

Who were the Rechabites in the Bible?

The Rechabites (also Recabite, Rekabite) were a nomadic people group known for their strict rules to abstain from wine, from building houses, from sowing seed, and from planting vineyards (Jeremiah 35:6-7). The Rechabites were faithful to abide by these rules through the generations, all the way from the time of Jehu (2 Kings 10:15) to the time of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 35:8-10)—over 200 years.

The Rechabites were descendants of Rechab (or Recab or Rekab), a Kenite and thus related to the Midianites and Moses' family by marriage (see Judges 1:16). According to Jeremiah 35:6, the Rechabites' strict rules were put in place by a son (or descendant) of Rechab named Jehonadab (or Jonadab). This is the same Jehonadab who helped Jehu rid Israel of Baal-worship after the time of Ahab (2 Kings 10:15-27). Scholars have differing opinions as to why Jehonadab implemented the rules, but many believe he sought to preserve the primitive lifestyle of his nomadic forebears.

God used the faithfulness of the Rechabites to teach an important lesson to His people. The Lord told Jeremiah, "Go to the Rekabite family and invite them to come to one of the side rooms of the house of the LORD and give them wine to drink" (Jeremiah 35:2). The prophet gathered the Rechabites into the house of the LORD and set bowls of wine in front of them (verses 3-5). The Rechabites firmly declined the wine and explained the command of their forefather (verse 6). They remained faithful to their family tradition.

God then told Jeremiah to go and tell the people of Judah to learn a lesson from the Rechabites' faithful obedience to Jehonadab (Jeremiah 35:12-14). God contrasted the obedience of the Rechabites to the disobedience of His own people. Again and again God had sent His prophets to tell the Israelites to turn from their wicked ways, but the

people had not heeded God's Word. "The descendants of Jehonadab son of Rekab have carried out the command their forefather gave them, but these people have not obeyed me" (verse 16).

As a result of the Israelites' historic disobedience, God promised to bring disaster upon the nation (Jeremiah 35:17). But God commended the family of the Rechabites and gave them a promise: "Jehonadab son of Rekab will never fail to have a descendant to serve me" (verse 19).

There is much to learn from this family. The Rechabites stood firm against assimilating into the culture of the time. They were commended by God for their faithfulness and obedience to their father. The Rechabites are an example of steadfastness. God desires His people to live in obedience and steadfastness to Him.