

INTRODUCTION

For all of us, death is inevitable but unpredictable. When I was a young boy, I lived up the street from one of my older cousins, who was about 18 at the time. For some reason, he and my dad got along well and became excellent friends. It seemed like they hung around with each other quite a bit.

Word got back to me that my cousin had stomach cancer. As a young boy, I was unaware of how serious this was but hoped for his full recovery. It seemed within a short time of six months that he passed away. I became aware of this because I heard a loud noise in the apartment where we lived on a particular night. I didn't know what this was all about and didn't want to know. I put the covers over my head and went to sleep. The following day, I asked my mother if she heard a loud noise during the night. She said it was dad. After my cousin died, he went to a local bar and got drunk.

How could this have happened to someone whose life was starting out?

My family was brought up Catholic. This faith's belief in what happens after death was pretty straightforward. If you committed venial (small) sins during your lifetime, then following death, you would go to a place called Purgatory to receive punishment for those sins that weren't confessed while on the earth. Once the determined penalty was satisfied, you would be allowed to go to heaven. If, however, a mortal sin was committed, such as murder, rape, incest, adultery, etc., the person would go to a place called hell unless it was confessed to a priest.

You might be wondering, why am I writing about this topic now? Long since have my younger years gone by. I'm currently retired from teaching high school math after 30 years. I live on an island that has a bustling summer tourist population. And I'm very fortunate to have obtained a taxi license, of which only 32 exist. Last summer, I had a couple in my cab who noticed a postcard of one of my religious books taped to my console. She recognized that it was of the spiritual genre and proceeded to express to me her adamant hatred of God.

I was taken aback by her angry tone and response. I asked her why she was so upset with God. She said that she lost one of her children at a young age and blamed Him because He didn't intervene and save her life. I expressed to her my condolences but didn't know what else to say. I thought at the time that I wished I had written a book on the subject of death so that I could have provided her with a copy of it. Perhaps this might have given her more understanding of the topic and God's role concerning it. So, here I am undertaking this study.

I'll present this research from a biblical perspective. Scriptures will be taken from the King James Bible. Don't worry if you aren't attending a church. This isn't an issue. If you have lost a loved one and blame God for not intervening and changing the outcome, I encourage you to read this book. If you have long-held perceptions about death, whether true or not, then this book is for you.

Hopefully, what both of us will learn from this study about death is the following.

- At physical death, does life as we know it end?
- Has God ever stepped in and prevented some people from dying?
- Has God personally got involved and brought about death upon certain people?
- For those whom God has brought death upon, should He be thought of as being evil?

- Why does God allow some to die, and yet at other times, intervene and prevent others from death?
- Is there something that we could do in the face of death that might persuade God to come to our aid and prevent us from dying?
- Should we attribute someone's death as having deserved it because of the sinful life that they lived?
- While it's true that none of us will escape physical death, is there another kind of death that leads to the fulness of life in time and assurance for eternity for both ourselves and our loved ones that we should seek after?

Hopefully, at this studies' end, we'll have learned whether to continue to hold God accountable for our heartaches and disappointments, thwarted desires and plans, and the loss of our loved ones, both young and old.

And might we instead become aware that there's another kind of death that leads to the fulness of life both now and eternity that we should set as a priority to receive for ourselves, share with our family, and proclaim to others?