

“DID GOD KILL GOD?”

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A Paper

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## **Contents**

Introduction.....	3
Background - Atonement and Satisfaction .....	5
1. God did NOT kill Jesus.....	8
2. God allowed the killing of Jesus by men .....	16
3. God considered Jesus' death to be the sacrificial atonement.....	20
4. Jesus voluntarily cooperated from His own will.....	23
Conclusion .....	24
Bibliography .....	27

## Introduction

### Who killed Jesus? God or men?

I believe the answer to this question, which to some might seem peripheral, has a direct effect on how we see and understand the character of God.

#### Option #1: God killed Jesus

God, by **wanting** mankind to reject, torture and murder the Messiah, ultimately makes God Himself the executer:

“Just as Abraham lifted the knife over the chest of his son Isaac, but then spared his son because there was a ram in the thicket, so God the Father lifted his knife over the chest of his own Son, Jesus — but did not spare him.”<sup>1</sup> (Pastor John Piper)

#### Option #2: God allowed men to kill Jesus

God, being all knowing, merely **allowed** and **took advantage** of men's rejection, torture and killing of Jesus, considering His' death as a sacrificial atonement:

"God stood aside and allowed Jesus to be crucified. God laid down the power to intervene."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Piper, Future Grace, Waterbrook Multnomah Publishers (September 18, 2012), page 110

<sup>2</sup> Tony Jones, "Did God Kill Jesus?" HarperOne (July 26, 2016) page 290

If God wanted Jesus to be rejected, tortured and killed - in order to satisfy His demand for judgment and punishment, it ultimately makes God the one “pulling the trigger”; the one killing Jesus. This view, in my opinion, falsely portrays the Father as an angry, harsh, vengeful God. (While Jesus described Him as a patient, graceful, loving Father Who seeks our good.) This view of God creates in us not only fear and a sense of alienation, but also generates legalism.

In this paper, I am interested to make the following case:

1. God did NOT kill Jesus.
2. God allowed the killing of Jesus by men.
3. God considered Jesus’ death to be the sacrificial atonement.
4. Jesus voluntarily cooperated from His own will.

## Background - Atonement and Satisfaction

What might be the earliest known view of atonement is the Ransom Theory, which was developed by Origen (185-254AD).<sup>3</sup> The thought is that in the fall of Adam we made ourselves subject to the devil instead of God. Whereby, Jesus ransomed us.<sup>4</sup>

This theory was wide spread until it was challenged by Anselm's Satisfaction Theory in 1098. In Anselm's day, most of Europe had become a feudal society. Meaning, the common folk served a knight who was charged with protecting the area in which they lived. Socially, great distance existed between knights and the common people. An offense against the honor of a knight was considered very serious, requiring the satisfaction of heavy punishment. Knights could not simply forgive an offense, because that would imply the offense didn't matter, in turn causing the people to be less fearful of the knighthood. Positioned above the knights was the King. Offense against a King was a very serious thing and demanded an even more severe response.

Refusing to accept the Ransom Theory, Anselm came up with the theory of Satisfaction in order to explain what happened at the cross. Anselm's Satisfaction Theory was most likely affected by the feudal culture in which he lived. For Anselm, sin was an offense against God's honor, and just as a King will not and could not ignore an offense against him, neither could God ignore our

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<sup>3</sup> Enns, Paul P., The Moody Handbook of Theology, p. 312

<sup>4</sup> Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a **ransom** for many."

1 Timothy 2:5-6: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a **ransom** for all, to be testified in due time."

sins against Him. While these sins had offended God's honor, the death of Jesus on the cross restored (satisfied) that honor. Through His suffering, Jesus regained the honor that was "lost".

Hundreds of years after Anselm, Europe changed, and people were challenging the ideas of its previous society. A well-known expression is of course the Protestant Reformation generated by Luther, Calvin, and others. This brought about the development of a new theory of atonement called Penal Substitution.

Penal Substitutionary Atonement was based on Anselm's Satisfaction Theory but with a significant upgrade: these reformers did not see the atonement as Jesus satisfying the honor of God in our place; rather Jesus satisfied the holiness and justice of God.

The idea was that God is holy and therefore cannot come near unholiness (of sin). And, since He is just and cannot justly ignore sin, He then, according to the view of many; must therefore punish sin. So God poured out His necessary wrath for our sin on Jesus. Therefore, Jesus paid the debt for our sin in satisfaction of God's holiness and justice.

In their opening summary on penal substitutionary atonement, authors Steve Jeffery, Mike Ovey, and Andrew Sach of *Pierced for our Transgressions*, explain that:

"The doctrine of penal substitution states that God gave himself in the person of his Son to suffer instead of us the death, punishment and curse due to fallen humanity as the penalty for sin.

This understanding of the cross of Christ stands at the very heart of the gospel. There is a captivating beauty in the sacrificial love of a God who gave himself for his people. It is this that first draws many believers to the Lord Jesus Christ, and this that will draw us to him when he returns on the last day to vindicate his name and welcome his people into his eternal kingdom.

That the Lord Jesus Christ died for us – a shameful death, bearing our curse, enduring our pain,

suffering the wrath of his own Father in our place – has been the wellspring of the hope of countless Christians throughout the ages.”<sup>5</sup>

In this paper, I will assume Penal Substitution to be true, while exploring the question that is begged to be asked – did God **want** mankind to reject, torture and murder the Messiah (ultimately making God the executer)? or, did God **allow** mankind to kill Jesus, considering His’ death as a sacrificial atonement for sin?

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<sup>5</sup> Steve Jeffery, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Crossway, 2007)  
Page 1

## 1. God did NOT kill Jesus

I would first like to present the following deductive argument, making the case that it is not possible that God killed Jesus:

1. God is incapable of **desiring** sin, yet may **allow** sin to take place.
2. Rejection, torture and murder of the Messiah are sins.
3. Jesus was rejected, tortured and murdered.
4. Therefore, God was incapable of **desiring** Jesus to be rejected, tortured and murdered.

Yet **allowed** it (for morally sufficient reasons).

### (1) God is incapable of desiring sin, yet may allow sin to take place.

God is holy, and therefore is incapable of desiring anything but good. It is impossible for Him to delight, take pleasure, or want evil or sin. Not because He chooses good over evil, but because He is goodness Himself.

"It is important to understand that God's holiness is intrinsic or inherent (i.e. inward, essential, belonging to His nature). Holiness is not merely something that God decides to be or do, but it is essential to His very nature—He is holy."<sup>6</sup>

God hates sin because it is the very antithesis of His nature. King David explained God's hatred towards sin:

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<sup>6</sup> Paul David Washer, *The One True God: A Biblical study of the Doctrine of God*, (CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2011) Page 46

“For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; no evil dwells with You”  
(Psalm 5:4).

God hates sin because He is holy; holiness is the most exalted of all His attributes:

"And one called out to another and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.’” (Isaiah 6:3)

His holiness totally saturates His being:

"Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David.” (Psalm 89:35)

His holiness epitomizes His moral perfection:

"To declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." (Psalm 92:15)

And His absolute freedom from blemish of any kind:

"What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!"  
(Romans 9:14)

## **(2) Rejection, torture and murder of the Messiah are sins.**

Jesus’ trail was distorted. Furthermore, Jesus did not deserve the punishment (torture) and rejection He had to endure following the corrupted trail.<sup>7</sup> The arrest, trial, conviction, sentencing and execution of Jesus Christ were and still are without legal precedent. He suffered the death

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<sup>7</sup> Exodus 23:8, Luke 22:52, Deuteronomy 19:15, Matthew 20:19

penalty even though Pontius Pilate – the local Roman authority – found Him innocent. (Luke 23:4).

The unlawful premeditated killing of one human being by another is murder, and murder is a sin (Exodus 20:13).

**(3) Jesus was rejected, tortured and murdered.**

According to scriptures, Jesus was rejected<sup>8</sup>, Jesus was tortured<sup>9</sup>, and Jesus was murdered<sup>10</sup>.

**(4) Therefore, God was incapable of desiring Jesus to be rejected, tortured and murdered.**

If God wanted us to reject, torture and kill the Messiah, it would mean that God wanted us to sin against Him. But God is unable to want sin, desire sin or take pleasure in sin, as it is against His nature.

The obvious conclusion therefore, is that since the rejection, the torture and the killing of Jesus were sins, God could not have wanted them to take place, only that He allowed them to take place.

**Isaiah 53:10**

“Jesus was pulverized under the weight of God’s wrath — as he stood in our place.....

how can God show both holy hatred and holy love toward sinners at the same time? This is the climactic question of the Bible, and the answer is the cross. At the cross, God

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<sup>8</sup> Matthew 23:39

<sup>9</sup> Luke 22:63, Matthew 27:30, Mark 15:19, Matthew 26:67, John 19:3, Mark 14:65, etc.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Thessalonians 2:14-15, Acts 5:30, Acts 2:36, Acts 3:15, Acts 4:10.

showed the full expression of his wrath. Look at the verbs in Isaiah. He was stricken, smitten, afflicted, wounded, crushed, and chastised. So does God hate sinners? Yes. Look at the cross.”<sup>11</sup> (David Platt)

Indeed, the one place in Scripture where God allegedly appears to **want** sin to take place, is in the first part of verse 10 of Isaiah chapter 53:

“But the LORD was pleased to crush Him...” (NASB)

“Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him...” (NIV)

Southern Baptist Pastor, C. J. Mahaney, summarizes his view on Isaiah 53:10 similarly to this of Platt:

"Who killed Jesus? The Father. The Father killed the Son. Feel God's love for you revealed in Isaiah 53:10. He crushed his son! For you! He crushed Him! He bruised him! He punished him! He disfigured him! He crushed him! With all of the righteous wrath that we deserved. That's what the Father did."

(C. J. Mahaney at the New Attitude Conference, May 2006)

I disagree. Now, I would like to present a few points to consider why I do NOT think Isaiah 53:10 is suggesting that God “pulled the trigger”, and why I do not think God hoped for or wanted the killing of Jesus (rather, merely allowed it).

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<sup>11</sup> David Platt, [Sep 24, 2011 speech](#), Desiring God 2011 National Conference.

## A. “Cleanse” or “Crushed”?

The LXX’s translation of Isaiah 53:10 renders “cleanse” instead of “crushed”:  
“καὶ κύριος βούλεται **καθαρίσαι** αὐτὸν”<sup>12</sup>

“The LXX has the servant’s disability removed by translating 53:10 as “Yet the LORD determined to cleanse him [the servant] of his disease.’ The translation suggests a very different meaning than the Masoretic Hebrew text.”<sup>13</sup>

## B. Meaning of “דכאו” (“crush”)

### In Hebrew

While in many cases in Biblical Hebrew, דכאו means a negative “oppressed” or “crushed”. It can also mean a positive “cleanse”, “humble” or “meek”.

A good example of this conflict in translation can be found in the way different Bible translations translated “ד.כ.א.” into English. For example:

- **Psalm 34:18** (לְאֶת-דֹּכְאֵי-רוּחַ יוֹשִׁיעַ...)

**NIV:** “...and saves those who are **crushed** in spirit.”

**Aramaic Bible in Plain English:** “...and he saves the **meek** in spirit.”

**Douay-Rheims:** “...and he will save the **humble** of spirit.”

- **Jeremiah 44:10** (לֹא דִכְאוּ עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה...)

**NIV:** “To this day they have not **humbled** themselves”.

**NASB:** ““But they have not become **contrite** even to this day”.

**Douay-Rheims:** “They are not **cleansed** even to this day”

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<sup>12</sup> "καθαρίζω to make clean, to cleanse" (G2511 καθαρίζω - Strong's Greek Lexicon)

<sup>13</sup> Jeremy Schipper, “Disability and Isaiah's Suffering Servant”, (Oxford University Press, September 2011) Page 67.

## **In Aramaic**

The word כִּבַּח in Aramaic and the word כָּבַח in Hebrew appear the exact same way, which most likely means there is a connection between the two, and probably testify of a shared origin. Either way, in contrast to the dual definitions in Hebrew, the word in Aramaic means “to cleanse”, or “to purify”,<sup>14</sup> supporting the view of the LXX.

### **C. Translations of כִּבַּח (Cleanse vs. Crushed)**

Most English Bible translations, going with the Masoretic text, choose the word “**crushed**” for Isaiah 53:10’s “כִּבַּח”.

However, not all did so. The Apostolic Bible Polyglot (ABP) which is based on the Septuagint, translated the verse: “And the LORD willed to **cleanse** him of the beating...”  
(ABP)

It appears there is a wide semantic range for the word in question (כִּבַּח) appearing in Isaiah 53:10, and therefore one should be careful when developing a world-changing theology, which is not explicitly stated in the New Testament, based on one single word.

### **D. Meaning of Isaiah 53:10**

But lets us assume that “crush” is indeed the correct translation. What could Isaiah have meant when he declared "the LORD was pleased to crush Him"?

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<sup>14</sup> <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/%D7%93%D7%9B%D7%90>

First, we must remember that Isaiah 53 is a metaphorical style of writing, of a prophecy which portrays Israel's point of view. We should be careful not to take every word literally. After all, there is no hovering arm of God floating from the skies touching people (verse 1), Jesus is not a root (verse 2), we are not sheep (verse 6), Jesus was not always silent (verse 7), and He did not have babies (verse 10). In the same way, we should look at "the LORD was pleased to crush Him" (verse 10) - with the same metaphorical view in mind.

The Old Testament describes sacrifices as something in which God takes pleasure in.

A "soothing aroma" that God "smells".<sup>15</sup>

Let's consider Isaiah 1:11:

"What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle; And I take no **pleasure** in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats."

God is no longer taking pleasure in the aroma coming from Israel's sacrifices.

That word for "pleasure" (יִצְחָק) in Isaiah 1:11 is the same Hebrew word Isaiah uses in the first line of Isaiah 53:10, "But the LORD was **pleased** to crush Him" (יִצְחָק).

In other words, God is not taking pleasure in the aroma coming from the sacrifice of animals (Isaiah 1). He does take pleasure however, in the aroma coming from the sacrifice of the righteous, glorified and flawless Messiah. It is not in the death itself that God takes pleasure, but in what that death produces.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Genesis 8:20-21, Exodus 29, Leviticus 1-8, 17, 23, Numbers 15, 18, 28, 29.

<sup>16</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:15

God takes pleasure and satisfaction in the fact that the need for atonement (in exchange for our lives) is being met. An atonement that took place thanks to the death of the Messiah.

The point is, that God took pleasure not in the Messiah being rejected, tortured and dying (which would make Him a bullying, angry, harsh, vengeful God) but rather took pleasure in the perfect sacrifice finally being provided. Metaphorically, it is as if Isaiah was saying: "the LORD was pleased to receive Him as sacrifice."

Or, as the words of Professor N. T. Wright:

"As somebody said to me years ago, *"If you take a half-truth and make it into the whole truth, it becomes an untruth."* And that's a very serious thing because then the vision of God that people have is distorted, and so many people are actually put off the gospel – they just say, *"No, that sounds like a bullying God. If there is a God he can't really be like that."* When some people talk about the gospel, you'd think that John 3:16 said: *"God so hated the world that he killed his only Son."* Sometimes people say: *"That picture is important – wrath and sin and hell and all the rest of it, and it's because God loves us."* But simply adding the word 'love' onto the end of that story can be actually even worse. It is like what abusers do when they say, "I love you so much" – it's hideous."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> "[Tom Wright's cross centred revolution](#)", Premier Christianity, Feb, 2017

## 2. God allowed the killing of Jesus by men

"When Jesus went to the cross, he wasn't just enduring the penalty of sin; he was standing in the place of sinners. When he was crushed and bruised and literally pulverized under the weight of God's wrath...All God's holy wrath and hatred toward sin and sinners, stored up since the beginning of the world, is about to be poured out on him, and he is sweating blood at the thought of it...What happened at the Cross was not primarily about nails being thrust into Jesus' hands and feet but about the wrath due your sin and my sin being thrust upon his soul. In that holy moment, all the righteous wrath and justice of God due us came down rushing like a torrent on Christ himself...One preacher described it as if you and I were standing a short hundred yards away from a dam of water ten thousand miles high and ten thousand miles wide. All of a sudden, that dam was breached, and a torrential flood of water came crashing toward us. Right before it reached our feet, the ground in front of us opened up and swallowed it all. At the Cross, Christ drank **the full cup of the wrath of God**, and when he had downed the last drop, he turned the cup over and cried out, "It is finished."...**This is the gospel**. The just and loving Creator of the universe has looked upon hopelessly sinful people and sent his Son, God in the flesh, **to bear his wrath** against sin on the..."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream Multnomah*; 1 edition (May 4, 2010), Pages 34-36. Emphasis (bold) by me.

David Platt<sup>19</sup> understands "the cup" as being God's anger, wrath and punishment (against men kind), which was build up from the beginning of time, and was afflicted onto Jesus to suffer in our place. In other words, instead of God giving the cup to us (punishing us), He gave the cup (punished) to Jesus.

However, Platt is basing his theology on a misunderstanding of what 'the cup' means. The cup indeed symbolizes suffering, torture and pain, not coming from God however, but coming from men kind.

In Matthew 20:22, Jesus is talking about "the cup" He is designated to drink. James and John are asking to drink from that same cup as Jesus. Jesus replies: "My cup you shall drink." (Matthew 20:23) If the cup is God's wrath (punishment for sin), and if Jesus satisfied that wrath already by drinking that cup on the cross, why then did Jesus agree that James and John, who died much later than He did, will drink that cup as well? That would create a logical contradiction. The cup, I believe, is not the wrath of God, the cup represents the suffering James and John are destined to experience by the hands of other people.

God is not punishing His Son for crimes He never did, that would-be injustice. Nor does God offers Jesus as a sacrifice to Himself.

Men, all throughout the Old Testament, were the ones to offer atonement to God. God never offered Himself an atonement.

Two thousand years ago, without even His own disciples realizing it, humankind offered Jesus as the sacrificial atonement.

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<sup>19</sup> David Platt is president of the International Mission Board

God is omniscient; He knows everything, including the future.<sup>20</sup>

God knew that we, fallen humans, would reject the Messiah, which means that He knew the only way for our redemption is for the Messiah to be rejected and die. Being a gracious loving God, He allowed it - considering the death of the "innocent lamb" as substitution for our lives.<sup>21</sup>

Scriptures make it very obvious that (although God allowed it) men are to blame for the rejection, torture and killing of Christ:

“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—this Man, **delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.** But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. (Acts 2:22-24)

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus **whom you crucified.**" (Acts 2:36)

"But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but **put to death the Prince of life**, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses." (Acts 3:14-15)

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<sup>20</sup> Isaiah 46:9-10

<sup>21</sup> Hebrews 2:9

"Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, **whom you crucified**, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health." (Acts 4:10)

"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom **you had put to death** by hanging Him on a cross." (Acts 5:30)

"For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, **who both killed the Lord Jesus** and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men," (1 Thessalonians 2:14-15)

More scriptures exist, but these are enough to make the point that we, mankind, are the ones responsible for killing Jesus.

### 3. God considered Jesus' death to be the sacrificial atonement

Dr. Roger E. Olson, Professor of Theology, explains it well:

"Men committed the violence against Jesus, not God the Father, and the actual suffering of the atonement was the rejection Jesus suffered by the Father. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" was the moment of atonement. God did not kill Jesus (at least in my version of penal substitution); people did. The Father did not inflict punishment on the unwilling, innocent Son as his victim; the Son volunteered to suffer the Father's wrath. The Father's wrath was not physical violence; it was the rupture within the Godhead suffered by both the Son and the Father (in different ways). The atonement was that he (Jesus), who knew no sin, became sin for us....with the result that the Father had to turn away and forsake him. The penalty for sin is spiritual death; separation from God, not physical death. Thus, God practiced no violence in the cross; God did not "kill Jesus" physically. The men who crucified him did that. God used the opportunity (perhaps provoked by Jesus himself by his triumphal entry) to carry out his great plan to suffer the penalty for sin by making HIMSELF the sacrificial lamb led to the slaughter by sinful men—the scapegoat sent out of the camp bearing the sins of the world. But his being sent out, away from the Father, in shame, was ultimately his own plan (together with the Father and the Holy Spirit) and his choice."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Dr. Roger E. Olson, Nov 2, 2011, [Patheos.com](http://Patheos.com)

God, being omniscient, knew in advance<sup>23</sup> that sending His Son Jesus in the perfect timing<sup>24</sup> of two thousand years ago, a time where the religious leaders were extremely corrupted - would lead to His rejection, torture and eventually death by the hands of men on the cross. A mission Jesus voluntarily agreed to take on Himself.

“For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you” (1 Peter 1:20)

According to Josephus<sup>25</sup> and the Talmud, the corruption of the priesthood occurred long before Jesus’ birth. Herod the Great started the practice of selling the office of high priest to the family willing to pay the most money for it. According to Dr. Phillip Moore, a Bible scholar and writer:

“For nearly a century a detestable abuse prevailed, which consisted in the arbitrary nomination and deposition of the high priest. The high priesthood, which for fifteen centuries had been preserved in the same family, being hereditary according to the divine command,<sup>26</sup> had at the time of Christ’s advent become an object of commercial speculation. Herod commenced these arbitrary changes,<sup>27</sup> and after Judea became one of the Roman conquests the election of the high priest took place almost every year at Jerusalem, the procurators appointing and deposing them in the same manner as the praetorians later on made and unmade emperors.<sup>28</sup> The Talmud speaks sorrowfully of this venality and the yearly changes of the high priest.

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<sup>23</sup> Revelation 13:8, 1 Cor. 2:8

<sup>24</sup> “For at just the right time, while we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. (Romans 5:6)

<sup>25</sup> Josephus was a Jewish general and historian who lived during the time of the Jewish revolt against the Romans in the Bar Kochba rebellion in the second century A.D.

<sup>26</sup> Josephus. Book XX, Chapter X, 1.

<sup>27</sup> Josephus. Book XV, Chapter III, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Josephus. Book XVIII, Chapter II, 3; Book XX, Chapter IX, 4.

This sacred office was given to the one that offered the most money for it, and mothers were particularly anxious that their sons should be nominated to this dignity<sup>29</sup> . . .M. Derembourg, a modern Jewish savant, has remarked: ‘A few priestly, aristocratic, powerful, and vain families, who cared for neither the dignity nor the interests of the altar, quarreled with each other respecting appointments, influence, and wealth.’<sup>30</sup>

In a sense, we may say that it wasn’t really Jesus on trial, but it was humanity on trial. God used the negative of human sin to bring out a His positive forgiveness, without compromising justice.

God did not want men to kill the Messiah, He wanted to allow Him to be killed.

“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?” (Romans 8:32)

“This Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.” (Acts 2:23)

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<sup>29</sup> Talmud Yoma.

<sup>30</sup> Moore, Phillip. The End of History—Messiah Conspiracy, Vol. I, Atlanta: Ramshead Press International Corporation, 1996, p. 71.

#### **4. Jesus voluntarily cooperated from His own will**

In a perfect world, not only would Jesus not be rejected, but there would not be a need for Him to die, as sin would not exist. But in our world sin does exist. And, while men are to blame for the rejection, torture and killing of Christ, we must recognize that Jesus voluntarily gave Himself as a living sacrifice. Jesus, being a part of the godhead, knowing what will happen in advance, knew there was no other way but for God to forsake Him to His death and not rescue Him from the evildoers.

"Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done." (Luke 22:42)

Just like Joseph recognized the divine plan of God of using the evil doing of men to produce the good of God: "God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance." (Genesis 45:6) – so the writers of the New Testament recognized it with Jesus:

“this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.” (Acts 2:23)

This may prove a useful analogy: imagine there are kidnappers who kidnapped 100,000 people, including my son. And they give me the choice between the release of my son (while the other 99,999 will die), or the release of the 99,999 (while my son will die). I end up talking to my son, allowing him the choice, and he chooses to give his life voluntarily in order to save the lives of the others. It doesn't mean that I wanted my son to die, or that my son wanted to die himself. It only means that we both wanted to allow his life to be taken in order to save the lives of others.

## Conclusion

“You killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead.” (Acts 3:15)

Golgotha is the peak of humanity’s greatest crimes — pride, rivalry, blame, violence, domination and such, which were met with judgment. Judgment of the human system called “civilization” for what it really is: a war over power and control enforced by violence so corrupted that it is even capable of murdering God Himself - in the name of “truth and justice”.

But it’s not all bad news. Golgotha is also where we experienced the ultimate love of God in its greatest form – sacrificial love. Jesus, even as he was lynched in the name of religious truth and imperial justice, was able to express God’s heart in one sentence, as He plead for God to forgive us, for we do not know what we do. At the cross, we discover the deepest level – not of God’s wrath and anger, but of God’s love and grace. Although He could have killed men for the sake of justice and set His Son free, He chose to allow His Son to die in the name of love – for ours sake.

The cross is both hideous and glorious, simultaneously ugly and beautiful. It’s as disgusting as human sin and as marvelous as divine love. It is a perfect demonstration of Paul’s line of thought when he claimed, “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” (Rom 5:20).

What the cross is not is a place where an angry God unloaded and discharged His frustrations and anger with humanity. Jesus did not save us from God, but revealed God as a loving Savior willing to lay down His own life so ours can be forgiven.

The understanding that God *allowed* us to reject, torture and kill His Son, voids the concept of a monstrous deity requiring a virgin to be thrown into a volcano, a baby to be burnt or a firstborn son to be nailed to a tree in order to satisfy his wrath and calm him down. Although we met with

the depths of human depravity, we also met with the depth of God's love for us, gaining His forgiveness.

Jesus was "sacrificed by the Father" only in the sense of the Father sending his Son into human civilization in order to reveal to us how corrupt and sinful we are – so sinful that we even murdered God Himself. God did not will the murder of His Son, He simply knew it would occur and allowed it.

Three centuries before Christ, Plato, knowing the human heart and the evil of civilization, predicted exactly that: "our just man will be scourged, racked, fettered...and at last, after all manner of suffering, will be crucified."<sup>31</sup>

The death of Jesus was a sacrifice. But it was a sacrifice to end sacrificing, not a sacrifice to appease the appetite of some angry gods. It was not God who needed the sacrifice of Jesus, it was us, the human civilization who needed it.

Paul wrote that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). And this should not be misunderstood as God reconciling Himself to the world. Jesus did not die for God's sake, but for ours. The crucifixion is not what God inflicts upon Jesus in order to forgive, the crucifixion is what God in Christ endures as He forgives. The cross is where God absorbs sin and recycles it into forgiveness.

The great plan of the cross was not an attempt to change God's mind about us, but an attempt to change our minds about God. God is not a Caiaphas seeking a sacrifice. God is not a Pilate requiring an execution. God is a Jesus, absorbing sin, forgiving sinners. That makes the gospel

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<sup>31</sup> The Republic, Book II, p. 37

all about forgiveness, rather than about payment and punishment. It makes the gospel all about love, rather than all about wrath.

The conclusion is this: It was not God who killed Jesus. It was us, human civilization, who killed Jesus. But the all-knowing, all-loving God knew we would reject His Son, yet allowed it in order for Jesus to become the ultimate once and for all sacrifice for our sake.

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