

## THE CANVASSING OF JERICHO

### *Rahab and the Spies*

#### Joshua 2

Chapter two is a beautiful picture of the gospel message.

- **Joshua**...his name means *the Lord is salvation*.
- **Jericho**...a picture of a *stronghold*...and the world waiting for *judgment* and *destruction*.
- **Two spies**...God's messengers going out *proclaiming that judgment is coming*.
- The *gospel message* offering the *good news of redemption*.
- **Rahab**...one who *believes*...one exercising *faith*. One expressing their *faith in a Redeemer and Savior*. One asking for *grace*.

**Joshua** was *one* of the *two* spies who had originally explored the land of **Canaan** *forty years* earlier (**Numbers 13-14**). Now, as he viewed the land that God had promised **Israel**, it was necessary for him to make preparations for entering the land by securing information in order to lead **Israel** across the **Jordan** to occupy the land.

#### I. THE VIRTUE IN SCRIPTURE: (vs. 1-7)

**Spies** (vs. 1)...the term for **spies** comes from the same word as *foot*. These "*footers*" weren't only spies. In **II Samuel 15:10**, they announced **Absalom** as king. Thus, they could *disseminate information* as well as *gather it*.

**Secretly** (vs. 1)...**Joshua** learned an important lesson from his experience at **Kadesh-Barnea** (**Numbers 13-14**). He now concealed the spy mission from the **Israelites**.

**Shittim** (vs. 1)...also known as **Acacia Grove**. It was located *7 miles east* of the **Jordan River** opposite **Jericho**. **Shittim** was the last stop for **Israel** before crossing the **Jordan**. This was also the place where **Israel** had been since **Balaam's** failed attempt to curse them (**Numbers 22:1; Numbers 25:1**).

**Go view the land, especially Jericho** (vs. 1)...the word **go** is identical to *they left*...indicating that they *obeyed immediately*.

**Rahab** (vs. 1)...From the time of **Josephus** to the present, some biblical writers and historians have attempted to soften the situation by arguing that **Rahab** was now only an *innkeeper*. But the New

Testament specifically refers to her as a *harlot* and a *prostitute* (**Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25**). Not only was she an *immoral woman* but she was an **Amorite**. (**Genesis** and **Numbers** list the people living in **Canaan** and the **Amorites** were among the worst).

God using such an immoral person like Rahab to fulfill His purposes in no way impugns His righteousness. Instead, this incident even more intently serves to convey His *mercy* and *grace*.

Even though **Rahab's lies** are *recorded* here in Scripture, it doesn't mean that God *condones* her *lying*...even for what appears to be a good purpose.

God could have kept those **two spies** safe without Rahab's lie. Remember when the men of **Sodom** came to **Lot's** house to engage the two angels who had been sent to warn and rescue **Lot** and his family. The men were struck with *blindness*... "*so that they wearied themselves trying to find the doorway*" (**Genesis 19:11**).

As a matter of fact...*lying* is *condemned* numerous times in the Bible:

**Exodus 20:16**

**Proverbs 12:22**

**Ephesians 4:25**

**Hebrews 6:18**

**Leviticus 19:11**

**Proverbs 14:5**

**Colossians 3:9**

**I John 2:21**

**Proverbs 6:16-17**

**Proverbs 26:28**

**Titus 1:2**

So, to excuse **Rahab** for *lying* is to *condone* what God *condemns*. This isn't the first time lies have been recorded in Scripture...and it wouldn't be the last.

- **Abraham**...lied *twice* about **Sarah** being his sister (**Genesis 12:13; Genesis 20:2**) (actually, she was his half-sister).
- **Isaac** (**Genesis 26:7**)...lied saying that **Rebekah** was his sister.
- **David**...lied to **Ahimelech** the priest about why he was running away from **Saul** (**I Samuel 21**).

**Behold, men from the sons of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land** (vs. 2)...obviously the city was on high alert knowing that **Israel** was camped opposite them across the **Jordan**.

**The king of Jericho sent word to Rahab saying, "Bring out who have come to you, who have entered our house, for they have come to search out all the land"** (vs. 3)...

Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from (vs. 4)...Rahab was a *compulsive liar*. She lied with such smoothness.

Rahab is a beautiful picture of how God *transforms a life* to His glory. **Matthew 1:5**, shows what God did with this prostitute. She became an ancestor of Jesus. She was the *great-great grandmother* of **King David**. Only God can work a miracle like that. She's also listed in **Hebrews 11** commending her for her *faith*.

Others God used with a colored past:

- Paul...a *zealot*.
- Matthew...a *tax collector*.
- Mary Magdalene...*delivered from seven demons* (**Luke 8:2**).

## II. THE VICTORY THROUGH SCRIPTURE: (vs. 8-11)

The victory for the **children of Israel** had already been won by God...even before they exiled themselves in the *wilderness 40 years* earlier. It just took them those *40 years to claim that victory*.

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 (vs. 9)...The terror of you...*fulfills the promise* of **Exodus 23:27** and **Deuteronomy 2:25**.

*"This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the peoples everywhere under the heavens, who, when they hear the report of you, shall tremble and be in anguish because of you."*  
~Deuteronomy 2:25

We have heard (vs. 10)...The people of **Jericho** had heard what had happened *40 years* earlier. They had been waiting *40 years* for them to come. Can you imagine waiting *40 years* for something to happen? The *worry*...the *stress*.

They had heard about:

- The *plagues in Egypt* (**Exodus 7-12**).
- The *opening of the Red Sea* (**Exodus 14**).
- The *drowning of the Egyptians* (**Exodus 15**).
- The *defeat of Sihon and Og, the two mighty kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan* (**Numbers 21**).

Then **Rahab** declares her *faith* in Israel's God...**For the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath** (vs. 11)...

Rahab *believed*, trusting in His *power* and *mercy*. And that *faith saved her*.

People ask how people in the Old Testament were *saved*. They were *saved* the same way someone today is saved...*by grace through faith*.

## III. THE VICARIOUS PICTURE IN SCRIPTURE: (vs. 12-24)

Dealt kindly (vs. 12)...Heb. *hesed*, found about *250 times* in the Old Testament. It means *steadfast loyalty*, or *faithful love based on a promise, agreement, or covenant*. Sometimes the word is used of *God's covenant love for His people*.

Rahab's request was that the spies make a *hesed agreement* with her and her father's household, just as she had made a *hesed agreement* with them by protecting them and seeing that their lives were spared.

The response of the spies was immediate and decisive. **It shall come about when the Lord gives us the land that we will deal kindly and faithfully with you** (vs. 14).

As the spies prepared to go, they confirmed the agreement in **verses 17-20**, and stated the *three conditions* Rahab must abide by:

- Her house must be *marked by a scarlet thread hung from the window*. The *scarlet thread* enabled the invading **Israelites** to identify the house they were to spare.
- Rahab and her family were to *remain in the house during the attack* on Jericho.
- The spies emphasized that they would be free of this oath of protection if Rahab *exposed their mission*.

**Cord of scarlet thread** (vs. 18 and 21)...a *scarlet thread* was always *connected in the Old Testament to the idea of putting away sin and its consequences* (**Leviticus 14:4, 6, 51; Numbers 19:6**). A *scarlet thread* was no different than the *blood of the Passover* (**Exodus 12:7, 13**)...it's *an emblem of salvation* completed by the *blood of Christ*.

**Rahab** was *saved by faith* (**Hebrews 11**) yet was *justified by her works* (**James 2:25**).

They departed and came to the hill country...the pursuers had sought them along the road, but had not found them (vs. 22)... About a *half mile west* of Jericho are *limestone cliffs* about *1500 feet high, honeycombed with caves*. This was a perfect place for the *two spies* to *hide for the three days*.

When they returned to their camp at **Shittim**, they reported to **Joshua**. Their conclusion...

**Surely the lord has given all the land into our hands; moreover, all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before us (vs. 24)...**

How different their report was from the report of the *ten spies* at **Kadesh-Barnea** who said, "*We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us*" (**Numbers 13:31**).

#### THINGS WE CAN LEARN:

- Trust God in your most *difficult circumstances*. Don't lean on your own *understanding*. You don't have to lie...trust God to be at work.
- Don't live your life based on the *narrative* of Scripture...but on the *principles* taught through Scripture. Just because it's recorded, doesn't justify it. Scripture doesn't allow for *situational ethics*!
- Don't be *defined* by your past. Let God *transform* your life into a testimony that will give Him *glory* and you great *joy*.