

Holey Wholly, Holy: The Case Against Limited Atonement

Dr. John H. Niemelä Message of Life Ministries MoL316.com langprof@gmail.com
GES Regional, Centennial, CO September 15, 2018

Introduction

The TULIP, with a focus on Limited Atonement¹

- T Total Depravity (including Inability)**
- U Unconditional Election**
- L Limited Atonement**
- I Irresistible Grace**
- P Perseverance of the Saints**

5-Pointers versus Everyone Else

- 5 Pointers favor T-u-l-i-p, buy Limited Atonement
- 4 Pointers favor T-u---i-p, reject Lim. Atonement
- Arminians + everyone else reject Lim. Atonement

What must be harmonized? Could Jesus both die for whole world as-well-as for believers?

5-Pointers say it is either/or

Everyone else says it is both-and

Outline:

1. **A Holey Calvinist Case for Limited Atonement**
2. **Jesus Died for the Whole Human Population (Holy² and Unholy)**
3. **Jesus Also Died for Those who Would be Holy Ones (Believers, the Elect)**

Point 1: A Holey Calvinist Case for Limited Atonement

Five-Point Calvinists claim that universal atonement yields universalism

“Did Jesus actually make a substitutionary sacrifice for sins or didn’t he. If he did, then it was not for all the world, for then all the world would be saved.” Edwin Palmer, *Five Points*, 56.

“Acceptance of Christ cannot be left partially up to man, for then **all would refuse**, and **Christ’s atonement would have been in vain**. Thus limited atonement points to the irresistible work of the Holy Spirit [i.e., irresistible grace].” Edwin Palmer, *Five Points*, 73.

The great white throne in relation to unlimited atonement

What other arguments require a limited-atonement definition of world?

¹ Atonement is an OT word. I only use it here, because that is the commonly-used phrase.

² The NT uses the word “saint” for believers, people sanctified as a result of faith in Christ. Calvinists like to talk of “the elect,” we are substituting “the holy [sanctified] ones, because of the title: “Holey, Wholly, Holy.” Feel free to substitute “the elect” or “the believers.” I am not addressing progressive sanctification.

Key Passages in which 5-Pointers Deny that World Refers to the Whole World

John 1₂₉ “On the next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of **the world!**” (FMT)

1 John 2₂ “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for **the whole world.**” (FMT)

John 3₁₆ “For God loved **the world** this way: That He gave His *One and* only Son, so whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God did not send His Son into **the world** to judge **the world**, but that [purpose] **the world** might be saved through Him.” (FMT)

John 6₃₃ For the bread of God is He who came down from heaven and gives life to **the world.**” (FMT)

John 6_{51b} “And the bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give on behalf of life for **the world.**” (FMT)

John 12₄₇ “And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; because I did not come so [purpose] I might judge **the world**, but so [purpose] I might deliver **the world.**” (FMT)

1 Tim. 2₃ For this *is* good and acceptable before God our Savior, ⁴ who desires **all men** to be saved and to come to knowledge of truth. ⁵ For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and **men**, *the Man* Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave Himself a ransom on behalf of **all men**, the testimony in its own seasons. (FMT)

2: Jesus Died for the Whole Human Population (Holy and Unholy)

Classifications of *kosmos* ("world") in BDAG

3. <i>the (orderly) universe</i>	6	
5. earth as habitation		
a. gener[ally]	2	
b. as habitation of humanity	2-3	
c. in contrast to heaven	20-22	
6. humanity in general		
a. gener[ally]	20	
b. of all humanity*...esp. of believers*	5	
7. system of human existence...		
a. as scene of earthly joys (etc.)	1-6	
b. <i>world...</i> which is hostile to God	<u>+42-50</u>	
	<u>+ 0-0</u>	
<i>Is something missing?</i>	106	

3. Jesus Also Died for Those who Would be Holy Ones (Believers, the Elect)

"...He will save His people [Israel] from their sins." (Matthew 1:21b)

"...I lay down My life for the sheep [Jewish believers]." (John 10:15b)

"...the church of God which He bought with His own blood." (Acts 20:28b)

"...Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her." (Ephesians 5:25b)

Conclusion

A Syllogism that Calvinists, Arminians, and Catholics Would Accept

1. The Major Premise: All who will be in heaven endure until death in faith + works
2. The Minor Premise: No one can know if he/she will endure until death in faith + works
3. The Conclusion: No one can know if he/she will be in heaven

A corrected syllogism would read:

1. The Major Premise: All highly-rewarded believers³ endure until death in faith + works
2. The Minor Premise: No one can know if he/she will endure until death in faith + works
3. The Conclusion: No one can know if he/she will be a highly-rewarded believer

³The reason for saying "highly rewarded" is that Matthew 10:42 and Mark 9:41 speak about low-level rewards that do not depend upon endurance.

Appendix: BAGD's Categorization of the 106 Uses of *Kosmos* in John's Writings

BAGD categorizes all of John's 106 uses of *kosmos* (including John 17:12, that is not in the Nestle-Aland text). They see John using eight of their groupings (their categories 3, 5a, 5b, 5c, 6a, 6b, 7a, and 7b). BAGD categorized asterisked passages twice.

3. the sum total of everything here and now, *the world, the (orderly) universe...*
6 uses (John 1:10b; 17:5, 24; 21:25; Rev 13:8; 17:8)
5. planet earth as a place of inhabitation, *the world...*
 - a. gener[ally]...
2 uses (John 11:9; Rev 11:15)
 - b. *the world* as the habitation of humanity...
3 uses (John 12:25; * 16:21; 2 John 1:7)
 - c. *earth, world* in contrast to heaven...
22 uses (John 1:9, 10a; 3:17a, 19; 6:14; 9:5a, 39; 10:36; 11:27; 12:46; 13:1a; 14:19; 16:28ab; 17:11a, 12 vl [= variant = *MajT*], 18[ab];⁴ 18:36ab, 37; 1 John 4:9)
6. humanity in general, *the world...*
 - a. gener[ally]...
20 uses (John 1:29; 3:17b; 4:42; 7:4; 8:12, 26; 9:5[b]; 12:19, 47a; 14:22, 31; 17:6, 13, 21, 23; 18:20; 1 John 2:2; 4:1, 3, 14)
 - b. of all humanity, but especially of believers, as the object of God's love...
5 uses (John 3:16, 17c; 6:33, 51; 12:47b)
7. the system of human existence in its many aspects, *the world...*
 - a. as scene of earthly joys, possessions, cares, sufferings...
6 uses (1 John 2:15[abc], * 16[ab]; * 3:17)
 - b. *the world*, and everything that belongs to it, appears as that which is hostile to God...
50 uses (John 1:10c; 7:7; 8:23[ab]; 12:25, * 31ab; 13:1b; 14:17, 27, 30; 15:18, 19abcd; 16:8, 11, 20, 33ab; 17:9, 11b, 14ab, 15, 16ab, 18b, 25; 18:36; 1 John 2:15[abc], * 16[ab], * 17; * 3:1, 13, 17; 4:4, 5[abc], 17; 5:4, 5[ab], 19)

John uses *kosmos* 106 times (in each of his books other than 3 John). BAGD has 114 Johannine citations, because eight appear twice. All eight are in category 7b (hostile to God), but BDAG also lists the eight as neutral (not emphasizing hostility toward God). The passages categorized twice are:

John 12:25	5b	7b	1John 2:15a	7a	7b	1John 2:16a	7a	7b
John 17:18a	5c	7b	1John 2:15b	7a	7b	1John 2:16b	7a	7b
John 17:18b	5c	7b	1John 2:15c	7a				

The 187 NT references (including the 106 Johannine references) are:

Matt 4:8; 5:14; 13:35, 38; 16:26; 18:7; 24:21; 25:34; 26:13; Mark 8:36; 14:9; 16:15; Luke 9:25; 11:50; 12:30; John 1:9, 10abc, 29; 3:16, 17abc, 19; 4:42; 6:14, 33, 51; 7:4, 7; 8:12, 23ab, 26; 9:5ab, 39; 10:36; 11:9, 27; 12:19, 25, 31ab, 46, 47ab; 13:1ab; 14:17, 19, 22, 27, 30-31; 15:18, 19abcde; 16:8, 11, 20-21, 28ab, 33ab; 17:5-6, 9, 11ab, 12 *MajT*, 13, 14abc, 15, 16ab, 18ab, 21, 23, 25ab; 18:20, 36ab, 37; 21:25; Acts 17:24; Rom 1:8, 20; 3:6, 19; 4:13; 5:12-13; 11:12, 15; 1 Cor 1:20-21, 27ab, 28; 2:12; 3:19, 22; 4:9, 13; 5:10ab; 6:2ab; 7:31ab, 33-34; 8:4; 11:32; 14:10; 2 Cor 1:12; 5:19; 7:10; Gal 4:3; 6:14ab; Eph 1:4; 2:2, 12; Phil 2:15; Col 1:6; 2:8, 20ab; 1 Tim 1:15; 3:16; 6:7; Heb 4:3; 9:26; 10:5; 11:7, 38; Jas 1:27; 2:5; 3:6; 4:4ab; 1 Pet 1:20; 3:3; 5:9; 2 Pet 1:4; 2:5ab, 20; 3:6; 1 John 2:2, 15abc, 16ab, 17; 3:1, 13, 17; 4:1, 3-4, 5ab, 9, 14, 17; 5:4ab, 5, 19; 2 John 1:7; Rev 11:15; 13:8; 17:8.

⁴ BAGD tries to save space. If a verse uses *kosmos* the same way more than once, they only list it once (e.g., John 17:18). This chart clarifies that there are two references by adding "ab" in brackets: "John 17:18[ab]."