

Joshua 02 - Rahab & the Two Spies

I. Israel's conquest of Canaan (Joshua 1:1—12:24)

(1) Preparations for the conquest of Shittim (Joshua 1:1—2:24)

(C) Israel's spies spy out Jericho (2:1-24)

Joshua 2

(C) Israel's spies spy out Jericho (2:1-24)

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 entered the house of a **prostitute** whose name was Rahab, and rested there.

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.

1 After this, Nun's son Joshua sent two men from the Acacia groves as undercover scouts. He told them, "Go and look over the land. Pay special attention to Jericho." So they went out, came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab, and lodged there.

1 And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.

- "...two men as spies secretly" - spies, scouts, messengers or witnesses

— Their job was to explore the area where the Israelites would enter the Land, especially Jericho

— Their objective was to determine when and how to attack, not whether or not to attack (such as at Kadesh-Barnea)

— Why 2 spies? 2 is the number of witness (Deut 17:6; 19:15)

— The two men were young (6:23)

- "...Shittim" - as far as Moses got (Num 25:1); more at 3:1

- "...Jericho" - *Bet Yerah*, "House of the Moon God"

— 5 miles west of Jordan, 7 miles north of the Dead Sea; capital of the Amorites, and probably the dominant city of Canaan

— It is possibly the lowest city on earth, at about 750 feet below sea level

- "...prostitute" - *zanah*, Josephus called Rahab an inn-keeper, but the Hebrew word clearly refers to a common prostitute

— This is confirmed in Heb 11:31 and James 2:25, both which use the term "harlot" (*porné*)

— The house of a prostitute may seem strange at first, but there were actually two good reasons for this selection: (1) Rahab's house was part of the construction of the wall around the city, so it was more accessible and provided an easier means of escape; (2) strange men at a harlot's house would not raise any suspicion.

2 But it was told to the king of Jericho, saying, "Behold, men from the sons of Israel have come here tonight to spy out the land."

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

2 Then the king of Jericho was told, "Look! Israeli men arrived tonight to scout out the land."

2 And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country.

- He apparently had counter-espionage resources who were on their toes!

— They also knew where they had gone: to Rahab's "house"

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 spy out all the land."

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."

3 So the king of Jericho sent for Rahab and ordered her, "Bring out the men who came to visit you and lodged in your house, because they've come to scout out the entire land."

3 And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country.

- The fact that Jericho is just north of the ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah makes it likely that the king knew of the judgment of their wickedness

4 But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them, and she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from.

4 But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them, and she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from.

4 Now the woman had taken the two men and hid them. So she replied, "The men really did come to me, but I didn't know from where they came.

4 And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were:

5 It came about, when *it was time* to shut the gate at dark, that the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them."

5 It came about when *it was time* to shut the gate at dark, that the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them."

5 At dusk, when it was time to close the city gates, the men left. I don't know where the men went. Go after them quickly, and you might overtake them."

5 And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them.

Situational Ethics

(1) She was commended for her faith, not her conduct. (Spiritual maturity is a gradual process. Even John Newton, who composed Amazing Grace, kept slaves for some years after first receiving Christ; etc.) Becoming saved is just the beginning.

- She was saved by faith, not for being free of sin. How about you?
- Though she had come to faith in Yahweh, her moral life had not yet undergone radical change

(2) The more complex problem deals with war, undercover assignments, etc. Can a Christian be a spy? Or an undercover detective?

- Are there occasions in which deception is essential?
- Lying is a more serious sin in some circumstances than in others, but it is always a sin (Ex 20:16; Lev 19:11; Deut 5:20; Prov 12:22)
- After all, this was war. Abraham and Isaac resorted to deception (Gen 12:10-20; 20; 26:6-11), as well as David (1 Sam 21:2)

- It is interesting that Rahab is referred to in the NT as a harlot, but never a liar. Her lie is never mentioned; it is "blotted out." Her sin was not overlooked; it was forgiven.

— David took five loaves of the Tabernacle shewbread for his men (1 Sam 2) which was prohibited for common use; though it was not lawful, they were blameless (Matt 12:3-6)

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.

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.

6 But she had taken them up to the roof and had hidden them among stalks of flax that she had laid out in order on the roof.

6 But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof.

- Flax was on the roof to dry. She was industrious (Cf. Prov 31:13).

7 So the men pursued them on the road to the Jordan, to the crossing places; and as soon as those who were pursuing them had gone out, they shut the gate.

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.

7 So the men pursued them along the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan River. As soon as the search party had left, they shut the city gate after them.

7 And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate.

- Assuming that the spies went back to the Israelite camp, the men of Jericho pursued and searched all along the road from the city to the Jordan, about 5 miles

8 Now before the spies lay down, she came up to them on the roof,

8 Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof,

8 Before the scouts had lain down, she went up to them on the roof

8 And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof;

9 and said to the men, "**I know** that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have despaired because of you.

9 and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you.

9 "I'm really convinced that the LORD has given you the land," she said, "because we're overwhelmed with fear of you. All the other inhabitants of the land are demoralized at your presence,

9 And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.

- "...I know" - Rahab had faith before their visit

- The terror among Israel's enemies was promised (Gen 35:5; Ex 15:15-16; 23:27; Deut 2:25; 11:25; 28:10)

— It's interesting to note that Yahweh had proved Himself more powerful than any other claimants to deity. The irony of the situation was the fact that Israel's enemies recognized this, but Israel did not.

10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you **utterly destroyed**.

10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.

10 because we heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Reed Sea right in front of you as you were coming out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan River—to Sihon and Og—whom you completely destroyed.

10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.

- Sihon and Og: previously defeated east of the Jordan (Num 21:21-35; Deut 2:30-37; 3:1-8; see note in 3:10)

- "...utterly destroyed" - *herem*, the technical term for the practice of completely destroying the spoils of war as a way of consecrating them to a deity (Cf. 6:17)

11 When we heard *these reports*, **our hearts melted** and no courage remained in anyone any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth below.

11 When we heard *it*, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

11 When we heard these reports, we all became terrified and discouraged because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath.

11 And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

- "...our hearts melted" - portrays utter despair; at Kadesh-Barnea 40 years earlier, it was Israel who feared. Now, it is the Canaanites who were afraid.

— The conquest of the land was prophesied to Abraham "when the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Gen 15:16). It would seem to be 40 years overdue! Moses had also alluded to the wickedness of these nations (Deut 9:4-5).

— Whether you are reviewing the wickedness before the flood of Noah (Gen 6:5,11-12), or Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:20-33), or the attitude of our world today, God's judgment is certain and timely (Luke 17:26-30; Rev 19:11-16). Rahab never questioned the justice of that, as some do today.

- The spies must have been amazed at her knowledge of Lord Himself (Cf. Matt 28:18)

— With no Sabbath, no Scriptures, she appears to have been regenerated before the spies came to her house (2:9,11)

— The fact that her lifestyle was not yet righteous illustrates the great depth of God's grace and His gift to her of faith

— Scan carefully the list in Heb 11, and consider what they all had in common. With whom did Abel, Enoch, and Noah have spiritual communion? Who encouraged and emboldened

Elijah, Daniel, Nehemiah? They had to walk alone.

— Abraham had to leave his family. Moses “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.” Ruth left her home and her own people.

— “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself...” (Mark 8:34; Luke 14:27)

- Rahab’s faith was well placed. Faith is only as good as its object. She believed on one God, not the polytheism of her culture; she believed in a personal God who could work on behalf of those who trusted in Him.

— She believed in the God of Israel, who would give the Land to His people

— Not a god of one nation or one land, but the God of heaven and earth...an awesome God! She knew; she feared; she received.

— Rahab was under condemnation and destined to die: she was a citizen of Canaan (Deut 7:1-3). She was a Gentile, outside the covenant mercies (Eph 2:11-13). If ever a sinner experienced the grace and mercies of God (as in Eph 1:1-10), it was Rahab.

— Although surrounded by a culture in opposition to God, she made her choice. Just as you and I must.

The critic declares that the God of the OT was a great big bully, that He was cruel and barbaric. When God gave the people of Canaan 420 years to repent, in my opinion, that is long enough. But God extended the time by 40 more years and saw to it that they heard how He had revealed Himself by delivering His people from Egypt. God did not destroy a people that had not heard about Him. He gave them ample opportunity to turn to Him. My question, Mr. Critic, is—how much longer do you think God should have given them?

Gentile Brides

Husband	Wife
Adam	Eve
Isaac	Rebekah
Joseph	Asenath
Moses	Zipporah
Salmon	Rahab
Boaz	Ruth
Christ	Church

...all have no death recorded!

See [7 Gentile Brides](#) for explanations on how each is a type of the Church.

12 Now then, please swear to me by the LORD, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father’s household, and give me a pledge of truth,

12 Now therefore, please swear to me by the LORD, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's household, and give me a pledge of truth,

12 Now therefore, since I've treated you so kindly, please swear in the name of the LORD that you'll also be kind to my father's household by giving me this sure sign:

12 Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token:
- She looks after her family (1 Tim 5:8)!

13 and spare my father and my mother, and my brothers and my sisters, and all who belong to them, and save our lives from death."

13 and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death."

13 Spare my father, my mother, and my brothers and sisters, along with everyone who belongs with them so we won't be killed."

13 And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.

- Note that she is single. She will later marry Salmon, a prince of Judah (Ruth 4:18-22; 1 Chr 2:11-12)

— Salmon's father was Nahshon, a prince of the tribe of Judah (Num 7:12)

— Rahab will give birth to Boaz, the kinsman redeemer of the Book of Ruth, who will link Bethlehem to the house of David

— It is likely that the shepherd's fields that the angels visit at the birth of Christ were the fields of Ruth and Boaz

- Thus, Rahab is mentioned in the family tree of the Messiah! (Matt 1:4-6)

— A harlot in the genealogy of Christ?! Indeed; all in His line were sinners needing a Savior! We all stand in Rahab's place in the sight of the Holy God! If we are as faithful as she was, we are destined to become His Bride!

— Both Rahab and Ruth, both in the genealogy of Christ, are both a type (and a pledge) of the calling of the Gentiles. God is a God of all nations.

14 So the men said to her, "Our life for yours if you do not tell this business of ours; and it shall come about when the LORD gives us the land that we will deal **kindly and faithfully** with you."

14 So the men said to her, "Our life for yours if you do not tell this business of ours; and it shall come about when the LORD gives us the land that we will deal kindly and faithfully with you."

14 So the men told her, "Our life for yours—even to death—if you don't betray this mission of ours. Then when the LORD gives us this land, we'll treat you graciously and faithfully."

14 And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee.
- Note the "when," not "if"—that's faith speaking
- "...kindly and faithfully" - same expression used by Eleazar when pleading with Laban and Bethuel for permission to take Rebecca for a bride for Isaac (Gen 24:49)

15 Then she let them down by a **rope** through the window, for her house was on the city wall, so that she was living on the wall.

15 Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall, so that she was living on the wall.

15 So she let them down by a rope through the window, since her house was built into the town wall where she lived.

15 Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall.

- "...rope" - *chebel*, a cord, rope, a measuring cord or line; secondary meaning is pain, sorrow, travail

- The convenient location of her house was not an accident (Acts 17:26)

- Escaping by a cord down the wall also happened to David (1 Sam 19:12-17) and Paul (Acts 9:25; 2 Cor 11:33)

Three Conditions for Sparing Rahab

(1) She had to make her home known to the Israelites when they attacked ("tie this cord of scarlet thread in your window," v18)

(2) She had to assemble her family into her home before the battle ("gather to yourself...your father's household," v18)

(3) She had to keep the mission of the spies a secret ("if you tell this business...we shall be free from the oath," v14,20)

16 And she said to them, "Go to the hill country, so that the pursuers will not encounter you, and hide yourselves there for three days until the pursuers return. Then afterward you may go on your way."

16 She said to them, "Go to the hill country, so that the pursuers will not happen upon you, and hide yourselves there for three days until the pursuers return. Then afterward you may go on your way."

16 She told them, "Go out to the hill country, so the search party won't find you, and hide for three days. After that, you may go on your own way."

16 And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your

way.

17 And the men said to her, "We *shall be* exempt from this oath to you which you have made us swear,

17 The men said to her, "We *shall be* free from this oath to you which you have made us swear,

17 The men replied, "We'll be free from our commitment to you to which you've obligated us

17 And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear.

18 unless, when we come into the land, you tie this **cord** of scarlet thread in the window through which you let us down, and gather into your house your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father's household.

18 unless, when we come into the land, you tie this cord of scarlet thread in the window through which you let us down, and gather to yourself into the house your father and your mother and your brothers and all your father's household.

18 when we invade the land, if you don't tie this rope made with red cords in the window through which you let us down, and if you don't gather your father, your mother, your brothers, and all of the rest of your father's household into your house.

18 Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee.

- "...cord" - *tiqvah*, line, rope; also means hope, things hoped for, outcome

— This "line" or "scarlet cord" (Cf. v15) was the means of identification the spies would use

— Rahab and her family were saved by their faith in the God of Israel and not by faith in the rope. Faith in a token of the covenant is religious superstition.

19 And it shall come about that anyone who goes out of the doors of your house outside *will have* his blood on his own head, and we *will be* innocent; but anyone who is with you in the house, his blood *will be* on our head if a hand is *laid* on him.

19 It shall come about that anyone who goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood *shall be* on his own head, and we *shall be* free; but anyone who is with you in the house, his blood *shall be* on our head if a hand is *laid* on him.

19 Everyone who leaves through the doors of your house into the street will be responsible for his own death, but we'll be responsible for anyone who remains with you in the house if even so much as a hand is laid on him.

19 And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in

the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him.

- The only safe place in Jericho was Rahab's house, protected by the "scarlet cord" (Cf. Passover, Ex 12:7,13,22-23; City of Refuge, Num 35:26-28)

- God spared the lives of Rahab and her household because of her faith (Cf. Heb 11:31)

— Any of Rahab's relatives, who had chosen to gather with her before the Israelite siege, would have done so because of their faith in God's promises through the spies

— Thus, the deliverance of Rahab and her family depended on believing a promise from God

20 But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be exempt from the oath which you have made us swear."

20 But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be free from the oath which you have made us swear."

20 But if you report this incident, we'll be free from the oath to which you've made us swear."

20 And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear.

- It is remarkable that the messengers were able to make promises without having to refer to Joshua. They were ambassadors with full power to act on behalf of their leader (Cf. John 20:21,23).

- Note, also, "deals" were prohibited (Deut 7:2). She was, indeed, saved by grace.

21 She then said, "According to your words, so be it." So she sent them away, and they departed; and she tied the **scarletcord** in the window.

21 She said, "According to your words, so be it." So she sent them away, and they departed; and she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

21 "Since you put it that way," she replied, "I agree. After she sent them on their way and they had left, she tied the red cord in the window.

21 And she said, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window.

- "...scarlet cord" - *tiqvah*, cord; secondary meaning: hope, expectation, things hoped for
— In v15, the Hebrew term is *chebel*, a cord, a rope, thus, a measured portion, etc. The cord of Rahab may be more symbolic than is commonly recognized.

— This "scarlet line of redemption," in another sense, began with the coats of skins in Gen 3, to Abel's offering in Gen 4, and continues all the way to the Throne of God in Rev 5 as "the Lamb as it had been slain" receives the scroll with seven seals. Ever since the early church, this scarlet cord has been taken as a sign of the blood of Christ, and paralleling the Passover lamb.

22 So they departed and came to the hill country, and remained there for three days, until the pursuers returned. Now the pursuers had searched for *them* all along the road, but had not found *them*.

22 They departed and came to the hill country, and remained there for three days until the pursuers returned. Now the pursuers had sought *them* all along the road, but had not found *them*.

22 The scouts left for the hill country and remained there for three days until the search party returned. The search party searched the entire road, but was unable to find them.

22 And they went, and came unto the mountain, and abode there three days, until the pursuers were returned: and the pursuers sought them throughout all the way, but found them not.

- The "hill country" was the mountainous region west of Jericho, containing deeply eroded hills and isolated canyons

— The spies were evidently absent from the Israelite camp for a total of three days (v22; Cf. 1:11; 3:2)

23 Then the two men returned and came down from the hill country, and they crossed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun. Then they reported to him all that had happened to them.

23 Then the two men returned and came down from the hill country and crossed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they related to him all that had happened to them.

23 Later, the two men returned from the hill country, crossed over the Jordan River, approached Nun's son Joshua, and told him everything that had happened to them.

23 So the two men returned, and descended from the mountain, and passed over, and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all things that befell them:

- It is interesting that the divine protection afforded them did not preclude the use of available means at every step. Let us remember that our "eternal security" includes availing ourselves of the safeguards that God has hedged about us: (continue to) abide in Christ! We need to heed His warnings and avoid that which would destroy us (1 Cor 9:27; Acts 27:31).

24 And they said to Joshua, "The LORD has indeed handed over to us all the land; furthermore, all the inhabitants of the land have despaired because of us."

24 They said to Joshua, "Surely the LORD has given all the land into our hands; moreover, all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before us."

24 They reported to Joshua, "The LORD really has given the entire land into our control. The inhabitants of the land have melted away right in front of us!"

24 And they said unto Joshua, Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.

- This is exactly what Joshua and Caleb had reported 38 years earlier!
- Prophesied in the Song of Moses (Ex 15:14-16; Cf. Rev 6:16-17)
- But...they weren't ready to deal with Jericho yet. They had some "unfinished business" to take care of first.

The spies violated God's explicit command that none of the people living in the land were to be spared (Deut 7:1-6; 20:16-18). Rahab, however, turned to God and sought deliverance. Her experience is proof of the gracious saving purpose of God. His overarching decree is that "everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved" (Joel 2:32). This is one of the most dramatic examples of grace in the OT and is set in bold relief by the questionable aspects of Rahab's profession and conversion.

The salvation of Rahab is an example of what God would have done for others also. The king and the other citizens of Jericho knew all that she knew, but they did not turn to Israel's God for mercy. The fear that drove her to beg for mercy drove them in their stubborn rebellion. Accordingly, the others are called "the disobedient" in Heb 11:31. Contrast the Canaanites with the response of the Ninevites in Jonah's day.