

Lesson 64

Rahab Helps the Spies

Rahab believed in God and helped the Israelite spies in Jericho.

Overview

Lesson Focus

God chose Joshua to lead the Israelites after Moses' death. Joshua sent spies into Jericho, but they were discovered. The prostitute Rahab hid the spies and helped them escape because she had faith in God. God rewarded her faith by sparing her and her family, and she was included in the genealogy of Jesus and listed in the book of Hebrews as an example of faith.

Key Passages

Joshua 1:5–6, 2:1, 2:11, 6:25

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify how Joshua became the leader of the Israelites.
- Describe how God used Rahab to accomplish his plan for his people.

Memory Verse

Deuteronomy 7:9 Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

The Amorites on the east side of the Jordan River were defeated, and the time came for Moses to die. God called him up to a mountain and let him see the Promised Land before he died at age 120 (Deuteronomy 34:1, 34:5–8). God chose Joshua to lead the people and promised to be with him just as he had been with Moses (Deuteronomy 34:9; Joshua 1:5). The Israelites under Joshua's leadership were to begin the conquest of the Promised Land. The generation of Moses' day had died for its lack of faith and obedience to God. The new generation of Israelites had many nations to conquer, yet God would provide the strength and courage needed for success as long as the Israelites remained obedient.

Joshua, as the new leader, sent two men on a spying mission to view the land, especially Jericho (Joshua 2:1). The two spies entered Jericho and found lodging with Rahab, the prostitute. Although this may seem odd at first, upon further consideration, Rahab's home on the wall could offer a safe and

inconspicuous haven for the men. However, in God's divine providence, the men were found out. When Rahab realized who the spies were, she was introduced firsthand to the God of Israel whom she had heard of and feared. Rahab demonstrated her faith by declaring the Lord to be the true God and offering protection to the spies (Joshua 2:3–6, 2:8–12, 2:15–16).

The question we might ask is how could this woman, a prostitute, know about the God of Israel? She was well aware, as apparently all in Jericho were, that Israel was a nation whose God had delivered his people in a dramatic, miraculous fashion from Egypt. This God had also provided victory for his people over the most notorious kings on the other side of the Jordan, including King Og of Bashan (Deuteronomy 3:4; Joshua 2:10).

Rahab was willing to stake her life and her family members' lives on the ability of God to defeat her own people and yet deliver her! She misled the pursuers who were sent by the king of Jericho to capture the spies, and she concealed the spies until she helped them escape back to Joshua (Joshua 2:2–6, 2:15–16). Rahab acted on her belief that the God of Israel would carry out his promises to give the land to his people, and by doing so, she showed an utter dependence upon him. This faith was remarkable enough to be held up to all future believers as an example of faith (Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25).

The fact that God would bring to saving faith and use a Gentile woman to fulfill his purpose foreshadowed his intention to break down the "dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14) between Jews and Gentiles in Christ and to make Gentiles "fellow heirs, members of the same body" with Jews in Christ (Ephesians 3:6). This grand scheme of Christ's salvation of sinners from every nation was in the background when God used Rahab to help deliver Israel's spies in return for protection for her and her family during Jericho's destruction (Joshua 6:25). Rahab and her family lived with the Israelites, and Rahab married a man from the tribe of Judah.

Historical/Apologetics Background

Many raise the question as to whether God blessed Rahab's lie to the king's men when they came for the Israelite spies. If so, is it okay to lie in some circumstances? The answer is no—it is never okay to lie. Lying is a sin against a holy, perfect God (Proverbs 12:22). However, God frequently uses the sinful acts of both the righteous and unrighteous to execute his purposes.

God wanted to show his amazing grace and sovereignty in this situation. Rahab had been a deliberate sinner, and likely an idolater, given that she had lived an immoral life in a pagan city. Her knowledge of the true God was no doubt incomplete, being based on what was discussed among her people and not on a principled or careful instruction from Scripture. Her people had not been given the Ten Commandments or the other laws that God gave his people. Thus, it was from this incomplete knowledge of God that she chose to lie on behalf of the spies. And in God's mercy, he covered the sin, acknowledged her faith, and redeemed the situation.

To focus on the lie instead of the reward that our holy, sovereign, merciful God granted her does not give God the glory due his name. One lesson to be

learned from Rahab is not about Rahab at all, but about God—how he did not judge her or reward her according to her sin but saved her by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). God does the same for all those who repent and believe in Jesus.

Rahab's imperfect actions of faith and courage resulted not only in her salvation from destruction but also in a place in history as an ancestor of Jesus (Matthew 1:5). If we wonder why God would use a woman like Rahab to fulfill his purposes, perhaps we have not fully faced the effect our own sin has against a holy God. Only then can we recognize the greatness of God's mercy in offering forgiveness to us through Jesus' death and resurrection.

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