

James 2:25 In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? (NASB)

1. Rahab, characterized in both Testaments as “the harlot,” is a wonderful example of the grace and mercy of God. She was saved by grace and as a result of her conversion, became one of the revered women of the Bible in three ways:

1. She was saved according to:

Hebrews 11:31 By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she welcomed the spies in peace. (NASB)

2. She used the working objects of her faith to produce divine good in James 2:25 (above).
3. She was honored among women and became a trophy of grace being mentioned among five women in the chart pedigree of Jesus Christ in:

Matthew 1:5a Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab ... (NASB)

2. It is unusual for feminine names to be found in Jewish genealogies. That five are included in Matthew 1 is remarkable considering the varied backgrounds of each:

The insertion of the names of women—a practice not only foreign but abhorrent to ordinary usage . This peculiarity is the more marked when we notice that these names introduce what would be considered serious blots in the family history of the Davidic house.⁷

3. In addition to this rare occurrence of these five women in Matthew 1, it is also true that the inclusion of the names of Gentiles were never to be listed in genealogies. However, three of the five were indeed Goyim: Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth. Some biblical scholars even question the pedigree of Bathsheba.
4. To add insult to this perceived injury, Tamar, Rahab, and for some Bathsheba, although the assertion to the latter is rejected in our study, were of ill repute. David raped Bathsheba! Ultimately, she married David and their first surviving son, Solomon, continued the progress of the royal chart pedigree of Jesus down to Joseph.

⁷ Lewis Matthews Sweet, “Genealogy of Jesus Christ,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, gen. ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), 2:1196.



5. Verse 25 opens with the phrase, “In the same way” which references us back to Abraham in James 2:21–24. This means that Rahab is introduced as a second example of using the working objects of her personal experiences to produce divine good.
6. Her application of doctrine as her working object is associated with Abraham’s by the conjunction **καί (kaí)**: “also.” In other words, Rahab will provide a second illustration of being vindicated by works.
7. Abraham’s accumulation of doctrinal rationales over a forty-five-year period resulted in empowering his Law of Freedom to take Isaac up Mount Moriah with the intent to offering him to God as a burnt offering.
8. Rahab used her Law of Freedom to sequester the two Israeli spies from the king of Jericho and then give them intel on how to avoid the king’s search party, so Joshua could get the intel he needed to attack the city.
9. Verses 21 and 25 each pose the same question that demands an affirmative answer. Here is how the Greek phrase, “Was not Abraham/Rahab vindicated by works,” reads exactly the same way in both references: **οὐκ ἐξ Ἀβραάμ / Ῥαάβ ἔργον ἐδικαιώθη (ouk ex Abraám , Rhaáb érgon edikaióthē)**.
10. The two vindications are mentioned next. For Abraham it reads, “When he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?” For Rahab it reads, “When she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?”
11. We have done a thorough study of Abraham’s utilization of his Law of Freedom to accumulate working objects resulting in his vindication by works. Rahab has a similar story to tell as well.
12. We will go through an overview of Joshua 2:1–24 in which Rahab becomes a central figure in the Jews ability to enter and occupy the promised land. The part she plays will be because of her salvation and the accumulation of working objects that facilitated this historic outcome.

Rahab’s Working Objects:

1. When we first meet Rahab, she is a believer who has left the profession of prostitution primarily because of her personal faith in “the Lord your God” mentioned in verse 11.
2. Her involvement with Salmon and his fellow spy occurs when the two arrive in Jericho on a reconnaissance mission under orders from Joshua. She used her home, situated on the top floor of Jericho’s walls, not only as a hotel, but also its roof for a rope manufacturing business. (Joshua 2:1)

Joshua 2:1 Then Joshua the son of Nun sent two men as spies secretly from Shittim, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho.” So they went and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab, and lodged there.⁸

Jericho (“moon city”), also called the “City of Palms,” was the primary focus of the spies. A fortified city, it was located just five miles west of the Jordan River and had springs that made it an oasis. Archaeological excavations of Jericho reveal continuous occupation to this point back to at least 7000 B.C.

The Amarna letters of the fourteenth century B.C. verify that the major cities of Canaan were in reality small kingdoms, each ruled by a local king.⁹

3. Intel reached the king of Jericho that Israeli spies had entered the city on a mission to reconnoiter it and its environs. This means that the city had an excellent system of spotting noncitizens entering the city.
4. Apparently the king had intelligence that the Israelites were encamped at Shittim, located in the trans-Jordan near Mount Nebo about ten miles east of the river. Jericho was only about five miles west of the Jordan.

Joshua 2:2 It was told to the king of Jericho, saying, “Behold, men from the sons of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land.

5. He knew that Rahab had converted to Judaism, so she was a prime suspect to be hosting the spies for the night. The king sent his officers to Rahab’s house to get a situation report:

Joshua 2:3 And the king of Jericho sent word 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 land.”

6. Before the officers arrived at Rahab’s place, she had already hidden them on the roof underneath her inventory of flax ropes. Her response to the search party has caused a stir among many believers because she told the men three lies that are recorded in verses 4 and 5:

⁸ All verses in Joshua, chapter 2, are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

⁹ *NIV Archaeological Study Bible: An Illustrated Walk through Biblical History and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), s.vv. 305fn2:1 and 2:2.



Joshua 2:4 But the woman had taken [Qal imperfect of לָקַח (*laqach*)] the two men and hidden them, and she said, “Yes, the men came to me [true], but I did not know where they were from [lie #1].

v. 5 “It came about when it was time to shut the gate at dark, that the men went out [lie #2]; I do not know where the men went [lie #3]. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them.

7. Obviously, the opening comment Rahab makes in verse four refers to events that took place prior to verse 3. As a believer in the God of Israel and therefore loyal to Joshua and his men, she made the decision to protect not only these two men, but the destiny of the entire Israelite nation encamped just fifteen miles away in Shittim.
8. However, in order to do this, she had to start telling lies. As a result, some commentators on this passage are quick to judge Rahab for telling lies. First, they are correct that she did lie. Second, what would have happened to her, her family, the two spies, one of whom, Salmon, was to be revealed as her right man and part of the chart pedigree of Messiah, while putting in jeopardy the entire Jewish nation?
9. Such a decision would have resulted in the following adjustment to the passage:

Joshua 2:4b “Yes the two men came to me. They are spies for the Jews who are encamped 15 miles to the east at Shittim.

v. 5 These two men are up on my roof right now. Go there and you can capture them.

10. The two spies would have been murdered along with Rahab and potentially her family. The king would have prepared to defend the city and sent carriers to alert other city states in the area. The Jewish people’s future in Canaan would have been jeopardized and the deaths of Salmon and Rahab would have severed the Judaic line of Messiah.
11. Yet, what about those lies? Lies come in a number of categories. For example: (1) some are often done in a way to express kindness in social situations. (2) some are in-your-face brazen, and (3) many are designed to mislead on a vast scale to deceptively influence groups or nations.
12. These three examples have titles, “little–white,” “bold–faced,” and “misinformation.”



White lie: An untruth told to spare feelings or from politeness, as in *She asked if I like her dress, and of course I told a white lie*. This term uses *white* in the sense of “harmless.”¹⁰

Bold-faced: impudence; marked by contemptuous or cocky boldness.¹¹

Misinformation: False or inaccurate information, especially that which is deliberately intended to deceive.¹²

13. Which category of lying does Rahab commit? Were they expression of being polite to the king’s emissaries? Back in the 1930s, Walter Donaldson wrote a song made popular by numerous big bands entitled, “Little White Lies”:

The stars all seemed to know
You didn’t mean all those sighs
The night that you told me
Those little white lies.

Who wouldn’t believe those lips
Who wouldn’t believe those eyes
The night that you told me
Those little white lies.

14. Rahab was not being courteous. But was she being impudent? No, “cocky boldness” is a facial façade designed to conceal guilt. For example, “I did not have sex with that woman!” President William Jefferson Blythe IV.¹³
15. One of the major tactics used today by major media outlets is misinformation. Each medium communicates its political or social agenda by means of misinformation designed to sway public opinion.
16. The press medium’s utilizers include newspapers: *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and the wire service, Associated Press.
17. The Broadcast medium’s frequencies include the major networks, ABC, CBS, NBC, and PBS plus two cable outlets, CNN and MSNBC. The major television networks also have radio affiliates nationwide.
18. These media are experts in widespread misinformation, told bold-face with never a hint of little white lies. Nevertheless, Rahab took on the task of defending her fellow believers up on the roof and Joshua’s army in Shittim.

(End JAS2-53. See JAS2-54 for continuation of study at p. 531.)

¹⁰ Christine Ammer, *The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms* (1997), s.v. “white lie.”

¹¹ *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2003), s.v. “bold-faced.”

¹² *The New Oxford American Dictionary* (2001), s.v. “misinformation.”

¹³ AKA, William Jefferson “Bill” Clinton. (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia*, 15th ed. [2010], 3:389).



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19. Deciding that lives saved trumped telling it all and leaving nothing out, Rahab engaged in a sinful misinformation trifecta.
20. Holier-than-thou believers who relish pointing out the sins of others are self-righteous boors:
 1. They find fault with Rahab for protecting the two spies, one of whom was to become her husband.
 2. Do they also advise her to strictly tell the unvarnished truth thereby threatening the Israelite army and the Jewish population encamped at Shittim?
 3. Are they willing to also have her be responsible for severing the chart pedigree of Messiah because both she and Salmon would have been executed by the heathen king?
 4. Requiring her to honestly respond to the king's investigators takes legalism to ultimate levels of moral degeneracy converting human good into gross evil.
21. We are happy to report that James clearly rejects this platform of legalism. He clearly exposes to us that Rahab was “vindicated by works” when she received the messengers and sent them out another way.”
22. In all the commentaries that write about Rahab, none of the better ones refers to her as Rahab the liar but rather as Rahab the harlot. Two study Bibles offer these explanatory footnotes:

Rahab lies not because she is a Canaanite and doesn't know better but because no other response would protect the spies. The story does not dwell on the morality of lying but reports that this ruse was used to subvert certain death. Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 praise Rahab for hiding the spies.¹

Rahab's actions, though not in conformity with the scriptural prohibition against lying, were evidence that she believed the God of Israel was the true God (vv. 10–13). The Bible commends her faith, not her lying (Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25). God's grace is remarkably demonstrated in giving her faith, sparing her, and including her in the messianic line (Matthew 1:5).²
23. As a result of these lies, the two spies escaped. She is actually well-versed in the art of lying since her previous profession was that of harlotry.

¹ Richard S. Hess, “Joshua,” in *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, gen. ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 351n2:4,5.

² Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1995), 334n2:4–5.



24. As a member of the oldest profession, Rahab knew how to manage her clientele. She could put on a show of cordiality but never betray her mental separation from them. In other words, she knew how to sell the ruse to her customers but without getting personally involved.
25. In our capitalistic culture it is called salesmanship, for hers it was the old razzle dazzle:

Give 'em the old razzle dazzle
Razzle dazzle 'em
Give 'em an act with lots of flash in it
And the reaction will be passionate
Give 'em the old hocus pocus
Bread and feather 'em
How can they see with sequins in their eyes?
Long as you keep 'em way off balance
How can they spot you got no talents?
Razzle dazzle 'em
And they'll never catch wise.³

26. That was then, this is now. She was practiced in the art of knowing what to say and what not to say to get the city's inspectors to leave her house, relay the lie to the king, and with razzle dazzle cause his posse to go on a wild-goose chase.
27. The truth of what she really did is stated next in:

Joshua 2:6 (But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them in the stalks of flax which she had laid in order on the roof.)⁴

v. 7 So the men pursued them on the road to the Jordan to the fords; and as soon as those who were pursuing them had gone out, they shut the gate. (NIV)

28. The fords of the Jordan are to the east of Jericho. This means Rahab's house was situation on the western wall pointing toward the central mountains.

The road mentioned here led from Jerusalem and then eastward across the Jordan River. The "fords" were places where the river was normally shallow enough to cross on foot. When the pursuers went out, "the gate was shut." This detail is added to underscore the predicament of the spies, who were trapped inside the city.⁵

³ "Razzle Dazzle" lyric by Fred Ebb from the musical play *Chicago* by Bob Fosse and Fred Ebb, screenplay by Bill Condon, directed by Rob Marshall, published by Unichappell Music Inc., and distributed by Miramax, 2002.

⁴ "This parenthesis heightens the story's drama. The reader is not told whether the king's agents follow Rahab's advice until v. 7" (Hess, *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, 351n2:6.

⁵ Donald H. Madvig, "Joshua," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 3:260.

