

Dismissing, as inconsistent with truth, the attempt to clear her character of stain by saying that she was only an innkeeper, and not a harlot, we may yet notice that it is very possible that to a woman of her country and religion such a calling may have implied a far less deviation from the standard of morality than it does with us, and, moreover, that with a purer faith she seems to have entered upon a pure life. As a case of casuistry, her conduct in deceiving the king of Jericho's messengers with a false tale, and, above all, in taking part against her own countrymen, has been much discussed. With regard to the first, strict truth either in Jew or heathen, was a virtue so utterly unknown before the promulgation of the Gospel that, as far as Rahab is concerned, the discussion is quite superfluous. With regard to her taking part against her own countrymen, it can only be justified, but is fully justified, by the circumstance that fidelity to her country would in her case have been infidelity to God, and that the higher duty to her Maker eclipsed the lower duty to her native land.<sup>1</sup>

**Principle:** Some of the most wonderful people and mature Christians were formally, as unbelievers, marching to a different drummer. Where the sin nature takes one person may be quite different with another.

**Principle:** There are two major trends practiced by members of the human race. For the person involved in self-righteousness, the trend of his lust pattern is toward legalism and moral degeneracy.

**Principle:** For the person involved in self-indulgence, the trend of his lust pattern is toward antinomianism and immoral degeneracy.

**Principle:** Post salvation, inculcation of the Word of God transforms either the legalist or the antinomian into a person of honor. The latter was the case for Rahab.

**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. This verse begins with the interesting adverb, **ὁμοίως** (*homoíōs*), which is best translated, "And similarly." Way back in James 2:21, the first person James presents as having been "vindicated by works" is Abraham.
2. Abraham is the progenitor of the Jewish race. His and Sarah's gametes united to produce the first natural-born, full-blooded Jew, Isaac.
3. On the other hand, Rahab is a goy among the people of Canaan. She is Semitic, but nothing else is known about her bloodline.

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<sup>1</sup> Merrill F. Unger, "Rahab," in *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed., ed. R. K. Harrison (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1988), 1061.



4. All that is provided to describe her is the noun, **πόρνη (pōrnē)**: “harlot.” James, in order to demonstrate what he means by “vindication by works,” offers Abraham and Rahab as illustrations.
5. Abraham’s working objects for his faith were the five paragraphs of the Abrahamic Covenant, Rahab’s working objects were the demonstrations of divine power over Rameses, the king of Egypt’s army at the Red Sea, and over Sihon and Og, kings of two Trans-Jordan city states among the Amorites.
6. From those victories, Rahab realized that the heathen gods of her people were no match for the God of Israel. She placed her personal faith in Him. When given the opportunity to accommodate His army against her own people, she went with God, not heritage.
7. Therefore, Abraham and a harlot, personalities who had more things in common that one might suspect, were used by James to make his point about working objects.
8. Abraham was not a goody two-shoes himself. He tried to pawn off his wife, Sarah, as his sister on two occasions with disastrous effect. He took her horrible advice to commit adultery with Hagar which resulted in the illegitimate birth of Ishmael.
9. The Lord Himself issued the following prophecy regarding Ishmael which has continuing ramifications down to the present hour and beyond:

**Genesis 16:12** “He will be a wild donkey<sup>2</sup> of a man, his hand will be against everyone, and everyone’s hand will be against him; and he will live to the east of all his brothers.” (NASB)

10. Nevertheless, Abraham remains revered by the Jewish people today:

**Abraham (c. 1940 B.C.) Founder of the Jewish people, first of the patriarchs, who discarded idol worship for the belief in one God. The Covenant between God and Israel began with Abraham. “I will establish my covenant between Me and you, and your seed after you in their generations for an everlasting covenant.”**

**In the story of the sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham’s submission to the will of God was tested. As commanded, Abraham placed Isaac on the altar, preparing to offer him up. An angel of God restrained him: “Lay not thy hand upon the lad ... for now I know thou fearest God.”<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>2</sup> “A wild donkey of a man. The prophecy is not an insult. The wild donkey lived a solitary existence in the desert away from society. Ishmael would be free-roaming, strong, and like a Bedouin” (*The NET Bible*, 40sn2).

<sup>3</sup> Naomi Ben-Asher, “Abraham,” in *The Junior Jewish Encyclopedia*, 14th ed., eds. Naomi Ben-Asher and Haim Leaf (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1996), 10.



11. In Hagar’s biblical biography, even after her salvation, she is consistently referred to as “Rahab the harlot.” Nevertheless, her name is revered in the New Testament, listed simply as “Rahab” in the Lord’s chart pedigree in Matthew 1:5, but then as Rahab the harlot by the writer of Hebrews’ Hall of Fame inductions in Hebrews 11:31.
12. Then, finally, in James 2:25, “In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified [vindicated] by works ....”
13. Both Abraham and Rahab were each occupied with the Person and works of Christ. Both had working objects for their faith which were imperative at their moments in history when they could not have become faith-rest heroes without them.
14. James opens verse 25 with the question, “...was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works ...? James’s positive answer emerges later in the verse, but like his comment regarding Abraham in verse 21, the power behind her decision requires that details about her involvement with the Jewish spies is required.
15. Abraham was a believer. He grew in grace and over the course of 45 years, he was able to rely on a high inventory of working objects to ascend Mount Moriah with the intent of sacrificing Isaac on a wood-topped altar.
16. Likewise, Rahab responded to the reports of the God of Israel’s victories over the Pharaoh of Egypt and the armies of Sihon and Og in Trans-Jordan under the command of Moses.
17. James does not provide any great detail about these eventful battlefield victories but instead concentrates his comments on Joshua’s two spies who arrived at Rahab the harlot’s house in Jericho.
18. Details about her conversion are provided by going back to Joshua 2 in order to learn about her conversion and her subsequent intelligence given to the two men, one being Salmon and the other who remains unnamed.
19. Her positive volition toward them is indicated by the aorist passive indicative of the verb **δικαίω** (*dikaiōō*): “vindicated.” The culminative aorist indicates that it was by means of a series of actions related to her assistance to the two Israeli spies mentioned later in the verse.
20. The passive voice means that Rahab received vindication by her actions motivated by working objects. She was saved by her response to the Jewish victories over the Egyptian cavalry and Amorite kings, Sihon and Og, at Heshbon and Bashan respectively. (See Deuteronomy 2:26–3:11)
21. These victories convinced her that the God of Israel was the one, true God to Whom she volitionally responded with faith for salvation.



22. Divine power over previously dominant powers in Egypt and trans-Jordan became working objects in her soul that converted her from a heathen goy to a believer in the God of Israel.
23. The indicative mood certifies the absolute truth of her conversion which led to her production of divine good at Jericho, indicated by the ablative of means of the preposition **ἐκ (ek)** plus the ablative of means of **ἔργον (érgon)**: works: “Was not Rahab the harlot caused to be vindicated out from the source of works.”
24. This vindication began when she “received the messengers.” The verb “received” is the aorist middle participle of **ὑποδέχομαι (hupodéchomai)**.
25. The verb **δέχομαι (déchomai)**: “In the middle voice it means to accept an offer deliberately and readily. To take to oneself what is presented or brought by another.” This idea is contained in her willing and cordial reception of the Jewish spies into her home.
26. The prefix, **ὑπό (hupó)**: “Figuratively of what is under the power or authority of any person or thing.”<sup>4</sup>
27. Taken together, *hupodéchomai* means she willingly and enthusiastically placed herself under the authority of the two men she welcomed as representatives of the God of Israel.
28. Salmon and his associate were spies out on a mission ordered by Joshua to reconnoiter Jericho and its environs and report back their findings. The NIV Bible refers to them as “spies,” while the other three major translations, KJV, NASB, and NET use “messengers.”
29. Both have their place in the translation. The Greek word for “messenger” is the noun, **ἄγγελος (ángelos)**: messengers authorized to announce, teach, or explore anything. The two men in context are on a mission to explore the enemy’s strong and weak points, its geography, and its defenses, ergo, spies, scouts, messengers.
30. Their orders were to surveil the target, infiltrate its stronghold, gather intelligence, and report back their findings. Rahab was their divine provision to accomplish all these objectives.
31. Not only were Salmon and his fellow spy successful, Salmon, whether he knew it at the time or not, had just met his right woman. He was in the tribe of Judah, the son of Náhshōn and destined to be the father of Boaz by Rahab the harlot (Matthew 1:4c–5a).

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<sup>4</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, ed., “ὑπό,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 1419.



32. It was his future wife that supplied him and his associate with their means of learning details about Jericho, the status of its defenses, and the policy of tracking enemies.
33. Knowing how things were done, she not only willingly offered hospitality and lodging to the two men, she also gave them needful information to prevent being caught by the king's search party.
34. This is indicated by the phrase, "sent them out," the aorist active participle of **ἐκβάλλω** (*ekballō*): "To cause to remove from a position (without force), send out, send away."<sup>5</sup>
35. The definition indicates that she knew the tactics used by the search party and advised them not to return to their base camp by going toward the Jordan but instead to head west into the mountains and wait there for three days when the coast would be clear.
36. The action of this aorist participle precedes the action of the main verb which is our verb of previous frustration, the aorist passive indicative of the verb **δικαιόω** (*dikaiōō*): "vindicated."
37. Her salvation's working objects to arrive at faith in Messiah were Moses' victories over the Egyptians at the Red Sea and the two kings of the Amorites in Trans-Jordan.
38. Her working objects for vindication by works included her hospitality to the spies, informing the two men the strategy they would need to successfully return to the Israeli encampment, and providing information Joshua would need to develop of his battle plan.
39. Rahab became a heroin of grace. She immediately submitted to the authority of the two spies recognizing them as representatives of the God of Israel:
  - (1) First of all, she hid them among the flaxen ropes on her roof.
  - (2) Secondly, she gave the king's search party false information on their whereabouts.
  - (3) Thirdly, she gave the spies information Joshua would need to attack the city of Jericho.
  - (4) Fourthly, she sent them to the western mountains for three days to avoid the king's search party.
40. These efforts resulted in Rahab's "vindication by works" based on the word of God resident in her soul.

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<sup>5</sup> Walter Bauer, "ἐκβάλλω," in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 299.



**James 2:25** Similarly, was not Rahab the harlot also caused to be vindicated out from the source of working objects when she placed herself under the authority of the two spies and caused them to be sent out of Jericho to a place of safety? Yes she can. (EXT)

**James 2:26** For just as the body [ σώμα (*sōma*) ] without the spirit [ πνεῦμα (*pneúma*) ] is dead [ νεκρός (*nekrós*) ] , so also faith [ πίστις (*pístis*) ] without works [ ἔργον (*érgon*) ] is dead. (NASB)

1. James concludes the chapter, summarizing especially verses 21–25, with an analogy. He presents human life being dependent on a human spirit without which the person is dead. He compares this with the principle that faith without a working object is also dead.<sup>6</sup>
2. The human spirit is the immaterial part of man which is designed by God to inculcate, retain, and apply divine thought in the stream of consciousness of the soul.
3. The Holy Spirit converts incoming information, classified as γνῶσις (*gnōsis*), that the believer accepts as true, and converts it into ἐπίγνωσις (*epígnōsis*) or “divine knowledge or viewpoint.”
4. When a person dies, his soul and spirit are removed from the body and the coroner pronounces the person’s body dead, although his soul and spirit continue to live in an interim body, face to face with the Lord.
5. It is also true that unbelievers are imputed human life at physical birth when the soul is imputed to the body. However, they are also spiritually dead since they do not have the human spirit.

**1 Corinthians 2:14** But a natural man [ **unbeliever with no human spirit** ] does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. (NASB)

6. When the human body dies, the soul and human spirit evacuate and are transferred into heaven. When an unbeliever is born, he receives a soul and a body but no human spirit. Therefore, he is spiritually dead.
7. James then completes the analogy by comparing physical or spiritual death with a believer’s faith that, without a working object, is also dead.

<sup>6</sup> “Analogy: A comparison of two objects that are essentially different but have at least one common quality. Analogy is often used to explain an unfamiliar idea or concept in terms of a similar and familiar one” (*Dictionary of Literary Terms* [Toronto: Coles Publishing Co., 1980], 11).

8. There are two deaths in this verse indicated each time by the predicate adjective **νεκρός (nekrós)**. In context, the first use refers to physical death while the second describes productive death.
9. The conclusion of each example of death is the present active indicative of the verb **εἰμί (eimí)**. These are static present tenses “used to represent a condition which is assumed as perpetually existing, or to be ever taken for granted as a fact.”<sup>7</sup>

**Principle:** When the body is without the human spirit it stays dead. When one’s faith is without a working object it stays dead, which is addressed next.
10. The second phrase is introduced by the demonstrative adverb **οὕτως (houítōs)** plus the conjunction **καί (kaí)**: “so also.” In other words, it keeps on being this way: **νεκρός (nekrós)**: “dead.”
11. What is considered “dead” is the noun, **πίστις (pístis)**: “faith.” This noun and its verb form, **πιστεύω (pisteúō)**: “to believe,” are transitive and demand an object.
12. The objects referred to in the James 2:21–25 context, are “working objects” referenced by the believer’s faith that result in the production of “divine good,” indicated by the plural of the noun **ἔργον (érgon)**: “works.”
13. When there are no working objects due to spiritual ignorance or because of a believer’s function in the cosmic systems, then the person’s faith is described as “dead.”
14. Because of failure to accumulate an inventory of biblical principles, doctrines, and categories in his soul, the cosmic believer goes through life as spiritual corpse. His body is alive, but without working objects for his faith, he is a dead man walking.

**James 2:26** Just as the body without the human spirit is dead, so also faith without working objects also keeps on being dead. (EXT)

**NOTE:** This concludes the exegesis, analysis, and interpretation of James: Chapter Two. We will next review James 2, verses 1 through 20. Afterward we will begin the study of James: Chapter Three.

**(End JAS2-55. See JAS2-56 for continuation of study at p. 551.)**

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<sup>7</sup> H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1955), 186.