

Rahab

Saved the Lives of the Spies

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Overview

RAHAB SAVES THE LIVES OF THE SPIES

Rahab's story is told in Joshua 2 and Joshua 6:22-23. She is also mentioned in Matthew 1:5; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25.

Rahab was a prostitute in the city of Jerusalem. As a prostitute, she lived on the edge of society, one stop short of rejection. Her house, built right into the city wall, provided both lodging and favors to travelers. It was a natural place for the Israelite spies to stay, as they would be mistaken for Rahab's customers.

Stories about the Israelites had been circulating for some time, but now it was evident that the Israelites were about to invade.

Living on the wall, Rahab felt especially vulnerable. Yet while she shared the general mood of fear with the rest of Jericho's population, she alone turned to the Lord for her salvation. Her faith gave her the courage to hide the spies and lie to the authorities.

Rahab knew her position was dangerous; she could have been killed if she were caught harboring the Israelites. Rahab took the risk, however, because she sensed that the Israelites relied on a God worth trusting. And God rewarded Rahab by promising safety for her and her family.

Rahab lived in Jericho and assists the spies of the Israelites.

Joshua 2

Faith in God's promises ought not to do away, but to encourage our diligence in the use of proper means. The providence of God directed the spies to the house of Rahab.

God knew where there was one that would be true to them, though they did not. Rahab appears to have been an innkeeper; and if she had formerly been one of bad life, which is doubtful, she had left her evil courses.

That which seems to us most accidental, is often overruled by the Divine providence to serve great ends. It was by faith that Rahab received those with peace, against whom her king and country had war.

Rahab is spared when the Israelites captured Jericho

Joshua 6:17-25

The city and everything in it must be completely destroyed as an offering to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and the others in her house will be spared, for she protected our spies.

Do not take any of the things set apart for destruction, or you yourselves will be completely destroyed, and you will bring trouble on all Israel. Everything made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron is sacred to the Lord and must be brought into his treasury."

When the people heard the sound of the horns, they shouted as loud as they could. Suddenly, the walls of Jericho collapsed, and the Israelites charged straight into the city from every side and captured it. They completely destroyed everything in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep, donkeys—everything.

Then Joshua said to the two spies, "Keep your promise. Go to the prostitute's house and bring her out, along with all her family."

The young men went in and brought out Rahab, her father, mother, brothers, and all the other relatives who were with her. They moved her whole family to a safe place near the camp of Israel.

Then the Israelites burned the city and everything in it. Only the things made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron were kept for the treasury of the Lord's house. So Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute and her relatives who were with her in the house, because she had hidden the spies Joshua sent to Jericho. And she lives among the Israelites to this day.

Why did God demand that the Israelites destroy almost everyone and everything in Jericho?

He was carrying out severe judgment against the wickedness of the Canaanites. This judgment, or ban, usually required that everything be destroyed (Deut. 12:2-3; Deut. 13:12-18).

Because of their evil practices and intense idolatry, the Canaanites were a stronghold of rebellion against God.

This threat to the right kind of living that God required had to be removed. If not, it would affect all Israel like a cancerous growth (as it did in the sad story told in the book of Judges).

Rahab and her family and some items in Jericho were not destroyed, but this was a special case.

Rahab and her household were saved because she had faith in God and because she helped the Israelite spies. The silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron were kept, not to enrich the people, but to beautify the tabernacle and its services.

God's purpose in all this was to keep the people's faith and religion uncontaminated. He did not want the plunder to remind Israel of Canaanite practices.

God also wants us to be pure. He wants us to clean up our behavior when we begin a new life with him. We must not let the desire for personal gain distract us from our spiritual purpose.

We must also reject any objects that are reminders of a life of rebellion against God. (For more information on how Israel handled its plunder, see the note on +Numbers 31:25-30.)

Rahab was an ancestor of Joseph of Nazareth

Matthew 1:5

Salmon was the father of Boaz (his mother was Rahab). Boaz was the father of Obed (his mother was Ruth). Obed was the father of Jesse.

Matthew opens his Gospel with a genealogy to prove that Jesus is the descendant of both King David and Abraham, just as the Old Testament had predicted. Jesus' birth didn't go unnoticed, for both shepherds and magi came to worship him.

The Jewish people were waiting for the Messiah to appear. Finally, he was born, but the Jews didn't recognize him because they were looking for a different kind of king.

Presenting this genealogy was one of the most interesting ways that Matthew could begin a book for a Jewish audience. Because a person's family line proved his or her standing as one of God's chosen people, Matthew began by showing that Jesus was a descendant of Abraham, the father of all Jews, and a direct descendant of David, fulfilling Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah's line.

The facts of this ancestry were carefully preserved. This is the first of many proofs recorded by Matthew to show that Jesus is the true Messiah.

More than 400 years had passed since the last Old Testament prophecies, and faithful Jews all over the world were still waiting for the Messiah (Luke 3:15).

Matthew wrote this book to Jews to present Jesus as King and Messiah, the promised descendant of David who would reign forever (Isaiah 11:1-5). The Gospel of Matthew links the Old and New Testaments and contains many references that show how Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy.

Jesus entered human history when the land of Palestine was controlled by Rome and considered an insignificant outpost of the vast and mighty Roman Empire.

The presence of Roman soldiers in Israel gave the Jews military peace, but at the price of oppression, slavery, injustice, and immorality. Into this kind of world came the promised Messiah.

In the first 17 verses of Matthew 1, we meet 46 people whose lifetimes span 2,000 years.

All were ancestors of Jesus, but they varied considerably in personality, spirituality, and experience. Some were heroes of faith—like Abraham, Isaac, Ruth, and David.

Some had shady reputations—like Rahab and Tamar. Many were very ordinary—like Hezron, Ram, Nahshon, and Akim. And others were evil—like Manasseh and Abijah. God’s work in history is not limited by human failures or sins, and he works through ordinary people.

Just as God used all kinds of people to bring his Son into the world, he uses all kinds today to accomplish his will. And God wants to use you.

The faith of Rahab is commended

Hebrews 11:31

It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute did not die with all the others in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

When Joshua planned the conquest of Jericho, he sent spies to investigate the fortifications of the city.

The spies met Rahab, who had two strikes against her—she was a Gentile and a prostitute. But she showed that she had faith in God by welcoming the spies and by trusting God to spare her and her family when the city was destroyed. Faith helps us turn around and do what is right regardless of our past or the disapproval of others

Rahab is listed as one of the heroes of faith.

James 2:25

Rahab the prostitute is another example of this. She was made right with God by her actions—when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road.

Life application

God works through people—like Rahab—whom we are inclined to reject. God remembers her because of her faith, not her profession. If at times you feel like a failure, remember that Rahab rose above her situation through her trust in God. You can do the same!

Key verse:

“By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient” (Hebrews 11:31).

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

