

Joshua 2:2-24 - Thursday, March 1st, 2012

(1) Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there. (2) And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, "Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country." (3) So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country." (4) Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they *were* from. (5) And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them." (6) (But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.)

- Well, right out of the shoot, we've got a very big problem. What are we going to do about Rahab lying about the two men that she was hiding?
- The issue is that it would almost seem as if God were condoning, or at the very least, excusing lying, in certain cases such as the one before us.
- I would submit to you that God is in no way doing this, and furthermore, there is never a justifiable, let alone an excusable, lie in any situation.

- Let me explain, there are several reasons why Rahab's lie, as with any lie, was a sin, chief of which is that she is as of yet, still an unbeliever.
- In other words, she hasn't yet come to salvation nor the subsequent work of sanctification. She's still a pagan sinner, not to mention a prostitute.
- We do err, when we expect the un-regenerated unbeliever, to behave like a regenerated believer. Absent salvation, there is no sanctification.

- Another reason this account of Rahab lying doesn't condone lying is because of the cultural practices of that day, which are similar in our day.
- In other words, the Middle-Eastern people are one of the most, if not the most, hospitable people in the world culturally, and for good reason.
- Here's why; the ancient Arab's particularly, were a nomadic people who traveled great distances. In being hospitable, you would save their lives.

- It's for this reason, to this day, if you break bread with an Arab, you are loyal to each other even unto death. In effect, they owe you their lives.
- Rahab is taking these two men in, and in so doing she's saving their lives literally, and she'll soon be repaid with the saving of her life eternally.
- By way of explaining it and not excusing it, I suppose you could say that the cultural practices of the day superseded her lying in this situation.

- Another reason this passage doesn't condone lying is that just because God's Word records the lie, in no way means it's encouraging the lie.
- The narrative gives us an account of what actually happened, and if the truth be known, she didn't have to lie in order to save these two men.
- Again, she's doing the only thing she knows to do, however, God doesn't need us to lie for him in order to protect ourselves and even others.

- One final thought before we move on, I'm of the belief that we are never more like the Devil than when we are deceptive and given over to lying.
- We know from scripture, in the words of Jesus Himself, that the Devil is the "Father of Lies." When we lie, we are acting like a child of the Devil.
- You've heard the expression that the apple doesn't fall too far from the tree, well, so to is this true for us when we to imitate the Father of Lies.

- The good news is that lying, and the father of lying, cannot have the last word in our lives. Neither did it have the final word in the life of Rahab.
- This prostitute and liar was not only an example of faith in James, a hero of faith in Hebrews, but she's in the lineage of Jesus Christ in Matthew.
- How can this be? It's been said that when God sees us, He sees not our sin, He sees only His Son. God doesn't see us as sinners but saints.

(7) Then the men pursued them by the road to the Jordan, to the fords. And as soon as those who pursued them had gone out, they shut the gate. (8) Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, (9) and said to the men: "I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. (10) For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who *were* on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. (11) And as soon as we heard *these things*, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He *is* God in heaven above and on earth beneath. (12) Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, (13) and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death."

- How beautiful yet powerful is this? Rahab is saying all the right things, in the right way, and with the right heart. This is how it is that faith works.
- She's putting her faith where her mouth is. This is a dramatic profession of faith, and it's an emphatic confession of faith in the God of Israel.
- What she says has all the necessary ingredients for salvation, she's calling on the Lord, in the fear of the Lord, and putting her faith in the Lord.

- Also, notice that she begs for her family's salvation. To me, this validates and authenticates her conversion. I see it as a litmus test of sorts.
- When someone genuinely and sincerely comes to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, it is followed by a desire to see family come to Christ.
- Now I am keenly aware that this may be a very sore subject for some, by virtue of how long you have been crying out for loved ones salvation.

(14) So the men answered her, "Our lives for yours, if none of you tell this business of ours. And it shall be, when the LORD has given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you." (15) Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house *was* on the city wall; she dwelt on the wall. (16) And she said to them, "Get to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you. Hide there three days, until the pursuers have returned. Afterward you may go your way." (17) So the men said to her: "We *will be* blameless of this oath of yours which you have made us swear, (18) unless, *when* we come into the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father's household to your own home. (19) So it shall be *that* whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood *shall be* on his own head, and we *will be* guiltless. And whoever is with you in the house, his blood *shall be* on our head if a hand is laid on him. (20) And if you tell this business of ours, then we will be free from your oath which you made us swear." (21) Then she said, "According to your words, so *be* it." And she sent them away, and they departed. And she bound the scarlet cord in the window.

- This is interesting for a number of reason not the least of which is the typology. First, notice that they are to hide three days before returning.
- I believe that this speaks to the three days that Jesus was in the grave before returning to the right hand of the Father after the resurrection.
- The letting down of the scarlet cord through the window is a powerful scripture picture of the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary.

- It is thought that the prostitutes of that day painted their windowsills red, much in the same way that prostitutes today turn on their red lights.
 - This is why we call them red light districts. One has suggested that the red rope over the red windowsill would've been in the shape of a cross.
 - This is reminiscent of the blood in the shape of the cross over the door at the Exodus. Present the cross, present their salvation from death.
- That's why the two men tell Rahab that unless she brings her father, mother, brothers, and all her household into her home, they would perish.
 - So too with the Israelites during the 10th plague of the death of the firstborn son. Only those under the scarlet red blood of the lamb were saved.
 - The death of the firstborn son was a picture of the death of God's only begotten son, Who died and rose again, so that we could be born again.
- At the risk of getting a little crazy with this, and for the benefit of those who share my craziness about this, we even have another picture of this.
 - It's found in the 38th chapter of Genesis, and by way of a warning, it is both very weird and gnarly and maybe even difficult for some to accept.
 - Before we get into it, I think it's incumbent upon me to give you the back story of what is going on so that you can have a better understanding.
- It starts with Judah marrying a Canaanite named Shua who has three sons named; Er, Onan, and Shelah. This proves to be a huge mistake.
 - It wasn't Judah's first mistake. The first mistake was departing from his brothers and going his own way, which is what led to his next mistake.
 - When his first son Er is born Judah takes a wife for him by the name of Tamar, but Er was so wicked in the sight of the Lord, that God killed him.
- After this, Judah goes to his second born son Onan, according to the custom of the levirate marriage which is found in Deuteronomy 25:5-10.
 - The custom was that if a man died before providing sons to his wife, it was the duty of his biological brother to marry her and give sons to her.
 - The sons given to the widow by the brother would actually be considered the deceased brothers sons, because the brother was in his place.
- Onan, who is aware of this, emits his seed on the ground not wanting to give his brother an heir. God is displeased by this, and kills him too.
 - By the way, this has account has nothing to do with birth control, it has everything to do with willful disobedience and unspeakable wickedness.
 - Be that as it may, let me hasten to say, that this sordid story is a true story and it's about to get even worse, it's two down and only one to go.
- However, as far as Judah is concerned, it's a no go. He want's Tamar to go. Honestly, in all fairness to Judah, you really can't blame the guy!
 - So, then Judah tells his daughter in law, Tamar, to go home to her parents until his youngest son Shelah is older before he gives him to her.
 - The fact of the matter is he has no intention whatsoever in giving Shelah to Tamar and is just blowing her off and shining her on to get rid of her.
- As a father of two sons, like Judah, I would probably start thinking twice about this daughter in law of mine who's my daughter in law twice.
 - Again, it goes from bad to worse when Judah's wife dies. Now he's experienced the death of two sons, and now the death of his son's mother.
 - So, in his sorrow and grief, Judah seeks comfort by going to spend some time with his friend named Hirah, who lives in a place called Timnah.
- Big booboo as we'll see next. Tamar catches wind of this and realizes her father-in-law has no intentions of giving Shelah to her as he promised.
 - She knows without Shelah giving her sons she's sentenced to a destitute life of poverty and ultimately death. She can't remarry without Judah.
 - She has got to do something, so she comes up with this plan to dress up as a temple prostitute, and go to Timnah so she can seduce Judah.
- Listen, I never see myself as the sharpest knife in the kitchen drawer, but I'm smart enough to know that Hollywood is totally missing the boat.
 - Can you imagine a movie like this playing in the theaters? You don't have to give it an R rating, but you will likely have to give it a PG13 rating.
 - Especially for the next scene. You'll forgive me if as it relates to the nitty-gritty dirty details, however I don't want to take the edge off of all this.
- So now, Judah sees Tamar thinking she's just another prostitute there for sheep shearing season as was the custom in that corrupt culture.
 - As an aside, it's interesting to note how Judah is completely caught up in the Canaanite ways at this point. He's not just in the culture he's of it.
 - Now, Judah, not knowing that this is his daughter-in-law Tamar, propositions her, and she responds by asking what he's willing to give to her.
- Judah then tries to first offer her a young goat from the flock as payment. The only problem is, he doesn't have a goat with him at that moment.
 - So then Tamar asks him if he will give her something until he is able to send the goat to her for payment so that she's assured she will get paid.
 - Tamar asks for and receives his signet ring, his necklace, and his staff. Judah lies with her, and she conceives by him, but unbenounced to him.
- One commentator suggested Judah gave up his signet ring (Person), necklace (Possession), and staff (Position). That's what sexual sin does.
 - Right about now, you may be thinking to yourself, "what in the world does this account of Tamar in Timnah, have to do with Rahab in Jericho?"
 - I am so very glad you asked, because what you are about to see, at least those who are unfamiliar with what happens, is almost unbelievable.
- After all of this, Tamar puts her widow's garments back on and goes her way, and Judah sends his friend Hirah, with a goat in order to pay her.
 - Naturally, he wants to get his pledge back, especially his signet ring, which is in effect his identification. The problem is that Hirah can't find her.
 - Hirah goes back to Judah and tells him the bad news that he could not find this woman and that he was told there wasn't even a prostitute there.
- Judah, wanting to forget the whole matter tells his friend Hirah to just let the woman keep everything because he doesn't want to be found out.
 - This is an irony of ironies. Judah keeps his word by sending the goat as payment to her, but he won't keep his word when it comes to his son.
 - This is duplicity, irony, and hypocrisy at its ugliest. Also, the only reason he tried to make good on the payment was to get his ID back from her.
- Three months later, there is a report that's brought to Judah. He's told that his daughter-in-law Tamar, has been engaging in temple prostitution.
 - That's not all; in addition to her prostitution she has become pregnant because of this. Of course this will bring unspeakable shame to the family.
 - Upon receiving this report, Judah becomes incensed, and pronounces judgment on her by demanding she be brought out, and burned alive!
- Judah is even guiltier than Tamar is, as will come out shortly. For him to judge her for what he himself should be judged for is unconscionable.
 - Sometimes those who are the most angry and judgmental towards a sin, are they themselves guilty of the very sin they judge and condemn.
 - It's been said that our sin always looks worse on someone else than it does on us. Their sin looks like a beam, while my same sin is a speck.
- Why are we like this? In a word, "pride." Here's what I'm thinking, when Judah demands Tamar be burnt, he is assuming the role of a priest.
 - In Leviticus 21:9 it says that if priest's daughter is a prostitute, she is to be burned. The problem is neither Judah nor his tribe are the priests.
 - Only the descendants of Levi will be the priestly tribe of Israel. So, for Judah to assume this is to think more highly of himself than he ought.

- Well, that doesn't matter, because Tamar is brought out for this public burning, and as you might imagine, this would've drawn quite a crowd.
- When she's brought out, she declares to Judah that she has become pregnant by the man to whom the signet ring, necklace, and staff belong.
- Then, Tamar tells Judah to "please determine whose these are." I cannot even begin to imagine how Judah must have felt at that moment.
- It would seem that instead of Tamar being burned literally, Judah is being burned figuratively. And so it is when one falls prey to a prostitute.

Proverbs 6:25-29 NIV Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes, (26) for the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread, and the adulteress preys upon your very life. (27) Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? (28) Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? (29) So is he who sleeps with another man's wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished.

- Suffice it to say, Judah has been found out, that which he did secretly was shouted from the rooftop in the public square, and he has to confess!
- I find it interesting that Judah would confess that she was more righteous than he because after this he basically has nothing to do with her.
- Not only that, but Judah virtually fades from the scene and we don't really hear from him, or about him at all, for the most part. This is his end.

- However, it's not how the story ends. Tamar has not only been with child, she's been with twins, and now the time has come for her to give birth.
- They had an interesting custom when there were twins, in order to identify which one of the twins was the firstborn, and which one was second.
- What they would do is have the midwife tie, of all things, a "scarlet thread" on the hand of the first baby born and say; 'this one came out first.'

- Just as Tamar's midwife does this the baby with scarlet thread draws back and the other brother comes out unexpectedly and is named "Perez."
- Then, after that, the other baby boy who already had the scarlet thread on his hand comes out and they name him, as the second born, "Zerah."
- One commentator has ever so brilliantly connected the dots in how that this Zerah is also a picture of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- Zerah had a scarlet thread on his wrist just as the scarlet bloodstain was on Jesus' wrist.
- Zerah appeared first, just as Jesus is the First-fruit of the brethren, according to 1 Corinthians 15:20-23.
- Zerah remained in the womb, just as Jesus remained in a tomb.
- Zerah comes back out of the womb, just as Jesus comes out of the tomb.

- OK, so now the question is, how all of this is tied together, pun intended, back in Jericho with Rahab? The answer is absolutely astonishing.
- Consider the following similarities between these two accounts. First, it's the presence, perhaps more importantly, the significance of the scarlet.
- The scarlet points to the blood of Christ, the rope/thread are a symbol of the cross of Christ, and the second birth pictures the new life in Christ.

- Just as Rahab had found her salvation via that scarlet rope, so too does the second birth of Perez, symbolize salvation, via that scarlet thread.
- Just as Rahab hid the men for three days, a type of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, so too does Tamar keep hid Judah's sins for three months.
- Just as Rahab is in the genealogy of Jesus Christ, so too is both Perez and Zerah along with Tamar also listed in the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 1:1-6 NIV A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham: (2) Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, (3) Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, (4) Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, (5) Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, (6) and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,

(22) They departed and went to the mountain, and stayed there three days until the pursuers returned. The pursuers sought *them* all along the way, but did not find *them*. (23) So the two men returned, descended from the mountain, and crossed over; and they came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all that had befallen them. (24) And they said to Joshua, "Truly the LORD has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us."

- The way this chapter ends sums everything up perfectly and succinctly, with these two unnamed men returning from their amazing mission trip.
- Perhaps you'll indulge me in closing as I go through a number of life lessons that we can learn from this chapter of Joshua here in God's Word.
- In the interest of time, I'll be as brief as possible, and in so doing give the Holy Spirit elbowroom to minister this to you in your own devotions.

1. The Lord is attracted to, and comfortable with, the outcast, and the downcast, but am I like that?
2. The Lord's ways are mysterious and too high for my understanding, but do I allow for that?
3. The Lord can work out any sordid and scandalous situation for His glory and our good, but do I believe that?
4. The Lord and His finished work on the cross is the central focal point of God's Word, but am I living that?