

Exposition of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Lesson #104 - "Chapter 8 – Christ, the Mediator (Part 32)

October 18, 2009

Outline of Chapter 8: Christ, the Mediator

- I. His Appointment (Paragraph 1)
- II. His Incarnation (Paragraph 2 & 7)
- III. His Anointing (Paragraph 3)
- IV. His Work (Paragraphs 4-6, & 8)**
- V. His Uniqueness (Paragraph 9)
- VI. His Indispensability (Paragraph 10)

IV. His Work (Paragraphs 4-6, & 8)

- A. The Atonement of Christ**
- B. The Burial & Resurrection of Christ
- C. The Ascension & Exaltation of Christ
- D. The Outpouring of the Spirit by Christ
- E. The Session/Reign of Christ
- F. The Coming of Christ

A. The Atonement of Christ

- 1. The Cause of the Atonement (Lesson 95)
- 2. The Necessity of the Atonement (Lesson 95)
- 3. The Nature of the Atonement (Lessons 96-99)
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- 7. The Application of the Atonement (Lesson 105)

6. The Extent of the Atonement

- a. Clarification
- b. Demonstration
- c. Objections**

c. Objections (Textual & Practical)

(1) Textual Objections

There are basically three categories of texts that have been difficult for many to understand within the framework of a limited atonement. These categories of texts (in their minds) teach universal atonement, and by 'universal,' they mean 'every man, woman, and child' that has ever lived or ever will live.

(a) **There are passages which teach that Christ died for the world.**

e.g., Jn. 1:29; 3:16; 6:33,51; Rom.11:12,15; 2 Cor.5:19; 1 Jn.2:2

This objection is founded upon the mistaken idea that the word "world" as used in these verses means "all the individuals that constitute the human race." But it is evident from Scripture that the term "world" is never used to mean this. For example, in 1 John 2:15 we are commanded to "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." However, in Matthew 5:44 Jesus tells us to love our enemies. How can we love our enemies when John tells us that we are not to love the world? The word "world" as used in the original language of the New Testament does not mean "everyone in the human race without exception."

A few examples:

- If the meaning of the word "world" in John 6:33 meant every man, woman, and child that has ever lived or ever will live, then it would follow that Christ actually gives life to all men, that is, He saves them ALL. And this is obviously not the case.
- In Romans 11:12,15 the word "world" cannot mean what the universalist says it means, since the context clearly excludes Israel; and because this verse would be saying that all men are saved.
- In 1 John 2:2 the word "world" cannot possibly mean everyone in the human race without exception, because then all the world would be saved. The word "world" must be interpreted by the word "propitiation," not vice-versa.

The word "world" in the NT is used primarily in two ways, especially by the Apostle John. It is either used in an ethical sense or in an ethnic sense. Never is it used to mean "every member of Adam's race." We find it being used in the 'ethical' sense most clearly in 1 John 2:15 - "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." Here the word world (cosmos) means the present evil age - the world order as it presently is in its wickedness.

In most cases, however, the word "world" is used in an ethnic sense. That is, when it is used with reference to salvation, it is referring to the "Gentile world" as opposed to the Jewish nation. For centuries God had been pleased to deal almost exclusively with Israel as a nation. Now, in these New Covenant days, God would begin dealing with all the world. And indeed, the Scriptures tell us that when all is said and done, God will have brought in His elect from every tribe, kindred, nation, people, and tongue. So, for example, in 1 John 2:2 - John is stressing that Christ did not only die for them (the Jews), but for all peoples of all races.

John is, no doubt, also pointing to the fact that Christ is THE ONLY propitiation the world has. He is the propitiation for our sins, but not only that, He is also (the exclusive) propitiation for the whole world. There is no propitiation apart from Christ - He is indeed the only Saviour the world has - He is THE Saviour of the world! If any are to be saved, it is through the propitiating work of Christ alone!

(b) **There are passages in which it is said that Christ died for all men.**

e.g., Rom.5:18; 1 Cor.15:22; 2 Cor.5:14; 1 Tim.2:4,6; Tit.2:11; Heb.2:9

Note: The words "all" or "every" are called "indefinite" pronouns. They are never to be taken "absolutely," but rather interpreted in light of their context and in light of the entire teaching of God's Word.

For example:

- The "all" or "all men" in Romans 5:18 and 1 Cor.15:22 includes only those who are "in Christ" as opposed to those who are "in Adam." If the word "all" is not limited in these passages, then it would teach that Christ actually saves everyone without exception (universalism).

- A similar limitation must be made in 2 Cor.5:14 and Heb.2:9 (see v.10). In all of these passages the “all” or “every” is referring to “all those in Christ.”
- In Titus 2:11 and 1 Tim.2:4-6, the “all” probably means “all classes of men.” Otherwise, once again, it would teach universal salvation.

(c) **There are passages which seem to imply the possibility that those for whom Christ died fail to obtain salvation.**

e.g., 2 Pet.2:1; Heb.10:29

In each of these cases, the writer, for the sake of argument, is supposing something that does not and cannot happen. The writer’s argument is based on the “professions” of those people, not the “actual condition” of their souls.

(2) **Practical Objection**

viz., How can we preach the gospel if we cannot say to men, “*Christ died for you?*”

So many professing Christians believe that the gospel message is “Christ died for you.” They believe that unless you can tell all men that Christ died for them, you cannot preach the gospel. Therefore, they reject the doctrine of particular redemption (limited atonement) wholesale because they cannot see how they would be able to preach the gospel without a universal atonement.

But in reality, it is impossible to preach the gospel accurately *without* the doctrine of particular redemption! How can you preach that Christ died for all and yet the majority of those for whom He died perish? What comfort or confidence will it be to any sinner to hear that Christ died for them, but that His death is ultimately useless and a failure? What kind of Saviour is He that doesn’t really save? What kind of redemption is it that doesn’t really redeem?

The fact of the matter is, the gospel message is not telling everyone that Christ died for them. This is NOT the gospel message. Read the book of Acts and see if any of the apostles preached that way. Not one of them ever preached that to an audience of unsaved hearers! If we have a problem reconciling particular redemption with the preaching of the gospel, then we have a problem that the apostles obviously did not have.

Someone might ask, “*How then can we offer the atonement to sinners if we can’t tell them Christ died for them individually?*” The answer to this is: the gospel message is not about offering the atonement. It is not “*Come to the atonement.*” It is “*Come to Christ.*” The focal point of the gospel is not a thing, it is a *person*. Sinners are not commanded to put their trust and faith in the atonement, but in Christ! They are not commanded to flee to the atonement, but to Christ who has made atonement for all those who come to Him! Therefore, the issue is not whether Christ died for me... the issue is, “*Am I a sinner, is Christ an able and available Saviour, and has He bidden me to come? If so, then what am I waiting for?*”

An awakened sinner’s immediate concern is not whether or not he is elect, or whether or not Christ died for him in particular. His immediate concern ought to be, “*Where can I go to find a qualified and able physician who is able to cure my sin problem?*” Preachers do not need to tell sinners that Christ died for them - all they need to do is point to Christ and say, “*The only way to be saved from your sin is to flee to Christ. Flee to Him Who has made an atonement for sin, and you will be saved. Refuse to flee to Him and you will remain in your sins and are condemned.*” The awakened sinner doesn’t need to be told that Christ died for them, because that is not the issue at hand. The issue at hand is - He is the ONLY refuge for sinners, and He is able to save all those who come to Him. Therefore, you must flee to HIM. And in fleeing, you will then be assured that He died for you. Your very coming to Christ is proof that Christ died for you. Why? Because Christ said Himself, “*All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me.*” All that the Father has elected to salvation - those for whom Christ died - **will** come to Christ. Their coming is proof of their election and proof that Christ did indeed die for them. Not only that, but their faith in Christ is proof that Christ died for them, because their faith is a gift which Christ purchased for them by His death.