

Rahab: A Woman of Unusual Faith

Part 1

Introduction

God prepared the groundwork for sending His Son to be our Savior long before Jesus was born on earth. His selection of the people in Jesus' ancestry is in many cases unimpressive. Matthew lists five women in Jesus' lineage: Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah, who prostituted herself to him; Ruth, a heathen woman; Bathsheba, who committed adultery with David; Mary, Jesus' mother, a simple peasant girl; and Rahab, a prostitute.

I believe God specifically chose these women because they were sinful, heathen, or ordinary, so that people of all times would be able to easily identify with Jesus. We will never be able to use our background, our heredity, our moral condition or our lack of some special quality as an excuse to hold us back from the love of the Savior.

In this study, we are going to devote our attention to Jesus' ancestor Rahab, a heathen women through whom and to whom God performed a mighty miracle.

Our Study

The Israelites had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years when Moses led them through the wilderness for another 40 years, during which time God fed them on manna from heaven. Moses was an old man when they reached the land of Canaan, a land that God had promised to them many years before if they would remain faithful to Him. They had proved unfaithful on many occasions, but they were now encamped at Shittim or Acacia Grove, across the Jordan River from Canaan. Moses was not destined to lead the Israelites into the land on the other side of Jordan River. God had given this assignment to Joshua, his assistant. Joshua is a type of Christ. The name Joshua means "Yahweh Is Salvation", the Hebrew equivalent of Jesus.

The Scripture: Joshua 1: 5-6

“God promised Joshua, ‘No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and courageous.’ ”

1. What was God's promise to Joshua? _____

2. What were His instructions? _____

3. Why? _____

The Scripture: Joshua 2:1

"Joshua, son of Nun, secretly sent two spies from Shittim. 'Go, look over the land,' he said, 'especially Jericho.' So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there."

4. What was Joshua's command to the two spies? _____

5. What did the spies do? _____

It is possible that Rahab was not a prostitute in the usual sense of the word but rather a priestess of their religion, an honorable profession in that society. Her house was probably a public house where people came and went. You may remember that this was not the first time, the Israelites had seen Canaan. Before their 40-year sojourn in the wilderness, Moses sent spies into the land. Most of them returned with fearful reports.

The Scripture: Numbers 13: 28, 31, 33

"The people who live there are powerful and the cities are fortified and very large... We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are... We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."

6. What was the spies' report? _____

7. How did they describe themselves? _____

Although the spies' imaginations may have run wild, they were right in one respect. The Canaanites were a powerful people, brutal and depraved. Their religion included serpent worship and child sacrifice. Only Joshua and a fellow spy, Caleb, believed that the Lord would give them the land. Because the Israelites did not have faith that God would act on their behalf, they had to spend 40 years wandering in the wilderness.

The Scripture: Joshua 2:2-3

"The king of Jericho was told, 'Look! Some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land. So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab. 'Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house because they have come to spy out the whole land.'"

8. What had the king of Jericho been told? _____

9. What did he do? _____

The Scripture: Joshua 2:4-6

"But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, 'Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from.... Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them.' But she had hidden them up on the roof under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof."

10. What was Rahab's response? _____

11. What did she suggest? _____

12. What had Rahab actually done? _____

This required great courage on Rehab's part. The Bible gives us no details on how she came by her faith in God, only that it was strong against seemingly impossible odds. If she were discovered helping the spies, she would have been subjected to a merciless death.

The roof tops were flat, a place for casual conversation and for sleeping during the heat of the summer months. Flax is a native plant of the area. It was used for making cloth and candlewicks. When mature, it was soaked to separate the fibers, then dried on the roof tops.

The Scripture: Joshua 2:8-10

"Before the spies lay down for the night, she (Rahab) went up on the roof and said to them, 'I know that the Lord has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. 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 Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed.'"

13. What did Rahab tell them? _____

The Scripture: Joshua 2:11

"When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below."

14. What was her statement of faith? _____

God had possibly chosen the one person in all of Canaan who believed in Him and was courageous enough to act on her belief.

In the next part of this study, we will learn the oath Rahab and the spies swore to each other and what happened to Rahab when the Israelites took Jericho.

The Answers

1. He would be with him as He had been with Moses. He would never leave nor forsake him.
2. To be strong and courageous
3. Because He would lead the Israelites to inherit the land He swore to give them
4. To go look over the land, especially Jericho
5. They entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.
6. That the Canaanites were stronger than the Israelites
7. They said they looked like grasshoppers both to themselves and to the Canaanites.
8. That some Israelites had come there to spy out the land
9. He ordered Rahab to bring out the men.
10. That she had not known the men were spies and she didn't know where they had gone
11. That they go after the spies quickly
12. She had hidden the men on her roof under some stalks of flax she had laid out there.
13. That she knew the Lord had given the land to the Israelites and she knew what they had accomplished so far. She said everyone in the country was “melting” of fear of them.
14. That their God was God in heaven above and on the earth below

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