

Book of Ruth

Author: unknown, but its thought to be Samuel.

One of two books in the Bible where the principal character is a woman. This book is about Ruth, a Moabite woman who marries a Hebrew husband.

Time period: written during the time of judges. After Joshua's death to the birth of Samuel. Approximately 1400-1000 BC.

Main purpose: To show how a Gentile woman became one of the ancestors of King David and ultimately Christ. (But King David being in the line of Christ wasn't known when it was written)

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Purpose 2: The book of Ruth also plays an important role in bridging two main sections of the Bible.

On one side we have Genesis to Judges. For months now, we have spent time reading about Abraham's descendants, how they became the nation of Israel and all about the covenant relationship they have with God.

On the other side, we're about to go through with Samuel through Kings tells the story of Israel's kings and the covenant that God makes with King David as the head of Israel's royal line. The royal line of David is a line that leads to Jesus, the Messiah.

Ruth helps the transition or builds this bridge by opening in the days of judges and ending with the genealogy of David.

The book appears to have been written to defend David's right to be king. In the end of the book we see that David is the great grandson of a woman named, what? Ruth.

Purpose 3: The book also shows how God's purposes are accomplished in the world. God makes good laws like allowing the poor to gather grain in the fields. He is also sovereignty and has providence over events. The books shows us how God's laws, providence and the kindness and goodness of people help the story find a redemptive conclusion.

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Ruth is from what area? Moab. Why is this important?

The Moabites did not help Israel when they came out of Egypt and Israel's law did not permit any descendant of a Moabite nation to join Israel, down to the tenth generation. So this begs a really important question. If a Moabite could not even join in community, how could one of them serve as king?

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Book Formation:

The book is set up like a play and each scene has an introduction and then dialogue between characters. The book ends with the genealogy of David.

So, format of the book mirrors its purpose, which is to show that genuine faith was present in a woman from a nation whose descendants were normally excluded for ten generations.

Purpose 3: REPEAT

how God's purposes are accomplished in the world.

God makes good laws

He is also sovereignty and has providence over events.

how God's laws, providence and the kindness and goodness of people help the story find a redemptive conclusion.

So many of the stories that we've heard have shown struggles and challenges. But throughout them, are you starting to see a plan? God is sovereign. His plan allows humans to go through incredible events to help us find our way, sometime seeing His hand, other times like we'll see in Job, where we do not see His hand at all. In the end, there is a redemptive conclusion.

What is incredible is that these people during these historic times were living it out. They didn't get the entire book to look back on history. They had some written history and a ton of stories passed down through generations, but they certainly didn't get the whole picture or the New Testament which looks ahead to the end of the story.

This is a short book, but it does play an important role as a bridge between what we've read so far, from creation, slavery, the birth of a nation, the governance of that nation NOW to setting up for Israel's royal line of Kings that eventually leads us to Jesus, the King of all Kings, not only over a small area of the middle east, but over all man-kind and over all of the universe.

And this woman Ruth, a gentile, opens up redemption to not just the Jewish people, but for all men.

Does that get you a little more stoked about this book?

Characters: 3 Main characters

Naomi the widow

Ruth the Moabite

Boaz the Israelite

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Chapter 1 – Ruth's Sorrow

“In the day that judges ruled”

These were the dark and difficult days we read about in the book of judges

This was a 400 year period of general anarchy and oppression when the Israelites were not ruled by kings, but by periodic deliverers who God raised up when the nation sought him again.

We meet an Israelite family in Bethlehem struggling to survive through a famine. The famine could have been a result of the constant warfare.

Elimelech (husband and dad), Naomi (wife and mom) and sons Mahlon (sp) & Kilion,

In search of food, they move on to the land of Moab (for a time, intention of returning home), the home of Israel's ancient enemy and a pagan land

Did God promise famine in the land? What did He promise? Plenty

In fact, Bethlehem is a very fertile and agricultural land, so this shouldn't be

So what does this tell us? They were living in disobedience during this time

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While in Moab, Elimelech dies and the 2 sons marry 2 moabite women, Ruth and Oprah, I mean Orpha.

Then the sons die also (about 10 years later). So now we're left with mom Naomi, and 2 DIL's Ruth & Oprah, I mean Orpha. And no kids were born before the boys died.

To be a childless widow was to be among the lowest, most disadvantaged classes in the ancient world. There was no one to support you, and you had to live on the generosity of strangers. Naomi had no family in Moab, and no one else to help her. It was a desperate situation.

Naomi has no reason to stay so she tells her daughters in law that she's moving back home

Where's home? Bethlehem in Israel

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V6-7 Speaking of home, Naomi hears that good things are happening back home, God is providing bread.

What does this tell us? Most likely there is some sort of returning to God happening and Naomi wants to be part of that

She could have wallowed, but she wanted to be part of what God was doing. She sought it out

V8-9 Naomi urges the girls to go to their homes. She urges them to find other husbands so that they could be cared for. Naomi clearly cared for them

V9 – They wept. These women were close. There was true, genuine love here.

The girls both tell Naomi that they'll go with her to Israel.

V10-13 Naomi says something that gives us a glimpse into culture of that time.

And they said to her, "Surely we will return with you to your people." But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? *Are* there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn back, my daughters, go; for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, *if* I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons, would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me!"

Are there still sons in my womb: According to the laws of ancient Israel, if a young woman was left widowed, without having had a son, then one of her deceased husband's brothers was responsible for being a "surrogate father" (Kinsman Redeemer) and providing her with a son. Naomi here says that she has no other sons to give either Orpah or Ruth.

Naomi knows that a widowed woman is going to have a hard time of it back home.

She also feels that God's hand is against her. But despite her feelings, she knows that God is drawing her back to him.

Wanting what is best for the girls she urges them again to go to their homes.

Oprah, I mean Orpah takes the logical approach and returns to her home.

Midrash (Jewish interpretation of oral tradition and biblical text) expands and paints Orpah as the negative version of Ruth. It says that Orpah cried 4 tears for Naomi and traveled 4 miles outside of Moab with Naomi. As a result she became the mother of 4 giant babies including Goliath, which David eventually kills. As we'll see later, Ruth becomes the father of David.

This is possible, but it is not in the text that you and I read here.

The different paths of Orpah and Ruth.

But Ruth, she is a seeker! She is perhaps illogical but fiercely loyal

In this moment we also have a sneak peak into a redemption story. Remember that Ruth and Orpah are pagans, from a pagan land, but Ruth is seeking. God is making a way to him, for a gentile to be saved!

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Ruth shows incredible loyalty Naomi and here in verse 16 we see an amazing statement. (read v 16) “wherever you go, I’m going to go. Your people will become my people and your God will become my God.

Ruth’s commitment to Naomi goes beyond friendship and family. Ruth commits to Naomi’s God.

This is more than an address change.

Ruth is forsaking the Moabite gods she grew up with. She was deciding to follow God.

This gentile woman, once far from God is drawing near to him.

Why??

Clearly the life of Naomi impacted her. Naomi was faced with a hard life.

She had faced famine

She had to leave her home

She lost her husband

She lost her sons

Her response to tragedy was to go home to experience what God was doing

Naomi’s life was an attraction to Ruth. Are we attractive? Do challenges bring out the best in us?

Ruth was with Naomi for 10 years and didn’t follow Naomi’s God. Perhaps it is because during this time, Naomi had left her home in compromise to seek out food rather than trust God at home.

As soon as Naomi decided to trust God, THAT is what attracted Ruth to her.

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Charles Spurgeon says this “Ah! You will never win any soul to the right by a compromise with the wrong. It is decision for Christ and his truth that has the greatest power in the family, and the greatest power in the world, too.”

The chapter ends with Naomi and Ruth returning to Israel and Naomi (pleasant) changing her name to Mara which in Hebrew means Bitter and she laments her tragic fate

(25 minutes)

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Chapter 2 – Ruth’s Service

V1 – Introduction of Boaz. We see a lot in this one verse

Boaz is a relative of Elimelech. We don’t know how they are related, but he’s not just any relative, he’s a RICH relative. (go somewhere with that)

When others left Bethlehem, Boaz stayed around and was blessed.

We are introduced to the important biblical word; Kinsman. In Hebrew the word is “Goel.” To say that Boaz was a goel (kinsman) was more than saying he was a relative; it was saying that he was a special family representative. He was a chieftain in the family. It was the Kinsman redeemer's job to marry the widow, share his wealth with her.

V2-3 Naomi and Ruth need food!

Naomi and Ruth talking about where they are going to find food. Ruth begs Naomi to let her go pick up the scraps in the Barley fields.

It just so happens to be the beginning of the barley harvest.

Ruth goes out and starts picking up grain in the field that just so happens to be owned by Boaz

Who just so happens to be a relative, unbeknownst to either of them.

Talk about gleaning for a moment:

Farmers in this time were commanded to leave food for the poor when harvesting from their fields. But this was a desperate time right? Coming out of a famine? What would natural instinct be? To get it all!

But Boaz is described as a man of noble character

This is Boaz obeying an explicit command in the Torah to show generosity to the immigrant. Deut 24:19

When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

Boaz is obeying Levitical law we see in Lev 19:9-10.

“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. ¹⁰ Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the LORD your God.

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V4-10 Boaz learns of Ruth and cares for her

v4. Boaz says “The Lord be with you” – this shows us that he was a man of character. He had a good relationship with his servants and they returned the blessing “The Lord be with you.” They had a good relationship with him

v5 the servants tell Boaz of Ruth. How she had asked if she could glean. She didn't command it as part of some commandment. She likely didn't know it was a right of the poor, she didn't just come do it. But she was kind and asked, “may I please glean after the workers”. This made a good impression on Boaz.

V6-7 – she was a hard worker. She only took a short rest

V8 – Boaz had compassion

He told her to stay close to the young women. She would be taken care of and have companions

He told her not to go glean anywhere else and told the men to stay away. She would be protected here

He allowed her to eat until she was full. She would be provided for here.

V10 – Ruth's attitude is once again, amazing. She acknowledges her weakness. She doesn't say “I worked hard for this.”. She doesn't demand good things. She always asks “why this good thing has come?”

V11 Boaz lets Ruth know that her reputation has preceded her. He says “It has been reported to me”. He knew of Ruth's sacrifice to stay with Naomi. He knew she was a foreigner, out of her comfort zone.

Boaz blesses her in v12: May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”

Boaz recognizes her as a new convert.

She put her trust in the God of Israel.

She has left her former associates.

She had come in among strangers.

She was very low in her own eyes.

She found protection under the wings of God.

This serves as a good reminder for those of us who know God and how we should help new believers!

Before we move on, lets just go back to a couple of words in that verse, ” under whose wings you have come to take refuge”

You may not have been here at the beginning of this class, but Israel and Jewish culture does not speak like we speak. We say, “You’ll be safe here.”

In Jewish culture they use a lot of imagery. This is a beautiful picture of safety and rest. “under whose wings you have come to take refuge”

V14-16 we may see a hint of romance as Boaz invites her to dinner with him and to dip her bread in vinegar

We see Ruth eating until she is full but she held some back, to take back to Naomi. So thoughtful

After dinner, she was going back to work and Boaz makes her life a little easier by instructing the workers to leave food for her to pick up. He was blessing her.

But he didn’t want to dishonor her hard work or embarrass her, so he “allowed some grain to fall” for her to pick up

V17-18 – Ruth picks up an ephah of barley. That is about a 5 gallon bucket, plus a half gallon. This was a lot of food for someone who had nothing.

V19-23 – Ruth is made aware of everything that has just happened.

Naomi learns that Ruth met Boaz and she is stoked because Boaz is their Kinsman Redeemer

Naomi praises God and begins to hope that there still may be a hope and future for her family

Naomi is directing praise, showing Ruth the way.

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Chapter 3 – Ruth’s Surrender

Chapter 3 begins with Naomi and Ruth forming a plan to get Boaz’s attention. Naomi cares for Ruth and wants her to have a husband. She reminds Ruth that Boaz is a man, who is their kin. Their kinsman. Naomi wants to make sure that he knows what is going on with them.

So how do you get a man’s attention? Look good, smell good. Ruth stops wearing clothes of a person in mourning and dolls herself up. She bathes and puts on her best clothes. Making it apparent that she is on the market.

V4-6: the plan: Go to the threshing floor after Boaz has eaten and drank. When he lies down, uncover his feet and lie down. “he will tell you what to do.”

This is not a provocative gesture as it may appear. In this culture, this act was an act of total surrender, total humility. This seems to fit more in line with Ruth’s character that we’ve seen.

Don’t lose sight of the larger picture: Ruth came to claim a right. Boaz was her *goel*, her kinsman-redeemer, and she had the *right* to expect him to marry her and raise up a family to perpetuate the name of Elimelech. But Naomi wisely counseled Ruth to not come as a victim demanding her rights, but as a humble servant, trusting in the goodness of her kinsman-redeemer. She said to Boaz, “I respect you, I trust you, and I put my fate in your hands.”

V7-9 Operation Get Boaz

So, Ruth goes to Boaz at the end of a day when Boaz is in bed and she startles him. She makes her intentions clear (9) and asks Boaz if he will be their Kinsman Redeemer and marry her.

And here is where we see the character of Boaz. In today’s world, we can just imagine what a man with a few drinks in him would do. He could have mistreated her. But Ruth and Naomi had a chance to get to know him and his character. They knew he was a good man, a godly man, a man that Ruth could trust by submitting to him.

Her request to “spread your garment over me” was culturally relevant. Other translations say “Take me under your wing.” This culturally meant, “I am a widow, take me as your wife.”

The spreading of a skirt over a widow is an Arabaic way of claiming a woman as a wife and is still practiced among some Arabs today (Morris)

Even to the present day, when a Jew marries a woman, he throws the skirt or end of his talith over her, to signify that he has taken her under her protection (Clarke)

In Ezekiel 16:8 God uses the same terminology in relation to Israel: I spread my wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you and you became Mine, says the LORD God.

V10-11 Boaz takes the bait

Boaz is amazed at the loyalty of Ruth and her commitment to their family. He praises her for not chasing after the younger men. He praises her for not chasing after money. And he commits to become her kinsman redeemer. He ends his praise of her by calling her a “woman of noble character.”

Proverbs 31 uses this same word to describe the woman in that passage of scripture.

V12-13 Boaz proves he’s the man

Boaz once again reveals not only his good character, but his mutual interest in Ruth. To me it almost seems like he was waiting for this to happen. He had done his research and knew that there was another relative that was closer in line to be her kinsman redeemer. He tells her to wait until the next day and that he will take the matter up with the other man and if he is not willing, then “As surely as the Lord lives,” I will do it. He makes a commitment in the sight of the Lord.

V14-15 Ruth is asked to stay until morning and she got up before anyone could recognize her. She is protected from rumors

Again this may seem scandalous, but knowing the character of both of these people, Boaz did not want it to be known that Ruth had asked him to be her kinsman redeemer ahead of the other man. Boaz wanted to do that himself.

Boaz sends Ruth home with 33 gallons of barley for Naomi. Jewish traditions say that the six measures of barley given as a gift to Ruth were a sign or a symbol of six pious men who would descend from her, endowed with six spiritual gifts: David, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, and the Messiah.

V16-18 The chapter ends again with Naomi and Ruth discussing all that happened and rejoicing and marveling at all that has been happening to them.

Is this what happens when girls go in groups to the bathroom?

SLIDE

Chapter 4 – Ruth’s Satisfaction

V1-2 – Boaz went to the gate. This is where the nobles and esteemed men would sit. This isn't literally a gate into the city. This is more like a city courtroom or city council chamber. Like an outdoor court where business was conducted.

The other man is never mentioned by name. He is dishonored because he did not fulfill his responsibility. I'm going to call him JimBob

Boaz gives a historical account of what has happened to Naomi and focuses first on property.

Naomi sold the land belonging to her husband Elimelech. He points out that it is JimBob's responsibility to buy that land and redeem it. The purpose was to preserve the family name. It was also to keep the land allotted to members of the clan of Israel.

Remember, the land was divided purposely. God intended for the land to stay within the tribes and family groups so that the land could never be permanently sold. Every 50 years it had to go back to the original family group. 50 years is a long time, so God made provision that land that was sold could be redeemed or bought back.

It was the responsibility of the kinsman redeemer (redeemer) to protect persons, property and posterity of the family.

JimBob says, heck yes, I'll buy the property back!

Maybe Naomi and Ruth were watching and their hearts would have sunk at this. All of their work, thwarted!

But Boaz was wise. He had a plan.

V5 – Boaz drops the hammer. He says, alright, since you're willing to buy the land, you're also going to be responsible for buying it from Ruth, the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to perpetuate her husband's name as well.

JimBob was just made aware that he's not just dealing with Naomi, but also Ruth.

Because Naomi was older, JimBob wouldn't have been expected to marry her or try to give her children. But Ruth was another matter. These would be responsibilities with her.

This was no longer just a property deal. Now he was faced with a much bigger question, in front of all of the witnesses. This was a lot of new information all at once.

JimBob considers that his own inheritance would be messed with. Likely the man had his own sons and had already figured out how things would be split up. The thought of having children with Ruth and having to redistribute his inheritance was more than he was willing to do.

Many things to consider:

Maybe he knew his current wife wouldn't be pleased

Maybe he didn't like the idea of marrying a Moabitess

Maybe he was...a lot of things

We don't know his motive but what we do know is that he declined and suggested that Boaz become the redeemer.

V7-8 We have the ceremony of passing a dusty sandal one to another.

It was the custom in former times in Israel: Deuteronomy 25:5-10 describes the ceremony conducted when a kinsman declined his responsibility. The one declining removed a sandal and the woman he declined to honor spat in his face. But in this case, because there was no lack of honor was involved, they just did the part of the ceremony involving the sandal.

V9-10 Boaz has an exciting announcement that he is going to buy the land. He is going to redeem Naomi and Ruth and take Ruth as his wife in order to maintain the name of not only Elimilech but also Ruth's deceased husband.

V11-12 the elders recognize the marriage and they bless the occasion. They say "may your house be like the house of Perez."

What's that about? Genesis 38. Judah had slept with Tamar who tricked him into sleeping with her and was pregnant with twins. When the first baby was coming out it stuck its arm out and the midwife tied a scarlett thread on its wrist because it came out first. But, that baby was pulled back into the womb by the other baby and he forced he way out, wanting to be first and to get the birthright of being the firstborn. THAT baby was named Perez.

It seems that Perez was the ancestor of all those in Bethlehem in general.

In 1 Chronicles 2:5 we see the ancestry of Perez. (Pretty cool reason to have these long genealogies)

V13 - The story ends with a reversal of all of the tragedies of Chapter 1.

The death of a husband and son is replaced with Ruth giving birth to a son, bringing joy to Naomi.

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The son of Ruth and Boaz was named Obed. He had a son name Jesse. He had a son named David. And David had a descendant named *Jesus!*

Jesse was the father of David.

Naomi's return to Bethlehem, and the roots of David in Bethlehem, going back to Ruth and Boaz, are why Joseph and Mary had to go to Bethlehem to register in the census of Augustus (Luke 2:1-5).

Ruth and Boaz are the reason why Jesus was born in Bethlehem!

But the consideration of Jesus in this book of Ruth doesn't begin with the mention of King David; Jesus has been through the whole book, pictured by Boaz and the office of the kinsman-redeemer.

- The kinsman-redeemer had to be a family member; Jesus added humanity to His eternal deity, so He could be our kinsman and save us.
- The kinsman-redeemer had the duty of buying family members out of slavery; Jesus redeemed us from slavery to sin and death.
- The kinsman-redeemer had the duty of buying back land that had been forfeited; Jesus will redeem the earth that mankind "sold" over to Satan.
- Boaz, as kinsman-redeemer to Ruth, was not motivated by self-interest, but motivated by love for Ruth. Jesus' motivation for redeeming us is His great love for us.
- Boaz, as kinsman-redeemer to Ruth, had to have a plan to redeem Ruth unto himself – and some might have thought the plan to be foolish. Jesus has a plan to redeem us, and some might think the plan foolish (saving men by dying for them on a cruel cross?), yet the plan works and is glorious.
- Boaz, as kinsman-redeemer to Ruth, took her as his bride; the people Jesus has redeemed are collectively called His bride (Ephesians 5:31-32; Revelation 21:9).

· Boaz, as kinsman-redeemer to Ruth, provided a glorious destiny for Ruth. Jesus, as our redeemer, provides a glorious destiny for us.

ii. But it all comes back to the idea of Jesus as our *kinsman-redeemer*; this is why He became a man. God might have sent an angel to save us, but the angel would not have been our *kinsman*. Jesus, in His eternal glory, without the addition of humanity to His divine nature might have saved us, but He would not have been our *kinsman*. A great prophet or priest would be our kinsman, but his own sin would have disqualified him as our *redeemer*. Only Jesus, the eternal God who added humanity to His eternal deity, can be both the *kinsman* and the *redeemer* for mankind!

ii. Isaiah 54:4-8 describes the beautiful ministry of the LORD as our *goel* – our kinsman-redeemer: *Do not fear, for you will not be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame... your [Kinsman] Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel... For the LORD has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit... with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you, says the LORD, your [Kinsman] Redeemer.*

iii. From eternity, God planned to bring Ruth and Boaz together, and thus make Bethlehem His entrance point for the coming of Jesus as our true Kinsman-Redeemer, fully God and fully man.

SLIDE

Some cool final thoughts about the book:

There is cool Symmetry between the beginning and the end of the story

The tragedy in the beginning was followed by a great act of loyalty by Ruth

The act of loyalty on Boaz' part that leads to the family's restoration

There is also symmetry highlights the design of the inner chapters

Each of the chapters begin with Naomi and Ruth forming a plan

That is followed by a providential meeting of Ruth and Boaz

And each end with Naomi and Ruth rejoicing at what is taking place.

This is a well designed story, but we don't see a lot of God in the story. The characters mention God a few times but the narrator never mentions God doing anything directly in the story. This is unique and cool because God's providence is at work behind every scene in the story. God weaves the circumstances and choices of all of the characters.

With Naomi, her tragedy leads her to think that God is punishing her when the whole story is about God's mission to restore her and her family.

God is accomplishing that plan through Ruth who is full of boldness and loyalty which is healing to Naomi.

But none of this happens without Boaz who is just a no nonsense farmer who is full of generosity and loyalty.

So God uses Boaz's integrity, coupled with Ruth's boldness to save Naomi and her family

This story interplays God's purpose and will with Human decisions and will. It weaves together the faithful obedience of His people to bring about His redemptive purposes in the world.

The very end of the book ends with a genealogy. In this genealogy we see how Boaz and Ruth's son Obed was the grandfather of King David. From King David we get the lineage of the Messiah, Jesus.

This seemingly not very exciting story is woven together into God's master plan, God's story of redemption for the whole world.

This book should drive us to consider; How is God using the mundane situations in our lives to carry out His plan. God is always working. He is a master designer! Look at the universe and its design, there seems to be no end to God's design!