

The Book of Ruth: Evil, Suffering, and the Providence of God

April 3rd, 2022

Scripture: Ruth 1:19-21

Ruth 1:19-21

So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, “Is this Naomi?” ²⁰ She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. ²¹ I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the Lord has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?”

Outline

1. The Problem of Evil
2. Answers from Job
3. Answers from Scholars
4. Answers from the Gospel

The Problem of Evil

“Either God wants to abolish evil, and cannot; or he can, but does not want to. If he wants to, but cannot, he is impotent. If he can, but does not want to, he is wicked. If God can abolish evil, and God really wants to do it, why is there evil in the world?”
-Epicurus, 300 B.C.

Answers from Job

Job 1:21

Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

Job 38:1-5

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:

² “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?”

³ Dress for action like a man;

I will question you, and you make it known to me:

⁴ “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?”

Tell me, if you have understanding.

⁵ Who determined its measurements—surely you know!”



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Job 42:3, 5-6

“I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

⁵ I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;

⁶ therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes.”

Romans 9:20-21

But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” ²¹ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?”

Answers from Scholars

James 1:13-15

“Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”

“That is what mortals misunderstand. They say of some temporal suffering, “No future bliss can make up for it,” not knowing that Heaven, once attained, will work backwards and turn even that agony into a glory.”

-C.S. Lewis

Answers from the Gospel

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave up his one and only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

