

The Book of Joshua



Jericho – City of Palms

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Bible Study – Good Shepherd Lutheran Church – Collinsville, Illinois

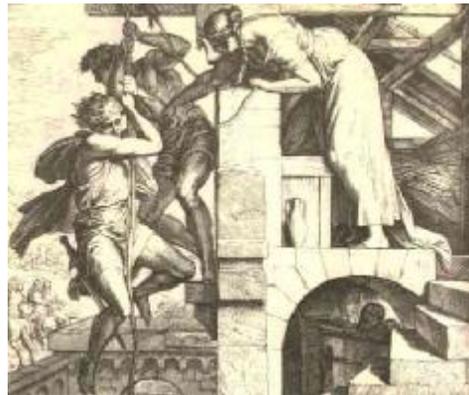
Chapter Two

Joshua Sends Two Spies 2.1-7

1. Rahab

What do we know about Rahab?

Innkeeper: The Law Code of Hammurabi (18th Century B.C.) states: "If conspirators meet in the house of a [woman wine-seller], and these conspirators are not captured and delivered to the court, the [wine-seller] shall be put to death.



Prostitute: Josephus and other Jewish commentators tried to avoid the scandal of spies going to the house of a prostitute. But the spies stayed on the roof and Rahab "went up" to them (2.8).

2. Jericho

Why was Jericho Afraid?

Shutting the Gate: In Biblical times cities were an important defense against invaders. Built upon mounds with fortified walls, they were able to repel armies. The gate was especially guarded with care. These fortifications however would never stop God. How do people today try to "shut the gate" on God's judgment?

An Important City: It was 800 feet below sea level. It was important for its pleasant winter climate, abundant

water supply, and for its location on an important trade route.



Oldest Fortification Structure in the World: Stone Tower at Jericho

Destruction? The debate about the archeological evidence for the destruction of Jericho goes back and forth. But one interesting finding showed that the city appeared to suffer destruction even though it had ample stores of grain. This would fit with the fact that the city fell in 7 days without a long siege that would have depleted food stores.

Was it a sin for Rahab to lie?

- 3. Situation Ethics:** Lying in this case is like killing during a war. As it serves the high purpose of saving lives, so it cannot be viewed as a sin. St. Augustine calls this an "obliging lie," because a person is forced to lie for the sake of an innocent person's welfare. The mid-wives in Exodus lied to Pharaoh (1.15-21) to save the lives of the baby boys.



Was Rahab a believer?

4. **Rahab and Jesus:** Rahab recognizes the judgement of God and seeks His help through the spies. In so doing she helps enable Israel to accomplish its goal. Amazingly she becomes an important part of the ultimate plan for Israel to bring forth the Messiah. In Matthew 1.5 she is listed as one of the ancestors of Jesus. (More on this topic below!)

Rahab's Faith and Canaan's Fear 2.8-14

5. **Rahab's Confession:** She practically confesses the first article of the Apostles' Creed: "for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath" (2.11). Four times she uses the word "LORD" or *Yahweh*. She also uses the technical term *cherem* "devoted to the ban" (2.10). In Hebrews 11.31 she is upheld as a woman of faith. In James 2.25 she is recognized along with Abraham as one who was justified by works (motivated by faith).

6. **Jesus & Rahab:** Later another Canaanite woman would plead before the greater Joshua (Matthew 15.21-28). Luke 7.34 says that Jesus was "a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" Rahab appeals to *chesed*. This very important word refers both to God's grace and to sacrificial love motivated by God's grace. It is often translated "mercy."



What comfort does this give us? What challenges does it present?

It is a comfort that God will forgive all sinners by grace. We have been given the most comforting message to share with the world.

It is a challenge because sometimes we avoid the really vile sinners. Could it be said of you, as it was of Jesus, that He was a "friend of sinners"? We need to be careful that we do not insulate ourselves from the brokenness of this world. At the same time we know it is a thin line to walk in this world without being tempted by it!

7. The *cherem*: Canaan was under the *cherem* of the LORD (2.10). This word refers to something that is devoted for destruction. Chapter 12 lists 31 Canaanite kings. All of them were probably subservient to Egypt. When they heard that Israel had destroyed Egypt and was now advancing to destroy them, their hearts melted.

Why didn't the rest of Jericho believe?

8. Why some and not others? This question has troubled Christians for centuries. Trying to answer it always runs amuck because we look for something in ourselves... Our good works or decision for Christ to distinguish us from the lost. But it is best to leave the question alone. Those who are saved are saved by grace. Those who are lost are lost by their own rejection of God.

The Spies Escape 2.15-24

9. "They went that way..." Rahab misled the soldiers indicating that they went out the gate to the main road. Instead she let them down through the city wall and told them to hide out for three days. The spies were totally dependent on Rahab.



The Judean Wilderness East of Jerusalem

10. **The Scarlet Cord:** Rahab and the spies agree to a carefully worded oath. Rahab and her family will be spared as long as she displays the scarlet cord and as long as her family stays in her house. The imagery points us back to the Passover where the blood was placed on the door posts and to the cross where the blood of Christ was shed for the salvation of all. It is interesting that the Hebrew word for "cord" is also used for "hope."

How does God challenge us to live in hope?

11. **More than conquerors (Romans 8.37):** We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. We have many challenges today in our own "Canaanite" like culture (immorality, violence, unfaithfulness, and apostacy). We depend completely upon God's promises written in the blood of Christ.

And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; ²⁶ "men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the

powers of heaven will be shaken. ²⁷ "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near." (Luke 21.25-28)