

Famine and Death

Scripture Reading — Ruth 1:3-5

Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. . . . Both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband. — Ruth 1:3, 5

The land was dead, and so was Naomi's family. Did Elimelek die because he left the promised land? Did Naomi's sons die because they married foreigners? Was Naomi suffering because of her family's actions?

Let's consider the bigger picture. Later in Israel, the Lord announced a great famine as punishment for the nation's wickedness, but among them were 7,000 people who had remained faithful (1 Kings 19:18). Proverbs 29:2 says that "when the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan."

Everyone, whether guilty or innocent, suffered the costs of disobedience in the days when the judges ruled. And in the world today, many innocents—Christians and many others—suffer from all kinds of deadly diseases, natural disasters, selfish rulers, and terror attacks.

In times of great wickedness, when many innocents suffer what the wicked deserve, what can you do? Wise people know that "the eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good" (Proverbs 15:3). But how long can you wait for God to do something?

When Jesus cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34), he bore the judgment meant for the wicked. God answered his complaint, but not until he had died the death of the wicked, for you and for me.

Prayer

Lord, help me to trust that you will make all things right one day. In Christ the Savior, Amen.

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