

Universal Atonement

- This is the Arminian position.
 - Jesus died for everyone everywhere, and His death made salvation possible for all.
- They look for Bible references that show salvation offered to the whole world.
 - They typically assume world means world without exception – everyone who ever lived.
- They look for “whosoever” references since it implies that people can choose salvation their own free will.
- They also seek verses that apply Christ’s death to all.
 - They believe “all” to be all without exception.
- We will look at their proposed Scriptures and then their theological and philosophical arguments.

Arminian “World”

- John has some clear references.
 - 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!”
 - John 3:16-17 – For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.
- The Arminian assumes world refers to everyone who has ever lived. They believe Calvinists read a non-plain interpretation into it.
 - In reality, the Arminian interpretation lacks context.
 - It is wrong for them to assume their view without consideration of context and then argue any other interpretation is ignoring the plain reading.
- John the Baptist’s view makes most sense from a Calvinistic standpoint.
 - Should be understood in light of Old Covenant atonement.

Arminian “World”

- Arminians also appeal to 1 John 4:14.
 - 1 John 4:14 – And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.
- This can be argued on the same grounds as the other world passages.
 - Also, our look at 1 John 2:2 showed “world without distinction.” This verse should be seen as the same.
 - The Calvinist also says Jesus is the Savior of the world. They just understand world to mean all kinds of people.



Whosoever

- Arminians like to appeal to “whosoever” to appeal to free will.
- John 3:16 is the most classic appeal.
 - This is not a strong argument. Whosoever is just an older way of saying “everyone” or “all people.”
 - There is no connotation of free will in the word at all.
 - ESV says “whoever” and HCSB says “everyone.” Calvinist agree that whoever believes (or everyone that believes) will be saved.
 - So John 3:16’s “whosoever” does not actually answer the question about the extent of the atonement. It simply states a fact accepted by all sides.
 - It says nothing of the means of belief (regeneration). In fact regeneration is in John 3:5, not 3:16.
- So John 3:16 hinges upon what the word “world” means, not what “whosoever” means. As we have seen, “world” most likely means the world without distinction.



Other Whosoever Passages

- There are other passages, but most people do not notice them.
 - Modern translations put it as “everyone” and “whoever.”
 - You can’t really make an argument out of these.
- Acts 2:21 – And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’
- Acts 10:43 – To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”
- Romans 10:13 – For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”
- The Calvinist would say amen after each passage.
 - People often assume Calvinists reject that faith is necessary for salvation. This is not true.
 - These passages do not speak as to how someone is able to have faith.
 - For example, Romans 10:13 lets us know that it is by hearing, but it does not tell us if the response of faith is a free will response, or if regeneration takes place first then causing a free will response.
- These passages simply declare the propositional truths that those who believe are saved. To say any more is to read too much into the text, which would make one guilty of eisegesis.

Arminian Use of “All”

- They appeal to passages that seem to say the death of Christ is applied to all people.
- There are a number examples.
- John 12:32 – And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”
 - We already discussed the context. Greeks were seeking him out.
 - This supports the interpretation that people of all races will be drawn, not all people without exception.



Arminian Misuse of "All"

- Sometimes, Arminians read "all" into passages where it is not present.
- Two examples are Luke 19:10 and Romans 5:6.
- Luke 19:10 – For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.
 - A closer look shows this does not teach Christ died for all men.
 - It does not say He seeks all who are lost. It just says He seeks the lost. Even if He only seeks one lost person, He still seeks the lost.
 - Every Christian was once lost, but is now saved. So Christ fulfilled this already.
 - In fact, this passage doesn't merely say He seeks, but it also says that He actually saves them too. Those He seeks, He saves. That supports particular atonement rather than universal.
 - Since not all are saved, we can assume not all are sought.
- Rom 5:6 – For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.
 - The word "we" tells us exactly who the "ungodly" were that Christ died for.
 - So this passage shows He died for the church, not all people.

Scope of This Argument

- One qualifier must be brought up at this point.
- An Arminian, or any person who believes in unlimited atonement may argue that there are many more verses than these that pertain to salvation being made for "all" people.
- The reason those passages have not been brought up is because the subject here is specifically tied to the subject of who Christ died for.
 - When we discuss the doctrine of salvation those other passages will be more relevant.
 - In the Calvinist section, the Scripture quotes were primarily limited to Christ's death. The many other passages about election were not offered as primary arguments.
 - So keep in mind, we are only dealing with the atonement.
- However, I will say with confidence that you find the same pattern with those other passages that allegedly teach universal salvation.
 - Often the Arminian reads too much into the word "all."



Theological Arguments

- Arminians claim they deal honestly with the texts they cite.
 - Calvinists disagree.
- They also cite 2 Peter 2:1.
 - 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 appears to say people who were bought by Christ will face destruction.
 - Admittedly, this one is tough to answer from the particular redemption standpoint.



Universal Propitiation?

- Arminians read certain passages as supporting universal propitiation.
 - Romans 3:25 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.
 - Hebrews 2:17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.
 - 1 John 2:2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.
 - 1 John 4:10 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.
- Using these passages make little sense, unless 1 John 2:2 is being used as the lens for the rest.
 - Romans 3:25 says nothing of propitiation for the whole world. In fact, verse 24 shows this in reference to the saved.
 - Hebrews 2:17 uses the definite article (the). So it's a specific people. It is also a comparison to the OT High Priest.
 - 1 John 4:10 shows He propitiates for "our" sins, so it cannot be used in a universal way.
 - 1 John 2:2 was already explained. Also, since the wrath of God is still on many of the world, He could not have been their propitiation.

Reconciliation of the World?

- Arminians also appeal to 2 Corinthians 5:18-20.
 - 2 Corinthians 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.
- Context does not demand the Arminian interpretation.
 - Verse 18 speaks of reconciliation of Christians.
 - In verse 19, we can still interpret world as "all nations." It does not demand all people everywhere.
 - Verse 20 says we are ambassadors. Ambassadors are sent to nations, not individuals.
 - Our reconciliation is past (vv. 19), the reconciling of the world is present (vv. 20), as is our appeal of reconciliation to the world (vv.20). So the same thing that happened to us, we are carrying to others of the nations.
 - Clearly not all are saved, so not all are reconciled.



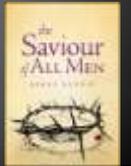
Savior of All Men

- In 1 Timothy 4:10, it says that God is the Savior of all men.
- 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.
 - Well, if God literally saved all men, then there would be no point in saying, "especially those who believe," since the distinction would be meaningless. So no universalism.
 - The only two remaining possibilities are the Arminian and Calvinistic views.
 - The Arminian will say that God is the Savior to all in that He provides the possibility of salvation to all men, but it is more specially applied to those who actually receive it through belief.
 - The Calvinist will say that "everyone" or "all men" could just as easily mean all without distinction. It is true that those who believe are especially saved. However, it is also true that God is the Savior of all kinds of men since men from every, nation, tribe, and tongue will be saved by Him.



Savior of All Men

- Answering this, like the other passages, may depend on context, but the context surrounding it sheds no light that aids either position.
- Timothy and Paul as Jews may support the Calvinistic position, but you can't push it too far.
- The simple fact of the matter is this passage may best be neutral.
- In a case where context does not help alleviate difficulty, you have the option of taking the plain reading.
 - However, depending on who you talk to, the plain reading will be different between Arminians and Calvinists.
 - Knowing that God's Word is without error or true contradiction, the best method will be to hold the interpretation that best accords with the rest of Scripture.
 - From the standpoint of a holistic view of Scripture, it would be safer to go with the Calvinistic viewpoint.



Evaluation of the Arminian Position

- It can be argued that they have a faulty definition of free will and do not take into consideration the natural spiritual condition of all humans.
- Furthermore, their view of free will compromises the Biblical doctrine of God's sovereignty.
- Also, if one takes literally the definitions of the vocabulary words related to atonement that we discussed in the last lesson, then the universal atonement position logically and necessarily leads to universalism.
 - The Arminian position has failed to answer the charge of universalism.
 - In fact, openness theology came into existence because certain theologians followed their Arminian thinking to its natural consequence.
 - If the human will operates unhindered and God has to depend on the human will for completed salvation, then until the human will acts, God is at its mercy and truly does not know who will be saved.



Evaluation of the Arminian Position

- Even appealing to foreknowledge does not help.
 - Honest Arminian scholars openly admit that the Achilles heel of their position is that God already knows what choices people will make.
 - Thus, even if there is human free will, the knowledge of God limits it since He created people He knew would never hear the gospel, or choose Him. Having all knowledge that is perfect makes it impossible for anything other than what God knows to actually happen in real time and space.
- Because this truth failed to jive with unhindered free will, openness theologians favored free will at the expense of God's omniscience, now claiming that God knows everything except whether or not a person will choose to be saved.
- Whether a person wants to admit it or not, this is logically consistent with the rest of Arminian thinking.
- Arminians may deny openness theology, but it is because they have not seriously thought through the implications of their doctrine of universal atonement.

