

# Sierra Vista SDA Church Newsletter

## March – April 2024 Edition

### Rahab the Prostitute of Jericho



For some, the story of Rahab can be a bit of a head-scratcher, while her induction into the Hebrews' Faith Hall of Fame (Hebrews 11) might be quite surprising, if not shocking. Even more remarkable is that Apostle Paul mentioned Rahab, a Canaanite prostitute, right after Moses, while

Joshua who leads the Israelites into the Promised Land, is omitted altogether (Hebrews 11:24-31). Pause and think about that for a minute. And Paul is not the only one who mentions her as a hero of faith. James also places Rahab right next to Abraham, the "father of the faithful," as an example of someone whose faith in action overcame adversity and social status (James 2:25).

Interestingly enough, a handful of Bible commentators, perhaps uncomfortable with Rahab being portrayed in such a positive light, attempted to sanitize her employment history, suggesting that Rahab, at the time she is mentioned in Joshua 2, might not have been actively engaged in prostitution and that the reference to her occupation was a mere allusion to her troubled past. Although it appears that at the time she interacted with the spies Rahab was running an ancient form of Airbnb in addition to some textile manufacturing business (Joshua 2:6), the Bible repeatedly calls her Rahab the prostitute.

Furthermore, in Luke 7:36-48, we read how Jesus, while attending dinner at one of the Pharisees' houses, allowed a woman with a troubled history to anoint His feet with a costly, fragrant oil. Even though this woman, just like Rahab, had a dubious reputation, it did not stop Jesus from interacting with her and accepting her sacrificial gesture to the dismay of the distinguished guests. Just like the Pharisees, gathered in Simon's house, occasionally we might also be tempted to look down on people and treat them poorly

because of their reputation, overlooking the fact that in Jesus everyone can find forgiveness and acceptance.

In the world's eyes, someone might be known for his or her past transgressions, but in God's eyes, all of us are someone precious enough for Christ to suffer unimaginable pain and die on the cross.

As we read Rahab's story, we should not spend too much time debating, or feeling uncomfortable with Rahab's career choices but rather focus on her faith. Rahab's life is the story of faith and redemption which every one of us can relate to or at least sympathize with.

In Matthew 1:3-6 Rahab is mentioned again, and this time her name is part of Jesus' lineage as she went on to marry Salmon and give birth to Boaz. She is one of five women mentioned in Matthew's genealogy of Christ; Tamar the wife of Judah, Rahab the wife of Salmon, Ruth the wife of Boaz, Bathsheba the wife of King David, and Mary the Mother of Jesus. "Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David (Matthew 1:5). Other than Mary, Rahab is the only one mentioned again in the New Testament. In my opinion, Rahab's not-so-honorable profession is included in the Bible text as an assurance that Jesus is not ashamed to have a woman with such a questionable past in His earthly ancestry, and neither should we. "For the One who sanctifies, and those who are sanctified, all have one Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying: "I will proclaim Your name to My brothers; I will sing hymns to You in the congregation". (Hebrews 2:11, 12)

In 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10, the Apostle Paul mentions several pretty egregious transgressions and makes it painfully clear that none of these unrepented sinners will inherit the kingdom of God. However, one verse over, Paul delivers the great news: all of us, regardless of our past transgressions, are justified and sanctified in Jesus Christ - "And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor 6:11).

Recently, it was reported in the press that actor Bob Odenkirk was overwhelmed with emotion to learn that his DNA analysis revealed that he is a distant cousin of His Majesty King Charles III of England. If being the 11th cousin of a current early royalty makes a Hollywood celebrity ecstatic, how much honored and overjoyed should we all be knowing that God of the universe calls us His sons (1 John 3:1) and Jesus, the Lord of lords and King of kings, calls us brothers and sisters!?

"And looking about at those who sat around Him, He said, Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:34, 35). A.G.

### *From the Pastor's Desk*



As we are getting settled into a new and uncertain year, many of us are beginning to feel an urgency we have not felt before. Perhaps somewhat due to the world conditions, and also conditions in our own dear country. As I couple that with the great truths of 1844, the judgment hour, and the nearness of the second coming, there is an urgency to have a close connection to God. I'm reminded of a powerful verse: Hebrews 12:14: "Follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord". I don't want to infer that holiness is a works program, it's not, but rather that we survey the gospel; the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Holiness is what we are saved to, and like an inheritance, it belongs to every son and daughter of God. That means that holiness is our heritage, it's gospel fruit. I encourage all of us to search the scriptures for the purpose of knowing God, who is gracious and merciful and long-suffering, but "will by no means clear the guilty". To know Him is to love Him, and holiness is the fruit that springs from that love. This is what the Holy Spirit so longingly wants to implant into the hearts of all justified believers every day, and every moment. Holiness means to love God, submit ourselves to Him, surrender our wills to Him, respect Him, reflect Him, follow Him, live for Him, think about Him, obey Him, talk to Him, witness for Him, honor Him, and give glory to Him. To respect Him in the home, the neighborhood, and the church, and to have a soft heart toward our great and loving God. God wants to bestow all of this on us as a free gift of His grace. It has been called the sanctified life. May this be the choice we make in the new year as the Holy Spirit gives us guidance. Pray for the presence of God's Spirit, and He will not disappoint you, and the fruits of the Spirit will blossom, and crowd out those things that disappoint. We receive the Holy Spirit as we respond with thankful and prayerful hearts for what the Lord has done in Christ.

I'm reminded of a saying I heard at camp meeting many years ago; "If your heart is right with God today, you would be ready if He came today". To Seventh-day Adventists who love His appearing, that's a precious promise. Even so come Lord Jesus.

Alvin Schnell



## Church Announcements

**Church Growth:** As you might have noticed, we are outgrowing our church sitting capacity and that's a good thing! The Church Board is presently working with architects and contractors to come up with an expansion plan for our sanctuary. As you might have guessed, there is going to be a great deal of money needed for this project. Please pray and stay tuned for more details and how you can help.

**April 7, 2024 at 5:00 pm** in the BLC, there will be a one-hour health program called "Building a Better Brain." A total of seven presentations are scheduled for subsequent Sundays.

**April 14, 2024**, is the Plant, Pantry & Surplus Sale. A \$30 entry fee will be charged for vendors. For more information and registration contact Janelle Miller.

**May 5th, 2024 at 1:00 pm**, Quilts of Valor will be having one of three annual presentations to honor the church members who served in the Armed Forces. For more information contact Janelle Miller.

**Sponsor a Pathfinder:** to the 2024 Camporee in Gillette, WY: If you are interested in sponsoring a Pathfinder or defraying the cost for their parents, please place funds in a tithe envelope and label it 'International Pathfinder Camporee'. Every dollar helps a Pathfinder, no donation is too small. Thank you.

**Help Students at Cochise SDA School:** If you are interested in helping with student tuition, consider contributing to Arizona Tax Credit. Please contact Juliebee Roberts at (520) 432-9186 for more information.

**Navajo Nation Mission Opportunities:** Experience a cross-cultural mission experience without even leaving the United States! We need your help with Vacation Bible Schools, community outreach, construction/church maintenance, health seminars and more. We have something for everyone to experience the joy of service. WHO CAN BE INVOLVED? Churches-Retirees-Families-Youth Groups-Individuals. No Age Limit! For more information contact Dale Wolcott at (929) 589-7210.

**Caretaker needed:** for a 55-acre property in St. David AZ in exchange for housing - it can be a single person or a couple. For more information please call Diane Johnson at 928-699-9765.

## Church Life Notes by Connie Allen

First, let's mention the hard work that Kisha Collins, Ila Rice, and Deven Sorensen contribute to our Sierra Vista Warriors Pathfinder Club. They have been preparing the pathfinders for the Pathfinder Bible experience for the last few months. They have been drilling the kids on the books of Joshua and Judges twice a week. The Pathfinders competed in Tucson on January 20. Then they went on to Phoenix on February 10 to compete with 16 other teams. Our pathfinders came in 3rd place. Thank you ladies for your hard work and I'm sure our Pathfinder's had a blast!

Lamont and Rose Garner are working hard to help people get off the streets and into housing. Nine of these people are attending Bible study with Pastor Alvin. If you would like to help financially with this cause, donate to "Community Services" on your tithe envelope.

We have between 15 and 20 teams, and several individuals too, of Bible workers going out every week with study guides. If anyone would like to join us, call me, Connie Allen, and I will gladly give you new names and addresses of people in this community interested in receiving Bible study guides.

The January 28, Chili Cook-Off Fundraiser was a great success and a total of \$1204 was raised for the Cochise SDA school. It was a fun afternoon for the church family and



guests to come together in support of a great cause. Thank you to all who brought generous amounts of chili, cornbread, and sides. No one went away hungry! Angie and Gary Lee are strong believers in Christian education and the huge difference that makes in a child's life. They planned and organized this event. Thank you Angie and Gary for all your love and dedication to our Church and School!

## Stuff From a Bible Buff

"Bible Buff," eh? Surely, if you're an SDA, you're a Bible buff also. None of us would hold membership in this denomination if we didn't cherish Scripture. That's why this column is "Stuff From a Bible Buff." Did you notice that indefinite article? I'm not the Bible buff, as though I'm the only fan of God's Word. I'm one of many.

You, too, could share thoughts you've gleaned from Scripture. So why am I (not you) authoring this column? Simple. I've been particularly blessed, having (1) minored in Greek, (2) majored on both the collegiate and graduate levels in theology, (3) held membership in two academic societies for biblical scholars, and (4) owned a good-sized library of biblical resources.

In this column we'll explore scriptural passages and some theological concepts. In the process, we might look at (1) Greek or Hebrew vocabulary, (2) grammar, (3) literary context, (4) cultural context, and (5) maybe even communication theory.

Some of what you'll read will sound old hat. Other concepts may occasionally be surprising or even shocking. Whatever, it will be my interim report. Try to avoid knee-jerk reactions! On the one hand, if Bible study doesn't transform opinion, why invest the time and effort? On the other hand, remember that I don't speak for Steve Wilhelmsen, Pastor A, or G.C. President Ted Wilson. I'll share what I think harmonizes best with both the immediate literary context and the larger biblical and theological backgrounds.

If you have a particular passage from God's Word you'd like me to research, feel free to e-mail me at [rwcoffen@cox.net](mailto:rwcoffen@cox.net).

I'll do my best to try to understand what the biblical writer wanted to communicate. However, I'm not the answer man but, like you, am a seeker after truth.

Let's regard this column as an expedition into Scripture.

Richard Coffen