

status was in relationship to the earthly Tabernacle/Temple or to the community itself. Thus, the laws of ritual purity as well as those governing atonement for guilt offer a vivid revelation and foreshadowing of the ultimate and final atonement to be effected through the death of Yeshua on behalf of guilty sinners. The atonement secured by Yeshua through His saving sacrifice and His work as our Great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary brought about an eternal status of “holy,” that is, “righteous” for all who by faith are marked by this atonement. It is therefore proper to speak of the “atonement” made for us by Yeshua, for in His death on behalf of His people, He “wiped away” our sins and saved us from the penalty we deserved because of them.

The Extent of the Atonement

The question of the extent of the atonement may be more simply put this way: “for whom did Yeshua die?” In the two opposing theological perspectives of soteriology, the Arminian view is that of universal atonement while the Calvinistic or Reformed view is that of limited atonement, or more accurately called “particular redemption.” The heart of the issue revolves around whether the death of Messiah is efficacious or not. The following table summarizes the opposing views:¹⁰

Arminian	Calvinist
<i>Not efficacious:</i> Through the death of Yeshua, God made atonement <i>available</i> to all.	<i>Efficacious:</i> Through the death of Yeshua, God made atonement <i>inevitable</i> for all the elect.
<i>Universal:</i> When Yeshua died, He died for all mankind. Yet only those who receive Him are forgiven. Those who do not receive Him are lost.	<i>Particularistic:</i> When Yeshua died, He died for the elect alone. Therefore, all those for whom He died are inevitably forgiven and eternally saved.
<i>Universal Purpose:</i> The divine purpose of the death of Yeshua was to make atonement possible for sinful mankind. The number who will be redeemed by His death, while known by God, is contingent upon the free will of people to accept the atonement God has provided for them.	<i>Particularistic Purpose:</i> The divine purpose of the death of Yeshua was to save an innumerable host of people, the elect. This purpose will inevitably be realized so that no one for whom Messiah died will ever be eternally lost.
<i>Potential Payment for Sin:</i> The death of Messiah made payment for sin possible for all, but only those who choose to repent and accept Yeshua as their Savior by placing their faith in Him are actually forgiven.	<i>Actual Payment for Sin:</i> The death of Messiah actually paid for the sins of all the elect, who will, through God’s sovereign designs, come to repentance and accept Yeshua as their Savior by placing their faith in Him.

In reality, both views presented above limit the atonement, for neither believe that all people will be saved. In the Arminian view, the atonement is limited

¹⁰ There is also a view of the atonement that is explicitly universalistic. In this view, all people are eventually saved—no one is eternally lost. In Universalism, the atonement of Yeshua actually pays for the sins of all people, and therefore all are saved. Those who hold this view obviously deny that the Bible teaches either the eternal damnation or annihilation of the wicked.

by man's free will—the choice to reject the offer of atonement limits its effectiveness to save. In this case, man controls the final outcome of the Messiah's death. In the Calvinistic view, the atonement is limited by *the design of God*. The Messiah's death had a particular divine purpose, that being to redeem the elect from their sin. In this case, God controls the final outcome of the Messiah's death.

If we begin with the proposition that a person is unable to effect forgiveness of sins through their own efforts, and that God is just and will not punish the same sin twice, then from a purely logical standpoint the Calvinistic approach makes the most sense, as can be seen from the following syllogisms:

1. If Messiah died for all of the sins of all people, then all are saved from the wrath of God since all of the debt for all of their sins has been paid (=Universalism).
2. If Messiah died for some of the sins of all people, then no one is saved, for we began with the premise that a person is unable to effect forgiveness of sins through their own efforts.
3. If Messiah died for all of the sins of some of the people, then those for whom He died are indeed saved (Particularism).

Of course, those who hold to an Arminian view of the atonement would object because what is left out of the syllogisms above is any mention of one's free choice either to accept or reject the offer of salvation through Yeshua's atoning work. But what even this objection shows is that in the Arminian view, the death of Yeshua does not actually pay for sin, it only makes a "deposit" on that payment. In the end, of course, such logical argumentation may have value for theological dialog, but the real crux resides in the language of the Scriptures themselves. Is the payment for sins made by the death of Yeshua presented in the Scriptures as being potential or actual? Do the Scriptures speak of the death of the Messiah as making salvation *possible* or *inevitable*?

We may first note the manner in which atonement is said to be secured through the sacrificial rituals of the Tabernacle and Temple. Take, for instance, the picture presented in the sin offering (Lev 4). In each case, whether the one who has sinned is a priest, the whole assembly of Israel, a leader, or a common person, the ritual is the same: 1) the animal is brought to the Tabernacle, 2) the sinner (or representative for the congregation of Israel) places his hand upon the head of the animal, 3) the animal is slain, 4) some of the blood is sprinkled in the holy place (if the offender is a priest) and put upon the four horns of the altar of incense, 5) the remaining blood is pour out at the base of the altar of sacrifice, 6) the fat of the animal is offered upon the altar, and 7) the remainder of the animal is burnt outside of the camp in a ritually pure place. Once this ritual has been completed, the text states: "Thus the priest shall make atonement for him in regard to his sin, and he will be forgiven" (Lev 4:26, 31, 35).

What does this ritual reveal to us about the manner in which atonement is made? First, the laying of the hand upon the head of the animal is symbolic of the transfer of guilt. There is a one-to-one correspondence between the animal and the guilty party. The sacrifice of the animal is specifically for the one who has laid his or her hands upon its head. Second, the sprinkling and pouring of the blood upon the altars, along with the burning of the fat, signifies the actual payment for the sin of the guilty party. Since the penalty for sin is death (Ezek 18:4), the death of the animal is direct payment for the sin symbolically transferred to it. Third, the result of offering the sacrifice is that the guilty party is forgiven and

returns to an acceptable status within the congregation, including ability to enter the *sanctum* of the Tabernacle court.

Surely this Torah revelation of God’s way of making atonement for sinners is particularistic. The death of the animal does not make the atonement and forgiveness possible—it actually returns the offerer to the status of “no longer guilty,” even if this status obtains only in a temporal, cultic sense (as noted above). Indeed, in all of the Temple sacrifices and rituals, the one-to-one correspondence between the sacrificial victim and the transgressor makes it amply clear that the sacrifice was viewed as an actual payment for the transgressions, not as a potential or possible payment. Once the sacrifice has been made, the guilt has been “wiped away.”

By way of foreshadowing, we may also note that the atonement made through the sacrificial system of the Tabernacle and Temple was for Israel and Israel alone. No sacrifices were made for those nations outside of Israel. Some might suggest that this favors the universalistic view of the atonement, not the particularistic, since sacrifices (such as that made on Yom Kippur) were for the entire nation of Israel. Yet one must remember that in the unfolding of God’s plan of salvation in the history of Israel, Israel is viewed as God’s chosen ones, His elect. The work of the priests in the Tabernacle were for those who were part of Israel and for no one else. In regard to this, one must remember that the “court of the Gentiles” constructed in the Herodian 2nd Temple was an invention of the rabbis, not something prescribed by God. In the Tabernacle and 1st Temple no such division existed. Those who came into the sacred space of the courtyard were those who were part of Israel (whether native born or foreigner who had joined Israel) and who had submitted to the purity laws of the Torah.

When we come to the Apostolic Scriptures, it becomes clear that the atonement effected by the death of Yeshua is efficacious in procuring the very purpose for which He died. We first note that Yeshua came with a divine purpose, a mission which He was sent to accomplish. And this purpose is clearly stated to be that of saving sinners:

She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Yeshua, for He will save His people from their sins. (Matt 1:21)

For the Son of Man has come *to seek and to save* that which was lost. (Luke 19:10)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua Messiah, who gave Himself for our sins *so that He might rescue us from this present evil age*, according to the will of our God and Father, (Gal 1:3–4)

It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Messiah Yeshua *came into the world to save sinners*, among whom I am foremost of all. (1Tim 1:15)

...looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Messiah Yeshua, *who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds*. (Titus 2:13–14)

For Messiah also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, *so that He might bring us to God*, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; (1Pet 3:18)

In each of these texts, the purpose of Yeshua’s incarnation and sacrificial death is clearly stated: He came to save sinners. Therefore, when He cried from the cross “it is finished” (Jn 19:30), we must understand this as a victory cry announcing that He had “accomplished the work” which had been given to

Him (Jn 17:4). In other words, He made the salvation of sinners inevitable, not merely possible.

Second, as far as the Apostles are concerned, the death of the Messiah actually accomplished the reconciliation of the elect to God:

For if while we were enemies *we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son*, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Rom 5:10)

Now all these things are from God, who *reconciled us to Himself through Messiah* and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that *God was in Messiah reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them*, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (2Cor 5:18–19)

And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now *reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach...* (Col 1:21–22)

When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, *having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.* (Col 2:13–14)

Third, the righteousness and pardon needed to be justified was secured by the death of Yeshua:

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, *Messiah died for us*. Much more then, *having now been justified by His blood*, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. (Rom 5:8–9)

Messiah redeemed us from the curse of the Torah, *having become a curse for us*—for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE” (Gal 3:13)

and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through *His own blood*, He entered the holy place once for all, *having obtained eternal redemption.* (Heb 9:12)

and He Himself *bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.* (1Pet 2:24)

Fourth, the death of the Messiah for His chosen ones not only made atonement for their sins but also secured their inevitable sanctification:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Messiah also loved the assembly and *gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her*, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, (Eph 5:25–26)

how much more will the *blood of Messiah*, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, *cleanse your conscience from dead works* to serve the living God? (Heb 9:14)

Therefore Yeshua also, *that He might sanctify the people through His own blood*, suffered outside the gate. (Heb 13:12)

Fifth, Yeshua speaks of the purpose of His incarnation as being the salvation of those who had been given to Him:

For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will

of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, *that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing*, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day. (Jn 6:38–40)

Yeshua spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, *that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life*. (Jn 17:1–2)

Last, there are those texts which speak of Messiah’s death for “the world” as well as “for all,” for example:

For God so *loved the world*, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but *that the world might be saved through Him*. (Jn 3:16–17)

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Messiah and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Messiah *reconciling the world to Himself*, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (2Cor 5:18–19)

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Yeshua Messiah the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also *for those of the whole world*. (1Jn 2:1–2)

How are we to understand these texts? If we understand the word “world” (κόσμος, *kosmos*) to mean “all people in all generations,” then what can be made of Paul’s statement that “God was in the Messiah reconciling the world to Himself?” This would opt for universal salvation. Rather, “world” often is used in the Apostolic Scriptures to emphasize the fact that God’s intention is to save people from every nation, not just from Israel. We see similar language to what we find in 1Jn 2:1–2 in the words of John in his Gospel (11:51–52). Interpreting the wisdom of Caiaphas, who thought it best to leave Yeshua alone, reasoning that if His works were of God, they would succeed, and if not, they would fail on their own. John gives us further insight to Caiaphas’ words:

Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Yeshua was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

Here, “the children of God who are scattered abroad” clearly is a reference to the Gentiles who would be saved. This language is very similar to 1Jn 2:2, “... not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.” Thus, we should be careful not to presume that the word “world” is a mathematical equivalent for “every person.” It often simply emphasizes the breadth of God’s salvation to encompass all the nations, not just Israel.

As to the use of the word “all” in texts that speak of salvation, it is important to view the larger context. For instance, in 1Tim 2:4 Paul states that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” If, however, it is God’s desire that all be saved, why does this not happen? Rather, in this context, it seems warranted to understand “all” to mean “all kinds of people.”

In v. 1, for instance, Paul admonishes: “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men.” His meaning cannot be that he expects the followers of Yeshua to pray for all people who have ever lived when he writes “. . . on behalf of all men.” So the following context gives us a better description of what he means by “on behalf of all men,” namely, “for kings and all who are in authority. . . .” His point is that prayers of petition and thanksgiving should be made on behalf of all kinds of people, even kings and government officials, with the goal of leading a tranquil and quiet life. His point, then, that God desires “all men” to be saved, if understood in the context, means that God desires all kinds of people to be saved, even kings and government officials who of all people, from a human standpoint, may be considered most unlikely to receive the Gospel.

We may also note 2Pet 3:8–9:

But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

In the previous context, Peter writes that in the last days there would be mockers, denying that Yeshua would return in accordance with His own words. Their argument is that everything remains the same from one era to the next, and that the idea of Yeshua’s return and the judgment that would prevail is a hoax. Peter notes how mistaken they are, and then gives a word of hope to those believers to whom he is writing. He affirms that “The Lord is not slow about His promise. . . but is patient toward you. . . .” The pronoun “you” in this case refers to the believing community. Thus, the following phrase, “not wishing for any to perish” refers most naturally to those who are believers and those who would become believers through the Gospel.

In the end, the Scriptures clearly teach that God has chosen those who will be saved, and He has paid for their sins through the death of His Son, Yeshua. While the Gospel is surely to be given to all people without distinction (what we have termed the “general call”), the reality is that God has determined to save an innumerable host of people, and these are those who will inevitably be saved. The efficacious nature of the atonement assures that.

Redemption / Deliverance in the Tanach

Two other soteriological terms that are often encountered when we look into the Scriptures are “redemption” and “deliverance.” These two words overlap for the simple reason that Israel’s “deliverance” from Egypt is likewise spoken of as their “redemption” from Egypt. And since the exodus is used so often in the Scriptures as the paradigm for salvation in general, it is easy to see how the two terms were sometimes used as near synonyms.

The English “to redeem” is usually a translation of the Hebrew verb גָּאַל, *ga’al* (104x in the Tanach). The corresponding noun is גְּאֻלָּה, *g’ullah*, usually translated “redemption.” The verb גָּאַל generally denotes “to buy back” or “to recover” something that was previously owned, whether a slave, a piece of land, a house, or even something designated for an offering or tithe (Lev 25:33, 48; 27:13, 15, 19f).

The verb also has a technical meaning, describing the duties of a near male relative (“kinsman”) of a deceased brother whose widow is childless. The Torah