacy forward to the end of time and backward to the entrance of the Law. It is the procuring cause of forgiveness for all dispensations (see Rom 3:24-26). The emphasis of the last words is on ‘may receive the promise,’ i.e. be put in possession of what was promised—the eternal inheritance, the blessing of the Gospel-, ‘the good things to come,’ including the eternal life, which is the completion of them all.... As the writer is speaking of the Old Covenant, those ‘who are called’ refers properly to the Jews, but the principle applies to the Gentiles also, and to all economies.^[3]

It is Christ who mediates the New Covenant to which all believers are called and chosen into. Christ's death is the action that redeems believing Old Testament saints from all their sins as it is now the ground of our salvation. Salvation has always been by grace and by Christ precious blood from Adam until He comes to take us home. See also [here](#) for Hebrews 9:15.

Revealed through Shadows and Types

See [chapter 7](#) of the confession on the types and shadows. For types in the [Adamic Covenant see here](#). For types in the [Noahic Covenant see here](#). For types in the [Abrahamic Covenant see here](#). For types in the [Mosaic Covenant see here](#). For types in the [Davidic Covenant see here](#).

§7 Christ, in the work of mediation, acteth according to both natures

7. Christ, in the work of mediation, **acteth according to both natures**, by each nature doing that which is proper to itself; yet by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture, attributed to the person denominated by the other nature. **1**

1. John 3:13; Acts 20:28

As a mediator, the Lord Jesus **acteth according to both natures**. He is not a mediator only in His divine nature neither only by His human nature. But He is a mediator in His one **person**, which is both man and God. Sometimes, Scripture attributes that which is properly human to the divine nature and vice versa. Acts 20:28, for example, says "to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood". The reference to "his" is God. But we know that God does not have blood. Yet **by reason of the unity of the person**, that which is properly human is attributed to the divine Son. Another example concerns the day and the hour of the second coming. Matthew 24:36 says, "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." The Son, as divine, surely knows the day and the hour, but in the state of His humiliation and as a human, He did not know the day and the hour. Yet this ignorance is attributed to the Son as if it belonged to His divine nature.

As man, He is able to truly and faithfully represent us. The Epistle to the Hebrews encourages us to run to Christ with these words—

Heb. 4:14-16 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who **in every respect has been tempted as we are**, yet without sin. 16 Let us then **with confidence draw near to the throne of grace**, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The fact that Jesus was made man, though without sin, does not mean that He does not understand our sin and temptation. In fact, to resist temptation is much stronger than giving in and therefore, the Lord Who was tempted in every way is able to represent us before God and understands our struggle. He is not angry with His people, but He gives us confidence that if we come through Him we will indeed receive forgiveness and grace (1 John 1:8-9). As God, He is able to satisfy the justice of God by pointing back to His perfect work on behalf of the elect on the cross. He is also able to represent the offended party, namely—God.

§8 Particular Atonement

8. To all those for whom Christ hath obtained eternal redemption, **he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same**, **1** making **intercession for them**; **2** **uniting them to himself by his Spirit**, **3** revealing unto them, in and by his Word, the mystery of salvation, **4** **persuading them to believe** and obey, **5** **governing their hearts by his Word and Spirit**, **6** and overcoming all their enemies by his almighty power and wisdom, **7** in such manner and ways as are most consonant to his wonderful and unsearchable dispensation; **8** and **all of free and absolute grace, without any condition foreseen in**

them to procure it. **9**

1. John 6:37, 39; 10:15-16; 17:9
2. 1 John 2:1-2; Rom. 8:34
3. Rom. 8:1-2
4. John 15:13, 15; 17:6; Eph. 1:7-9
5. 1 John 5:20
6. John 14:16; Heb. 12:2; Rom. 8:9, 14; 2 Cor. 4:13; Rom. 15:18-19; John 17:17
7. Ps. 110:1; 1 Cor. 15:25-26; Col. 2:15
8. Eph. 1:9-11
9. John 3:8; Eph. 1:8

The benefits of Christ redemption are applied to all for whom it was purchased. He **doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate** the **eternal redemption** which was **obtained** for them by His passive and active obedience ([paragraph 5](#)). He makes **intercession for them** (1 John 2:1-2; Rom. 8:34), pleading on their behalf on the basis of His sacrifice. They are united **to Himself by His Spirit** (Rom. 8:1-2). The Spirit comes to reveal to them the glories of the gospel and work faith in them. The Lord Christ persuades us to **believe and obey** by His Word and Spirit (1 John 3:23; 5:20). His rule and lordship in us is exercised **by His Word and Spirit**. He is also the One Who overcomes **all their enemies by His almighty power and wisdom** (Ps. 110:1-2; Col 2:15). It is Christ Who works in us by His Spirit to mortify sin and works that which is pleasing in God's sight in us. This He does not wonderfully and in accordance with His sovereign decree and plan. From the beginning until the end it is **all of free and absolute grace, without any condition foreseen in them to procure** (Rom. 9:11) this amazing redemption and the manifold blessings of God.

Introduction

Particular Atonement/Redemption or as it is most commonly known, *Limited Atonement*, is one of the most confusing doctrines about Calvinism to non-Calvinists. Honestly, it was not a difficult point for me to accept the *L* in *TULIP*, since it logically and naturally followed from the other points. If I believed that we were all dead in sin (Total Depravity), God has chosen from the world particular people to be saved (Unconditional Election), how would I reject Limited Atonement and remain consistent?

Some find the phrase "Limited Atonement" confusing as it may suggest to some the effect of the atonement itself was limited, but that is not the intended meaning, so they prefer to use other phrases as *Particular Atonement/Redemption*. That is fine, but as with every big theological term, we cannot simply assume the meaning. We must learn and try to understand what is being conveyed through the use of the term.

Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith, which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation.^[28]

By saying that the atonement is *limited*, we are not saying that it is limited in its *power*, rather it is limited in *scope*. The Father's will and desire is for Christ to be a perfect Savior for those whom the Father has given to Jesus (John 6:37-40). It was *not* the Father's will or intention for Christ to be the substitute for all sinners, but only those whom the Father has given Him. This is what we mean by *Limited Atonement* or *Definite Atonement*.

Both Calvinists and Arminians limit the atonement but in different aspects. The Calvinist limits the atonement in its *scope*, the Arminian limits it in its *power*. Charles Spurgeon rightly observed:

We are often told that we limit the atonement of Christ, because we say that Christ has not made satisfaction for all men, or all men would be saved. Now, our reply to this is that, on the other hand, our opponents limit it, we do not. The Arminians say, Christ died for all men. Ask them what they mean by it. Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of all men? They say, "No, certainly not." We ask them the next question-Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of any man in particular? They say, "No." They are obliged to admit this if they are consistent. They say, "No; Christ has died so that any man may be saved if"-and then follow certain conditions of salvation. We say then, we will just go back to

the old statement-Christ did not die so as beyond a doubt to secure the salvation of anybody, did He? You must say "No;" you are obliged to say so, for you believe that even after a man has been pardoned, he may yet fall from grace and perish. Now, who is it that limits the death of Christ? Why you... We say Christ so died that He infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number, who through Christ's death not only may be saved, but are saved, must be saved, and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved. You are welcome to your atonement; you may keep it. We will never renounce ours for the sake of it.^[29]

Basically, the Arminian believes in a *potential* atonement and salvation for all men without exception who would repent and believe. On the other hand, the Calvinist believes in a *definite* and *certain* atonement made on behalf of everyone whom God has chosen and through which faith and repentance are purchased for the same group. Our discussion is based on the fact that the atonement was substitutionary [as we argued above](#). If we do not agree that the atonement was meant to propitiate the wrath of God there is no use of speaking about Limited Atonement. All cases for Particular Redemption are based upon the fact that the atonement satisfies the wrath of God against our sins. John Owen made a very powerful argument in favor of Limited Atonement. The argument goes like this:

The Father imposed His wrath due unto, and the Son underwent punishment for, either:

1. All the sins of all men.
2. All the sins of some men, or
3. Some of the sins of all men.

In which case it may be said:

1. That if the last be true, all men have some sins to answer for, and so, none are saved.
2. That if the second be true, then Christ, in their stead suffered for all the sins of all the elect in the whole world, and this is the truth.
3. But if the first be the case, why are not all men free from the punishment due unto their sins?

You answer, "Because of unbelief."

I ask, Is this unbelief a sin, or is it not? If it be, then Christ suffered the punishment due unto it, or He did not. If He did, why must that hinder them more than their other sins for which He died? If He did not, He did not die for all their sins!"^[30]

If you wonder if unbelief is a sin, check John 16:8-9; Hebrews 3:12; Revelation 21:8. His argument is forceful and convincing. **1)** If Christ died for all sins of all men, then Hell should be emptied and no one is to perish. But this is contrary to the biblical testimony (e.g., Matt. 25:46). **3)** What if Christ died for some sins of all men? In this case, none would be saved as no complete atonement is made for any person. A partial atonement has been made on behalf of every single person, but none is saved as the wrath of God has not been fully satisfied. **2)** Only in the second option, we see the freedom of God to elect as He pleases and also the consistency of God not judging us believers while throwing the reprobate to Hell for their sins. It is not unrighteous for God to throw the wicked into hell to pay for their sins since no payment was made for their sins. But if the atonement was universal, then it would be unjust for God to punish Christ for the same sins which He will punish the sinner in hell. In this scenario, God would demand double payment, one by Christ on the cross, the other by the sinner himself in hell.

The logic of Limited Atonement in light of Unconditional Election is not disputable, rather what is disputed is if this logic is in agreement with the biblical testimony about Christ's death. It is my purpose here to make a biblical case for Limited Atonement by looking at the purpose of the atonement, the extent of the atonement and trying to give some answers for texts used against the doctrine of Definite Atonement. But first, let us go to the intermediate section about John Owen's case for Definite Redemption.

John Owen's Case for Particular Redemption

(This section was added on the 22nd of March 2017 and may also be found as a separate post in [here](#).)

Dr. John Owen's work titled "*The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*" is, by the admission of many Calvinists, the most extensive work on the doctrine of Limited Atonement, or better named, Particular/Definite or Atonement/Redemption. Therefore, it is beneficial for us to take a brief look at his case for Particular Atonement over against Universal Atonement. Dr. Owen is aware and acquainted with the material of the opposing position and he interacts with them and answers their objections. He is not writing against caricatures of the opposing side but has researched the materials and arguments of the opposing side and, in my opinion, utterly refutes their arguments.

Almost everyone who has any reasonable knowledge of the debates concerning limited or unlimited atonement must have heard of Owen's trilemma, which we have presented [above](#). The trilemma is really forceful, but it is merely *one* argument out of many more from Dr. Owen's arsenal. The trilemma is not his only argument for Particular Redemption. But it may be an accurate summary of his case. He argues each of his points biblically. For a good summary of his arguments see [here](#).

Dr. Owen's book is divided into four books and various chapters dealing with the issues related to the atonement.

1. Book 1 (8 chapters) deals with the purpose of the Trinity in the design of the atonement.
2. Book 2 (5 chapters) deals with the effects and application of the work of Christ.
3. Book 3 (11 chapters) presents 16 arguments against Universal Atonement and for Definite Atonement.
4. Book 4 (7 chapters) answers various interpretations and objections to Particular Atonement.

Note: All biblical references in the quotes are modernized (e.g., John i. 1 to John 1:1 for the ease of reading and the recognition by the Scripture Tag).

The General Purpose of Christ's Death

First, he enquires about the "*general of the end [i.e., purpose] of the death of Christ*" ([book I, chap. 1](#)). What does the big picture of Scripture say about the death of Christ? What is indisputable there about it? He divides this question into two sections:

1. "that which his Father and himself intended *in it*" ([book I, chap. 1](#)):
 - a. Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to **save the lost**."
 - b. 1 Tim. 1:15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to **save sinners**, of whom I am the foremost.
 - c. Matt. 20:28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to **give his life as a ransom for many**."
 - d. Gal. 1:4 who gave himself for our sins to **deliver us from the present evil age**, according to the will of our God and Father,
 - e. Eph. 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might **sanctify her**, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might **present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle** or any such thing, that she might be **holy and without blemish**.
 - f. Titus 2:14 who gave himself for us to **redeem us from all lawlessness** and to **purify for himself a people** for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

After citing and alluding to the above-cited passages, Owen says:

Thus clear, then, and apparent, is the intention and design of Christ and his Father in this great work, even what it was, and towards whom, — namely, to save us, to deliver us from the evil world, to purge and wash us, to make us holy, zealous, fruitful in good works, to render us acceptable, and to bring us unto God; for through him "we have access into the grace wherein we stand" Rom. 5:2. ^[31]

1. "that which was effectually fulfilled and accomplished *by it*" ([book I, chap. 1](#)):
 - a. Reconciliation:
 - i. Rom. 5:10 For if while we were enemies we were **reconciled to God by the death of his Son**, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.
 - ii. 2 Cor. 5:18-19; Eph. 2:14-16.
 - b. Justification:
 - i. Rom. 3:23-25 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are **justified by his grace** as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a **propitiation by his blood**, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance

- he had passed over former sins.
 - ii. Heb. 9:12; Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:24.
- c. Sanctification:
 - i. Heb. 13:12 So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to **sanctify the people** through his own blood.
 - ii. Heb. 1:3; 9:14; 1 John 1:7; Eph. 1:3; 5:25-27; Phil. 1:29.
- d. Adoption:
 - i. Gal. 4:4-5 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive **adoption as sons**.
 - ii. Eph. 1:14; Heb. 9:15.

The obvious question now is: "Is God able to accomplish that which He intends?" We see that by the blood-shedding of Christ, the Father intends for the Son to be an actual ransom (Matt. 20:28) and to *actually* save, and not *try* to save sinners (Luke 19:10; 1 Tim. 1:15). He is said to deliver us from "the present evil age" and not to *try* to deliver us by His self-giving for our wickedness (Gal. 1:4). Well...did He or did He not? Not only do we see the intention of the atonement in Scripture, but also its effects and application, which correspond to the intention of God in it.

The Work of the Trinity

Secondly, he enquires about the intention of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity in the work of redemption. What did the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit plan to accomplish through the death of Christ? This is still how many Calvinists at the present time argue for Definite Redemption (i.e. James White). What effect did God want the atonement to have, and is He able to bring it to pass?

- God the Father (**book I, chap. 3**):
 1. "The sending of his Son into the world for this employment":
 - John 3:16-17; 5:37; 10:36; Rom. 8:3-4; Gal. 4:4-5; Isa. 19:20; 48:16.
 - An authoritative imposition of the office of mediator:
 - **Purpose**: Ps. 2:7-8; 110:1, 4; Heb. 1:2; Rom. 1:4; 8:29.
 - **Inauguration**: John 5:22; Acts 2:36; Heb. 3:1-6; Dan. 9:24 ["anointing of the most Holy"]; Matt. 3:15-17; Heb. 10:5; 1:3; 2:7-8; Matt. 28:18; Phil. 2:9-11.
 - "entering into covenant and compact with his Son concerning the work to be undertaken":
 - **The Father's promise to assist the Son in the accomplishment of redemption**: Isa. 63:8-9; Zech. 13:7; Isa. 63:2-3 and 53:4-5; 49:2-3; Ps. 2:2, 4, 6; 118:22-23; Matt. 21:42; Isa. 28:16; Matt. 21:44.
 - **The Father's promise of "a happy accomplishment and attainment of the end of his great undertaking"**: Isa. 49:5-6, 6-12; 53:10-12.
 2. "laying the punishment due to our sin upon him":
 - Zech. 13:7; Matt. 26:31; Isa. 53:4, 6, 10; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13.
- God the Son (**book I, chap. 4**):
 1. The "agent in this great work":
 - Heb. 5:6-7; Matt. 3:17; John 4:34; 6:38; 17:4; Luke 2:49.
 2. The Incarnation:
 - John 1:14; Gal. 4:4; 1 Tim. 3:16 KJV; Heb. 2:13-14.
 3. His Sacrifice:
 - Heb. 9:14; Rev. 1:5; Eph. 5:25-26; Dan. 9:26 KJV ["but not for himself"]; John 17:19; Rom. 5:6; John 1:29; Isa. 53:7; John 10:17-18; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2; 1 Pet. 2:24; Heb. 1:3; Matt. 26:28.
 4. His Intercession:
 - Ps. 2:8; John 14:2-3; Heb. 9:11-12, 24; 1 John 2:1-2; John 17:9; 11:42; Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:33-34; John 17:24; Heb. 10:14.
- God the Holy Spirit (**book I, chap. 5**):

1. The Incarnation of the Son:
 - Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:35.
2. The Sacrifice of the Son:
 - Heb. 9:14; Rom. 1:4; 1 Pet. 3:18.
3. The Resurrection of the Son:
 - Rom. 8:11.

Some of the proof-texts provided may be strange and that's why they have to be read as Dr. Owen explains them and thereby we will be able to see the reasonableness of using these references. I have tried to provide most, if not all, the references he provides.

We see that in this inquiry, Dr. Owen tries to establish the purpose and work of the Trinity in the plan of redemption. Thereby we can establish what the purpose of God is. Each Person of the Trinity has a unique role in the work of redemption, to the glory of the Triune God.

Sacrifice and Intercession

In chapters 7-9 of the first book, Dr. Owen deals with a most important and neglected point about this discussion, namely, the relation of the intercession of Christ to His sacrifice. For whom does Christ intercede? We Calvinists argue that He only intercedes for the elect and that His intercession is perfect and accomplishes that which is its purpose. The problem for the non-Calvinist position of the atonement is that His intercession is explicitly connected to His sacrifice. In other words, those for whom Christ died are the same group for whom He intercedes. This is problematic as it is obvious that not everyone is or will be enjoying the benefits of redemption. There are those who will eternally be damned and not taste redemption. Moreover, there are those who have never heard of Christ's sacrifice (supposedly) on their behalf. In their case, therefore, the sacrifice of Christ is meaningless and cannot be applied to them apart from faith.

When Owen speaks of Christ's offering, or as he calls it by a not-so-common word—oblation—he has in mind both the passive and active obedience of Christ. He writes:

By his *oblation* we do not design only the particular offering of himself upon the cross an offering to his Father...but also his whole humiliation, or state of emptying himself, whether by yielding voluntary obedience unto the law, as being made under it, that he might be the end thereof to them that believe, Rom. 10:4, or by his subjection to the curse of the law, in the antecedent misery and suffering of life, as well as by submitting to death, the death of the cross: for no action of his as mediator is to be excluded from a concurrence to make up the whole means in this work.^[32] ([book I, chap. 6](#))

His intercession is not only His appearance before the Father on our behalf for the applying of the benefits of redemption, but also His exaltation and resurrection.

Neither by his *intercession* do I understand only that heavenly appearance of his in the most holy place for the applying unto us all good things purchased and procured by his oblation; but also every act of his exaltation conducting thereunto, from his resurrection to his "sitting down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, angels, and principalities, and powers, being made subject unto him."^[33] ([book I, chap. 6](#))

The resurrection is essential to His exaltation and therefore, also to His intercession. If He had not risen, then our faith is vain (1 Cor. 15:13-14), we would be still in our sin (1 Cor. 15:17), and we would be miserable (1 Cor. 15:19). The resurrection plays an essential part in our justification (Rom. 4:25) as it is also the means whereby God blesses us (Acts 3:26).

The Particularity of Christ's Intercession

Dr. Owen readily admits that the *oblation* (offering) and *intercession* of Christ are distinct acts, yet they are not to be separated. They are not to be separated because...

1. Both have the goal of redeeming the people of God and bringing many sons to glory;
2. "the object of the one is of no larger extent than the object of the other; or, for whom Christ offered himself, for all those, and only those, doth he intercede"^[34] ([book I, chap. 6](#));
3. The oblation of Christ is the foundation of His intercession.

Owen cites several passages to the effect that the oblation and intercession are interconnected, chief among those and most conclusive, in my opinion, is Romans 8:33-34. But let us take a look at the other references first.

Isaiah 53:11-12 says:

Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; **by his knowledge shall the righteous one**, my servant, make many to be **accounted righteous**, and he shall **bear their iniquities**. 12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he **bore the sin of many**, and **makes intercession** for the transgressors.

The Lord Christ is prophesied to “bear their iniquities” which becomes the ground of “mak[ing] many to be accounted righteous” (v. 11). The Lord poured His soul to death and thereby “bore the sin of many”, which is succeeded by “mak[ing] intercession for the transgressors” (v. 12), namely, the same ones for whom His soul was poured out. We should also not forget v. 10 in this regard in which the Suffering Servant is assured that “he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.” He receives assurance from the Father that He will see His spiritual offspring, namely, those whose sins He bore and for whom He makes intercession.

Romans 4:25 declares:

who was **delivered up for our trespasses** and **raised for our justification**.

The same “our” for whose trespasses the sinless Savior was delivered up and the same “our” for whose justification He rose. But it is most evident that not all are justified because “not all have faith” (2 Thess. 3:2), which is the means of justification (e.g., Rom. 5:1). In this passage, we see that His sacrifice is closely connected with our justification, which will be bestowed on the elect thanks to His intercession before the Father, at the time that God had decreed. Those who still hold to Universal Atonement must place a great disconnect in this passage between His self-giving for our trespasses and His resurrection for our justification. In the non-Calvinistic scheme, He was delivered for the trespasses of all people everywhere, but He was raised up for the justification of a smaller group.

Romans 8 is one of the strongest places where the Doctrines of Grace are taught. Romans 8 lays the foundation for Romans 9. We must understand these chapters together and in the larger context of which has become before these chapters, obviously. Romans 8:32-34 says:

He who did not spare his own Son but **gave him up for us all**, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is **God who justifies**. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ **Jesus is the one who died**—more than that, who was **raised**— who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is **interceding for us**.

This passage is used for many purposes. To comfort believers, to argue that none who believe will ever perish, to show the indestructibility of the golden chain of redemption, and so on. Now we want to use this passage to establish the connection between the sacrifice of Christ and His intercession.

The ground for no one being able to bring any charge against God’s elect is laid in the verse before, namely, that God gave His Son “for us all” (v. 32). This furnishes the foundation on which every believer may say, “since Christ died for me and I am in Christ, ‘There is therefore now no condemnation’ for me (Rom. 8:1).” Furthermore, the reason that no charge can be established is that the Judge of all the earth has already declared us righteous in His sight. Likewise, no one is able to condemn us because Christ died for us and thereby satisfied the wrath of God against our sin (Rom. 3:23-26; 2 Cor. 5:21). A substitute received the punishment and became a curse on our behalf (Gal. 3:10-13). Therefore, the justice of God was satisfied on behalf of those for whom this payment or ransom was made.

Not only did Jesus die and that His death was substitutionary for those for whom it was made, but He is also the One Whom death could not hold—He was raised! The primal fruit of His resurrection which Paul mentions in this passage is His intercession “for us.” Following upon His death and resurrection comes His work of intercession. Notice also that the group for whom the Father gave up the Son, namely, the “us”, is the same group who are justified, for whom Christ died and for whom Christ is interceding at the present time!

This is another chain, like the one in Romans 8:29-30, which is not to be broken without breaking the meaning of the passage. Just like in the golden chain of redemption, those who are foreknown (i.e., fore-loved and fore-chosen), are the same group who are predestined, called, justified and glorified. None of those who are foreknown gets to miss any part of

the chain. In the same way, the chain in Romans 8:33-34 is that of Christ dying for the elect, the same group in Romans 8:29-30, Christ rising for the elect and Christ interceding for the elect. Owen writes on this passage:

That he died for *all* and intercedes only for *some* will scarcely be squared to this text, especially considering the foundation of all this, which is (verse 32) that love of God which moved him to give up Christ to death for us all; upon which the apostle infers a kind of impossibility in not giving us all good things in him; which how it can be reconciled with their opinion who affirm that he gave his Son for millions to whom he will give neither grace nor glory, I cannot see.^[35] ([book I, chapter 7](#))

Dr. Owen obviously does not neglect to take a look at the book of Hebrews in connection to this subject, as it largely deals with the priestly office of our Savior and His priestly work on our behalf. We have tried to exegete some passages from the book of Hebrews in connection to the atonement [below](#). The reader is referred to the [chapter^{\[36\]}](#) for the rest of the passages which he surveys (e.g., Heb. 7:24-25; 9:11-13; 10:19-22).

The Fruits of Christ's Intercession

The fruits of Christ's intercession is the application of the work of redemption to those for whom it was intended. It is the granting of the gift of faith, it is the calling, justification, adoption, sanctification and all the countless graces of God poured out upon us.

In Romans 8:32, Paul argues from the death of Christ that God will certainly "with him [Christ] graciously give us all things". Since God went to such ways to demonstrate His glory and redeem us, what doubt can we have that He will not give us all good things which He intended for His glory and our good? This is in the immediate context of Christ's intercession. Christ intercedes before the Father on behalf of those for whom He offered Himself, that the benefits of His work may be applied to them. That through the intercession of Christ, God does indeed graciously give us all things that we need.

In John 17, the great High Priestly Prayer, the Lord Christ intercedes before the Father on behalf of those who were given to Him, in direct opposition to "the world" (John 17:9), i.e., those who were *not* given to Him. Right before offering His great sacrifice, the Lord Jesus, our great High Priest, finds it necessary to explicitly say that His intercession is certainly not for the world, but only those given to Him. In the same chapter, Christ's prays...

- that His own may be kept in the Father's name and from the evil one (John 17:11, 15);
- for the sanctification of His church in the truth of God's Word (John 17:17, 19);
- for the union of Christ's universal church in the Trinity (John 17:20-23);
- for them seeing His glory and the love which the Father has for the Son (John 17:24);
- that the love which the Father has for the Son may be in them (John 17:26).

Hebrews 7:25 tells us that Christ "is able to **save to the uttermost** those who draw near to God through him, **since he always lives to make intercession for them.**" The basis for the fact that He is able to save them to the uttermost, or "save completely" (NET), "save forever" (NASB), "save to the very end" (YLT), is grounded upon His intercession. Those who draw near to God, draw near to God through Him (cf. John 14:6). But we know that it is God Himself who draws us to Himself through Christ (John 6:44). In this way, everyone who draws near to Christ, Christ is able and *willing* to save to the uttermost—to the very end and thus accomplish the will of the Father (e.g., John 6:39).

Christ does much more than we ask. Just as He prayed for Peter (Luke 22:31-32), so likewise He prays for the faith of His elect. In short, Christ prays that the fruits of His death may be applied to all His people.

The Infallibility of Christ's Intercession

The foundation on which Christ's intercession is built is upon the fact that He always does the will of God. His mission from the Father was to accomplish the work which He had given Him (John 17:4) and that the Lord Christ certainly did. He came not to do His own will, but the will of the Father (John 6:38). What is the Father's will for Him? "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day" (John 6:39). Basically, that He should save them and keep them to all eternity. Well, the question now is: "Is Christ able to accomplish that which the Father wills for Him?"

To answer this question negatively is blasphemy. To entertain the thought that our Christ could in any way, shape or form disobey the will of the Father is not worthy of His glory. He laid down His prerogative as God and became like us, to obey the will of the Father and accomplish that work which was given to Him to do. That work, our Lord says, that He certainly accomplished (John 17:4). Furthermore, we have a clear word from the Savior as to the attitude of the Father towards Him. The Lord says:

John 11:42 I knew that **you always hear me**, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.”

Even those who knew Him knew that the Father will do *whatever* Christ asks (John 11:22). Christ on another occasion says that He “always do[es] the things that are pleasing to him [the Father]” (John 8:29). Well, it is the will of the Father that He give eternal life and keep for eternity all those who were given to Him (e.g., John 6:37-44; 17:1-5). Will the Lord ever fail to accomplish the will of the Father? Perish the thought! The Father always hears Him, because just like the Spirit, the Lord Christ—our faithful High Priest—intercedes according to God’s will (Rom. 8:27), therefore, His intercession can never fail. This is the firm foundation on which we stand.

Christ died and intercedes for the same group. Christ died that those for whom He died *should* be saved and by His intercession, He *applies* the benefits of His work to them *in time*. He never fails in His intercession. Since it is evident that not all men have faith or will be saved, therefore, Christ did not die in their stead, neither does He intercede for them.

Although I have added my own exegesis of the passages above, I have greatly benefited from Owen’s insight into the connection between Christ’s sacrifice and His subsequent intercession. This is, in my opinion, a very powerful argument for Particular Atonement. Even if we take into consideration the work of the High Priest on behalf of Israel, for example, on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). It will quickly be replied by our opponents that the High Priest interceded for all of Israel, which included unbelievers, and the sacrifice was likewise made for all of Israel. We will not object to that fact, only to the supposition that the membership of the Mosaic and New covenants is the same. The Old Covenant included in it both believers and unbelievers, while the New Covenant includes only believers. It is made only with them and all of its members have the benefits of the covenant applied to them (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:6-13). Therefore, the analogy or the type still stands. The only difference is the people who make up the covenant. On the one hand, the Old Covenant contained both believer and unbeliever alike; while the New Covenant subsists of believers only. The High Priest interceded only for the covenant people of God and not for the heathen and godless. Likewise, our High Priest intercedes not for the world, but for those who are His. Furthermore, we should be able to distinguish between the type (Levitical priesthood) and the antitype (Christ’s high priesthood) and keep them distinct.

The End of Christ’s Death

Now we have begun with book II of Owen’s monumental work. He **begins** by returning to the subject in **chapter 1 of book I**, which concerned the end (i.e. goal) of Christ’s death as Scripture declares it (**see above**).

The primary, or “*supreme* and ultimate” end of Christ’s death is the glory of God. The glory of God stands at the center in Reformed theology. That is what attracted me at the beginning to Reformed theology. The *obsession* with the glory of God and trying to do all things to His glory. Everything and anything that God does, He does first of all to and for His glory. Owen cites a few passages to this effect (Prov. 16:4; 2 Cor. 4:15; Eph. 1:6, 12; Phil. 1:11; 2:11; Rev. 5:13; I would add Isa. 46:8-11). Owen says:

The Lord doth necessarily aim at himself in the first place, as the chiefest good, yea, indeed, that alone which is good; that is, absolutely and simply so, and not by virtue of communication from another: and therefore in all his works, especially in this which we have in hand, the chiefest of all, he first intends the manifestation of his own glory; which also he fully accomplisheth in the close, to every point and degree by him intended.^[37] (**book II, chapter 1**)

The secondary, or the end that is “*intermediate* and subservient to that last end” of Christ’s death, which is “the *bringing of us unto God*” (**book II, chapter 1**). The salvation of the elect is “subservient” to the glory of God. Generally, if you would ask an Arminian, or a non-Calvinist, what God’s primary purpose or plan is, they would likely answer “redemption.” On the other hand, Reformed theologians see that God’s glory is the primary goal and end of everything which God does, including the salvation of the elect, but that in itself is not the primary goal; the glory of God is the primary goal.

Before enquiring in the Scriptures, Owen lays down the thesis which he is trying to prove:

“Jesus Christ, according to the counsel and will of his Father, did offer himself upon the cross, to the procurement of those things before recounted; and maketh continual intercession with this intent and purpose, that all the good things so procured by his death might be actually and infallibly bestowed on and applied to all and every one for whom he died, according to the will and counsel of God.”^[38] (**book II, chapter 3**)

He discusses what the Scriptures say concerning this subject under three headings^[38] (**book II, chapter 3**):

1. The *purpose* of the Trinity in it, which he titles, “Those [Scriptures] that hold out the *intention and counsel of God*, with our Saviour’s own mind; whose will was one with his Father’s in this business.”
2. The *accomplishment* of the atonement, which he titles, “Those [Scriptures] that lay down the *actual accomplishment or effect* of his oblation, what it did really procure, effect, and produce.”
3. The *scope* of the atonement, which he titles, “Those [Scriptures] that point out the *persons* for whom Christ died, as designed peculiarly to be the object of this work of redemption in the end and purpose of God.”

Purpose

The Savior’s purpose was to be a Savior. Not a *potential* Savior, but an *actual* Savior. That is the meaning of Jesus, namely—Yahweh saves! In fact, in **Matthew 1:21**, the angel explains the Savior’s name saying, “you shall call his name Jesus, for he will **save his people from their sins**.” The Lord described His mission when He said that “the Son of Man came to seek and to **save the lost**” (Luke 19:10; Matt. 18:11 KJV). Paul, the Lord’s apostle, makes a similar statement, saying:

1 Tim. 1:15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that **Christ Jesus** came into the world **to save sinners**, of whom I am the foremost.

Well, did He or did He not accomplish that which the Father and He Himself intended? Did He, or will He save the lost and those whom He came to seek or not? Will He save His people or will He not? Had He a people in mind when He offered Himself on the cross or not? Our Lord is not a potential Savior, but an infallible and actual Savior, by virtue of His worth and Father’s will for Him. It was the purpose of the Trinity in the atonement to save, redeem, free people from their sins.

In **Hebrews 2:14-15**, we read that Christ through His incarnation and self-giving “destroy[ed] the one who has the power of death” and thereby “**deliver** all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.” Does Christ try to deliver all people without exception, or does He actually deliver His people from the power of Satan and sin (cf. Rom. 6-7)? The passage begins with “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood”. We have to ask ourselves, which “children” are that, and we will find our answer in the previous verse. “And again, “I will put my trust in him.” And again, “Behold, I and the children God has given me.”” These are citations from Psalm 18:2 and Isaiah 8:17. The children are in other words, the elect, all those whom the Father gave to the Son. It is for their sake that He partook of flesh so as to deliver them. Will He or will He not deliver all those for whom He died and whom He intended to deliver?

Ephesians 5:25-27 is a passage that cannot be ignored when discussing the atonement as it deals with both the purpose as well as the scope of the atonement. There we are told that Christ’s love is specific and is toward the church, which led Him to give Himself for her sake. This is the model which husbands are called up to follow. They are to be faithful to their wives and lead and love them like their Lord loved His church. This passage mentions explicitly the purpose of His self-giving, which is to “**sanctify her**, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might **present the church to himself in splendor**, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that **she might be holy and without blemish**” (Eph. 5:26-27). The purpose of His self-giving was the complete and eternal salvation of His church. Notice how the passage explicitly mentions that His church was the object of His atonement and the one who receives its benefits. Christ does not die for other “wives.” He is a faithful husband, and He has only one wife, and the reprobate are certainly not his “bride.” Therefore, at the least, the ends mentioned in this passage do not concern the reprobate but only the elect, even if we should say that Christ’s death was for all men without exception, which we will not. The church is the only object of His love and sacrifice in this passage. By mentioning the idea of a wife and a church, the passage makes explicit that the scope and effects mentioned are limited to His bride alone.

Titus 2:14 is to the same effect as the aforementioned passage. Christ had a purpose in His self-giving, which was “to **redeem** us from all lawlessness” and also “to **purify for himself a people** for his own possession”. The scope in this passage is likewise limited. He does not redeem all from lawlessness, although that was the purpose of His self-giving and certainly He can accomplish all that He desires. Furthermore, notice that Christ’s second purpose, which is mentioned in this passage, is that a specific people might be set apart for Him. He does not desire to have all people for His own possession, but He desires that “a [specific] people for his own possession”. This brings to mind the promises of Exodus 19:5-6, which are a reality under the New Covenant people of God (1 Pet. 2:9).

After the two aforementioned passages, Owen asks:

Are all men of this church? Are all in that rank of men among whom Paul placeth himself and Titus? Are all purged,

purified, sanctified, made glorious, brought nigh unto Christ? or doth Christ fail in his aim towards the greatest part of men? I dare not close with any of these.^[39] ([book II, chapter 3](#))

In **John 17:19**, just before His self-giving, the Lord says that He sets Himself apart—He sanctifies Himself—that, i.e., for the purpose, “that they also may be **sanctified in truth**.” His setting apart includes but is not limited to His self-giving. In John 17:9, the Lord explicitly tells us that He does not pray for the world, but only for them whom the Father has given Him. He does not set Himself apart that the reprobate may be sanctified in the truth, but only that the elect may be sanctified in the truth. The “may be” in English sounds as unsure or conditional, but that is not the case in the Greek text. The *hina* clause at the beginning of 19b (“that”) expresses a purpose or a design. In this case, it is that the elect should be sanctified in truth.

In **Galatians 1:4**, we read of Christ who gave “himself for our sins to **deliver** us from the present evil age”, which was the purpose and “the will of our God and Father”. Does He or does He not deliver? We should not forget that the Father always hears the Son and never rejects Him (John 11:42). In **Galatians 4:4-5**, the purpose of Christ being born under the law was “to **redeem** those who were under the law, so that we might receive **adoption** as sons.” Will He fail in His and the Father’s purpose or will He accomplish all that He intends?

Lastly, Owen appeals to **2 Corinthians 5:21**, which says, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the **righteousness of God**.” God’s purpose in counting and placing all our sins upon Him was so that we might, through Him, become “the righteousness of God.” Who are those who become the “righteousness of God”? It is most evident that they are not all men without exception, but only those who believe, in other words, only the elect. The purpose of God in the giving of His Son and of making the Sinless sin, was so that He may justify us.

Owen draws his first section to a close saying that:

the Father and his Son intended by the death of Christ to redeem, purge, sanctify, purify, deliver from death, Satan, the curse of the law, to quit of all sin, to make righteousness in Christ, to bring nigh unto God, all those for whom he died, as was above proved: therefore, Christ died for all and only those in and towards whom all these things recounted are effected; — which, whether they are all and every one, I leave to all and every one to judge that hath any knowledge in these things.^[40] ([book II, chapter 3](#))

Accomplishment

Now we turn our attention to the accomplishment of the atonement. What does Holy Writ say that was accomplished by the atonement?

Scripture teaches that Christ secured “an eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12). For whom did He secure this, but for those who are saved? They are also the same who are said to have their conscience purged by His offering, through which He secured this great redemption (Heb. 9:14). Christ is said to have made “purification for sins” for sins (Heb. 1:3). In fact, **Hebrews 9:26** is much stronger, declaring that the purpose of His coming was “to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

Christ is said to “**bear our sins**” in **1 Peter 2:24**. This means nothing less than **Christ’s substitutionary atonement**. Christ bore our sins and their punishment upon Himself. The purpose of Christ bearing our sins is “that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.” After citing the purpose, Owen says:

And what was the effect? “By his stripes we are healed:” which latter, as it is taken from the same place of the prophet where our Saviour is affirmed to “bear our iniquities, and to have them laid upon him” (Isa. 53:5, 6, 10-12), so it is expository of the former, and will tell us what Christ did by “bearing our sins;”^[41] ([book II, chapter 3](#))

He underwent the punishment for our sins which we should have received and thereby we have been healed.

Reconciliation with God is one of the fruits of Christ’s accomplishments as is said in Colossians 1:21-22; Ephesians 2:13-16; Romans 5:8-10. “Peace and reconciliation, deliverance from wrath, enmity, and whatever lay against us to keep us from enjoying the love and favour of God, — a redemption from all these he effected for his church “with his own blood,” Acts xx. 28.”^[42] ([book II, chapter 3](#))

By His self-giving, He accomplished both our **justification** as well as our **redemption** (Rom. 5:9; 8:32-34; Rev. 5:9-10). By His death, He gives us life and we **live** (John 10:15, 28; Rom. 5:8-10; 6:4, 10-11).

Scope

What does Scripture say about the scope of the atonement? Many different names are given for the objects of Christ’s death.

Some references are definite, others are indefinite and general, but both concern the same group, namely, the elect who actually receive the benefits of His work, according to the purpose of God.

In various places they are called “**many**” (Matt. 26:28; Isa. 53:11; Mark 10:45; Matt. 20:28; Heb. 2:10; Rom. 5:19; Heb. 9:28). But more important than that there are specific designations as:

- sheep (John 10:15);
- the children of God who are scattered abroad (John 11:52);
- those given of the Father (John 17:2, 6, 9, 11);
- God’s elect (Rom. 8:32);
- His people (Matt. 1:21; cf. Acts 18:10; Heb. 13:12);
- those whom He foreknew (Rom. 8:29; 11:2);
- His church (Acts 20:28; cf. Eph. 5:25-27).

Next to this, we should not forget the antithesis between *the world* and *the people of God*; those who are God’s *friends* and those who are still His *enemies*; those who are *sheep* and those who are *goats*. When we understand the radical antithesis between the redeemed and the reprobate, it will no longer be necessary to demand a verse in which the word “only” is used (for those who would reply that it does not say that He died only for the sheep, the church or the elect).

The Obtaining and Application of Redemption

Next, Dr. Owen deals with the objection that Christ has purchased salvation for all without exception, but it is applied only to those who believe. In other words, the obtaining of redemption, or the death of Christ is for everyone, but the application only to those who believe, i.e., the elect. Owen explains that “by *impetration* we mean the meritorious purchase of all good things made by Christ for us with and of his Father; and by *application*, the actual enjoyment of those good things upon our believing;”^[43] ([book II, chapter 4](#)). Owen answers this objection, among other things, by pointing to Scriptures which enjoin and do not disjoin these two things.

But first let us deal with the question of faith and it being a condition. The condition for enjoying the work of redemption on our behalf is itself a gift of God. Faith, which is the key to justification and enjoyment of the benefits of Christ’s work, is itself a result of His work and is conferred on us *absolutely*, without any condition. There is no condition on our side, as the glory of the New Covenant is that God, thanks to the death of Christ, supplies the condition for its members Himself, making it most evident that it is certainly all of grace! Faith, which is our trust in Christ’s work on our behalf, is something which we *do*, but it is nonetheless granted to us by God and does not have its origin in us. **Philippians 1:29** says, “For it has been **granted** to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only **believe in him** but also suffer for his sake”. It has been given to us, granted to us, for Christ’s sake, not our own, that we believe in Him. The faith, the belief itself, has been granted to us and gifted to us by God Himself! Faith is a spiritual blessing, yea, the chiefest spiritual blessing and it is certainly granted to us by Christ (Eph. 1:3). See for more on faith being a gift [here](#). Owen deals with this question in [book III, chapter 4](#), argument IX, specifically.

If faith be granted of grace, the disjunction between the obtaining and application of redemption as proposed by non-Calvinists will not stand. Since all the good things which God has and is pouring upon us are thanks to the work of Christ, then no doubt, faith is the highest grace which He gives us, and is a fruit of Christ’s self-giving.

Now let us turn our attention to the enjoining of the obtaining and application of redemption in Scripture. In **Isaiah 53:11**, we read of the Suffering Servant making “many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.” These two things are enjoined together, in fact, the KJV says “for” instead of “and.” Upon citing **Isaiah 53:5**, Owen says, “His wounding and our healing, impetration and application, his chastisement and our peace, are inseparably associated”^[44] ([book II, chapter 4](#)). In **Romans 4:25**, the death of Christ and justification are enjoined together. So likewise in **Romans 5:18-19**, on which he says, ‘So Rom. 5:18, “By the righteousness of one” (that is, his impetration), “the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life,” in the application’^[44] ([book II, chapter 4](#)). **Romans 8:32-34** likewise is an important passage that enjoins those two things under consideration, which we have dealt with [above](#).

Both the obtaining and the application of redemption concerns and is limited to the same group, namely, the elect. Lastly, in [chapter 5 of book II](#), Owen uses some common sense as to the meaning of Christ obtaining redemption. He argues, **(1)** that is contrary to common sense to say that something is obtained for a person, yet it is uncertain whether he shall have it or not. Owen says, “That which is impetrated or obtained by petition is his by whom it is obtained. It is to offer violence to common sense to say a thing may be a man’s, or it may not be his, when it is obtained for him”^[45] ([book II, chapter 5](#)). **(2)** It is contrary “to all reason in the world” that God would intend Christ to die for those whom He knows will have no share in His blessings. Those who oppose the Calvinists basically hold to that the death of Christ “is so applied to all, and yet the fruits of this death are never so much as once made known to far the greatest part of those all”^[45] ([book II, chapter 5](#)). **(3)** It is contrary to reason to hold that a ransom has been paid, but upon the payment of

the ransom “those captives not be made free and set at liberty”^[45] ([book II, chapter 5](#)). As we have argued above, faith is the key the enjoyment of those blessings and faith itself is a gift, therefore, this argument cannot be discarded simply because we do not immediately enjoy the blessings of redemption. Since the ransom has been paid, its benefits will, in God’s own time, be applied to all for whom the ransom was given. **(4)** It is contrary to Scripture as argued above.

Arguments Against the Universality of Redemption

Book III presents 16 arguments against the general ransom theory and in favor of Particular Atonement. Here are the arguments [as summarized by Dr. J. I. Packer](#) (slightly edited by me):

- I. From the fact that the new covenant, which Christ’s death ratified, is not made with all men ([chapter 1](#)).
- II. From the fact that the gospel, which reveals faith in Christ to be the only way of salvation, is not published to all men ([chapter 1](#)).
- III. From the dilemmas involved in asserting that the divine intention in Christ’s death was to redeem every man ([chapter 2](#)).
- IV. From the fact that Christ is said to die for one of the two classes (elect and reprobate) into which God divided men, and not for the other ([chapter 2](#)).
- V. From the fact that Scripture nowhere asserts that Christ dies for all men, as such ([chapter 2](#)).
- VI. From the fact that Christ died as sponsor (surety) for those for whom He died ([chapter 3](#)).
- VII. From the fact that Christ is a mediator, and as such a priest, for those for whom He died ([chapter 3](#)).
- VIII. From the fact that Christ’s death cleanses and sanctifies those for whom He died, whereas not all men and sanctified ([chapter 3](#)).
- IX. From the fact that faith (which is necessary for salvation) was procured by the death of Christ, whereas not all men have faith ([chapter 4](#)).
- X. From the fact that the deliverance of Israel from Egypt is a type of Christ’s saving work ([chapter 4](#)).

The next five arguments form a group on their own. They have a common form and are all taken from the biblical terms in which Christ’s work is described.

- XI. (i). From the fact that Christ’s death wrought redemption (deliverance by payment) ([chapter 5](#)).
- XII. (ii). From the fact that Christ’s death effected reconciliation between God and men ([chapter 6](#)).
- XIII. (iii). From the fact that Christ’s death made satisfaction for sins (chapter [7](#), [8](#), [9](#)).
- XIV. (iv). From the fact that Christ’s death merited salvation for men ([chapter 10](#)).
- XV. (v). From the fact that Christ died for men ([chapter 10](#)).
- XVI. From particular texts: Gen. 3:15; Matt. 7:33; 11:25; John 10:11ff.; Rom. 8:32-34; Eph. 1:7; 2 Cor. 5:21; John 17:9; Eph. 5:25 ([chapter 11](#)).

These are great chapters, especially chapters XI-XV, which deal with important and essential benefits of Christ’s death in some detail as they retain to the subject of atonement. I’d like to take a quick look at a few of his arguments.

The New Covenant (Arg. I)

The Covenant of Grace, i.e., the New Covenant according to 1689 Federalism, is made only with the elect ([see chapter 7](#) for more on Covenant Theology). If that is truly the case, then we have a problem with universal atonement. For more see [chapter 7](#) on Jeremiah 31:31-34; chapter 17 [here](#) and [here](#).

Owen’s basic argument is as follows:

The first argument may be taken from the nature of the covenant of grace, which was established, ratified, and confirmed in and by the death of Christ; that was the testament whereof he was the testator, which was ratified in his death, and whence his blood is called “The blood of the new testament,” Matt. 26:28. Neither can any effects thereof

be extended beyond the compass of this covenant. But now this covenant was not made universally with all, but particularly only with some, and therefore those alone were intended in the benefits of the death of Christ.^[46] ([Book III, chapter 1](#))

The Two Classes of Men (Arg. IV)

Owen's argument here is that since the Bible separates people into two categories, namely, believers and unbelievers, and various other designations of the groups, therefore, when Christ is said to die for one, it is implicit that He did not die for the other. In his own words:

If all mankind be, in and by the eternal purpose of God, distinguished into two sorts and conditions, severally and distinctly described and set forth in the Scripture, and Christ be peculiarly affirmed to die for one of these sorts, and nowhere for them of the other, then did he not die for all; for of the one sort he dies for all and every one, and of the other for no one at all.^[47] ([Book III, chapter 2](#))

The elect are designated also as:

those whom he "loves"...Rom. 9:13; whom he "knoweth,"...John 10:14, "I know my sheep;" 2 Tim. 2:19, "The Lord knoweth them that are his;" Rom. 8:29, "Whom he did foreknow;" chap. 11:2, "His people which he foreknew;" "I know you not," Matt. 25:12: so John 13:18, "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen." Those that are appointed to life and glory, and those that are appointed to and fitted for destruction, — "elect" and "reprobate;" those that were "ordained to eternal life," and those who "before were of old ordained to condemnation:" as Eph. 1:4, "He hath chosen us in him;" Acts 13:48, "Ordained to eternal life;" Rom. 8:30, "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, on the other side, 1 Thess. 5:9, "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation;" Rom. 9:18-21, "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?" Jude 4, "Ordained to this condemnation;" 2 Pet. 2:12, "Made to be taken and destroyed;" "Sheep and goats," Matt. 25:32; John 10 passim. Those on whom he hath "mercy," and those whom he "hardeneth," Rom. 9:18. Those that are his "peculiar people" and "the children of promise," that are "not of the world," his "church;"^[48] ([Book III, chapter 2](#))

All these things are true only of the redeemed, the elect of God from all eternity. But this is not the only group which Scripture knows. On the other hand, Scripture designates the reprobates in the following words:

...in opposition to them, are "the world," "not prayed for," "not his people:" as Tit. 2:14; Gal. 4:28; John 15:19, 17:9; Col. 1:24; John 11:52; Heb. 2:10, 12, 13. Which distinction of men is everywhere ascribed to the purpose, will, and good pleasure of God: Prov. 16:4, "The Lord hath made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil." Matt. 11:25, 26, "I thank thee, O Father, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." Rom. 9:11, 12, "The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger." Verses 16, 17, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth."^[49] ([Book III, chapter 2](#))

Furthermore, Christ is said to die for the first group, but not for the second. He laid His life for "his people" (Matt. 1:21), His own sheep (John 10:11, 14), His "church" (Eph. 5:25; Acts 20:28).

Mediator for Whom He Died (Arg. VII)

This is a strong argument building upon that which we have sought to prove before, namely, that the offering and intercession of Christ are inter-connected and are the two faces of the same coin. Christ intercedes as a mediator and those for whom He intercedes are "save[d] to the uttermost" (Heb. 7:25). His intercession is limited to those for whom His offering was made. [See above](#) for more. In his own words:

For whom Christ died, for them he is a mediator: which is apparent; for the oblation or offering of Christ, which he made of himself unto God, in the shedding of his blood, was one of the chiefest acts of his mediation. But he is not a mediator for all and every one; which also is no less evident, because as mediator he is the priest for them for whom he is a mediator. Now, to a priest it belongs, as was declared before, to sacrifice and intercede, to procure good things, and to apply them to those for whom they are procured; as is evident, Heb. 9, and was proved before at large: which, confessedly, Christ doth not for all. Yea, that Christ is not a mediator for every one needs no proof. Experience sufficiently evinceth it, besides innumerable places of Scripture.^[50] ([Book III, chapter 3](#))

Typological Exodus (Arg. X)

The exodus of the children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt is typological of our exodus from the slavery of sin by the death of Jesus Christ, our Lord. The Lord freed the Israelites out of Egypt. He gave them His laws and ordinances, and not other nations. His redemption was limited to His covenant people and did not extend to everyone without exception in the world. The type is not identical to the antitype, otherwise, there would be no reason to speak of these things. There are some significant differences. The significant difference between the Old and New covenants is that the New Covenant has only believers as its members, over against the Old, which contained both elect and reprobate. The redemption was limited to the covenant people. In the Old Covenant, it was believers and unbelievers alike who were descended from Abraham and who joined themselves to Yahweh. The New Covenant has only believers in its membership.

In his own words:

The whole people itself was a type of God's church, his elect, his chosen and called people: whence as they were called a "holy people, a royal priesthood;" so also, in allusion to them, are believers, 1 Pet. 2:5, 9. Yea, God's people are in innumerable places called his "Israel," as it is farther expounded, Heb. 8:8. A true Israelite is as much as a true believer, John 1:47; and he is a Jew who is so in the hidden man of the heart. I hope it need not be proved that that people, as delivered from bondage, preserved, taken nigh unto God, brought into Canaan, was typical of God's spiritual church, of elect believers. Whence we thus argue:— Those only are really and spiritually redeemed by Jesus Christ who were designed, signified, typified by the people of Israel in their carnal, typical redemption (for no reason in the world can be rendered why some should be typed out in the same condition, partakers of the same good, and not others); but by the people of the Jews, in their deliverance from Egypt, bringing into Canaan, with all their ordinances and institutions, only the elect, the church of God, was typed out, as was before proved.^[51] ([Book III, chapter 4](#))

Reconciliation (Arg. XII)

By the precious blood of Christ, we have reconciliation with God. God is said to reconcile us to Himself through Christ (2 Cor. 5:18). It is even said that "in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). This reconciliation is through the blood of Christ (Rom. 5:10-11; Col. 1:20-22). But it is an undeniable fact that not all people are reconciled to God. Therefore, what does Christ's work mean for them? Nothing! The non-Calvinists do not believe that faith, which is the condition of salvation on our part, is, in fact, a gift of God Himself. Therefore, in a real sense, the New Covenant is *unconditional* as all of its conditions are provided through grace by God ([see for more here](#)).

Reconciliation "is the renewing of friendship between parties before at variance, both parties being properly said to be reconciled, even both he that offendeth and he that was offended"^[52] ([Book III, chapter 6](#)). There is an enmity between God and man, and it is *not* one-sided (e.g., Rom. 5:10; 8:7-8). God has set Himself against the wicked by pouring out His wrath upon them (Rom. 1:18; John 3:36), while the wicked have set themselves against God by disobeying His law (Rom. 8:7-8). This enmity has been healed through Christ. Paul tells us:

2 Cor. 5:18-20 All this is from God, who through Christ **reconciled us to himself** and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was **reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them**, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, **be reconciled to God**.

God is said to be reconciled to *us*, even in the indefinite designation, *world*, through the death of His Son. This reconciliation consists of the non-imputation of sins. Well, if this is true, then the logical conclusion is that God is reconciled to us and whoever is designated with the word "*world*". The usual non-Calvinistic interpretation of the "*world*" as all humanity will not do here. The *world* is limited by the previous reference to "*us*", namely, the believers who are *actually* reconciled to God. The "*world*" here is a reference to believers everywhere in the world, much like how the redeemed are described in Revelation 5:9. But the main point to be taken from this passage is that this reconciliation is directly connected to the non-imputation of trespasses. But, if we take the interpretation of "*world*" as everyone without exception, then we have a huge problem, namely, that God will, in fact, impute sin to the wicked on the day of wrath. Therefore, this means that He has not

been reconciled to them, for to be reconciled means to have fellowship and friendship with God, and according to the passage at hand, to have the non-imputation of sins. But this is, in fact, not the case, nor will it be for everyone without exception.

If the opposing position will attack us on the point that even the elect do not *enjoy* this reconciliation immediately, although it was purchased at the cross, then we reply: It is true, but everyone for whom this reconciliation was made, will, in fact, *enjoy* this reconciliation with God. In fact, the means of enjoying this reconciliation is provided for by God through the work of His Son, namely, our faith, which is a gift ([see here](#)). But this is not the case with the non-Calvinistic doctrine of the atonement and reconciliation. The non-Calvinists claim that Christ died for everyone without exception and *tried* (?) to reconcile everyone without exception to God, yet the majority of humanity either does not know of this reconciliation or rejects it. The Calvinist doesn't run into the trouble of a reconciliation that does not reconcile, or an atonement that does not save but needs our deciding choice.

To put it at length in the words of Dr. Owen:

Now, how this reconciliation can possibly be reconciled with universal redemption, I am no way able to discern; for if reconciliation be the proper effect of the death of Christ, as is confessed by all, then if he died for all, I ask how cometh it to pass, — First, That God is not reconciled to all? as he is not, for his wrath abideth on some, John 3:36, and reconciliation is the aversion of wrath. Secondly, That all are not reconciled to God? as they are not, for “by nature all are the children of wrath,” Eph. 2:3; and some all their lives do nothing but “treasure up wrath against the day of wrath,” Rom. 2:5. Thirdly, How, then, can it be that reconciliation should be wrought between God and all men, and yet neither God reconciled to all nor all reconciled to God? Fourthly, If God be reconciled to all, when doth he begin to be unreconciled towards them that perish? by what alteration is it? in his will or nature? Fifthly, If all be reconciled by the death of Christ, when do they begin to be unreconciled who perish, being born children of wrath? Sixthly, Seeing that reconciliation on the part of God consists in the turning away of his wrath and not imputing of iniquity, 2 Cor. 5:18, 19, which is justification, rendering us blessed, Rom. 4:6–8, why, if God be reconciled to all, are not all justified and made blessed through a non-imputation of their sin? They who have found out a redemption where none are redeemed, and a reconciliation where none are reconciled, can easily answer these and such other questions; which to do I leave them to their leisure, and in the meantime conclude this part of our argument. That reconciliation which is the renewing of lost friendship, the slaying of enmity, the making up of peace, the appeasing of God, and turning away of his wrath, attended with a non-imputation of iniquities; and, on our part, conversion to God by faith and repentance; — this, I say, being that reconciliation which is the effect of the death and blood of Christ, it cannot be asserted in reference to any, nor Christ said to die for any other, but only those concerning whom all the properties of it, and acts wherein it doth consist, may be truly affirmed; which, whether they may be of all men or not, let all men judge.^[53] ([Book III, chapter 6](#))

The Merit of Christ (Arg. XIV)

The merit of Christ is “that worth and value of his death whereby he purchased and procured unto us, and for us, all those good things which we find in the Scripture for his death to be bestowed upon us”^[54] ([Book III, chapter 10](#)). He received this merit from His Father as obedience to the work which the Father had given Him to do. It was the reward for His suffering and Christ the Lord shall certainly “see and be satisfied” with His accomplishment (Isa. 53:11). The offspring which the Father gave Him (Isa. 53:10), was not of grace, but a reward for His work and obedience. It was His due; it was deserved. Christ paid the price for our freedom, therefore, He purchased us (Acts 20:28; Rev. 5:9; Heb. 9:12). Since the fruits of His work were purchased at the cross, the next question is: for whom was it purchased? The obvious answer is that it was purchased for those whom His Father gave Him, namely, the elect. Those are also the only ones who do *actually* and *effectually* enjoy the fruits of His work on their behalf.

Now I'll give you Owen at length who will present to you the fruits which Christ purchased for us:

Christ then, by his death, did merit and purchase, for all those for whom he died, all those things which in the Scripture are assigned to be the fruits and effects of his death. These are the things purchased and merited by his blood-shedding, and death; which may be referred unto two heads:—

First, Such as are privative; as, —

1. Deliverance from the hand of our enemies, Luke 1:74; from the wrath to come, 1 Thess. 1:10.
2. The destruction and abolition of death in his power, Heb. 2:14;
3. Of the works of the devil, 1 John 3:8.
4. Deliverance from the curse of the law, Gal. 3:13;

5. From our vain conversation, 1 Pet. 1: 18;
6. From the present evil world, Gal. 1:4;
7. From the earth, and from among men, Rev. 14:3, 4.
8. Purging of our sins, Heb. 1:3,

Secondly, Positive; as, —

1. Reconciliation with God, Rom. 5:10; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20.
2. Appeasing or atoning of God by propitiation, Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2.
3. Peacemaking, Eph. 2:14.
4. Salvation, Matt. 1:21.

All these hath our Saviour by his death merited and purchased for all them for whom he died; that is, so procured them of his Father that they ought, in respect of that merit, according to the equity of justice, to be bestowed on them for whom they were so purchased and procured. It was absolutely of free grace in God that he would send Jesus Christ to die for any; it was of free grace for whom he would send him to die; it is of free grace that the good things procured by his death be bestowed on any person, in respect of those persons on whom they are bestowed: but considering his own appointment and constitution, that Jesus Christ by his death should merit and procure grace and glory for those for whom he died, it is of debt in respect of Christ that they be communicated to them. Now, that which is thus merited, which is of debt to be bestowed, we do not say that it may be bestowed, but it ought so to be, and it is injustice if it be not. ^[55] [formatting changed for ease of reading] ([Book III, chapter 10](#))

If Christ died for all, why do not all enjoy the benefits of His work? Is it because they did not meet the condition for the enjoyment of His fruits, namely, faith? Well, Scripture testifies and we believe, that the condition itself, faith, is a fruit of His merit ([see here](#)). His work on the cross provides the condition for the enjoyment of its benefits. But this is not the case with the position of the opposing party.

Substitutionary Atonement (Arg. XV)

That beautiful doctrine of substitutionary atonement is a Reformed doctrine. It is inconsistent with Arminianism. The doctrine teaches that Christ bore the sins and stood in the place of everyone for whom He died, so as to take their penalty upon Himself. He made payment to the Father with His blood and purchased His Bride (e.g., Acts 20:28). The problem for the Arminian view of the atonement is that it has Christ dying *in the same way* for both elect and reprobate. In the non-Calvinistic view, the atonement does not provide the condition for its enjoyment, namely, faith. According to the non-Calvinistic view, the Lord Christ on the cross bore the sins and took the place of the reprobates even as He took the place of those who were chosen from before the foundation of the earth. Alas! Even though the Lord died in the same way for the elect as well as the reprobates, one group will believe but the other will not. It is obvious that in this scheme the deciding factor does not lie with the Lord, but with the free will of man. The atonement is not effectual in and of itself, but requires the assistance of man. Even if a reply would come to us that the faith of man will count only for 1% or even less, the fact is clear: without that 1%, the atonement, which was made on your behalf, is useless. Furthermore, this atonement does not provide the condition for its enjoyment but leaves that to the wretched sinner himself.

Dr. Owen in his own words:

The very phrases of “dying for us,” “bearing our sins,” being our “surety,” and the like, whereby the death of Christ for us is expressed, will not stand with the payment of a ransom for all. To die for another is, in Scripture, to die in that other’s stead, that he might go free; as Judah besought his brother Joseph to accept of him for a bondman instead of Benjamin, that he might be set at liberty, Gen. 44:33, and that to make good the engagement wherein he stood bound to his father to be a surety for him. He that is surety for another (as Christ was for us, Heb. 7:22), is to undergo the danger, that the other may be delivered...And this plainly is the meaning of that phrase, “Christ died for us;” that is, in the undergoing of death there was a subrogation of his person in the room and stead of ours...But concerning the word ἀντί, which also is used, there is no doubt, nor can any exception be made; it always signifieth a commutation and change, whether it be applied to things or persons: so Luke 11:11, Ὁφίς ἀντὶ ἰχθύος, “A serpent instead of a fish;” so Matt. 5:38, Ὁφθαλμὸς ἀντὶ ὀφθαλμοῦ “An eye for an eye;” so Heb. 12:16; — and for persons, Archelaus is said to reign ἀντὶ Ἡρώδου τοῦ πατρός, “instead of his father,” Matt. 2:22. Now, this word is used of the death of our Saviour, Matt. 20:28, “The Son of man came δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν,” — which words are repeated again, Mark 10:45, — that is, to give his life a ransom in the stead of the lives of many. So that, plainly, Christ dying for us, as a surety, Heb. 7:22, and thereby and therein “bearing our sins in his own body,” 1 Pet. 2:24, being made a curse for us, was an undergoing of death, punishment, curse, wrath, not only for our good, but directly in our stead; a commutation and subrogation of his person

in the room and place of ours being allowed, and of God accepted.^[56] ([Book III, chapter 10](#))

If these things are true, how can it be said that Christ died in the stead of all men without exception? Why would God lay the sins of those whom He knew certainly to be damned upon Christ, to make Him their mediator and representative Who fails to achieve His work? Did Christ die in the stead of those who were long damned or not?

Particular Texts (Arg. XVI)

The last general argument is made by brief comments on several texts of Scripture.

Matthew 7:23

And then will I declare to them, '**I never knew you**; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Christ will declare to some who profess His name on the last day that He does not know them. In fact, He has *never* known them. It is obvious that "know" in this place is used for relationship and love, and not knowledge about someone. How could this be the case if Christ lays down His life for the sheep whom He knows (John 10:14-17)? In fact, in John 10:14-17, the Lord Christ makes it explicit that He gives His life for those whom He actually knows, and thereby excluding those whom He does not know, namely, the reprobates.

In Owen's words:

Christ at the last day professeth to some he never knew them. Christ saith directly that he knoweth his own, whom he layeth down his life for, John 10:14-17. And surely he knows whom and what he hath bought. Were it not strange that Christ should die for them, and buy them that he will not own, but profess he never knew them? If they are "bought with a price," surely they are his own? 1 Cor. 6:20.^[57] ([Book III, chapter 11](#))

John 10

Owen points in particular to John 10:11, 15, 16, 27, 28 and says that this is a "clear place, which of itself is sufficient to evert the general ransom"^[58] ([Book III, chapter 11](#)). **First** things first, only a particular people are among the sheep of Christ, and not everyone without exception. **Second**, some are explicitly said to not be sheep (John 10:26). **Third**, Christ is said to die for His sheep (John 10:11, 15). **Fourth**, the sheep are said to be known by Christ and they follow Him (John 10:27) and to whom Christ gives eternal life (John 10:28), which cannot be taken away from them (John 10:29).

Some will object that this place does not say that He died *only* for His sheep and that is true, but the point which they try to prove thereby is false. People are divided into two groups, namely, the sheep and the non-sheep (goats). These two groups are diametrically opposed to each other with different natures and different masters. There is no need to say that He lays down His life *only* for the sheep when the context makes those two different groups obvious. That which is said of the sheep is not true of the non-sheep. Notice that the death of Christ for His sheep leads to their eternal salvation, which is not true of everyone without exception, but it is absolutely true of the sheep.

In his own words:

That Christ so says that he laid down his life for his sheep, that plainly he excludes all others; for, — *First*, He lays down his life for them as sheep. Now, that which belongs to them as such belongs only to such. If he lays down his life for sheep, as sheep, certainly be doth it not for goats, and wolves, and dogs. *Secondly*, He lays down his life as a shepherd, verse 11; therefore, for them as the sheep. What hath the shepherd to do with the wolves, unless it be to destroy them? *Thirdly*, Dividing all into sheep and others, verse 26, he saith he lays down his life for his sheep; which is all one as if he had said he did it for them only. *Fourthly*, He describes them for whom he died by this, "My Father gave them me," verse 29; as also chap. 17:6, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me:" which are not all; for "all that the Father giveth him shall come to him," chap. 6:37, and he "giveth unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish," chap. 10: 28. Let but the sheep of Christ keep close to this evidence, and all the world shall never deprive them of their inheritance. Farther to confirm this place, add Matt. 20:28; John 11:52.^[59] ([Book III, chapter 11](#))

32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him **graciously give us all things**? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is **God who justifies**. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who **died**—more than that, who was **raised**— who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is **interceding for us**.

This is a vital passage in Owen's entire book, dealt with several times on which he later says:

...I desire the reader to peruse that one place, Rom. 8:32-34; and I make no doubt but that he will, if not infected with the leaven of the error opposed, conclude with me, that if there be any comfort, any consolation, any assurance, any rest, any peace, any joy, any refreshment, any exultation of spirit, to be obtained here below, it is all to be had in the blood of Jesus long since shed, and his intercession still continued; as both are united and appropriated to the elect of God, by the precious effects and fruits of them both drawn to believe and preserved in believing, to the obtaining of an immortal crown of glory, that shall not fade away.^[59] ([Book IV, chapter 7](#))

In this passage, we have the connection of Christ's work on behalf of His elect even from His death even unto their redemption and intercession for their sake. Christ intercedes for His own so that they will receive those things which God intends for them; the same God who did not spare His own Son. [See above](#) for more on this passage.

2 Corinthians 5:21

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

I find it hard to square the idea of substitutionary atonement with an atonement that is not able to save all for whom it was made. Those for whose sake Christ was made sin and are the same group who are made the righteousness of God. In fact, that was the purpose of the Father in making Christ sin. Owen says:

for whomsoever he was made sin, they are made the righteousness of God in him: "By his stripes we are healed," Isa. liiii. 5; John xv. 13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Then, to intercede is not of greater love than to die, nor any thing else that he doth for his elect. If, then, he laid down his life for all, which is the greatest, why doth he not also the rest for them, and save them to the uttermost?^[60] ([Book IV, chapter 7](#))

The next argument which follows simply cites **John 17:9, 19**, in which we learn that Christ, before going to the cross, did not even pray for the world of unbelievers. Furthermore, His consecration was only for His own, which the Father had given Him. He was consecrated to them as an offering and a mediator, but He was not so consecrated nor for the purpose of them being sanctified for the reprobates.

Universal Language in Scripture

It is no surprise for Calvinists that Scripture does speak of the atonement of Christ in universal language as "world", "whole world", "every man" and the like. The non-Calvinists sometimes act as if the Calvinists are not aware of these Scriptures. We actually do know them and try to interpret them according to their context and by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Very often, the reason for the rejection of Particular Atonement hangs upon these universal expressions. In fact, Owen says, 'Upon these expressions hangs the whole weight of the opposite cause, the chief if not the only argument for the universality of redemption being taken from words which seem to be of a latitude in their signification equal to such an assertion, as the *world*, *the whole world*, *all*, and the like; which terms, when they have once fastened upon, they run with, "lo triumphe," as though the victory were surely theirs'^[61] ([Book IV, chapter 1](#)). This is still true today.

The Reason

According to Owen, the purpose for the use of general and indefinite or universal language has to do with several things. Here are the two most important summarized:

1. Showing the infinite value of the work of Christ for all the world without exception, if the Lord

had so willed. Yea, even for 10,000 worlds! Therefore, in our proclamation, we should declare the exclusivity of Christ as the only way of salvation. There is no other name (Acts 4:12).

2. The change of the covenant from the Old to the New. The Old was exclusive to Israel after the flesh, while the New is inclusive of everyone who believes from all the four corners of the earth (Rev. 5:9). Therefore, it is certainly right to speak of the atonement and work of Christ in universal terms, but it is something else to conclude that this is an absolute universality. This is a significant point considering how the Jews generally thought that they would be the only benefactors of the Messiah's work. By using words like "world" and other universal designations, the authors of Scripture make clear that salvation is no longer confined in Israel.
3. That the engrafting of the Gentiles was a serious issue at the beginning of the church could be seen from the Jewish exclusivity even outside of Jerusalem until Acts 11. In Acts 15, even some of the apostles were questioning the status of the Gentile believers among the people of God. Therefore, using universal and general language about the atonement and the work of Christ, dispels this Jewish exclusivity.

These are all important factors that Owen gives for the use of universal and indefinite language in the NT.

World

It is simply false to claim that whenever the word "*world*" is used that it speaks of all of humanity without exception. In fact, Owen finds several senses of the word, which I have put into a list:

1. For the created world:
 - i. The whole fabric of heaven and earth (Job 34:13; Acts 17:24; Eph. 1:4);
 - ii. Heaven distinguished from the earth (Ps. 90:2);
 - iii. The habitable earth (Ps. 24:1; Matt. 13:38; John 1:9; 3:17, 19; 6:14; 1 Tim. 1:15; 6:7).
2. For the world contained:
 - i. Universally for all and everyone (Rom. 3:6, 19; 5:12);
 - ii. Indefinitely for men, without restriction (John 7:4; Isa. 13:11);
 - iii. Many (Matt. 13:7; John 4:42; 12:19; 16: 8; 17:21; 1 Cor. 4:9; Rev. 13:3);
 - iv. Comparatively, for a great part of the world (Rom. 1:8; 10:18; Matt. 24:14; 26:13);
 - v. Restrictively, for the inhabitants of the Roman world (Luke 2:1);
 - vi. Men distinguished in their qualifications:
 - a. God's people (Ps. 22:27 KJV; John 3:16; 6:33, 51; Rom. 4:13; 11:12, 15; 2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 1:6; 1 John 2:2);
 - b. The wicked (Isa. 13:11; John 7:7; 14:17, 22; 15:19; 17:25; 1 Cor. 6:2; 11:32; Heb. 11:38; 2 Pet. 2:5; 1 John 5:19; Rev. 13:3).
3. For the corrupted world:
 - i. Gal. 1:4; 6:14; Eph. 2:2; James 1:27; 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17; 1 Cor. 1:20, 21; 3:18, 19; 7:31, 33; Col. 2:8; 2 Tim. 4:10; Rom. 12:2.
4. For the worldly condition of men and things:
 - i. Luke 16:8; John 18:36; 1 John 4:5 "and very many other places."
5. For the accursed world under Satan:
 - i. John 7:7; 14:30; 16:11, 33; 1 Cor. 2:12; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 6:12 KJV.
6. Extra: "All nations":
 - i. Rom. 1:5; Rev. 18:3, 23; Ps. 118:10; 1 Chron.. 14:17; Jer. 27:7.

It is even true that the same word can mean different things even in the same verse or passage. This is what Owen calls an ἀντακλάσις [*antanaklasis*], which is the repetition of the same word, but with a different meaning. He gives several examples to this effect (Matt. 8:22; John 1:10, 11; 3:6). Romans 9:6 may also be added to the list.

The best interpreter of the word "*world*" is the context. We cannot simply *a priori* define the word, without looking at the context and what Scripture says. Owen says:

Secondly, That no argument can be taken from a phrase of speech in the Scripture, in any particular place, if in other places thereof where it is used the signification pressed from that place is evidently denied, unless the scope of the place or subject-matter do enforce it. For instance: God is said to love the world, and send his Son; to be in Christ reconciling the world to himself; and Christ to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. If the scope of the places where these assertions are, or the subject-matter of which they treat, will enforce a universality of all persons to be meant by the word world, so let it be, without control. But if not, if there be no enforcement of any such interpretation from the places themselves, why should the world there signify all and every one, more than in John i. 10, "The world knew him not," which, if it be meant of all without exception, then no one did believe in Christ, which is contrary to verse 12; or in Luke 2:1, "That all the world should be taxed," where none but the chief inhabitants of the Roman empire can be understood; or in John 8:26, "I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him," understanding the Jews to whom he spake, who then lived in the world, and not every one, to whom he was not sent; or in John 12:19, "Behold, the world is gone after him!" which world was nothing but a great multitude of one small nation; or in 1 John 5:19, "The whole world lieth in wickedness," from which, notwithstanding, all believers are to be understood as exempted; or in Rev. 13:3, "All the world wondered after the beast," which, whether it be affirmed of the whole universality of individuals in the world, let all judge? That all nations, an expression of equal extent with that of the world, is in like manner to be understood, is apparent, Rom. 1:5; Rev. 18:3, 23; Ps. 118:10; 1 Chron. 14:17; Jer. 27:7. It being evident that the words world, all the world, the whole world, do, where taken adjunctively for men in the world, usually and almost always denote only some or many men in the world, distinguished into good or bad, believers or unbelievers, elect or reprobate, by what is immediately in the several places affirmed of them, I see no reason in the world why they should be wrested to any other meaning or sense in the places that are in controversy between us and our opponents.^[62] ([Book IV, chapter 1](#))

There are places in Scripture where the word "world" definitely does not mean all without exception as in John 1:10; 7:4; 12:19; 14:17; Luke 2:1; Acts 19:27; Rom. 1:8; Col. 1:6; 1 John 5:19; Rev. 12:9 (cf. Rev 13:3, 8). It is a simple denial of the fact that the word "world" is used in many ways to always take the references where it used to be speaking of all humanity without exception. The meaning must be determined by the context and exegesis.

In this way, Owen interprets "world" in John 3:16 to be speaking of the world of God's elect (see [Book IV, chapter 2](#), see also [here](#)). The first "world" in John 3:17 is the human realm into which Christ was sent; the second and the third are for God's elect (see [Book IV, chapter 3](#)). The expression "world" is used in these passages to denote the extent of God's grace to all who believe. It refutes that Jewish exclusivism, which prevailed in their day. In this way, the author (whether it be John commenting or the Lord Christ speaking) shows us that the Jews are not only the object of God's love and grace but even the Gentiles. The same is true of John 1:29 (see [Book IV, chapter 3](#), see also [here](#)).

1 John 2:2 is also dealt with in detail (see [Book IV, chapter 3](#)). The passage is for the purpose of giving consolation to sinning believers, but it is no consolation to them that the propitiation of Christ, which means "to appease, pacify, and reconcile God in respect of aversation for sin"^[63] ([Book IV, chapter 3](#)), is the same for them as for the damned. Furthermore, this passage should be read in close connection with John 11:51-52 and with the meaning of propitiation ([see here](#)). The expressions "whole world" and the like are used in Scripture to refer to only one particular group and not all without exception. See for example Luke 2:1; Romans 1:8; Colossians 1:6; Revelation 3:10.

When approaching all of these passages Revelation 5:9 should be kept in mind. The Scriptures themselves give us a universality which is particular. The passage reads, "...you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation". Notice the universality of the language. The people of God come from everywhere in the world. But let us not overlook the particularity. It was not that those tribes, languages, peoples and nations were purchased, but "people for God *from every*" corner of the earth. The realization of this purchase is not in question as everyone for whom this purchase was made is said to have been made a kingdom of priests and they will reign on the earth (Rev. 5:10). Therefore, we are more than justified, when the context requires, to take expressions like "world" and "all" to be speaking of God's elect from everywhere on the earth.

All, Everyone

According to own the word "all" does mean all without exception, but this is not its only use. In fact, this is not even the most used sense. I will simply quote Owen at length here:

That it is sometimes taken in the first sense, for all collectively, is granted, and I need not prove it, they whom we oppose affirming that this is the only sense of the word, — though I dare boldly say it is not once in ten times so to be understood in the usage of it through the whole book of God; but that it is commonly, and indeed properly, used in the latter sense, for some of all sorts, concerning whatsoever it is affirmed, a few instances, for many that might be urged, will make it clear. Thus, then, ye have it, John 12:32, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me." That we translate it "all men," as in other places (for though I know the sense may be the same, yet the

word *men* being not in the original, but only Πᾶντα), I cannot approve. But who, I pray, are these *all*? Are they all and every one? Then are all and every one drawn to Christ, made believers, and truly converted, and shall be certainly saved; for those that come unto him by his and his Father's drawing, "he will in no wise cast out," John 6:37. *All*, then, can here be no other than many, some of all sorts, no sort excluded, according as the word is interpreted in Rev. 5:9, "Thou hast redeemed us out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." These are the *all* he draws to him: which exposition of this phrase is with me of more value and esteem than a thousand glosses of the sons of men. So also, Luke 11:42, where our translators have made the word to signify immediately and properly (for translators are to keep close to the propriety and native signification of every word) what we assert to be the right interpretation of it; for they render Πᾶν λαχναον (which ῥητῶς is "every herb"), "all manner of herbs," taking the word (as it must be) *distributively*, for herbs of all sorts, and not for any individual herb, which the Pharisees did not, could not tithe. And in the very same sense is the word used again, Luke 18:12, "I give tithes of all that I possess;" where it cannot signify every individual thing, as is apparent. Most evident, also, is this restrained signification of the word, Acts 2:17, "I will pour out of my Spirit, ἐνὶ Πᾶσαν σάρκα." which, whether it compriseth every man or no, let every man judge, and not rather men of several and sundry sorts. The same course of interpretation as formerly is followed by our translators, Acts 10:12, rendering Πάντα τὰ τετράποδα, (literally, "all beasts or four-footed creatures,") "all manner of beasts," or beasts of sundry several sorts. In the same sense also must it be understood, Rom. 14:2, "One believeth that he may eat all things;" that is, what he pleaseth of things to be eaten of. See, moreover, 1 Cor. 1:5. Yea, in that very chapter where men so eagerly contend that the word *all* is to be taken for all and every one (though fruitlessly and falsely, as shall be demonstrated), — namely, 1 Tim. 2:4, where it is said that "God will have all men to be saved," — in that very chapter confessedly the word is to be expounded according to the sense we give, namely, verse 8, "I will, therefore, that men pray ἐν Παντὶ τόπῳ." which, that it cannot signify every individual place in heaven, earth, and hell, is of all confessed, and needeth no proof; no more than when our Saviour is said to cure Πᾶσαν νόσον, as Matt. 9:35, there is need to prove that he did not cure every disease of every man, but only all sorts of diseases.^[64] ([Book IV, chapter 1](#))

The word "*all*" is most of the time not used to denote everyone without exception. This is evident in places like John 12:32 (compare John 6:37-44); Luke 2:1; 11:42 ("every"); 18:12; Acts 2:17; 10:12; Romans 14:2; 1 Corinthians 1:5; 1 Timothy 2:8; Matthew 9:35. Add to those also the following passages: Jeremiah 13:19 (comp. Jer. 39:9-10); Matthew 2:3-4; 3:5; 5:11 (literally "all evil"); Mark 1:5; Luke 3:21; John 4:29; 8:2; Acts 10:39; 17:21; 21:28; 22:15; 26:4; 1 Corinthians 6:12. In all of these places and more, the better understanding of the expression is that it refers to *all kinds* of things (men, herbs, etc.), or all *without distinction* instead of all without exception. It is just too simplistic to take these expressions to be speaking of humanity without exception.

1 Timothy 2:4-6 speaks of all sorts of men, and specifically the elect of God. The passage does not speak of God's will of desire, but God's will of decree (see [Book IV, chapter 4](#), see also [here](#)). The "all" and "every" in **2 Peter 3:9** is limited by the "you" (in the KJV "us-ward"), who are the elect and the beloved of the epistle (see [Book IV, chapter 4](#), see also [here](#)). See also his comments on Hebrews 2:9 (see also [here](#)) and on 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (see also [here](#)) in [chapter 4](#).

Comparing the Two Systems

Much more could be said about this work, but I'll leave that task to you to find out by reading it. Let us close with a table which Owen provides^[65] ([Book IV, chapter 7](#)):

Universalists.	Scriptural Redemption.
1. Christ died for all and every one, elect and reprobate.	1. Christ died for the elect only.
2. Most of them for whom Christ died are damned.	2. All those for whom Christ died are certainly saved.
3. Christ, by his death, purchased not any saving grace for them for whom he died.	3. Christ by his death purchased all saving grace for them for whom he died.
4. Christ took no care for the greatest part of them for whom he died, that ever they should hear one word of his death.	4. Christ sends the means and reveals the way of life to all them for whom he died.
5. Christ, in his death, did not ratify nor confirm a covenant of grace with any federates, but only procured by his death that God might, if he would, enter into a new covenant with whom he would, and upon what condition he pleased.	5. The new covenant of grace was confirmed to all the elect in the blood of Jesus.
Christ might have died, and yet no one be saved.	6. Christ, by his death, purchased, upon covenant and compact, an assured peculiar people, the pleasure of the Lord prospering to the end in his hand.
7. Christ had no intention to redeem his church, any more than the wicked seed of the serpent.	7. Christ loved his church, and gave himself for it.

Conclusion

John Owen makes a biblically and logically tight case for what is commonly but unfortunately called Limited Atonement. He extensively uses Scripture and Scriptural concepts to argue his case, which makes the case all the more convincing. Adding to the final and primary authority of Scripture, his good use of “sanctified” common sense and logic against universal atonement and for definite redemption. This work, while extensive and verbose, is truly a blessing and a very good case not only for Particular Redemption, but on the whole question of the accomplishment and application of redemption. Owen spent 7 years writing and researching for this book, and it is still the foremost defense of particular redemption. No learned theologian may dismiss “Limited Atonement” without first giving Owen a hearing.

Μόνῳ σοφῷ Θεῷ, διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. Ἀμήν.

The Purpose and Scope of the Atonement

Steve Lawson has rightly observed that “The extent of the atonement is defined by the intent of the atonement (Matt. 1:21; John 17:2,9, 24).” We must see what was the purpose of God in the atonement. What did God desire the outcome to be? I would like to survey some texts which pertain to the death of our Lord and speak of its effect or purpose. Let’s not forget again that we already have spoken of the Lord’s wrath-satisfying death [above](#), expounding upon Isaiah 53; Galatians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21 which speak of His being our Substitute and what His death would accomplish on our behalf. What I would like to do here is to take a look at a few passages from the New Testament that speak of our Lord’s death, its purpose and for whom it was meant.

Matthew

Let’s begin at the start of the New Testament. Let’s begin by unpacking what the precious name of our Lord means. The angel tells Joseph to name Him Jesus:

Matt. 1:21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name **Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.**”

The name *Jesus*, or as He would have been known in His Hebrew language, *Yeshua* means “Yahweh saves.” That is the meaning of the name Jesus. But the angel wants to make it clear to Joseph. The angel gives an explanation of the name and also makes known the mission of the child entrusted to Joseph. His name will be Jesus for a reason. It is not because it sounds cool, but there is a purpose for this child. The Greek γάρ (*gar*) is a conjunction which assigns a reason for something. He shall be called Jesus, **for** the reason that He will save His people. His people are both elect from the Jews and from the Gentiles (e.g., Isa. 53:10-11; John 6:37; Heb. 2:13). His people are “Those whom the Father has given to him. The Jews were called the people of God because he had chosen them to himself, and regarded them as His special and beloved people, separate from all the nations of the earth. Christians are called the people of Christ because it was the purpose of the Father to give them to him Isa 53:11; Joh 6:37; and because in due time he came to redeem them to himself, Tit 2:14; 1Pe 1:2.”^[2]

The question is: Did the Lord Jesus fail or did He indeed save His people? Obviously, as One Who always does the Father’s will, He could not have failed (John 4:34; 5:19, 30; 6:38; 8:29) and that is proven both by the *tetelestai* (John 19:30) on the cross and the resurrection which shows that the Father was pleased with the work of the Son. How could the work of God the Son not achieve its intended purpose for saving His people from their sins without the failure of the power of God? Is what Job said still right concerning God’s will?

Job 42:2 “I know that you can do all things, and that **no purpose of yours can be thwarted.**
cf. Isa. 14:27.

Can the purpose of God for Christ to save His people fail to accomplish its intended goal without destroying the power and intention of God? Such thoughts are blasphemous and are unworthy of anyone who bears the name of Christ. We not only see the purpose of the atonement here but also its extent. It is not extended to all men everywhere, but it is extended as far

as those who belong among “his people.” He is born for the specific purpose of saving His people from their sins. He was born to die.

Why was Christ’s precious blood spilled? Matthew records the Lord’s words when He instituted the Lord’s Supper—

Matt. 26:27-28 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, 28 for this is **my blood of the covenant**, which is **poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins**.
cf. Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20.

The purpose that the precious blood of Christ was poured out was to forgive the sins of many. Schaff comments on the last portion of the verse as follows:

Which is shed (or ‘being shed’) **for many unto remission of sins**. Our Lord here declares, with reference to His own death, that it was an actual dying for others, to the end that their sins might be pardoned. That death for many is the ground of the forgiveness of each; the partaking of the cup signifies our belief that He thus died for us; the seal of the covenant assuring our believing souls of forgiveness. Both ‘bread’ and ‘wine’ set forth Christ *in us*, as well as Christ *for us*. The blood is a symbol of life; the wine, the emblem of Christ’s blood, is drunk, to signify also our new life through the blood of Christ, just as the eating of the bread sets forth nourishment derived from Christ, whose body has been broken for us.^[3]

John Gill comments on the usage of “many” here:

Which is shed for many, for the remission of sins; that is, was very shortly to be shed, and since has been, for all the elect of God; for the many that were ordained to eternal life, and the many that were given to Christ, the many that are justified by him, and the many sons he will bring to glory: whereby the full forgiveness of all their sins was procured, in a way consistent with, and honourable to the justice of God; full satisfaction being made to the law of God, for all their transgressions.^[6]

This is similar to **Matthew 20:28** where our Lord tells us the purpose of His mission—

Matt. 20:28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to **give his life as a ransom for many**.
cf. Mark 10:45.

Well, if Christ is a ransom for all people without exception, why does Scripture teach that the wicked will still pay for their sins and they will not be set free? The Lord Christ is a ransom, but only for the elect who are indeed set free and will completely be set free from sin and its dominion.

The question again is, did Christ fail in His mission or not? Did He attain that which was commanded Him by the Father? Did He, as He said before He went to the cross, finish the work that was given to Him (John 17:4)? His blood, which is the blood of the New Covenant (Heb. 12:24; 13:20; Luke 22:20), naturally would be poured out for those in the covenant. In Old Testament times, the atonement was nationally limited. It was limited in scope to the nation of Israel. The high priest did not pray, intercede or offer sacrifice on behalf of the Babylonians, Assyrians or any other nation. The atonement was nationally limited to those who bore the sign of the covenant. It was limited to those who were within the covenant wherein the sacrificial system was instituted. This truth would also naturally be applied to the New Covenant. Though the difference is that the New Covenant is a perfectly salvific covenant, meaning, it does not have unregenerate members within it (Heb. 8:6-13). The Lord Jesus limits the scope of people for whom His blood is shed. It is not for every single man in the world or all humanity that the Savior shed His precious blood, but He says that He shed His blood for many. “Many” certainly is correct as the elect are a multitude that no man can number (Rev. 5:9; 7:9).

Matthew 20:28 says that His perfect life was the ransom for the many. The Greek word λύτρον (*lutron*, G3083) is defined by Thayer’s Greek Definitions as:

- Original: λύτρον
- Transliteration: Lutron

- Phonetic: loo'-tron

- Definition:

1. the price for redeeming, ransom
 - a. paid for slaves, captives
 - b. for the ransom of life
2. to liberate many from misery and the penalty of their sins

- Origin: from G3089

- TDNT entry: 4:328 & 4:340,543

- Part(s) of speech: Noun Neuter^[11]

Barnes comments on the meaning of the word "ransom":

The word "ransom" means literally a price paid for the redemption of captives. In war, when prisoners are taken by an enemy, the money demanded for their release is called a ransom; that is, it is the means by which they are set at liberty. So anything that releases anyone from a state of punishment, or suffering, or sin, is called a ransom. People are by nature captives to sin. They are sold under it. They are under condemnation, Eph 2:3; Rom 3:9-20, Rom 3:23; 1Jo 5:19. They are under a curse, Gal 3:10. They are in love with sin. They are under its withering dominion, and are exposed to death eternal, Eze 18:4; Psa 9:17; Psa 11:6; Psa 68:2; Psa 139:19; Mat 25:46; Rom 2:6-9. They must have perished unless there had been some way by which they could be rescued. This was done by the death of Jesus - by giving his life a ransom. The meaning is, that he died in the place of sinners, and that God was willing to accept the pains of his death in the place of the eternal suffering of the redeemed.^[12]

So, if the Lord Christ did shed His precious blood and gave His life as a ransom, did He or did He not redeem us from the power of sin and from the slave market of sin? The obvious answer should be that He certainly did on the cross by the shedding of His blood ransom us from sin and at the appointed time, by His Holy Spirit, applied the benefits that He bought for us on the cross to us. But if our Arminian brothers want to insist that Christ the Lord died for every single person in the world, how then was the life and blood of our Lord the ransom for their sin? How was the blood of the Lord, which is the blood of the New Covenant, shed on their behalf without bringing them into the New Covenant? According to Arminians, most of those for whom Christ died are unaware that Christ died for them (e.g., unreached people throughout history) and if they are aware, unless they believe, which is an act on their own (according to them), they will still rot in Hell. So, how effective is the atonement for them? It seems to me, that if Christ's purpose was to redeem and forgive every single human being, then He has failed miserably. But such a thing is impossible for the God for Whom nothing is too hard (Jer. 32:27; Gen. 18:14). It is impossible for the God Whose purpose cannot be thwarted (Job 42:2; Isa. 14:27; Dan. 4:34-35; Rom. 9:19ff). The only consistent way to understand the extent of the atonement is by not forgetting the effect and purpose of the atonement, which is to save His people, be a ransom for many and forgive their sins.

Some may already object now that just because the Bible sometimes speaks of Christ's atonement as being specific it does exclude it being offered on behalf of all men without exception. **First**, this objection would be correct if we did not stress the *purpose* and the *effect* of the atonement. The passages which we have looked at until now could only be applied to the elect—those who have saving faith in Christ *thanks to the atonement* itself. The atonement described in these passages is not an "iffy" thing, but a *definite* and *certain* atonement thanks to Christ's sacrifice. **Second**, we have not forgotten that Christ's death was substitutionary—meaning that He died in the place of people. He died on the cross representing all the elect. He did not die for a faceless group. He died for specific people and He died to propitiate God—to satisfy, i.e., remove His wrath against their sin. How could this be said of any group but believers? If we are consistent in our understanding of the Lord's substitutionary death, we would limit the scope of the atonement to those who would believe, i.e., the elect, otherwise, we have to limit the power of the atonement. **Third**, the passages that speak of the atonement in terms of *all*, *world* and other like terms should be understood in the light of the passages that speak of the definite and certain atonement of Christ. But we will look at some passages that use universal language below. In the meantime check Owen's look at the universal language in Scripture [above](#).

John

In the Gospel of John, the Lord Jesus is clear about what is known as the Doctrines of Grace. There, we get a clear picture of what election means in chapter 6 and also for whom His atoning death was meant, among other places, in chapters 10 and 17.

John 6 and 10

Let's remind ourselves of John 6. [As we have argued above](#), even in the Old Testament, salvation was by grace and based

on Christ's (from their viewpoint) future sacrifice. So basically, all of salvation is based on the fact that Christ alone is the One Who satisfies the justice of God, which then qualifies us for eternal life.

John 6:37-40 **All that the Father gives me will come to me**, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that **I should lose nothing** of all that he has given me, but **raise it up on the last day**. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who **looks on the Son and believes in him** should have eternal life, and **I will raise him up** on the last day."

John 6:44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And **I will raise him up** on the last day.

From these passages, it is clear to see God's sovereign election. The will of God for Christ is that He saves those people whom the Father has given Him and raise them in glory on the last day. Then in v. 40, the call is generalized so that no one would say "I do not need to have faith and repent, I'll just wait here until God regenerates me." The call is also upon man to make a positive response. Both the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man are present in the passage. One does not undermine the other. But from v. 44, we learn that this ability to come to the Son, i.e., to have faith in Him and look up to Him, comes from God. No one has the ability to come on their own to the Son. Rather, they are drawn by the Father. The drawing of the Father is effective and it assures that the same one which was drawn is also raised up in glory on the last day. All of this is presupposed upon the work which the Lord Jesus then had to do on the cross on behalf of sinners. He had to make propitiation so that they would be forgiven from sin, pardoned and welcomed by God. See for more our discussion of [this passage in chapter 3](#) concerning God's **Unconditional Election**.

This is consistent with what our Lord says in John 10 concerning His sheep, i.e., His elect, those who belong to Him. This is my favorite designation of the believers. We are the sheep and the Lord is our Shepherd.

John 10:11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd **lays down his life for the sheep**.

The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sake of the sheep to protect and save them from harm. The Lord Jesus gave His life as a ransom for us (Matt. 20:28). His life was the price to save His sheep. Notice that here, the Lord limits the scope of His death. He lays His life down for the sheep. Although the text does not say that He lays His life for the sheep *alone*, yet that is implied by the context. It is implied by the context because the Lord specifically speaks of those who belong to Him. Those who have faith in Him. They are those who know Him intimately and He knows them intimately. He is the One who takes care of them. He is the One who protects them. He is the One who calls them by name. It is Him whom the sheep follow, not any other (John 10:4-5). Furthermore, wolves (John 10:12) are mentioned, which in Scripture refer to unbelievers and false teachers (e.g., Matt. 7:15; Luke 10:3; Acts 20:29), which the statement would prove that the Lord Jesus was not planning to lay down His precious life for the wolves, but exclusively for the sheep to save them from the wolves even by dying.

Again in vv. 14-15, the Lord of glory repeats what He said in v. 11 with emphasis this time upon His loving relationship and intimacy with the Father and the like intimacy with His sheep. Could the same be said of unbelievers? Throughout the chapter, the sheep are God's people. The sheep are the believers. This is also the group that the Lord says He lays His life for.

Now let us move to the next section of chapter 10. The Jews come up to the Lord and demand that He tell them if He is the Messiah. His answer is amazing:

John 10:25-26 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, 26 but **you do not believe because you are not among my sheep**.

The Lord finds the cause of their unbelief in the fact that they were not among His sheep. If John was an Arminian, this verse would have said something like: you are not among my sheep *because* you do not believe. But the verse finds the cause of their unbelief in the fact that they are not among the Lord's sheep. What this means is that those not among Christ's sheep are unbelievers, while those who are among Christ's sheep are believers. They are sheep because of their election, and they are non-sheep because of their reprobation. The Lord speaks of sheep which He has still to gather from the Gentiles—

John 10:16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. **I must bring them also**, and **they will listen to my voice**. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

He seeks out His sheep and He brings them into His fold. Because they are *His* sheep, they will listen to the voice of their Master. This is certain to happen. It is not an “iffy” thing. They will listen and come into His fold, because of His power and grace. They are currently not among His fold, but He *will* bring them.

John 10:27-28 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 **I give them eternal life**, and **they will never perish**, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

In this verse, the Shepherd assures us that His sheep hear His voice calling them, He knows them intimately. He does not merely know facts about them, rather He knows *them* personally. Not only that, but those sheep whom He knows and loves, follow Him. They are not among those who do not follow Him. Simply by the fact that they are His sheep and He is the Shepherd, they trust and follow Him. To the same sheep, in v. 28, He gives eternal life and assures us that those same sheep will never perish. They cannot but have eternal life and in the words of John 6, they will be raised on the last day.

Now let us turn to v. 11 where the Lord says that He lays His life for the sheep. Now we see that obviously, John 10:1-30 speaks of the same subject. The same sheep for whom He lays down His life in v. 11, are the same sheep to whom He gives eternal life and they will never perish. Those are the same sheep who know Him and He knows them personally and intimately. As we have pointed out at the beginning of the discussion about John 6 above, all salvation is presupposed upon Christ’s perfectly and substitutionary death. So, I would like to ask the Arminian, how does this verse fit with the idea that Christ the Lord died for all people without exception? How is Christ’s death effective for the Jews who rejected Him? How is Christ’s death effective for those who are wolves? If the work of Christ in laying down His life for the sheep assures the bringing in of the sheep into His fold, giving them eternal life, preserving them and raising them up on the last day, how could this work be said to be done also on behalf of those who are not sheep and who have not been given by the Father? How is Christ not a failure for not achieving the same for the sheep as for the non-sheep if He gave His life for and in the place of every man without exception?

It seems clear to me that this chapter teaches that the scope of the atonement is limited to the sheep, i.e., the believers, the elect. This does not mean that He dies for those who already are believers, but that all for whom He dies are among the elect and will, thanks to His death, become believers, will be given eternal life, will be kept and will be raised on the last day. The intent of the atonement is to bring in the sheep into the fold of God, giving them eternal life and preserving them unto the last day.

John 17

This is one of the most fascinating chapters in the Bible. Herein is recorded the Lord’s High Priestly Prayer before the sacrifice of Himself. It is interesting to note what was on the Lord’s mind before He was to be betrayed and slain for our sake. In v. 2, we read of our Lord given eternal life to all who were given to Him by the Father. In this verse, we see a connection with chapters 6 and 10. Those who were given to Him in chapter 17, and the sheep to whom He gives eternal life (John 10:28) are the same group because it is only to those whom the Father has given, the Lord Christ has authority to give eternal life. If the Lord Christ was the substitute in our place, He laid down His life for the sheep, i.e., all whom the Father has given Him. It is, therefore, most proper to say that the Lord laid down His life for the elect to give them eternal life.

The Lord Christ, hours away from His painful crucifixion, by which He spiritually and physically endured the wrath of God due unto us, says to the Father in all confidence:

John 17:4 I glorified you on earth, having **accomplished the work that you gave me to do**.

He has done all that the Father has commanded Him to do. He has done all the Father’s will concerning Him (e.g., John 6:39). He accomplished His mission, although He had not yet gone to the cross, yet the cross was certain and He speaks of His (strictly speaking near-future) sacrifice on the cross as already accomplished (John 19:30). The Lord then intercedes for His disciples before the Father. They were the Father’s and the Father has given them to the Son so that the Father may be manifested to them. A characteristic of them is that they keep the word of the Father. They obey the word of the Father, which is specifically that the Lord Jesus has come from the Father (John 17:8). This is similar to “they hear his voice” in John 10:3. Then in v. 9, we come across a limiting sentence in the Lord’s High Priestly prayer—

John 17:9 **I am praying for them**. I am **not praying for the world** but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.

The group under discussion, strictly speaking, are the disciples of our Lord, but by extension (John 17:19-24), all the elect, i.e., all those whom the Father has given the Son. It is for them that the Lord prays. It is for their sake that He consecrates Himself (John 17:19) that they may be *sanctified* in the truth and in God's word (John 17:17). It is for their *unity* that the Lord prays. He wants us, believers, to be one in Christ as He and the Father are one (John 17:11, 20-21). It is for their *protection* that the Lord prays. He prays that they may be *sustained* under persecution and be kept from the evil one (John 17:15).

The Great High Priest, specifically and emphatically says that He does not pray for the world. What could here be meant by the word "*world*" than everyone except those whom the Father has given Him (John 17:16)? In the words of John 10, the world are the non-sheep. What keeps me wondering if Universal rather than Definite atonement is the right way to go, why on earth did the Lord emphatically did not want to pray for the people for whom, according to our Arminian brethren, He would substitutionarily die? The Lord does not even bother to pray for them, are we then to say, "yes, surely He died in their place?" Does this sound reasonable? He does not even want to pray for those who are not His, but He would die on the cross as a substitute for those for whom He did not bother to pray for?

Again, we see the consistency of John's presentation of the atonement in chapters 10 and 17. John presents an atonement that is limited, not in power, but in scope. It is limited to those who are His sheep, i.e., those given to Him by the Father. He is our Friend Who has laid down His life for us (John 15:13). Although when He did, we were His enemies, yet He has reconciled us to Him (Rom. 5:6-9).

Revelation 5:9-10

Rev. 5:9-10 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and **by your blood you ransomed people for God from every** tribe and language and people and nation, 10 and **you have made them a kingdom and priests** to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

We have already dealt with this [passage briefly above](#) when we tried to show the meaning of the word "*world*" in 2 Corinthians 5:19. By the blood of the Lamb, He ransomed people for God. He *redeemed* them say the HCSB and KJV; *purchased* say the ISV and NET. The idea conveyed here is the action (verb), which the Lamb, by the shedding of His blood, has done. He has bought people for God. This is something that is *definite*. It is not an "iffy" thing. It is not conditional upon something that people must do, rather it is simply something that God has done. Christ has bought certain people for God, and the price for them was His blood. The fact that it is not an "iffy" thing is seen in what is said in v. 10. They are said, the same group, which was bought by blood, to have been made a kingdom and priests to God. That is, they are in the service of God. The same people for whom the Lamb was slain has the covenant promises of God applied to them (cf. Ex 19:5-6; 1 Pet 2:9). Therefore, the purpose of the atonement was to purchase people to be "a kingdom and priests to our God."

The reason why this is a powerful passage in support of Definite Atonement is in the fact that it is *limited in scope*. The passage says that Christ has redeemed people for God **from** every tribe, language, people and nation, or in other words—from every corner of the world. This, the Lord has done, He has redeemed so that they will definitely be "a kingdom and priests to our God." But what is interesting is the fact that the text does not say that by His blood Christ has ransomed "every tribe and language and people and nation"; or that the Lamb by the shedding of His blood has ransomed "all people from every tribe and language and people and nation." Rather, the text is limited in its scope. It says that He has redeemed people **from** all the world. He did not redeem, purchase or ransom all people (without exception) from the world, rather he ransomed a specific people from all over the world. If from what we have seen John believes in Definite Atonement why does he write of Christ being the propitiation for the whole world in 1 John 2:2? That, we will examine later [below](#).

Paul

Ephesians 5:25-27

Eph. 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, as **Christ loved the church** and **gave himself up for her**, 26 that he might **sanctify her**, having **cleansed her** by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might **present the church to himself in splendor**, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

His love for the church, i.e., the body of believers, was prior to the giving up of Himself up for her. He loved the church and that was the motivation for His self-sacrifice. The church was the object of Christ's and God's intimate and special love, which He bought with His blood (Acts 20:28). It is for the church that He gave himself up. It is in her stead, in her place, ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς (*hyper autēs*). This giving up of Himself in place of the church, the body of the elect, was for a purpose. It was not purposeless, rather the Lord had a specific purpose in it. That purpose is indicated by the use of the ἵνα (*hina*) purpose clause. This purpose which the Lord purposed in the giving up of Himself for the church was:

- to sanctify her
 - having cleansed her by the water of the word

- to present the church as holy and without blemish

The Lord, in dying, purposed to present His church as sinless before Him and the Father. How? By setting them apart for His service, i.e., by sanctifying them. This, as we read in John 17:19 involves the Son consecrating Himself so that we may be sanctified. He intercedes and prays for us from heaven that we more and more may become like Him and walk in His footsteps. This sanctification comes after the regeneration of the believer (James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:22-23; Titus 3:5). After the believers are given a new heart, cleansed of their sin, given the Holy Spirit, the life long process of sanctification begins in them by the Spirit. The purpose again in v. 27 given for regeneration is that the church may be presented in the words of Ephesians 1:4 as “holy and blameless.”

From this passage, we learn that Christ’s death not only effects our justification and regeneration but also our sanctification. Our sanctification is also thanks to the work of Christ on our behalf. And this work is presented perfectly in heaven when we are cleansed of all sin and are holy and blameless, as we were predestined to be. In this passage, the co-operation of man in a synergistic sense is excluded. It is Christ Who has given Himself in place of the church and has cleansed her “by the washing of water with the word.” It is also Christ who has Himself purposed to sanctify the church and to present her as blameless. The church is being *acted upon by Christ* and is not co-operating with Christ. So, if Christ’s purpose was to sanctify and purify those for whom He died, which the text here says was the church, what of those “outside the church”? How has Christ sanctified and cleansed those outside the body of believers? What effect did it have on them? How did His purpose for them not fail? Or was His purpose to sanctify the church, but had another purpose for those not belonging to the church? (Throughout this discussion I’m not speaking of the church as an organizational body but as the body of all true believers, i.e., the invisible church).

Again, I conclude that the purpose of the atonement limits the scope. Christ’s purpose was to sanctify and cleanse; the scope was the church.

Romans 5:9-10

Rom. 5:9-10 Since, therefore, we have now been **justified by his blood**, much more shall we be **saved by him from the wrath of God**. 10 For if while we were enemies we were **reconciled to God by the death of his Son**, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

His sacrifice, the shedding of His blood, was the cause of our justification. “The fact that we are purchased by his blood, and sanctified by it, renders us sacred in the eye of God; bestows a value on us proportionate to the worth of the price of our redemption; and is a pledge that he will keep what has been so dearly bought.”^[2] Since we by faith have been justified by His shed blood, we likewise will escape the wrath of God Almighty. What relevance, according to Universal Atonement, has this for those who will not believe? How is this effective for them? The reply I expect will be that those who believe have received the atonement by faith, while those who remain in unbelief reject it. Well, that is true, but every blessing of salvation was provided for us by the atonement (Heb. 13:20-21; Isa. 53:5-6). Salvation was provided for us by His blood. For us to be justified we have to believe, but even this the Bible teaches is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 1:29; Acts 18:27; [see here](#)). Therefore, faith is not something that originates or comes from us, rather it is something by grace and based on Christ’s sacrifice, which is given to us, so that we may truly have no occasion of boasting, not even in saying that the faith came from us. But if it is even by grace that we believe (consistent with Ephesians 2:8-9 which says “this is not your own doing...so that no one may boast”, then our whole salvation which includes both faith and repentance (e.g., 2 Tim. 2:24-26) is by grace, not our doing. It is the Lord’s monergistic work.

In v. 10, Paul says that the enemies for whom Christ died were reconciled to God by Jesus’ death, thereby referencing only those who were in the past enemies and who have or will be reconciled to God. Barnes comments on this reconciliation:

We are brought to an agreement; to a state of friendship and union. We became his friends, laid aside our opposition, and embraced him as our friend and portion. To effect this is the great design of the plan of salvation; 2Co. 5:1-20; Col 1:21; Eph 2:16. It means that there were obstacles existing on both sides to a reconciliation; and that these have been removed by the death of Christ; and that a union has thus been effected. This has been done in removing the obstacles on the part of God - by maintaining the honor of his Law; showing his hatred of sin; upholding his justice, and maintaining his truth, at the same time that he pardons; Note, Rom 3:26. And on the part of man, by removing his unwillingness to be reconciled; by subduing, changing, and sanctifying his heart; by overcoming his hatred of God, and of his Law; and bringing him into submission to the government of God. So that the Christian is in fact reconciled to God; he is his friend; he is pleased with his Law, his character, and his plan of salvation. And all this has been accomplished by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus as an offering in our place.^[2]

We were united with God in a harmonious relationship—reconciled by Jesus’ death. That is one of the purposes of His death. How is that accomplished in those who remain enemies and who not merely “were” enemies? The apostle limits the scope of

His death to those who were justified. To those who because of their justification look forward to being saved from the wrath of God on the Day of Judgment. To those who were reconciled to God and look forward to be saved by His life. The Lord's death for Paul's audience and by extension to all believers is what affected our reconciliation to God. Not all people are reconciled to God or justified, therefore Christ did not die for all people without exception. Again, the *purpose* limits the *scope*.

Titus 2:11-14

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God has appeared, **bringing salvation for all people**, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who **gave himself for us to redeem us** from all lawlessness and to **purify for himself a people** for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

The reference to "all people" is not to all people without exception, but all people without distinction, i.e., all kinds of people. This is supported by the context, which gives us a list of different kinds of people. For more, see [1 Timothy 2:4 & Titus 2:11, 'desires all people to be saved'](#).

God's salvation has reached to all kinds of people even in the time of Paul (Col. 1:6) and all kinds of people were being saved and transferred from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God. This salvation of God teaches us and causes us to hate and renounce all ungodliness and walk in ways of the Lord, for His name's sake. We are to live in a manner worthy of His holy name, as we await His Parousia which Paul calls "our blessed hope." Verse 14 is what we need to look at for our purpose. It is in many ways similar to Ephesians 5:25-27. Our great God and Savior Jesus Christ gave

Himself ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν (*hyper humon*)—in our place, and that for a purpose. The purpose clause ἵνα (*hina*) is translated with "to." The purpose was to redeem us from all lawlessness. Will He accomplish His work? Will anyone of "us", which are the believers (Tit 1:1-4), fail to be redeemed from all lawlessness by Christ the Lord? Certainly not, the Christ will never fail to accomplish the Father's will for Him. The second reason for His giving himself for us is "to purify for himself a people." You would have expected in the same way that all people in v. 11 is interpreted by Arminians as referring to all people without exception, so likewise here it would say "to purify for himself *all* people." But that is not what we have in the text. Rather the text is very specific and narrow in its scope. It is to purify a specific people. I hear echoes of Exodus 19:5-6 in here.

Just like God in the Old Covenant promised the nation of Israel upon the condition of obedience to His covenant and laws that they would become His treasured possession. So likewise Christ the Lord's purpose in giving Himself for us is so that we will be a people for his own possession. Not that we would obey to be so, but His death makes us so. Paul gives us two effects and purposes of the Lord's death: 1) to redeem us from lawlessness and 2) to purify a people for himself. The extent, therefore, has to be the "us" of believers and those whom Christ has as "a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works" (cf. Eph. 2:10), that is, the elect of God. We see again that the *purpose* of the atonement limits also its *scope*. We have seen over and over again both the purpose and scope of the atonement in the same passages.

Hebrews

The book of Hebrews is my second favorite epistle of the New Testament. It causes me to wonder about the Lord's majesty, to think of His sacrifice and the covenant. One can speak volumes about what is written for us in this letter (John Owen wrote 7 volumes on Hebrews).

Heb. 7:23-28 The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, 24 but he holds his priesthood permanently, because **he continues forever**. 25 Consequently, he is **able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God** through him, since he always lives to **make intercession for them**. 26 For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. 27 He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since **he did this once for all when he offered up himself**. 28 For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

The reason that Christ is superior to the previous priests lies in the fact that His priestly office continues without interruption or change. The old priests died and other like-sinful and fallible priests came in their place, and the cycle went on. But the Lord Christ is a priest forever because He continues forever. The Christ shall never die! "Consequently"—on the basis of this, therefore He is mighty to save. On the basis that He is unable to die, He is mighty to intercede for those who draw near to God so that they are utterly saved.

It is the intercession of Christ that saves us to the uttermost. His intercession is not another work besides what He did on the cross, rather, it is the continuation of that single offering. Christ has offered Himself once for all time (ἐφ' ἅπασι [ephapaks, G2178] does not mean once for all people, but indicates something that happens once for all time), and on the basis of His sacrifice, He goes before the Father to obtain and apply all that He has purchased for us on the cross. The Lord's work of intercession, which assures us He is thereby able to "save to the uttermost" is connected with His offering up of Himself. The group for whom He intercedes is the same group for whom He offered the sacrifice. But v. 25 also says that He is able to completely save those for whom He intercedes. How is that possible if His sacrifice was on behalf of every single human being, yet most of those will be punished in hell for their rebellion against God? Is it because they do not draw near to God that His sacrifice is ineffective for them? Is Christ's work not sufficient in itself? Do we need to do something to make it effective? Is Christ's work not enough by itself? Is it not the promise of the New Covenant that God Himself grants the conditions (faith and repentance) to us (Jer. 31:31-34; 32:40; Ezk 35:25-27)?

Who is the person who delights to draw near to God, but the one whom God has already drawn to Himself (John 6:44; Heb. 7:19; 11:6)? People do not naturally seek God (Rom. 3:11), it is God Who seeks out His sheep and brings them into His fold (e.g., John 10:16).

Notice also in v. 27 the mention of the way the old high priests did their sacrifices. First, they would offer for themselves and then for the people. The old high priests did not offer sacrifices on behalf of any other nation than Israel which was the covenant people of God. The scope even in the Old Testament was limited to those who were within the covenant. But the Holy Spirit says that the Lord did *this* once for all when He offered up Himself. Did what? Offer for the sins of **the people**. The people in question would be His people (Matt. 1:21), those people who make up the covenant which He mediates (Heb. 8:6), which is perfectly salvific.

Heb. 9:11-15 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) 12 **he entered once for all into the holy places**, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of **his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption**. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, **purify our conscience** from dead works to serve the living God. 15 Therefore he is the **mediator of a new covenant**, so that **those who are called** may **receive the promised eternal inheritance**, since a death has occurred that **redeems them from the transgressions** committed under the first covenant.

Again, the idea is the same as with the previous passage. Christ the Lord did enter into the "holy places" once for all time to offer up Himself as the sacrifice to God. He entered into the holy places, into the presence of God by His blood, and the text here sees that as the basis for Him securing an eternal redemption. The connection is seen through the word "thus." Because Christ's blood was the means of entering the holy places, simply by that fact, the Lord secured "an eternal redemption." This eternal redemption, which He secured, obtained or found purifies our conscience to serve God. It does not try to do that, but the verse says that it is its purpose to purify and cleanse sinners. We see the application of this redemption, which our Lord by His precious blood secured, in v. 15. There, the Holy Spirit speaks of those who are called, He has especially in mind the saints of the Old Testament. Since Christ the Lord as the mediator of the New Covenant to which the saints under the Old Testament were called into has been sacrificed and thus by His blood the covenant was officially inaugurated (Heb. 9:16-18), the saints have received their eternal inheritance because of His sacrifice. It does not necessarily mean that they did not enjoy fellowship with God already, but that now God had established the atonement and covenant on the basis of which He forgave the Old Testament saints.

Notice the connection between the eternal redemption the Lord secured and the fact that the saints were redeemed from their transgressions. It is on the basis that Christ secured eternal redemption that the saints were freed from their sin and enjoyed fellowship with God both in this life and the one to come. Those for whom eternal redemption was obtained, they themselves received or will receive the eternal inheritance and redemption from transgressions and sin. In v. 15, they are called "those who are called", which is a common term used to refer to the believers (Heb. 3:1; Rom. 8:28-30; 9:24; 2 Thess. 2:14). The *scope* is implied in the *purpose* of the atonement which was to secure an eternal redemption, and not only that but the verse explicitly says to whom the effects of the atonement are applied: those who are called, i.e., the elect.

Heb. 10:8-14 When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), 9 then he added, "Behold, **I have come to do your will**." He does away with the first in order to establish the second. 10 And **by that will we have been sanctified** through the **offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all**. 11 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when Christ had offered for all time **a single sacrifice** for sins, he **sat down at the right hand of God**, 13 waiting from that time until his enemies

should be made a footstool for his feet. 14 For by a single offering **he has perfected** for all time those **who are being sanctified**.

The Lord Christ does away with the Levitical sacrificial system and goes to the heart of the matter, which is the matter of the heart. His desire is to obey God fully in every respect and do only that which the Father desires. It is by this will of our Lord by which He perfectly obeyed the Father even to the point of death that we have been sanctified—set apart for the service and use of God. It is because He offered Himself that we have been sanctified. This is a past action, which indicates that the setting apart was done in the past, i.e., the time when Christ was offered. Our being set apart in the past, the Holy Spirit traces to the sacrifice of Christ. The question is: are any other sanctified in this sense except believers? If so, how are they not perfected or are being in the present sanctified? It seems reasonable to me to conclude that the *scope* of the atonement was contained within its *purpose*. The Lord purposed to sanctify certain people, which is done on the basis of His offering. That is the effect that it had. Therefore, since only the believers are sanctified, perfected and are being in the present time sanctified, the scope of the atonement must be limited to the elect alone. Notice also what is said in v. 12. The work of the Son was finished as He did cry from the cross (John 19:30). There were no seats in the earthly Tabernacle or Temple, indicating that the high priestly work was never “finished.” But the Lord Christ by a single sacrifice for sin sat down thereby showing that His work was finished. His work and purpose in the sacrifice by which He obtained eternal redemption was accomplished. By His single offering, He has already perfected certain people. Those people are described as “those who are being sanctified.” We read in v. 10 of us being sanctified in the past tense by Christ’s blood, being dedicated to God and set apart for Him on the cross. But now we are described as being in the present time sanctified. We are growing into holiness and being made into Christ’s likeness more and more every day.

This is the “characteristic” of those who were in the past perfected, that is—on the cross as the cross is the basis of every blessing, even intercession by which we are saved to the uttermost (Heb. 7:25), they are at the present being sanctified (Heb. 2:11; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10; 1 Thess. 4:3). Therefore, those who were in the past sanctified by Christ’s death are perfected forever and in the present time as they live on the earth are being made more and more like Christ by the Spirit of Christ. In this verse, we again have a powerful and effective atonement, which perfectly accomplishes that which the Lord intended and therefore, it is limited in scope to the elect.

Peter

1 Pet. 3:18 For **Christ also suffered once for sins**, the righteous for the unrighteous, **that he might bring us to God**, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit

It’s not only John, Paul or the writer of Hebrews who speaks of Christ definite atonement but Peter also. “That he might” is translated from the ἵνα (*hina*) purpose clause. We might get the idea that there is some possibility of failure from the use of the word “might”, but that is not the intended meaning. It simply gives us the purpose of His suffering. The purpose was so that we would be brought to God. Well then the question is again, did He succeed or fail? There is no need to repeat again what has been said here above. Christ the righteous, suffered for the unrighteous, for a purpose. Did He or did He not bring us to God?

Summary of Used Passages

Reference	Purpose/Effect	Extent
Matt. 1:21	Save His people	His people
Matt. 20:28	Give His life as a ransom	For many
Matt. 26:28	Forgiveness of sins	For many
John 10:1-30	Eternal life, perseverance	For the sheep
John 17	Unity, sanctification, glorification	Those that the Father has given to the Son
Eph. 5:25-27	Sanctify her, cleanse her, present her in splendor, without spot or wrinkle that she may be holy and without blemish	The church
Rom. 5:9-10	Justified by His blood, saved from the wrath of God, reconciled to God, saved by His life	“we”, “we were enemies”
Titus 2:11-14	Redeem us from all lawlessness, purify for himself a people for His possession	“us”
Heb. 7:24-27	Save to the uttermost, intercession	Those who draw near to God, “the people”
Heb. 9:11-15	Securing an eternal redemption, purifies our conscience to serve God, eternal inheritance, redemption from transgression	Those who are called

Heb. 10:8-14	Been sanctified, we have been perfected, we are being sanctified	"we", those who are being sanctified
1 Pet. 3:18	Bring us to God	The unrighteous, "us"

Passages used for Universal Atonement

My purpose here is to address some often-cited verses against the doctrine of Definite Atonement, give an interpretation consistent with Definite Atonement and show some problems if these passages speak actually of humans, world, or all without exception. We've already dealt with Romans 5:18-19 ([see](#)) and 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 ([see](#)) above, so there is no need of repeating ourselves.

John 1:29

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who **takes away the sin of the world!**"

This verse is used to prove that the Lamb of God died for every single human being. Is that what is being said by John the Baptist? If this is what is being said then the only option available is Universalism, which is not biblical and which Arminians do not accept. Why do I say that? It is because of the way that the work of the Lamb for the "world" is described. He is to take away its sin. How does the Lord Christ do that for every single human being? The expected answer is that for this to be effected we must believe, that is well and true (John 1:11-12). As Calvinists, we believe that both faith and repentance, the conditions of salvation, are granted to us by God based on Christ's atoning death (Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; [see here](#)). Unbelief is a sin and that is certainly a sin for which Christ died (John 16:8-9; Heb. 3:12; Rev. 21:8). But if Christ takes away the sin of every single human being, then that should mean that everyone's sins have been forgiven and therefore, Hell should be empty. But that is not usually what our Arminian brethren believe. We go back to Owen's argument ([see here](#)). If unbelief a sin did Christ die for it or not? How has Christ according to Arminians taken away the sin of the world? Is this something that is a possibility based on conditions dependent on man? That does not seem to be what John the Baptist is saying. He says straightforwardly that He is to take away the sin of the world. He will not try, but He certainly will do. This is the purpose of His coming in the flesh. 1 John 3:5 uses a similar expression.

Now we are left with a problem if we understand the word *world* to mean all people without exception because that would lead to Universalism, which is contrary to Scripture by the fact that there still remains punishment for sin (e.g., Matt. 3:12; 25:46; Dan. 12:2; Jude 1:12-13; Rev. 14:11). It is unreasonable to think that the word means everyone without exception here. It simply means humanity in general, which in Jewish thought was composed of Jews and Gentiles. This is relevant to the situation as the Jews thought that the Messiah was Israel's Messiah alone and that He would come for her alone, not for the nations. Therefore John, by using the word "world," goes against their idea of Jewish exclusivity. What John is saying is thus that Christ, the Lamb of God foretold (Gen. 22:14) and typified through the sacrifice, is not only the atoning sacrifice for Jews, but also for Gentiles. He is the atoning sacrifice for the whole world. There is no reason to think that the *extent* of the atonement is to all people everywhere without exception when the purpose of the atonement is limited in *scope*.

It is perfectly fine to say that the Lord Christ died for the whole world if by that we mean that He is the only atoning sacrifice available and He died for people from everywhere under heaven. Check our comments on Revelation 5:9 [above](#). In Revelation 5:9, the habitable world is described in terms of tribes, peoples, languages, and nations yet at the same time, it is also limited by the fact that certain people were redeemed by the Lamb's blood. The use of the word "**world**" is varied and that especially in John. It is used 77 times in the Johannine writings and its meaning depends on the context as does the meaning of every word. Check the following verses which demonstrate the various uses of the word **κόσμος** (*kosmos*): John 1:9-10; 7:4, 7; 8:26; 12:19, 31; 14:17, 19, 27; 15:18-19; 16:20; 17:6, 9, 16; 18:20, 36, etc.. That the word *world* when referring to humans simply means **people without distinction** rather than exception is seen from Luke 2:1; John 12:19; 14:17; Acts 19:27; Romans 1:8; Colossians 1:6; Revelation 12:9, 13:3, 7-8. Therefore, I conclude that this verse simply teaches that the Lamb of God was slain to take the sin of all kinds of people from the world. To take the sin of the world, as in taking the sin of *certain* people from every tribe, language, people and nation, and not only Jews. See also John Owen on the word "world" [here](#). For some commentaries see [John 1:29, 'takes away the sin of the world'](#).

John 3:16

"For God **so loved the world**, that he gave his only Son, **that whoever believes in him should not perish** but have eternal life.

Since the word "*world*" is used in this verse, it is therefore claimed that this speaks of all humans without exception. Every last one of them. But not only that, our Arminian brethren often like to quote and especially emphasize the KJV "whosoever",

thereby implying that everyone has the ability to believe. Again, as with John 1:29 and the word there, only the context can determine the meaning of the word. As with other atonement-related texts, the non-Calvinists assume that “*world* means “every and all human beings without exception” apriori. They should actually exegetically prove why they think the word means all people without exception and not merely assume it. But since this verse is raised against the doctrine of Definite Redemption, we will take the burden of proof. Notice that strictly speaking, this passage is not addressing the extent of the atonement.

This verse finds itself in the midst of the conversation between the Lord Jesus and Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews (John 3:1). The conversation is about the necessity of the new birth. The Lord points Nicodemus back to the incident with the Israelites in the wilderness, their sin, and their redemption through the means of looking at the bronze serpent (Num 21:4-9). There is a similarity between that incident and what the Lord is going to do. Just like the serpent was lifted up on a pole, so likewise, the Son of Man will be lifted up on the cross (John 12:32, 34). The reception of the redemption by the serpent was through looking up to it, so likewise the reception of the forgiveness of sins is by looking with the eyes of faith upon the crucified Son of Man. The purpose of Him being lifted up is so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life. For this purpose did God plan the cross so that redemption will be found by those who look upon the Son.

Now we come to the verse under question. It begins with “For God so loved the world.” This does not indicate how much God loved the *world*, rather the *way in which* God loved the world. It was by giving His only Son that God demonstrated His love to the *world*. Then we come to the word under question: *world*. The first thing we need must notice is the connection that is there between God’s love and the giving of His Son. We need to ask if this speaks of God’s general or redemptive love. I believe it speaks not of God’s general love for all men (Luke 6:35; Ps. 145:9), but of His specific and redemptive love. The reason that I believe it is so is because the verse speaks of our redemption. Well then, the Arminian says that this admission makes the verse stronger, indeed, “God desires all men to be saved” (1 Tim. 2:4; [see answer below](#)).

Here are a few problems. The many times that I’ve heard John 3:16 in debates and discussions, it seems to me that the Arminian does not have the concept that God actually in a way hates sinners. It seems to me that popular/lay Arminianism is based on the belief that God loves all men and desires the salvation of all people without exception. Well, what do we do for example with Psalm 5:5-6; 10:5; Leviticus 20:23? Do we just ignore them? Do these verses have any meaning or relevance? Or do we say, “Oh, that is Old Testament, now that Jesus has come we listen to Him telling us ‘God so loved the world’”? The fact is that God says that He hates evildoers. While we may debate how God hates and what does it mean for God to hate, one thing is certain: it demonstrates that God does not love everybody equally. The glorious, gracious and redemptive love of God is restricted in Christ and to those who are His (Rom. 8:39). Therefore, it is difficult to say that God loves those whom His soul hates in such a way that He would give His only Son in their place. This puts some restrictions on the word “world.” It cannot mean all people without exception.

Furthermore, as with John 1:29, the idea is still within the minds of the Jews that the Messiah is for them alone, but not only that but also that God’s love is for them alone. They knew as they were the Old Covenant people of God that they were loved by God (Deut. 7:7-8), but no such certainty or idea existed for the Gentiles. Indeed, they were hoping that the Messiah would destroy their Gentile enemies so that they would be the world leaders. Therefore, what the Lord says comes as a shock to Nicodemus. What the Lord says to Nicodemus is that the redemptive love of God is not only extended to Israel, but also to the world—to those outside of Israel, to humanity in general. But the meaning of the word *world* is further expanded by understanding the rest of the passage.

God gave His Son to demonstrate His love, but there was also a purpose in all of this. Again we come to the ἵνα (*hina*) purpose clause. The *hina* clause is translated with “that.” It may also be translated with “in order that” or “so that.” There is a clear and definite purpose for the giving of the spotless Son. Is God going to fail in that which He has purposed? If the *world* means “every single human being” how has God accomplished His purpose? Then we come to the phrase that Arminians especially love to emphasize: that **whosoever** believeth in him. It is said that the word from the KJV *whosoever* proves that people have free will and are able to believe in God from their own free will. Various emotions go high and voices are raised when the word is spoken. But is that what it means? It is ironic that they don’t take a look at the Greek. There is not a hint of an idea of people having the ability and free will to choose God or not. The Greek under *whosoever* is Πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων (*pas ha pistuwon*), which literally translated means “all the believing” or “everyone believing.” So much for the idea that everyone has free will to believe in God. Rather than being a proof-text for *Universal* Atonement, this verse supports *Limited* Atonement. The verse states that God loved the world by giving His Son so that “all the believing” should not perish. This clarifies our understanding of the word “*world*” in the present context. God’s purpose was to give eternal life to “all the believing”, how does it make any sense to say that the motivation for His giving (v. 16a) was His love for all people without exception if His purpose is limited to “all the believing?”

The desire of God	“For God so loved the world
The action springing forth from His desire	that he gave his only Son
The purpose of the action	that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Therefore I believe that the word world here means **the world of believers**, i.e., **the elect**. Believers from among the Jews and the Gentiles throughout the world and time. Arthur Pink writes:

That “the world” in John 3:16 refers to the world of believers (God’s elect) in distinct contradistinction from the world of the ungodly (2 Pet. 2:5) is established by a comparison of the other passages which speak of God’s love. “God commendeth His love toward us”—the saints, Romans 5:8. “Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth”—every son, Hebrews 12:6. “We love Him, because He first loved US”—believers, 1 John 4:19. The wicked God “pities” (see Matthew 18:33). Unto the unthankful and evil God is “kind” (see Luke 6:35). The vessels of wrath He endures “with much long-suffering” (see Romans. 9:22). But “His own” God “loves”!^[66]

Verse 17 supports and does not contradict what I have tried to argue for. God’s purpose in sending the Son into the world (the creation, the planet) was not to condemn the world (the elect, the believers from among Jews and Gentiles), but that the same group be saved. Do not think that the word *might* communicate something about the possibility of God not accomplishing His purpose. In fact, the word is not found in the Greek text, but it is supplied so that the sentence would make sense. The NET chooses a stronger word: *but that the world **should** be saved through him*. **Verse 18**: Why would God plan the salvation of those who are already condemned for not believing? (See [Reprobation](#) in section 3 of [chapter 3](#)). This verse does not deny Limited Atonement, rather it supports it.

An objection may be raised that says how we are to evangelize if we do not tell people that Christ died for them or God loves them? Well, maybe we should review the way we do evangelism with what the Bible says. I have not yet found a place where the apostles tell unbelievers that God loves them or Christ died for them. The call is always to repent and believe (e.g., Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20). They did not come up to people and tell them: “God loves you, Jesus died on the cross for you and has a plan for your life.” Rather their call was always to repent and believe the gospel. They did indeed speak of the Lord’s atoning death, but not in such a direct way as stated above or as is most commonly done today. The call of the gospel is that God demonstrated His infinite love for all who repent and believe (which are gifts from Him), in giving His Son to die on their behalf for their sins, so that they would receive eternal life and forgiveness. Everyone who goes to Christ as Savior will not find Him anything less than a perfect Savior (John 6:37-40).

John’s Commentary On John 3:16

1 John 4:7-10 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and **whoever loves has been born of God** and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because **God is love**. 9 In this the **love of God was made manifest among us**, that **God sent his only Son** into the world, so that we might **live through him**. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and **sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins**.

After writing the above about John 3:16, I came across an [article written by Dr. James White](#) wherein he made a connection between John 3:16 and 1 John 4:7-10, which seems to be John’s commentary on the words of John 3:16. That there is a connection between the two may be demonstrated thus:

1 John 4:9-10	John 3:16
In this the love of God was made manifest among us	For God so loved the world
that God sent his only Son into the world	that he gave his only Son
	that whoever believes in him
	should not perish
so that we might live through him.	but have eternal life.
sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins	that he gave his only Son

John encourages his believing audience to love each other and he bases that in the fact that God is love and love is from Him. The fact that we love as the Lord Jesus has loved us (John 13:34; 15:12), demonstrates that we have been born of God because true and godly love is from God. The way that we experienced God’s love is by the fact that God sent His Son so that we might live through the Son. In John 3:16, the same idea is conveyed. God loved us and sent His Son so that we might have eternal life and not perish. God’s love is first, not our love. It is His amazing and redemptive love that was given to those who do not deserve it. God loved us and sent His Son into the world to be the propitiation for our sins. There is obviously a connection between 1 John 4:10 and John 3:16. In both is the idea present of the Son being sent, of God’s love and of salvation. But 1 John 4:10 helps us understand and moreover strengthens what we have tried to argue above concerning John 3:16. John is speaking of the believing community he is writing to. He is not speaking to all humans in the world. In fact, in the previous context, he uses the word “world” in a negative way and talks of “us” and “them” thereby distinguishing the believers.

God's love was manifested among us and we know that it was God's love. Why? Because He has given the Son to be the propitiation for our sins. We have spoken a lot of the idea of propitiation. Propitiation is the sacrifice that satisfies God's wrath because the punishment for our sins has been provided for. It is something definitive, not conditional. Christ has either satisfied God's wrath and applies those benefits to us, or the wrath of God abides on us (John 3:36). If it is true that John, while writing this, is commenting (giving thoughts, saying it in different words) upon John 3:16, then we see that the audience here is limited to the believing. God's love, John says, is demonstrated in the fact that the Son was the propitiation for our sins. The love of God that John is speaking of is not His general love, but His redemptive love. He says that the manifestation of this love is in the fact that Christ is the propitiation. We have also argued on John 3:16 that it does not speak of a possible, but rather a definite atonement for "all the believing," thus what 1 John 4:10 says about Christ the propitiatory sacrifice and what we have said on John 3:16 is consistent.

God's redemptive love is limited to those for whom He has sent the Son into the world, so that "all the believing" should be saved. See also [John 3:16, 'God so loved the world'](#).

1 John 2:2

And now to the last passage from the Johannine corpus:

He is the **propitiation** for **our sins**, and not for ours only but also for the **sins of the whole world**.

Obviously one can feel the weight of these words. The passage speaks of Christ the propitiation for the sins of the *whole world*. It is not that He is the propitiation for our sins only, but for the whole world. Obviously, the point of contention is on the meaning of the phrase "whole world" in this context. We agree that "whole world" can mean all creatures, all humans or creation (e.g., Job 34:13; Matt. 16:26; Rom. 3:19). But what about the times that it does not? First, let us see that the phrase "whole world" does not necessarily mean "every single human being on the planet", in fact, it refers more to the world as a place rather than the people (aside from Rom. 3:19 perhaps, see Job 34:13; Isa. 27:6; Matt. 16:26; 24:14; 26:13; Rev. 3:10; 12:9; 16:14). That the phrase does not mean all people without exception is seen from its use by John in chapter 5 in the same epistle.

1 John 5:19 We know that we are from God, and **the whole world lies in the power of the evil one**.

Does "whole world" here include the believers also? The word κεῖται (*keitai*, G2749) is translated here "lies" and it means "is held in subjection."^[11] It shows that the *whole world* is under the control of the devil. Well if "whole world" means all people without exception then it would mean that the believers are also held in subjection to the devil. Are we ready to give in to that? That is contrary even to the present context. While the "whole world" lies "in the power of the evil one" we are "in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20). We are in Christ and His power, not the devil's, therefore, this would mean that the believers are not included in the phrase "whole world." The previous verse says of the one born from God that "God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him." Therefore, the "whole world" of 1 John 5:19 cannot include within it those born of God, i.e., the believing—the elect. Furthermore, the believers have overcome the world and the evil one (1 John 2:13-14; 1 John 4:3-4; 1 John 5:4-5). Admittedly, we have thereby *not* demonstrated what "whole world" means in 1 John 2:2, but we have demonstrated that the idea that the whole world means all humanity without exception is an *a priori* assumption and not something proven from the text.

The phrase ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου (*holou tou kosmou*) is composed of the word κόσμος (*kosmos*) and ὅλος (*holos*). Both words in the dative are found in **Romans 1:8**—

Rom. 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in **all the world**.

Wow, so the faith of the believers in the Roman church was known by every individual and every country even prior to the close of the first century after Christ? No one in the daily reading of this passage will think that it means that all people without exception are speaking of the faith of the Romans, or that people in every nation in the world are speaking of the faith of the believers. Rather, the idea we get is that the faith of the Romans has spread abroad quickly to many churches and other countries, and by no means, it means in every single country or to every single person. See also Colossians 1:6. The phrase is slightly different in the Greek (Πᾶσι τὸ πᾶν, *panti to kosmo*), though with the same meaning. As we said above and as we will always say: context determines what the word *world* means. See also the various uses of the word "world" [above](#).

John is giving encouragement to believers that they will find forgiveness in the Lord Jesus. If anyone sins and confesses their sins, God is just and faithful to cleanse them (1 John 1:9). He is *just* because He has punished Christ in our place for our sins. Thus, God is not throwing our sin under the rug, rather He has already punished them in the Substitute. He is *faithful* because He wills that His children be saved and have fellowship with Him and receive the benefits of Christ's cross. John is writing so that the believers won't sin and won't live in sin. But even if they do, they must realize that there is an Advocate on our behalf. The word *παράκλητος* (*parakletos*, G3875) is used 5 times in the writings of John (John 14:6, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 John 2:1), it is only here that it refers to the Lord Jesus. All the other instances in the gospel refer to the Holy Spirit. The word means:

1. summoned, called to one's side, esp. called to one's aid
 - a. one who pleads another's cause before a judge, a pleader, counsel for defense, legal assistant, an advocate
 - b. one who pleads another's cause with one, an intercessor^[11]

The Lord Jesus as our advocate, defender, and friend in time of sin. He goes before the Father and pleads for our forgiveness and restoration on the basis of His perfect once for all time work ([see here for Christ's intercessory work](#)). Intercession and mediation is part of the priestly work. The Lord intercedes on behalf of and pleads for the people for whom He offered His sacrifice much like He does in John 17. Christ's intercessory work is perfect and limited to the believers (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24). John speaks of *us* having an advocate, not everyone. It is the believers who have Christ as their *Parakletos*. The unbelieving will not come to Christ as their advocate as they are enemies of His and do not desire Him unless the Father draws them to Him (Rom. 3:11; 8:7-8; John 6:44). The fact that we have Christ as our Advocate is based in that He is the "propitiation for our sins." It is because He has made satisfaction to the wrath that was against us that He is our Advocate and now applies the benefits of the cross to us in time of need and sin. It is Christ alone who is the propitiation for our sins. Christ's sacrifice was meant to take away sin ([see above](#)). The question at hand is: Did Christ appease the wrath of God or not?

If He did and the phrase "whole world" means all people without exception, then God will not count anyone's sin against them and all will be forgiven on the basis of Christ's appeasement of God's wrath against all humanity. But if Christ, the spotless sacrifice, did not appease the wrath of God on behalf of every single individual, then it explains the fact why people must still try to "appease" God's wrath and pay for their sins in Hell. Propitiation is limited to those who believe (Rom. 3:26). But that, in turn, does not mean that Christ has propitiated God on behalf of every single individual and now they have to "actuate" or "activate" that propitiation by their faith. The reason that this is wrong is that it does not trust in the finished work of Christ on our behalf, and gives man reason to boast. If Christ has propitiated the Father on behalf of everyone and to receive the effect of that propitiation we must repent and believe, it puts the "difference-making" within man and not God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:30). If Christ has satisfied the wrath of God on behalf of X in the same way for Y, and X believes while Y does not believe, then the difference was in man and not God. There is something that X can boast about that made him different than Y. No true Christian boasts in his salvation, neither will I claim that Arminians think that they saved themselves or have a reason to boast. But what I'm trying to argue is that their position, as I laid it out above, that propitiation is made on behalf of everyone yet we have to believe for it to be affected is true, then man does in this scenario have a reason to boast. Though Arminians as fellow brothers and sisters in Christ will not boast about their salvation.

John Calvin writes:

Though then I allow that what has been said is true ["Christ suffered sufficiently for the whole world, but efficiently only for the elect"], yet I deny that it is suitable to this passage; for the design of John was no other than to make this benefit common to the whole Church. Then under the word *all* or *whole*, he does not include the reprobate, but designates those who should believe as well as those who were then scattered through various parts of the world. For then is really made evident, as it is meet, the grace of Christ, when it is declared to be the only true salvation of the world.^[14]

Second, that would not make the propitiation **actually** the satisfaction of divine wrath, rather **possibly** upon the fulfilling of a condition. That is why I began our discussion of the atonement first by arguing for substitutionary atonement. How are we then to understand this passage? I believe that John is saying that Christ satisfied God's wrath on behalf of those to whom he is writing, but not only those but on behalf of all kinds of people from all over the world. Okay, that's a big assertion, let's try to prove it. First, let us notice the parallel between John 11:51-52 and the present passage. I believe again, as John was commenting on John 3:16 in 1 John 4:7-10, so likewise it appears that here he has in mind John 11:49-52. After the resurrection of Lazarus and the Jews witnessing that, they were all the more motivated to get rid of the Lord Jesus. So they gathered together to form their plans against our Lord. They are afraid that Jesus would stir riots or cause trouble with the Romans so that the Jews will be punished and they would be taken out of the land (John 11:48). As they were arguing and speaking, the high priest stood up and spoke the last word:

John 11:49-50 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all. 50 Nor do you understand that it is better for you that **one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.**”

Caiaphas said it is better to get rid of one person, i.e., Jesus, rather than to see Rome destroying the whole Jewish nation. It was better for Jesus to die for or instead of the people and not the people to perish. It is interesting what Caiaphas is saying here, though he is saying it with a different intent, yet the Sovereign spoke even through this wicked man:

John 11:51-52 He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that **Jesus would die for the nation**, 52 and **not for the nation only**, but also to gather into one the **children of God** who are **scattered abroad**.

It was God who spoke through Caiaphas and it was God who predestined the cross (Acts 2:23; 4:26-27). Obviously, the stress for the present purpose is upon “die for the nation.” Does this mean that Christ would die for the whole Jewish nations, even for Caiaphas himself? I don’t think that is the aim of what John is trying to say here. There is a limiter within the passage, the limiter is found in v. 52—it is “the children of God.” Christ did not die for Jews alone, but also for non-Jews also, since His death is the ransom for the redemption of sinners. But notice how His death is connected with the gathering of the children of God. It does not speak of gathering all people, rather it is specific. It only speaks about the children of God. Jesus died so that He would gather all the children of God, all His sheep into one fold (John 10:16; Eph. 2:11-22). The Lord speaks of some Jewish leaders not being children of God, but children of the devil (e.g., John 8:44).

“The children of God” is what limits the *intent*, not the power of the atonement, since He died to gather and He will not fail to gather. The phrase thus also limits the *scope* of the atonement. For why would Christ die for one whom He does not want to gather or one whom the Father has not given Him, or one who is not destined to be a child of God? Now we will demonstrate the connection with 1 John 2:2, which is plain to see, in a table—

1 John 2:2	John 11:51-52
He is the propitiation for our sins ,	...he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation ,
and not for ours only	and not for the nation only ,
but also for the sins of the whole world .	but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad .

Seeing that the *scope* in John 11 is limited to the “children of God”, which was the basis of this text; propitiation is something definite spoken on behalf of the believers; intercession is a perfect work based on the sacrifice offered; “*whole world*” cannot but mean the world of believers. It refers to Christ being the propitiation for “people...from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9), which may properly be called the *whole world* and the *world*. It is because we believe the Savior’s work is perfect and complete that we must *guard* His perfect, finished and definite atonement on behalf of everyone whom the Father intended to save. See also [1 John 2:2, ‘for the sins of the whole world’](#).

1 Timothy 2:3-4

This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of **God our Savior**, 4 who **desires all people to be saved** and to come to the **knowledge of the truth**.

Although this verse does not directly address the extent of the atonement, yet it indirectly does speak of it as all of salvation is based on the atonement of Christ. This is also a verse that is used against Unconditional Election. It is often brought up against the U and the L in TULIP in order to establish that God really wants everyone saved, but somehow He is frustrated and does not accomplish His desire. Is this how the Bible speaks of God?

The reason that God does not accomplish His purpose, according to non-Calvinists, is because He has a higher desire, that is for people to *autonomously* (**libertarian free will**) choose for Him. Arminians believe that people have a libertarian free will and that is one thing that “God will not violate.” In the Arminian scheme, God deems it higher to give man libertarian free will and that man autonomously come to God, rather than have all saved. Some even speak of the impossibility of genuine freedom (by this they mean libertarian free will, not as [chapter 9](#)) if there is no opposite choice. The choice between good and evil is necessary for true freedom. In Arminianism, God desires the salvation of every single soul, yet His desire to leave them to their libertarian free will is greater and He will “never violate their free will.”

What do we do when God does not desire to save people? How is this passage then consistent? Paul begins in v. 1 by giving

a charge to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:18ff), this charge is to pray for all—

1 Tim. 2:1 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made **for all people**,

As Dr. James White likes to say, is what Timothy being told here is to get the “phonebook” and pray for everyone there? That is hardly the case. Rather, v. 2 specifies and clears up what is meant by “all people”—

1 Tim. 2:2 for **kings** and all who are in **high positions**, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

By “all people,” Paul has in mind all *kinds* of people and not everyone without exception. He specifies what he means by all people for Timothy’s purpose. He was to pray for his government so that they would be free to lead a godly life. So that God would cause their leaders to be born again or not persecute the believers. Therefore, the phrase “all people” is to be understood to be speaking not of all people without exception, but about all *kinds* (kings, those in high positions, etc...) of people. This is not something strange, in fact, look at how 1 Timothy 6:10 is translated:

1 Tim. 6:10 For the love of money is a root of **all kinds of evils**...

The word “kinds” is not in the text, but it is supplied by the translators otherwise the statement then would be false. The word Πᾶν τὸ ὄν (panton) is used in both verses. The love of money was not the root of the Fall. Adam and Eve did not desire money, nor did the Devil. But it is a root of all types and kinds of evil, not a root to *ALL* evils. There exist other motivations for wickedness than money. See also Matthew 5:11; Acts 10:12; for the insertion of the word “kinds” by the translators. Therefore, the meaning of the word “all” is dependent upon the context. We are not saying that it does not ever mean all without exception, but what we are saying is that the meaning must be proven from the context and not merely assumed. There are a lot of texts which use the word “all” but mean by that not *all without exception* rather **all without distinction** or **many** (Jer. 13:19 with 39:9-10; Matt. 2:3-4; 3:5; 5:11; 10:21-22; Mark 1:5; Luke 3:21; John 4:29; 8:2; Acts 10:39; 17:21; 21:27-28; 26:4). We move on to consider vv. 3-4:

1 Tim. 2:3-4 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who **desires all people to be saved** and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

God likes the fact that His people pray and intercede for all kinds of people, this is pleasing and precious in His sight. We ought to pray for the salvation of all kinds of people, not just those in the government. The intercession of His saints on behalf of those who do not know Him is pleasing to God. At this point where the word “desires” is used some Calvinists fall back upon the “will of desire” of God. This means that God *desires* the salvation of all people without exception, yet He does not actualize that for He has purposed to display both His wrath and grace (Rom. 9:22-23). Arminians or other non-Reformed people obviously, as stated above, believe that this verse teaches that God really wants all people to be saved, yet He leaves the choice of salvation up to their “free will.” I take issue both with the regular non-Reformed interpretation and those Calvinists who interpret this verse along with 2 Peter 3:9 to be speaking about God’s will of desire. I have already tried to argue that the “all people” here is to be understood as speaking about all *kinds* of people because of the fact that v. 2 expands upon what Paul means by “all people” by listing two groups of people. In a similar way is this seen in Titus 2:1-11. See [1 Timothy 2:4 & Titus 2:11, ‘desires all people to be saved’](#).

The same “all people” and “everyone” is under discussion in this chapter. Paul does not change groups, throughout the chapter he is speaking about the same “all kinds of people.” Let’s take a look at the word “desire.” In this word, the Calvinists who lean upon the “will of desire interpretation”, find the statement that this does not speak of God’s decree that all be saved. This is erroneous since they should have known about Job 23:13—

But he is unchangeable, and who can turn him back? **What he desires, that he does.**

Well, if He desires the salvation of all people without exception who is turning Him back? Both Paul and the LXX share the same root word for “desire”—

LXX Eng Job 23:13 And if too he has thus judged, who is he that has contradicted, for **he has both willed** (ἡθέλωσεν) [a thing] and done it.

The word θέλω (*thelo*, G2309) is defined by Thayer as:

- Original: θέλω ἑθέλω
- Transliteration: Thelo
- Phonetic: thel'-o
- Definition:
 1. to will, have in mind, intend
 - a. to be resolved or determined, to purpose
 - b. to desire, to wish
 - c. to love
 1. to like to do a thing, be fond of doing
 - d. to take delight in, have pleasure
- Origin: apparently strengthened from the alternate form of G138
- TDNT entry: 03:44,3
- Part(s) of speech: Verb^[1]

The Young's Literal Translation says "who doth will all men to be saved..." I don't understand why people think of the use of the word "desire" to mean something that God wishes yet for some reason He does not realize or actualize. It does not express something weak, rather it expresses His will. His will is to save all kinds of people (Rev. 5:9). Therefore, because the desire of God does not speak of something that is weak, rather His definite will, it is problematic to think that this verse speaks of all people without exception because other texts speak of God not willing all to be saved. Is this a contradiction? Let's start with Romans 9.

Obviously, Romans 9 is the clearest chapter on election in the entire Bible, which Arminians have tried to give all kinds of explanations to make it compatible with a libertarian free will. That God desires to show His wrath and grace is obvious:

Rom. 9:22-23 What if God, **desiring** (θέλω) **to show his wrath** and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for **vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory**—

So, God desires to save all people without exception yet He desires to show His wrath and power in "vessels of wrath prepared for destruction"? This is inconsistent and contradictory. Obviously, from this text, God's desire is not to save all people without exception, but to prepare some for damnation, others for glory (see **Reprobation** in paragraph 3 of **chapter 3**). The "what if" does not make this a hypothetical thing, but wants to show the foolishness of demanding from God an account for His actions. The previous section demonstrates that God indeed does prepare some for destruction (Esau, Pharaoh) and others for glory (Jacob, Moses). Therefore, it cannot be that God wills the salvation of all people without exception if He in the same time desires and ordains the damnation of some (see also Isa. 6:9-10; 29:9-10; 44:18-20; 63:17; Matt. 11:25-26; 13:13-14; John 12:37-40; Rom. 11:7-8; 1 Thess. 5:9-10; 2 Thess. 2:11-12; 1 Pet. 2:6-8; Jude 1:4). Therefore, considering the present context and other passages which speak of God's will and dealings, "all people" cannot mean all people without exception, rather *all people without distinction*. Moreover, since no one can stop Him from fulfilling His desire, those "all people" whom He has desired to save, He will definitely and perfectly save and not fail in His purpose.

1 Tim. 2:5-6 For there is one God, and there is **one mediator** between **God** and **men**, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who **gave himself as a ransom for all**, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

The salvation of man is based on Christ's mediation. Christ Jesus is the man Who stands between the Father and humanity. He is the go-between between God and humans. He is the only way we can reach God. No one who comes through Jesus to God will fail to see Him as a perfect Savior. Christ's mediation and intercession perfectly saves and it cannot fail (Heb. 7:25). He is the One who stands between us and God "in order to make or restore peace and friendship" (*mesites*, G3316)^[1]. All other times when the Bible speaks of Christ mediation and intercession, it presents it as something that is complete and

perfect, unable to fail (Heb. 8:6; 7:25; 9:15; 12:24; Rom. 8:34). Imagine the Son interceding and mediating between God and for person X while X does not come to faith or God is not willing to save X. How miserably would Christ have failed, but the Bible presents no such blasphemy. Christ is a perfect mediator to all who come to Him, they will not fail to be received by God in grace and love because of Christ's mediation.

Christ's mediation is based on His sacrifice. He was a ransom for all *kinds of people*, as we have argued above for the meaning of "all people." The same all kinds of people are still under discussion from v. 1. He is the ransom that actually ransoms. It is not a *potential* ransom, but a *definite* ransom, which actually and truly ransoms people for God without any other works (Rev. 5:9; Matt. 20:28).

In conclusion, this passage does not teach that God wills everyone without exception to be saved and we see this from 1) the contextual meaning of "all people" and 2) also from the fact that the Bible speaks of God not willing some to be saved. Furthermore, the purpose of God is to save. He desires the salvation of all kinds of people and His desire will not be thwarted by the "free will" of man or anything else. Christ's mediation is limited to those alone who come to Him (John 6:44). Christ is a definite, and not a potential ransom that ransoms. Therefore, based on all the reasons discussed above the scope of the atonement is indeed limited.

1 Timothy 4:10

For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the **Savior of all people**, especially of those who believe.

This is not a strong verse to use against any Calvinistic doctrine, whether against the atonement or election because the "especially" part gives it up. God is the Savior "especially", in a unique way to those who believe and thus He is a Savior in a different way, to a different measure to those who do not believe. The Greek word translated here "especially"

is **μάλιστα** (*malista*, G3122). It is defined by Thayer as "especially, chiefly, most of all, above all"^[11]. This obviously limits the scope. He is the Savior and Creator of all humanity, but not in the same sense. For more see [1 Timothy 4:10, 'Savior of all men'](#).

Hebrews 2:9

But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he **might taste death for everyone**.

For a little while, namely around 33 years, He was as a human in a position inferior to angels. The purpose of His incarnation was that "he might taste death for everyone." Does this mean that the Lord Jesus died for all people without exception? My answer is obviously, no, and I'll try to explain why.

Let us begin by realizing that this speaks of Christ substitutionary death. He tasted death ὑπὲρ (*huper*) us, on our behalf. The death He, by the grace of God, died was in our place. Second, the word which generates the controversy: everyone. As we said above concerning the word *world* and *all*, those words are context-dependent. Only the context can determine what the scope is when these words are used. It is merely an assumption to think that "everyone" here means all people without exception. Since I have here the honor of providing an interpretation consistent with what we said above about the Lord's definite atonement, then I must make the case that "everyone" does not mean every single human being. The word **Πᾶσι** (*pas*, G3956) is defined as "each, every, any, all, the whole, everyone, all things, everything."^[11] But the question is: each, every and all of *what*? Does the context lead us to think it is speaking of all humans without exception? Obviously, I believe that it does not, rather the scope of "everyone" or of "all" here is limited. This is seen by examining the next verse:

Heb. 2:10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in **bringing many sons to glory**, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

It was fitting for Christ to suffer for Him to bring many sons to glory. So, if Christ tasted death for every single person, why does He only bring "many" sons to glory rather than all? The purpose of the atonement as given in v. 10 is that "many" sons be brought to glory, i.e., saved. But how is that accomplished if Christ died for all without exception. I mean, how can the scope of His sacrifice be different than His *intention*? Or how can the atonement of Christ fail? His intention is "to bring many sons to glory", but He offered Himself *substitutionarily* on behalf of all people without exception? That does not seem to be what the Holy Spirit is saying here. Furthermore, Hebrews in chapters 7-10 speaks of Christ's perfect and definite atonement ([see above](#)). Rather, the *everyone* referred to in v. 9 are the "many sons." The word **Πᾶσι** (*pas*) may be translated as "every", yet it would make an awkward ending, so the translators translate it rather with "everyone." In this context, it

means “every *son*” as the next verse clarifies. For more see [Hebrews 2:9, ‘Taste Death For Everyone’](#).

2 Peter 2:1

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be **false teachers** among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even **denying the Master who bought them**, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

This I think is the strongest passage that non-Calvinists bring up against Definite Atonement. It is a passage used not only against Definite Atonement but also the Perseverance of the Saints. But notice that the passage is not directly addressing the subject of the atonement. There are a lot of clear passages that are on the subject of the atonement, just think of Hebrews 7-10. Therefore, we must guard upon the weight we put on this text since it was not written to address the subject or extent of the atonement directly. I do not think that I will be able to give a definitive interpretation of this passage, but I will try my best to give a consistent exposition with all that we have learned about the atonement from the rest of Holy Writ.

The “But” at the beginning of the verse connects this verse with the previous discussion about the prophecies of old. Just as false prophets arose among the congregation of Israel, so likewise false prophets will rise among the church of Christ. They would bring false doctrine that would be destructive not only for them, but also for those who believe their doctrine. The KJV says “damnable heresies.” They will go so far as even to deny the Master who bought them. What we need to do is find 1) who the Master is, 2) what it means to be the Master and 3) what is the nature of this buying. Credit must be given where credit is due. I’ve been greatly helped by the following articles, though they do not all arrive at the same conclusion that I do:

- [Gary D. Long – Redemption in II Peter 2:1](#)
- [Daryl Wingerd - Thinking and Speaking Biblically About the Death of Christ: Appendix 2](#)
- [Jim Ellis – Agorazo in 2 Peter 2:1](#)
- [Thomas R. Schreiner – “Problematic Texts” for Definite Atonement in the Pastoral and General Epistles](#)
- [John MacArthur – False Teachers Bought By God](#)
- [Chris - Limited Atonement and 2 Peter 2:1](#)

Who is the Master?

Some Reformed men have said that the Master being spoken of here is God the Father. The word used for *master* is the Greek δεσπότης (*despotes*, G1203), which means “an absolute ruler.” The word is found 10 times in the NT and it refers to—

- The Father - Luke 2:29; Acts 4:24; 2 Tim. 2:21; Rev. 6:10.
- The Lord Jesus - Jude 1:4.
- Non-theological - 1 Tim. 6:1-2; Titus 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:18.

The idea that by “Master” God the Father is referred to is contradicted by the parallel in Jude—

Jude 1:4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and **deny our only Master** and Lord, Jesus Christ.

There is no question that Jude relied a lot on Peter’s material and this is one of the many parallels between these two writers. The argument was made that God the Father is being spoken of here is because of the absence of the Granville Sharp’s rule in the Greek. In the KJV, for example, the last part reads: “denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” In both passages, the authors speak of people who were designated for condemnation and deny the Master. The Master (δεσπότης, *despotes*) spoken of here is also the Savior, Jesus Christ. Therefore, seeing this clear parallel between the two passages, we must conclude that the Lord Jesus is being referred to in 2 Peter and not the Father specifically.

Master - Soteriological or not?

What does it mean that the Lord Jesus is the Master of these heretics? Does it mean that He is their Savior? Is it soteriological? That Christ is Lord over all creation is clear from the Bible (e.g., Matt. 28:18-19; Rom. 14:9; Phil. 2:10-11), so in this sense, He is **the absolute ruler and owner of everything**, believers and unbelievers alike. The word *despotes* is never used in the New Testament to speak of God or Christ as Savior, therefore, this raises a reason for me to reconsider if

this passage speaks of soteriology. This word is never used of Christ as a mediator in the only place where it is again used (Jude 1:4). Jude makes a distinction between Christ as *Despotes* and Lord (*kurios*). Moreover, it is interesting to see the source from which Peter is drawing here—

Deut. 32:5-6 KJV They have corrupted themselves, their spot [is] not [the spot] of his children: [they are] a perverse and crooked generation. 6 Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? [is] not he **thy father [that] hath bought thee?** hath he not made thee, and established thee?^[67]

The word translated “bought” is a different word (κτῶμα [G2932], *ctaomai*) than the one in 2 Peter 2:1 with the idea of “to procure for oneself, to get, gain, acquire”.^[68] Verse 6 speaks of God’s ownership of Israel by virtue of Him being their Creator (and the Creator of everyone else). He is the One Who formed them as a nation and also as individuals. They ought to love and obey Him with all their being. They are indebted to Him for every blessing. God did not pay anything to acquire them. Indeed, the ESV and other translations translate the word there with “created” instead of “bought” because that is the sense given in the context. To further strengthen the fact that Peter alludes to the Deuteronomy 32:5-6 text and has it in mind, is that he alludes to Deuteronomy 32:5 in 2 Peter 2:13 when he says they are blemishes/spots. Let us also not forget the fact that Peter begins by speaking of those who were not really God’s children who nevertheless were bought in the sense of Deuteronomy 32:6, in the first chapter. Therefore, I conclude, on the basis of the allusion to Deuteronomy 32:5-6 and the use of the word *despotes* instead of *kurios* or *soter* that the context that Peter is painting is not soteriological.

Agorazo

The first controversy was over to whom the word *despotes* was referring to and what does it mean. But now we turn our attention to the word translated “bought.” Let us first notice that Peter is not writing of something hypothetical. By that, I mean that these false teachers were *truly* and *actually* bought by Christ. It was not that atonement was made for them yet they rejected it and did not accept it (though I believe that the atonement is clearly not the subject of the present context). Whatever the nature of this “buying” is, Peter describes them as *bought*. Completed and done. It is more controversial to understand the intended meaning of the word *agorazo* here than it is to understand who the *despotes* is. Thayer’s Greek Definitions (G59) says the following:

- Original: ἀγοράζω
- Transliteration: Agorazo
- Phonetic: ag-or-ad'-zo
- Definition:
 1. to be in the market place, to attend it
 2. to do business there, buy or sell
 3. of idle people: to haunt the market place, lounge there
- Origin: from G58
- TDNT entry: 03:04,2
- Part(s) of speech: Verb^[11]

The word has the basic meaning of “to buy in the marketplace.” It is used 30 times in the New Testament, most of those in a normal, non-theological sense.

- Non-soteriological - Matthew 13:44, 46; 14:15; 21:12; 25:9-10; 27:7; Mark 6:36-37; 11:15; 15:46; 16:1; Luke 9:13; 14:18-19; 17:28; 22:36; John 4:8; 6:5; 13:29; 1 Corinthians 7:30; Revelation 3:18; 13:17; 18:11.
- Soteriological - 1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23; Revelation 5:9; 14:3-4.

These are 29 of its uses within the New Testament, 24 of those are of non-soteriological nature. It is used among other things of buying fields (Matt. 13:44) and buying food (Matt. 14:15). Thus, the primary use of the word is that of non-soteriological and non-theological nature. But it is used 5 times in a soteriological context wherein the price for buying is mentioned in the context. The only disputed reference is in 2 Peter 2:1, which we must inquire into.

Let us note something that is important about the word. The word does not speak merely of Christ paying the ransom by His blood (if that is what the Universal Redemptionists want to say), but that He also *possesses* that which He has bought. Meaning, the word *agorazo* does not merely refer to the payment of the price, but the *possession* of that for which the price was paid. For example, when buying a field, one does not merely pay the price, but there is naturally a change in ownership

and possession of the field (Matt. 13:44). The word does not merely refer to the laying down of the price, but also the possession of the thing bought. If therefore, the Universal Redemptionists want to say that Christ has bought all men without exception, including the false teachers, then they need to explain how they can have Christ as their *Despotes* and yet the text says that they were made to be destroyed (2 Pet. 2:12). Or to put it in other words: How can Christ lose those who are under His headship or those for whom He intercedes and mediates (as that is the continuation of His once for all time sacrifice)? If the response is in line with anything about Christ as their Sovereign Creator and that they owe Him obedience and love by the nature that He is Lord of all, then that leads to the position that the passage is not soteriological. But if they maintain that they were bought by the blood of Christ to be saved then they need to explain among others Hebrews 13:12 with 10:14 (Heb. 7:25; John 10:28-29) and how Christ's mediation and intercession can fail, when the Scriptures say that it does not (Heb. 8:6-13; 9:15; 7:25; 10:14)?

With that in mind, let us turn to the soteriological usage of the word. When the word is used soteriologically, the price is always mentioned in the context. Two of those references are found in Paul where the word "price" is used to speak of Christ's blood (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23). In Revelation 5:9, the price mentioned is "his blood." In Revelation 14:3-4, from the reference to the Lamb with whom they were standing on Mount Zion and the previous description of Him being slain for them (Rev. 5:9), the price for redemption is assumed both in the present context and also in the book as a whole (Rev. 1:5; 5:9; 7:14; 12:11). Not only that, but the chapter itself is soteriological in nature.

Now considering the text of 2 Peter 2:1, there is no mention of what the price was by which the false teachers were bought when all other places the price is either explicitly or implicitly mentioned. It is also interesting to notice the way in which Peter *does* speak of us being ransomed by Christ blood:

1 Pet. 1:18-19 knowing that you were **ransomed** from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but **with the precious blood of Christ**, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

Notice the way in which Peter clearly speaks soteriologically. But notice also that he uses a different word than *agorazo*. The word used is *lutroo* (G3084), which is thus defined:

- Original: λυτρόω
- Transliteration: Lutroo
- Phonetic: loo-tro'-o
- Definition:
 1. to release on receipt of ransom
 2. to redeem, liberate by payment of ransom
 - a. to liberate
 - b. to cause to be released to one's self by payment of a ransom
 - c. to redeem
 - d. to deliver: from evils of every kind, internal and external
- Origin: from G3083
- TDNT entry: 09:49,5
- Part(s) of speech: Verb^[11]

The word is also found in Titus 2:14 and Luke 24:21 in a soteriological sense. In fact, *agorazo* is not used by Peter anywhere else other than the disputed passage, i.e., 2 Peter 2:1. The only way by which we can determine how Peter is using the word is to examine the context and also the source from which he is drawing. We have already considered Deuteronomy 32:5-6 as the background and the different yet interchangeable word used there. The background source from which Peter is drawing is not soteriological either. The price by which the false prophets were bought is absent. The word *agorazo* is only used by Peter here, though there is another word which he used in his previous letter to speak of spiritual redemption (*lutroo*), which is not used in 2 Peter at all. Therefore, 1) if the word *despotes* is nowhere used in the New Testament to speak of God as Savior/Mediator; 2) Peter uses a different word to speak of spiritual redemption clearly, which is not found here; 3) the absence of the price for *agorazo*; and 4) the non-soteriological use of "buying" in Deuteronomy 32:5-6, leads me to conclude that this passage is not speaking of soteriology, but something else.

The Non-Soteriological Interpretations

I don't want to give you the idea that I am trying to understand the text on its own. I don't think that's the way of complete

biblical exegesis. I believe a text is to be understood within its context and also within the context of the whole Bible. Plus, I follow the *analogia fidei*: clear passages first and then obscure passages. 2 Peter 2:1 is by no means clear and if it is to be taken in a “straightforward” manner, it generates problems elsewhere in our theology. We need to harmonize and not make the Bible a mish-mash. If the apostle wanted to speak about the false teachers being bought by Christ the Savior’s blood, then he certainly knew how he could communicate that to his audience as he did previously (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Let us not forget that this passage was not put down to say anything about the atonement. What the passage speaks about is the apostasy of the false teachers and their dangerous heresies (cf. 1 John 2:19). It is not a discussion on the extent of the atonement. Therefore, it is desperate if non-Calvinists would want to spend much time speaking about this text all the while there are other texts, which were penned to discuss the subject of the atonement and Christ’s work (e.g., Hebrews 7-10).

Since we have ruled out the soteriological view, therefore, now we must explain what the passage is speaking about. We have already spoken of the connection between the present text and Deuteronomy 32:5-6 where “bought” is used in the sense of *create* and *own*. Therefore, I believe that this passage teaches that Christ has *acquired*, *created* and *bought* all people without exception, including these false teachers. They are owned by the Lord in the sense that He is the One who has created them and to whom they by nature they owe their thanks, worship, and adoration. Therefore, their public rejection of Christ brings them under His condemnation. Therefore, interpreting the text this way gives it the sense:

“There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying **the sovereign Lord** who **created**¹⁸ them and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”^[69]

If some object that the word found in the LXX is not *agorazo*, then the answer would be that Peter was not citing, but alluding to the text and since these words are synonymous, he was free to choose from both. There is, therefore, no radical difference between the two words.

The word Peter uses is **ἀγοράζω** (agorazō), which means, basically, “to buy.” The LXX uses it in 1 Chronicles 21:24 where the Hebrew uses the word **קָנָה** (qanah), meaning “to get, acquire, create, buy, possess.” The word used by the Septuagint in Exodus 15:16 and Deuteronomy 32:6 is **κτάομαι** (ktaomai), which means, “to acquire, get, or procure a thing for one’s self, to possess,” and is often used to refer to something acquired at a price--a purchase. And sure enough, the Hebrew word used in those places is, again, qanah.

So agorazō and ktaomai are, indeed, largely synonymous. In many cases they can be used interchangeably, being used by the translators of the Septuagint to translate the same Hebrew word. Since Peter is hearkening back to the Old Testament, but not quoting the LXX, he’s free to choose between these two Greek words to communicate the point.^[70]

Other Possible Interpretation

One possible interpretation is what has been called the *Christian Charity View*. By this is meant that we take the false teachers at their word. They claim to be Christians, we take them at their word even though they are not, similar to 1 John 2:19. Support of this may be found in vv. 18-22. They appear to be living the Christian life, but deep within they are wolves; they are false. Thus, if they professed to be Christian then that naturally meant that they were bought by Christ’s blood. But the difficulty within this view is the meaning of the words *despotes* and *agorazo* in this context and, in my opinion, the superior interpretation given above.

Other interpretation similar to the Christian Charity View is called the *Temporal Deliverance View*. Those who hold to this view maintain that they were bought in the sense that they belonged to the Christian fellowship and thus like the Christian Charity View, they were taken at their word that they belonged to the Lord. Support of this position may be found in vv. 20-21. To be in the congregation of the people of God, the false teachers are in a sense set apart and sanctified (yet not soteriologically) from worldliness as they are within a group, which seeks to avoid that which is displeasing to God. In this sense, they were bought and set apart and they later denied that profession.

Difficulties With the Soteriological Interpretation

What if Christ did actually shed His blood for those false teachers? The difficulties found with this view include that 1) Christ is unable to save those for whom He died; 2) they were ordained to condemnation yet bought by Christ; 3) they are owned, acquired and bought by Christ; 4) Peter uses different language to speak of spiritual redemption.

1) Scripture, as we saw above, when I tried to make the case for Definite Redemption presents an atonement and a Savior that is perfect to save, without human assistance or addition to His perfect work. Christ’s purpose in dying was to *truly* and *actually*, not hypothetically, redeem and free those for whom He died. If we say that Christ substitutionarily died even for the false teachers who will not come to saving faith, then we cannot escape the fact that His work fails. As mediation and intercession is merely the continuation of His once for all time sacrifice, so then we must also conclude that He fails even in

His mediation and intercession on behalf of those for whom He died. But that is impossible (Heb. 7:25; 8:6-13; 9:15; Rom. 8:34).

2) Why would Christ die for those of whom it is said that they “long ago were designated for this condemnation” (Jude 1:4) and “Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep” (2 Pet. 2:3). So, they are ordained for condemnation, yet Christ dies to *try* to save them? Does that make a lick of sense? Some have said, I don’t understand how they can say that, that Christ died for all so that no man may have an excuse and that they might justly be condemned for their sin of unbelief. But Romans 1:18ff places the universal condemnation of man not in the rejection of Christ’s death, but the rejection of the true God revealed in the created world. One must admit that it is pretty weird for Christ to die in order to save those “who long ago were designated for this condemnation.” Who but God designated them to this condemnation, but then He will try to go against His decree of reprobation? I don’t buy that! They are further described as “like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed” and yet Christ died to save them although they were born to be caught and destroyed?

3) If people still maintain that the context is soteriological then they must explain how Christ has *bought* and *owns* those false teachers. The word *agorazo* has within it not merely the laying down of the price, but also the *possession* of the thing bought. Thus, if Universal Redemptionists want to maintain that Christ died substitutionarily for these false teachers who were ordained for condemnation and born to be caught and destroyed, then they must explain in what way they are *currently* owned by Christ. If I buy a book from a store, the book is no longer in the possession of the store, but it is mine. The ownership of the item has changed. How or in what way is Christ the owner of these false prophets? Or did the Lord Christ somehow lose them to Satan, contrary to John 10:28-29?

4) Peter perfectly knows how to speak of our spiritual redemption, yet he does not do so here (cf. 1 Pet. 1:18-19). He speaks of our spiritual redemption with no unclear terms mentioning the price and everything, yet here he is silent about that. The word *agorazo* is furthermore not used by Peter anywhere else and therefore we are dependent upon the context to understand the intended meaning of the word. Seeing that Peter avoids the usual way of speaking about spiritual redemption, we must doubt that he is, in fact, speaking here of spiritual redemption.

Conclusion

I don’t imagine that I have given a definite and concrete interpretation, but I believe that I have provided a good defense of why this passage is not soteriological and does not speak of Christ’s blood being shed and yet He failing to redeem those for whom His blood was shed. I have also tried to provide some difficulties that I see with the soteriological interpretation (the typical non-Calvinist interpretation). The interpretation that I have presently provided seems to me to be most consistent with the Biblical testimony.

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing that any should perish**, but that **all should reach repentance**.

This passage, along with 1 Timothy 2:3-4 ([see comments above](#)), is one of the most cited passages against Limited Atonement (or Calvinism in general). The claim is, as is with 1 Timothy 2:4, that God does not want or wish that anyone should perish. He really wants everyone to come to repentance. As we said above on 1 Timothy 2:4, so now we repeat what Arminians usually say: there are two wishes of God involved here, one stronger than the other. He really wants to save everyone, yet His stronger/higher desire is that people have a libertarian free will and by their libertarian free will come to choose Him. We can directly see the stress laid by Arminians and some (I believe, inconsistent) Calvinists who fall back as with 1 Timothy 2:4 on the “will of desire interpretation” upon reading “any” and “all” in the text. I don’t think that is necessary.

Let’s first realize who the audience is. In vv. 1 and 8, they are called “beloved”, which Peter does not call anyone other than the believers. Out of the eight times that it is used in the Petrine corpus, the only time it does not refer to believers is when Peter quotes the words of the Father to the Son (2 Pet. 1:17). All the other seven references are to the believers to whom he was writing (1 Pet. 2:11; 4:12; 2 Pet. 3:1, 8, 14, 15, 17). 1 Peter 3:1 points back to the previous letter wherein they are addressed as “elect exiles” (1 Pet. 1:1). The recipients of the letter and the audience of Peter are elect believers; it was the church.

What is the promise of the Lord? This promise concerns His Parousia, which the scoffers scoff at. God the Father is patient in not sending the Son yet because if the Son comes there will no longer be a possibility of salvation. God is slow to anger and longsuffering “toward you.” The object of God’s patience are the believers. I think it is perfectly clear that Peter was writing to those who professed the name of Christ. Notice the object of God’s patience, it is not the “any” or the “all”, but specifically “you”—the beloved, the believers. The ὑμᾶς (*humas*, you) in the verse is plural. Peter is speaking to the

beloved collectively. He is not speaking to the person reading the letter, but to the congregation to whom he, under inspiration, wrote. As the beloved are the believers, so the text is actually saying that God does not wish any of the believers/elect to perish until they should reach repentance. Rather than undermine Calvinism, this verse supports it, but I'm getting ahead of myself.

As the verse continues, we come to that "any" part. Does the audience of the verse now at once change? Does the "any" and the "all" now become *any* and *all* humans *without exception*? What reason do we have to think of this? We have already argued that the object of God's patience and longsuffering are the beloved and not all men without exception. Therefore, how does it make sense to say that *God is longsuffering toward the believers, but not wishing any man without exception to perish, but all without exception come to repentance*? Doesn't it seem consistent to maintain the same group throughout the verse, i.e., God's elect (1 Pet. 1:1)? The Universal Redemptionist interpretation cuts the flow of the passage in half. In the first half, Peter is speaking about the believers, but then he switches to speak of all men without exception although the object of God's patience are the believers, which is the basis of the fact that God is not willing that they perish and should come to repentance. The object or group under discussion is the plural "you" of the beloved believers, therefore, naturally, the "any" and "all" are to be understood as "any of you" and "all of you." God is not willing that any of the elect should perish, but that they should come to repentance.

This passage supports the perfect work of the Son on behalf of the elect rather than undermine it (John 6:37-40). Christ will lose none for whom He died and will bring them to repentance and faith. If God were to send Christ back in Peter's time, for example, then all of us would not have existed and thus would not have been saved and brought into communion with the Triune God. But He is patient and He delays the Son's Parousia for the sake of the elect and them being brought into the Kingdom. This is the consistent reading of the passage. It may be illustrated thus in a table:

The Object of God's Patience	[the Lord] is patient toward <i>you</i>
What God Does Not Want	not wishing that any should <i>perish</i>
The Purpose for God's Patience	but that all should reach <i>repentance</i>

What of the word "wishing"? Some think that this word, like "desires" in 1 Timothy 2:4, supports the "will of desire" view. God desires that all be saved, but He has a higher purpose, namely the manifestation of His wrath and grace. So goes the Calvinist "will of desire interpretation." This idea fails for the same reason that it failed in 1 Timothy 2:4. God does whatever He pleases. If He pleased to save all people, all would have been saved. But since not all will be saved, therefore, He has not desired the salvation of all without exception. The word for wishing, βούλομαι (G1014, *boulomai*) is defined as:

- Original: βούλομαι
- Transliteration: Boulomai
- Phonetic: boo'-lom-ahee
- Definition:
 1. to will deliberately, have a purpose, be minded
 2. of willing as an affection, to desire
- Origin: middle voice of a primary verb
- TDNT entry: 11:29,1
- Part(s) of speech: Verb ^[11]

I believe it would be wrong to speak of 2 Peter 3:9 as expressing an unfulfilled desire within God. The word "wishing" may be translated with "willing" as in the KJV or "wanting" as in the HCSB. The word does not carry within it an idea of unfulfilled desire or a lower desire than something else. Neither does the English word *wish*, actually. The word is used in James 1:18 to speak of God's will which regenerated us and made us born again. Is the will and desire of God frustrated somehow? That which God wills and wishes, happens (e.g., Job 23:13; 42:2; Ps. 115:3). Therefore, there is no reason to hold to the "will of desire interpretation" as the context is clear about the audience whom Peter is addressing are the believers and it is consistent with the flow of the passage.

An objection raised against the idea that this passage teaches universal redemption or God's desire to save all people without exception may be leveled to the effect: What do we do when God wills people to perish? We are faced with that even in the present context. Notice in chapters 2 and 3, the "they's" used to distinguish the false prophets and scoffers from the beloved. Peter tells us that "the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly" (2 Pet. 3:7), yet two verses later he tells us, according to the common interpretation, that God is willing that all people without exception, including those ungodly whose destruction awaits them by fire, do not perish? Does that make sense to you? God is willing to destroy the ungodly, yet at the same time, He is willing that they not

perish and come to repentance. Certainly, this consideration further supports the case that the audience of 2 Peter 3:9 are the elect and not all people without exception. Furthermore, we have already considered 2 Peter 2:1 ([see here](#)) and let us take a look at how these false prophets are described:

2 Pet. 2:3 And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. **Their condemnation from long ago is not idle,** and their destruction is not asleep.

Jude 1:4 For **certain people** have crept in unnoticed who **long ago were designated for this condemnation**, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Does it make sense to say that God wills the repentance and salvation of those whom He has long ago designated for condemnation? It doesn't to me, at least. Moreover, they are described as being "like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, **born to be caught and destroyed**", but God does not actually will their destruction?

2 Pet. 2:9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to **keep the unrighteous under punishment** until the day of judgment,

He keeps them under punishment, yet He desires that they repent? They were made "for the day of disaster" (Prov. 16:4), yet God does not desire their destruction, but their repentance? For more see [Reprobation](#) in [chapter 3](#) section 3.

All these are reasons which make the passage inconsistent if interpreted with the scope of all men without exception. Therefore, the sense of the passage could be given thus:

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you [the beloved], not wishing that any [of you] should perish, but that all [of you] should reach repentance.

See also [2 Peter 3:8-9, not wishing that any should perish](#).

Conclusion

I conclude my brief and imperfect study on the atonement by confirming that Owen's argument was not only logical but also biblically faithful as Christ the Lord provided a *definite* and not a *potential* atonement for all His sheep, those given to Him by the Father and over whom He has charge.

Lord Jesus, You never fail to amaze me with Your love and grace. Thank You for laying down Your precious, spotless and glorious life for a wretch like me, Lord. Father, thank You for planning to save a wicked person like me. Spirit, thank You for regenerating me, giving me a new heart to love God and new eyes to see the beauty of the Triune Sovereign! SDG!

§9 This office of mediator between God and man is proper only to Christ

9. This office of mediator between God and man is **proper only to Christ**, who is the prophet, priest, and king of the church of God; and may not be either in whole or any part thereof, transferred from him to any other. **1**

1. 1 Tim. 2:5

Christ alone is the One who stands **between God and man**. No other creature could take His place as **mediator**, Who is also **the prophet, priest, and king of the church of God**. This is the privilege and honor of Christ alone and anyone who tries to take these offices upon themselves is most properly an antichrist (someone in the place of Christ). These offices belong exclusively to Christ.

Since it is He alone who is the God-Man. Who is able to be the go-between between God and man. Who is able to truly and properly represent both sides. No man, no matter how holy they may be, is to take this office unto himself. We may not associate anyone with the Lord Christ in His mediatorship. Not His dear mother nor anyone else. He alone is the mediator of

§10 This number and order of offices is necessary

10. This number and order of offices is necessary; for in respect of **our ignorance**, we stand in need of his **prophetical office**; **1** and in respect of our **alienation from God**, and **imperfection** of the best of our services, we need his **priestly office to reconcile us and present us acceptable** unto God; **2** and in respect to our **averseness** and **utter inability to return to God**, and for our **rescue** and **security** from our spiritual adversaries, we need his **kingly office** to convince, subdue, draw, uphold, deliver, and preserve us to his heavenly kingdom. **3**

1. John 1:18
2. Col. 1:21; Gal. 5:17; Heb. 10:19-21
3. John 16:8; Ps. 110:3; Luke 1:74-75

Lastly, the Confession goes on to explain how we are blessed by the threefold offices of Christ. Are we are in **ignorance** and severed from the life of God, we need someone to tell us the truth from God. This is the Lord Christ in **His prophetical office** (John 1:18, 45 and Deut. 18:15-18). In His **priestly office**, Christ works to **reconcile us and present us acceptable unto God** (Heb. 10:19-21) since we were in a state of **alienation from God** (Eph. 2:12-13; Col. 1:21). In **His kingly office**, Christ subdues and overcomes **our averseness and utter inability to return to God**. Not only is the **kingly office** of Christ of use at the beginning of our Christian life, but throughout our Christian life as we wage war against sin. He fights **our spiritual adversaries** and rescues us from them (Ps. 110:1-2). Furthermore, He **preserves** us by His **kingly office** until we are in **His heavenly kingdom** (2 Tim. 4:18).

The Lord Jesus is the teacher of the people of God. He as the **prophet** of God Who teaches us and reveals to us the words of God. He explains God as He is. He “exegetes” the Father to us (John 1:18), since only in Him is the Father revealed. As the **priest** of God’s people, He is able to satisfy the holy wrath of God against ourselves and our sin. Not only that but also to represent us before God and intercede for us and our blessings before God based on His work (Rom 8:32-34). As the **king** of His people, He is able to destroy our sin and spiritual enemies. By His Spirit, He fights against our sinful nature and will certainly overcome it. He, by the Spirit, brings us into submission to Him and teaches us to obey Him throughout our life (sanctification).

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name **Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins.

(Matthew 1:21)

Footnotes

1. [^](#) Many Scriptural references have been supplied by Samuel Waldron’s [Modern Exposition of 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith](#) which was apparently supplied by the [Westminster Confession of Faith 1646](#).
2. [a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v](#) [Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible](#). Taken from the [TheWord Bible Software](#). In loc.
3. [a, b, c, d](#) Philip Schaff. [A Popular Commentary on the New Testament](#). Taken from the [TheWord Bible Software](#). In loc.

4. [a, b, c, d](#) Matthew Poole. [English Annotations on the Holy Bible](#). Taken from the [TheWord Bible Software](#). In loc.
5. [^](#) [Joseph Henry Thayer's Greek Definitions](#). Taken from the [TheWord Bible Software](#). See reference for the Strong's number.
6. [a, b, c, d, e, f, g](#) John Gill. [Exposition of the Entire Bible](#). Taken from the [TheWord Bible Software](#). In loc.
7. [^](#) [Heir](#).
8. [a, b](#) Jamieson, Fausset, Brown. [Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible \(Full\)](#). Taken from the [TheWord Bible Software](#). In loc.
9. [^](#) [Mickelson's Enhanced Strong's Greek and Hebrew Dictionaries](#). Taken from the [TheWord Bible Software](#). See reference for the Strong's number.
10. [a, b, c, d](#) Charles J. Ellicott. [Commentary For English Readers](#). Taken from the [TheWord Bible Software](#). In loc.
11. [a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l](#) [Joseph Henry Thayer's Greek Definitions](#). Taken from the [TheWord Bible Software](#). See reference for the Strong's number.
12. [^](#) Cited from Wayne Grudem. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994). pp. 556-557. The content within the brackets is Grudem's.
13. [^](#) [The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges](#). Edited by J. J. S. Perowne. Taken from the [TheWord Bible Software](#). In loc.
14. [a, b, c, d](#) John Calvin. [Commentaries](#). Taken from the [TheWord Bible Software](#). In loc.
15. [^](#) William Robertson Nicoll. [The Expositor's Greek Testament](#). Taken from the [TheWord Bible Software](#). In loc.
16. [^](#) [Penal substitutionary atonement](#).
17. [^](#) Heinrich Meyer. [Critical and Exegetical NT](#). Taken from the [TheWord Bible Software](#). In loc.
18. [^](#) Grudem, *Systematic Theology*. Chapter 28, p. 609, n. 3.
19. [^](#) *Ibid.*, Chapter 28, p. 615.
20. [^](#) The Free Dictionary. [Intercede](#).
21. [^](#) *Ibid.*, [Intercession](#).
22. [^](#) Matt. Slick, CARM. [Active Obedience](#)
23. [^](#) Wayne Grudem. [The Active Obedience of Christ](#). Monergism.com.
24. [^](#) GotQuestions.org. [What is propitiation?](#)
25. [^](#) The Free Dictionary. [Reconcile](#).
26. [^](#) *Ibid.*, [Retroactive](#).
27. [^](#) John Owen. [An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews](#). Taken from the [TheWord Bible Software](#). In loc.
28. [^](#) David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, S. Lance Quinn. *The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, and Documented*. (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publications. 2004). pp. 6-7.
29. [^](#) As cited in Nathan W. Bingham, [Charles Spurgeon on Calvinism — Definite Atonement](#). (28-03-2012, Ligonier Ministries).
30. [^](#) The argument was cited from [Reformed.org](#).
31. [^](#) John Owen. *The Death Of Death In The Death Of Christ*. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust. 1959, 2013 reprint). p. 45.
32. [^](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.
33. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 68.
34. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 69.
35. [^](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.
36. [^](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 71-74.
37. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 89.
38. [a, b](#) *Ibid.*, p. 96.
39. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 98.

40. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 99.
41. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 100.
42. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 101.
43. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 111.
44. [a](#), [b](#) *Ibid.*, p. 113.
45. [a](#), [b](#), [c](#) *Ibid.*, p. 121.
46. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 124.
47. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 131.
48. [^](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132.
49. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 132.
50. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 137.
51. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 146.
52. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 150.
53. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 152.
54. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 174.
55. [^](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 175-176.
56. [^](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.
57. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 179.
58. [a](#), [b](#) *Ibid.*, p. 180.
59. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 309.
60. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 182.
61. [^](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 190-191.
62. [^](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 194-195.
63. [^](#) *Ibid.*, p. 221.
64. [^](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 195-196.
65. [^](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 302-303.
66. [^](#) A.W. Pink. *The Sovereignty of God*. (Alachua, FL: Bridge-Logos. 2008). p. 292.
67. [^](#) The ESV says “created”. See [its definition and usage](#).
68. [^](#) LSJ Gloss, [G2932 κτάνομαι](#).
69. [^](#) Gary D. Lon. [Redemption in II Peter 2:1](#).
70. [^](#) Chris. [Limited Atonement and 2 Peter 2:1](#).