

## The Lord Took My \_\_\_\_\_ (Name Your Relative)

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Often on Saturday our evangelism team goes to the street to share. One woman that we had the privilege of ministering to on one of those Saturdays has remained on my heart. She and her lesbian lover were very attentive and willing to receive the truth about the sacrifice of Christ on their behalf. However, her homosexuality is not the reason she remains on my heart. What has kept me thinking more about her than others we shared with that day is due to something painful she expressed to us.

This poor lady told us at one point that she was still angry with God. She told us that God took her mother through cancer and that she felt empty inside due to this. I have no doubt that it is painful ideas about God such as this that leads people into these types of relationships. The team members made some attempts to explain the love of God to her and how God never kills people through cancer.

Nevertheless, it was after she finally allowed us to pray for her that things began to change. We asked that God would give her an overwhelming sense of His love and presence. God touched her so powerfully and supernaturally that she began to be filled with His joy.

While we intend to follow up with this precious lady and her lover and hope to keep sharing the love of Jesus (and eventually see them free from their sin), it is a reminder of how monstrous lies spread about God from Christian pulpits, books, and other media has a tendency to drive people away from Him. I have attended (and performed) a number of funerals over the years. Very seldom have I been to a funeral where God is not blamed for having “taken” the person lying in the casket. The last funeral I attended several months ago was a cancer victim. Guess who was blamed for her death? You guessed it—God was blamed.

Like this precious woman we ministered to last week, I would not want to serve a “god” who takes people through long drawn out painful diseases such as cancer. People have a right to be angry with such a “god” if he exists.

A quick internet search shows us that there are numerous causes for cancer. Some of these causes include (but are not limited to) smoking, excessive alcohol drinking, bad diet, over exposure to the sun, lack of exercise, and being overweight. Can God be blamed when I smoke, get drunk, eat poorly, become lazy, and fail to watch my weight? I suppose one can blame God for these choices if one rejects the fact that God gives His creatures the freedom to make their own decisions (and many so-called Christians actually do reject what is called “free-will” due to twisted ideas about God’s sovereignty).

Nonetheless, from a Biblical standpoint, God is not in the business of *taking* anyone through horrible diseases and sicknesses, especially cancer. On the contrary, whenever we are told in Scripture that God “took” anyone it was *never* through sickness and death. For example, in Genesis 5:24 we are told, “*And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.*” If this is not clear enough then note what the divine record says in the book of Hebrews:

*By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. (Hebrews 11:5)*

Note that when God “took” Enoch, it was through *translation* and not death. When God “takes” someone then that someone does not experience sickness or death. Keeping in mind that death and sickness are twins (Compare Deut. 28:60-61 with 30:15, 19. See also Jeremiah 21:8-9), it should be further noted that cancer is not God’s method for “taking” anyone. This is also confirmed in 2 Kings 2 where we read:

*And it came to pass, when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. (2 Kings 2:1)*

In verses 2 and 5 of this same chapter the prophets told Elisha concerning Elijah, “*Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to day?*” Further in this chapter we read:

*9 And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.*

*10 And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.*

*11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. (1 Kings 2:9-11)*

Like Enoch, Elijah was certainly *taken* by God but there was no sickness that culminated in his death. Elijah experienced no death at all. Therefore, unless a person went straight to heaven while still in good health and experienced no cessation of life, one should never say that a person who dies a tragic death (sickness, car accident, etc.) was taken by God.

No doubt someone will object and say, “Ah, but Job 1:21 specifically states that the Lord ‘takes’ people through tragic deaths. That is how He took Job’s servants, children and livestock.” Let us look at this passage:

*And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: **the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away**; blessed be the name of the LORD. (Job 1:21)*

Apart from context we could certainly draw such conclusions. This passage is so frequently misquoted at funerals that most people believe this way without ever fully studying it in its entirety. It would defeat our primary purposes to do a full exposition of Job's tragedies, but I believe that touching on it briefly here will help the sincere seeker of truth who can look at our other materials later in which we give more detailed explanations of Job's trials. Verse 12 tells us exactly who *took* away Job's children and servants through death:

*And the Lord said unto Satan, **Behold, all that he hath is in thy power**; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.*

Centuries later Jesus would contrast the difference between His role and Satan's role in such tragic events when He said:

***The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.** (John 10:10)*

This being the case then why did Job say that God had taken his family and servants through a horrible tragedy and why would it be wrong for us to say it? During Job's time Jesus had not completed the redemptive work that would legally free us from Satan's kingdom. In our time Jesus has defeated Satan and now He says, "*I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over **all the power of the enemy***" (Luke 10:19). Satan can only go so far as *we*, God's people, let him.

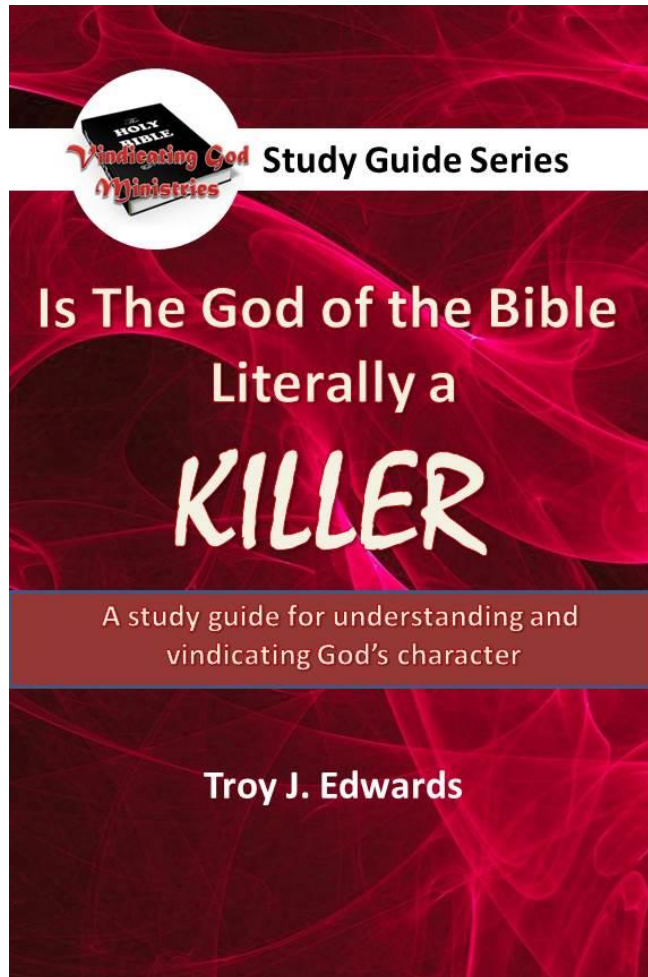
In contrast, Job knew absolutely nothing about Satan's existence. During the dispensation in which Job lived, God had to take responsibility for all of Satan's acts until His people had the capacity to receive more revelation of Satan without worshipping him as though he were another god (contrast 2 Samuel 24:1 with 1 Chronicles 21:1 which comments on the same incident though it was written several centuries later).

Unlike us, Job could not read Job 1 and see who was really behind His troubles. Therefore, He did that which was common in His day and found in most portions of Scripture: He credited God with the event. Yet, the New Covenant believer should be more Biblically literate in his or her understanding. God did not take any of Job's family through tragedy. This was done by Satan.

In conclusion, when faced with the death of a loved one, never, ever use that awful phrase, “God took him/her.” Instead, say as the householder said when He found tares among His wheat, “*An enemy hath done this*” (Matt. 13:28a).

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To get a better understanding of God’s place in relation to death and killing, we highly recommend our book, “**Is the God of the Bible Literally a KILLER?**”



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