

On page 11 of his book, *Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Had to Die*, Baptist theologian and pastor John Piper defines mainstream Christianity's view of who killed Jesus:

"The ultimate answer to the question, Who killed Jesus? Is: **God did**. It is a staggering thought. Jesus was His Son! But the whole message of the Bible leads to this conclusion."

And why, according to mainstream Christianity's view, did God kill His Son? To absorb (to appease/placate) God's wrath against man, which they wrongly define as "propitiation."

For example, in 1 John 4:10, the *Amplified Bible* wrongly defines propitiation as "fulfilling God's requirement for justice against sin and *placating His wrath*." Here's how John Piper explains it:

"... **God sends his own Son to absorb his wrath** and bear the curse for all who trust him. 'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us' (Galatians 3:13). This is the meaning of the word 'propitiation' in the text quoted above [previously quoted Romans 3:25]. **It refers to the removal of God's wrath by providing a substitute**. The substitute is provided by God himself. The substitute, Jesus Christ, does not just cancel the wrath; **he absorbs it and diverts it from us to himself. God's wrath is just, and it was spent, not withdrawn**. Let us not trifle with God or trivialize his love. We will never stand in awe of being loved by God until we reckon with the seriousness of our sin and **the justice of his wrath against us**." (*ibid*, p. 21)

Sadly, echoing this theology, here is Adventist leader J.H. Waggoner (father of E.J. Waggoner) pre-1888:

"Man is a rebel, an enemy to his Maker. God, though he loves man in his ruined condition, is a just Governor. His love can certainly go no farther, and grant no more, than justice can permit. **Justice must be appeased**; and while the offering makes it possible to pardon consistent with justice, it leaves us guilty, worthy of the condemnation under which we rest ... When we consider that the sacrifice is the means whereby the Atonement is made, we can readily understand how *hilasmos* [propitiation] is used in 1 John 2:2, defined by Liddell & Scott, a means of **appeasing, an expiatory sacrifice**. Jesus Christ is the propitiation—the sacrifice **to divine justice**, for all." (*The Atonement, [AERS]*, p. 197, 1884)

However, when we read E.J. Waggoner's biblical understanding of atonement in 1893 (post-1888), we see something completely different:

"But," someone will say, 'You have made the reconciliation all on the part of men; **I have always been taught that the death of Christ reconciled God to man; that Christ died to satisfy God's justice, and to appease Him.**' Well, we have left the matter of reconciliation just where the Scriptures have put it; and while they have much to say about the necessity for man to be reconciled to God, they never once hint of such a thing as the necessity for God to be reconciled to man. To intimate the necessity for such a thing is to bring a grave charge against the character of God. **The idea has come into the Christian Church from the Papacy, which in turn brought it from Paganism, in which the only idea of God was of a being whose wrath must be appeased by a sacrifice.**" (*Present Truth UK*, p. 386, September 21, 1893)

Here we clearly see that E.J. Waggoner presents the biblical position that Jesus did NOT die to satisfy (placate) God's wrath or justice. Here's another one from 1896:

"Of course the idea of a propitiation or sacrifice is that there is wrath to be appeased. But take particular notice that it is we who require the sacrifice, and not God. He provides the sacrifice. **The idea that God's wrath has to be propitiated in order that we may have forgiveness finds no warrant in the Bible. It is the height of absurdity to say that God is so angry with men that he will not forgive them unless something is provided to appease his wrath**, and that therefore he himself offers the gift to himself, by which he is appeased.<sup>1</sup>

... **The heathen idea, which is too often held by professed Christians, is that men must provide a sacrifice to appease the wrath of their god**. All heathen worship is simply a bribe to their gods to be favorable to them. If they thought that their gods were very angry with them, they would provide a greater sacrifice, and so human sacrifices were offered in extreme cases [Micah 6:6-8]. They thought, as the worshipers of Siva in India do today, that their god was gratified by the sight of blood." (*The Signs of the Times*, Vol. 22, January 23, 1896)

Echoing Waggoner's teaching, we can refer to Adventist Elder George Fifiel's *GCB Sermons* of 1897:

<sup>1</sup> Here Waggoner brings out the profound truth that God is not the one who required sacrifices and we provide one in order to be forgiven (see, Ps. 40:6). Instead, in our warped (pagan) thinking, we required the sacrifice (a scapegoat) and thus God provided it in order to appease (placate) us who naturally have enmity against Him (Rom. 8:7).

"Notwithstanding this, we did esteem [falsely perceived] him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. **That was what we thought about it. We said, God is doing all this; God is killing him, punishing him, to satisfy his wrath, in order to let us off. That is the pagan conception of sacrifice.** The [true] Christian idea of sacrifice is this. Let us note the contrast. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' That is the Christian idea. Yes, sir. Indifference keeps, hatred keeps, selfishness keeps, or gives, if at all, but grudgingly, counting the cost, and figuring on some larger return at some future time. But love, and love only, sacrifices, gives freely, gives itself, gives without counting the cost; gives because it is love. That is sacrifice, whether it is the sacrifice of bulls and goats, or of him who is the Lamb of God. It is the sacrifice that is revealed throughout the entire Bible. **But the pagan idea of sacrifice is just the opposite. It is that some god is always offended, always angry, and his wrath must be propitiated in some way.**"

"We talk of pagan immortality, pagan Sunday, pagan idolatry, etc.; but it seems to me that the lowest thought is that **men have brought this pagan idea of sacrifice right into the Bible and applied it to the sacrifice of the cross. So the Methodist Discipline uses these words: 'Christ died to reconcile the Father unto us,' that is, to propitiate God so that we could be forgiven – paganism straight out**. Why, brethren and sisters, it is the application of the **pagan conception of sacrifice** to the sacrifice upon the cross, so that that wonderful manifestation of divine love, which God intended should cause all men, all beings in the universe, to wonder and adore, has been turned around and made a manifestation of wrath to be propitiated in order to save man. I am glad that we are losing sight of this manner of viewing the subject, where we do not say that Christ died to reconcile the Father unto us. Brethren, there is sometimes such a thing as to give up the expression of a thing, and think we have thus gotten rid of it, when a good deal of it still lingers and clouds our consciousness of the love of God, and the beauty of his truth, so that we cannot present a clear gospel."

Notice Fifiel was so glad to see that we were beginning to lose sight of the *pagan idea* that "Christ died to reconcile the Father unto us" (i.e., Christ died to change the Father's mind toward us). This is even expressed so clearly in the **1957** edition of the *SDA Bible Commentary* which says, "The Bible **nowhere** mentions God's being reconciled to man" (Vol. 6, p. 528).

However, when we read the **1980** edition, we find there was an alteration to the wording: "The Bible **elsewhere** mentions God's being reconciled to man" (*ibid*, 1980).

Thus, when we read what most modern SDA leaders say concerning this subject, we see ample evidence that, not only was the 1888 message indeed rejected, but Adventism's acceptance of the view held by mainstream Christianity. For example, in the December 8, 2023 edition of *The Review*, **Clifford Goldstein** writes, "In short, rather than killing us for violating His law, the Father killed Jesus instead." And then later adds, "... to put it crudely, the Father killed Jesus so that He wouldn't have to kill us."

This sadly reveals that we have not fully come out of Babylon by our hesitance to follow Jesus deeper into the Holy of Holies and be cleansed from the pagan idea of propitiation and atonement.

**Seventh-day Adventist Believe 27:**

"Christ's self-sacrifice is pleasing to God because this sacrificial offering **took away the barrier between God and sinful man in that Christ fully bore God's wrath on man's sin.** Through Christ, God's wrath is not turned into love but is turned away from man and borne by Himself." (p. 111)

"For a loving God to maintain His justice and righteousness, the atoning death of Jesus Christ became 'a moral and legal necessity.' God's justice requires that sin be carried to judgment. God must therefore execute judgment on sin and thus on the sinner. **In this execution the Son of God took our place, the sinner's place, according to God's will.**" (*ibid.*, p. 111)

**Woodrow Whidden:**

"Why did **God the Father choose** a cross to be the instrument of death? Why did He not choose to have Christ instantly beheaded or quickly run through with a spear or sword? **Was God unjust in executing judgment on Christ with a cross** when He could have done it by beheading, a noose, a sword, a gas chamber, a bolt of lightning, or a lethal injection?" (*Ministry Magazine*, February, 2007)

**Angel Rodriguez:**

"One of the fundamental problems of the Moral Influence Theory is that it rejects the substitutionary nature of Christ's death. The idea that **God had to kill the innocent instead of the guilty** in order to save us is considered a violation of justice." (*Adventist World Review*, p. 40, December, 2007)

This tract is a supplement to the book,  
***Did God Kill Jesus Instead of Killing us?***

by Kevin J. Mullins.

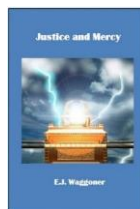
It is geared toward Seventh-day Adventists who may be concerned if the pagan idea of propitiation or atonement has crept into the church. Please read carefully as we compare quotations from mainstream Christianity with modern Adventism and how they widely differ from those who brought us the most precious message of 1888.

*"While God has desired to teach men that from His own love comes the Gift which reconciles them to Himself, the archenemy of mankind has endeavored to represent God as one who delights in their destruction.*

***Thus the sacrifices and the ordinances designed of Heaven to reveal divine love have been perverted to serve as means whereby sinners have vainly hoped to propitiate, with gifts and good works, the wrath of an offended God.***" (Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 685)

***"We have not to reconcile God to us, but-O wondrous love!-God in Christ is 'reconciling the world unto Himself.' 2 Corinthians 5:19"*** (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 35)

For more information on what you've just read, see the books:



***Justice and Mercy***  
By E.J. Waggoner  
George Fifeild's  
***1897 GCB Sermons***

Available for FREE  
download at:



# Did God Kill Jesus?

*A Supplemental Study for Seventh-day Adventists*



**"If you are a Christian, come out of Babylon! If you intend to be found a Christian when Christ appears, Come out of Babylon, come out now!"**  
(Charles Fitch, *Come Out of Her, My People*, 1843)