

The Book of Joshua

Lesson 2: Rahab and the Spies at Jericho -- Joshua 2:1-24

Picture a city built to keep people out. Jericho sat behind walls so thick and so high that the men who lived inside felt safe, sealed off, untouchable. And yet, somewhere within those walls, a woman named Rahab lay awake at night with a secret pressing on her heart. She had heard the stories. She knew what the God of Israel had done at the Red Sea and to the kings on the other side of the Jordan. While the soldiers polished their weapons and the king bolted his gates, Rahab was quietly coming to a conclusion the rest of the city refused to face: this God is real, and He is coming, and there is no wall thick enough to keep Him out.

Now imagine you are one of the two spies Joshua has sent across the river. You slip into a doomed city as strangers, your hearts pounding, looking for any shred of intelligence about the people you are about to face. And of all the doors in Jericho, you end up at the house of a woman whose name and reputation would have made a respectable Israelite blush. You are exposed, in danger, far from home, and the only person willing to risk her life to shield you is the last person anyone would have expected God to use. That is how grace often works. It shows up where we least expect it, in people we have already written off.

We tend to read the conquest stories and assume the line between the people of God and the people outside it is a hard, bright wall. Israel on this side, the Canaanites on that side. But here, right at the threshold of the Promised Land, God reaches across that wall and pulls a Gentile woman to safety by a scarlet cord. He does it before a single trumpet sounds at Jericho. Before the walls fall, before the battle is fought, God has already begun gathering in an outsider who simply believed. The story of the conquest opens, of all places, with a story of rescue.

Maybe that is why we need this chapter. Most of us know something about being on the wrong side of a wall. We know what it is to feel disqualified by our past, to wonder whether God could ever have a place at His table for someone like us. Rahab's house, built into the very wall of a city marked for destruction, becomes a picture of refuge for anyone who will trust the Lord and tie on the scarlet cord. As we walk through Joshua 2, do not watch it from a safe distance. Walk into Rahab's house. Listen to her confession. And ask the Lord what kind of faith He is calling out of you.

Group Discussion: Rahab had only heard reports about the God of Israel, yet she acted on what she heard while her whole city ignored the same news. Why do you think the same evidence moved one heart to faith and left an entire city unmoved?

Personal Reflection: Is there a part of your past that you fear has disqualified you from being truly used by God? How does Rahab's story speak to that fear?

Read Joshua 2:1-24

Study Questions

1. When the king of Jericho demands that Rahab hand over the spies, she hides them and points the search party in the wrong direction (Joshua 2:3–7). Look closely at verses 9 through 11, where Rahab explains why. What had she heard about the Lord, and what conclusions about Him had she drawn? What does her confession reveal about how God makes Himself known even to those far outside the covenant?
2. Rahab said, ‘as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt’ (Joshua 2:11). The whole city heard the same reports, yet only Rahab let what she heard reshape her life. Where have you heard the truth about God clearly but kept it at arm’s length, refusing to let it change the way you actually live?
3. Rahab’s confession reaches its high point in verse 11: ‘for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.’ Compare this with Deuteronomy 4:39. What is Rahab declaring about who the Lord is, and why is it remarkable that this confession comes from a Canaanite inside a condemned city rather than from Israel?
4. Rahab risked her life for two men she had just met, acting on a conviction she could not yet fully see proven. When has following God required you to take a real risk before you had all the assurance you wanted? What did you learn about Him in that moment of stepping out?
5. Rahab does not simply ask to be spared; she pleads for her father, mother, brothers, sisters, and all they have (Joshua 2:12–13). What does her concern for her whole household reveal about the heart of true faith, and how does this echo the way God deals with families throughout Scripture?

6. Rahab tied the scarlet cord in her window and gathered her loved ones under her roof, doing everything in her power to bring them to safety (Joshua 2:18-19). Who are the people in your life that you long to see brought to safety in the Lord, and what are you actually doing to gather them in?
7. The spies tell Rahab her household will be spared only if the scarlet line is bound in the window and her family stays inside the house (Joshua 2:17-20). Why does God so often attach His promises of rescue to a clear, visible sign that must be trusted and obeyed? What does this pattern teach us about the nature of saving faith?
8. Rahab had to wait days, even weeks, between tying the cord and the day the walls finally fell, trusting a promise no one else could see. Where in your life are you being asked to keep trusting a promise of God during the long, quiet stretch before you see it kept?
9. The New Testament returns to Rahab three times. She is listed among the heroes of faith (Hebrews 11:31), held up as proof that living faith acts (James 2:25), and named in the very lineage of Jesus the Messiah (Matthew 1:5). Drawing these passages together, what do they teach us about how God receives the believing outsider, and how does Rahab's place in Christ's family tree display the reach of His grace to all nations (Galatians 3:8-9, 26-29)?
10. Look back across the whole of Joshua 2, from Rahab's confession to the scarlet cord in her window. Name one specific way the Lord is using this story to form Christ in you. What is He asking you to believe about His grace, and what is He asking you to do in response, this week?

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Hebrews 11:31, Rahab is honored among the faithful because she believed and welcomed the spies in peace; James 2:25, her faith is shown to be living and real because it acted to protect God's messengers; Matthew 1:5, Rahab is named in the genealogy of Jesus, a Gentile woman woven into the line of the Messiah; Deuteronomy 4:39, the very confession Rahab makes, that the Lord is God in heaven above and on earth beneath; Galatians 3:26–29, in Christ the dividing wall is gone and all who belong to Him are heirs of the promise to Abraham.

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