



Rahab's Risk of Faith Joshua 2

Introduction

At long last, the nation of Israel was ready to enter the Promised Land. Joshua had orders directly from God to *be strong and courageous* and to keep God's Word in his mind and mouth. Behind them lay the desert wilderness, before them was the river Jordan, and across from them loomed the walled city of Jericho, an impregnable city-state. Joshua would need a strategic plan.

Outline of Joshua 2

- I. Reconnaissance by Two Spies- Joshua 2:1-3
- II. Rahab's Faith - Joshua 2:6-21
- III. Report of the Spies - Joshua 2:22-24

I. Reconnaissance by Two Spies- Joshua 2:1-3

A. Joshua's Strategy - Joshua 2:1

1. Two men sent secretly

Faith in God does not mean abandonment of reason. Joshua wisely surveyed the scene and, exercising caution before making his move, sent two men across the Jordan to "*Go view the land, especially Jericho*".

2. Lodging at Rahab's house

The spies arrived at a house where strangers might not be especially noticed and where people came and went without being questioned about their business. We are told that it was the house of a harlot named Rahab. There is no attempt to whitewash this house or its purpose. The motive of the spies was not impure but rather strategic, and Rahab's house was a place where they could learn about Jericho and also make a quick escape if need be, since the house was located on the city wall (2:15).

In view of her later role in Israel, and perhaps following the lead of the historian, Josephus, some commentators have tried to give Rahab retroactive respectability by calling her an "innkeeper" (*The Works of Josephus*, Antiquities, Book 5, William Whiston translator). This is unnecessary. God is not embarrassed by the sinners He saves. Also, it could be that all inns in Jericho were also houses of prostitution.

B. Jericho's King - Joshua 2:2-5

1. Alerted

The appearance of the spies no doubt set them apart from the populace, and the nervous inhabitants of Jericho were well aware of the large, rugged, desert nation camped across the river. Word of the two spies quickly reached the king. He rightly assessed their identity and mission.

2. Pursuing

The king sent guards to Rahab's house. She readily acknowledged, "*Yes, the men came to me,*" but she claimed no further knowledge, "*I did not know where they were from.*"

3. Outwitted

Rahab then proceeded to throw the guards completely off the trail by sending them on a wild goose chase. She told them the spies had left when the city gate was shut at nightfall and she did not know where they had gone. Then, apparently caught up in the intrigue, she added, "*Pursue them quickly for you may overtake them.*" The guards left and the spies were safe for the moment.

II. Rahab's Faith - Joshua 2:6-21

A. Proved by Her Works

1. Rahab's risk of faith

Rahab is an example of God's grace combined with an individual's response. It was God's grace that led the spies to her house and gave her the opportunity to be saved from the destruction to come. The next move was hers. She could have turned them over to the king. Any other person in Jericho would probably have done that. But she chose to go against her heredity, environment, and cultural conditioning and threw her lot in with the spies and God's people. There would be no turning back. Rahab took an amazing risk of faith.

In his New Testament epistle, James wrote, *Was not Rahab, the harlot, justified by works when she received the messengers, and sent them out another way* (James 2:25)?

2. Rahab's lie - 2:6-7

When Rahab told the guards that the men were gone, they were actually on her roof. She had hidden them under some bundles of flax laid out to dry. Rahab lied. Scripture neither commends nor condemns her lie but only reports it. At times believers have found themselves in dilemmas where a lie was the lesser of two evils, for instance in war or military occupation when the lives of others would be endangered by the truth. It is not ours to judge the actions of others but to thank God we are spared similar predicaments. On the other hand, we should value truth and scrupulously adhere to it. Rahab's lie was to protect others, not herself.

3. Rahab's works - 2:8-11

Rahab returned to the spies who listened in gratitude and awe as she confessed faith in God's promise, *"I know that the LORD has given you the land."* Their wonder increased as she revealed, *"the terror of you has fallen on us, and....all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you."* That is exactly the information the spies needed, and it was given to them by a pagan Canaanite prostitute. Rahab revealed that all of Jericho knew the LORD had dried up the Red Sea when the Israelites left Egypt and given them victories over the two Amorite kings, Sihon and Og. She described how panic had grown so all those in the city were quaking in their sandals. Rahab then confessed her faith, *"For the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath."*

4. Rahab's request - Joshua 2:12-13

"Now therefore I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness, that you will also show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters....and deliver our lives from death." Rahab believed Israel would prevail by the mighty power of God, and she wanted her family to be safe.

B. Preserved from Destruction - Joshua 2:14-21

1. The spies' promise - 2:14

With relief and gratitude they promised, *Our lives for yours*, committing Rahab to protect them by her silence. The king must not know what was about to happen. *"And it shall be, when the LORD has given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you."*

2. The spies' escape - 2:15

It was imperative that the spies escape before the empty-handed guards returned. So Rahab let them down by

a rope through her window to the outside of the wall. This was possible because her house was on top of the wall. Scripture makes the point by stating it twice. *Her house was on the city wall; she dwelt on the wall.* By the providence of God, the spies did not have to wait for daylight to go out through the gate.

The city of Jericho has been excavated many times and there is no doubt about where and when it existed. The wall is, of course, of special interest. Between 1907 and 1909, a German team discovered mud bricks at the base of the mound Jericho was built upon. A more thorough excavation was carried out between 1930 and 1936 by a British team led by archaeology professor, John Garstang. Four distinct layers of the city were found and many artifacts uncovered. In the 1950's, famed archeologist, Kathleen Kenyon discovered the wall and was incredulous to report through Carbon 14 dating that it had existed from 6850 B.C., making Jericho the oldest city in the world. The wall appeared to be thick enough for houses to stand on the top. One can observe this type of construction in dams of today which are wide enough to support a small house.

3. Rahab's advice - 2:16

Rahab continued to help the spies by advising them to hide in the mountains around Jericho for three days until their pursuers abandoned the search. Then they could safely go their way.

4. The scarlet cord - 2:17-18

Perhaps the way they were lowered by a rope gave the spies the plan for rescuing Rahab and her family. They instructed her to *bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down.* When they returned with all the people of Israel, they might not have time or opportunity to look for her nor guarantee her safety. There would be much confusion in the city and fighting in the streets. But they would easily be able to find her by the brilliant cord dangling from her window in the wall. Rahab and all who were with her would be delivered from death.

5. Safe in the house - 2:18-21

Just as Noah and his household were in the Ark (Genesis 7:1) and believers are in Christ (Romans 8:1), Rahab's and her family's safety depended on being inside. *"Whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we will be guiltless. And whoever is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him."*

How reminiscent this is of Passover night in Egypt when the only safety lay in being in the house which had the blood on the lintel. Is it coincidence that the cord in

Rahab's window was a scarlet one? It has been said that the theme of redemption through the blood runs through the Bible just as a red thread runs through the ropes of the British navy.

Are you safely "in Christ"? The apostle Paul wrote, *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus* (Ephesians 2:4-6).

Rahab sent the spies away and quickly bound the scarlet cord in the window. She made her deliverance certain. If you have any doubts concerning your salvation, will you make certain right now by repenting of your sins, opening your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, and confessing that He is your Savior and Lord? If you have questions or doubts concerning your salvation, ask your discussion leader for a Disciplers Confidence Letter which explains how to have the assurance you need.

The writer to the Hebrews in the "Hall of Faith", Chapter 11, wrote, *By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace* (Hebrews 11:31). Faith was the basis of salvation then as today, for as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe on His Name (John 1:12).

C. Place in God's Kingdom

1. Mentioned in the New Testament - James 2:25; Hebrews 11:13

Rahab and Sarah are mentioned three times in the New Testament, more than any other Old Testament women. Rahab the harlot is quite a contrast to Sarah the wife of the venerable patriarch of the faithful, Abraham. However, they are sisters in faith. Rahab, no less than Sarah, grasped the promises of God and staked her life on them. We have seen that she is mentioned in James 2:25 and Hebrews 11:31. She is also one of only five women mentioned in the genealogy of Christ (Matthew 1).

2. Mentioned in Christ's Genealogy - Matthew 1:5

Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab. By faith the pagan Canaanite prostitute gained entry into God's chosen people and further, into the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah. She married into the nation of Israel, perhaps even marrying one of the two spies. Ruth, another non-Israelite, married Rahab's descendant Boaz and also gained honorable mention in Matthew 1.

Jesus said, *"Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother"* (Matthew 12:50). Rahab made it into God's family by believing what she knew of Him and acting upon her faith.

III. Report of the Spies - Joshua 2:22-24

A. Return to Camp - Joshua 2:22-23

The two spies followed Rahab's advice and remained in the mountains for three days while the king's guards searched for them. Then they crossed back over the Jordan River.

B. Report to Joshua - Joshua 2:24

The spies excitedly reported to Joshua all that had happened. It must have been with great joy they exclaimed, *"Truly the LORD has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us."* In their minds victory was assured. The land was theirs. All that remained was to go obediently forward with God and see Him *"do wonders"* (Joshua 3:5) as He gave them victory.

Joshua had known it would be so. He had known it for forty years. The problem was not what God would do or what the enemy would do, but what God's own people would do. God's will was clear and His power unquestioned. It is His people who fail through unbelief in His power and promises. It is when we step forward in faith, dare for Christ, and take risks of faith as Rahab did, that God comes through and vindicates our faith by victory, answers to prayer, and fruitfulness.

Applications

1. What risk of faith will you take in obedience to God? Is there a responsibility in your church, a position in ministry, or some other calling God is urging you to accept? When will you take that step of faith and serve Him?
2. Which of God's promises have you laid hold of? How have you staked your life on them?
3. Is there someone in your household who needs advice that you have been reluctant to give? Will you humbly pray and speak the truth in love?"
4. Who do you know who has not heard the wonder of the scarlet cord, the blood of Christ, running through the pages of the Bible? Who will you tell of God's great deliverance and miracles?