

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
12-28-22

Joshua 2

Joshua Sends Forth Spies – Verse 1

¹ Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. “Go, look over the land,” he said, “especially Jericho.” So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

2:1 Why did Joshua send the spies secretly? As far as he knew, he would be attacking a heavily fortified city using conventional warfare tactics. He needed strategic information about the city for the upcoming battle. But he also knew that this might draw criticism from the other leaders. After all, the last time spies were sent, the report they brought back caused disastrous problems (Numbers 13:1–14:4). While he did not want to move ahead without information, he also did not want to cause the people to stumble and question his wisdom and ability to lead the nation.

2:1 Why would the Israelite spies stop at the house of Rahab, a prostitute? (1) It was a good place to gather information and have no questions asked in return. (2) Rahab’s house was in an ideal location for a quick escape because it was built into the city wall (2:15). (3) God directed the spies to Rahab’s house because he knew her heart was open to him and that she would be instrumental in the Israelite victory over Jericho. God often uses people with simple faith to accomplish his great purposes, no matter what kind of past they have had or how insignificant they seem to be. Rahab didn’t allow her past to keep her from the new role God had for her.

Rahab Hides And Protects The Spies – Verses 2-7

² The king of Jericho was told, “Look, some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land.” ³ So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: “Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land.” ⁴ But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, “Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from. ⁵ At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, they left. I don’t know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them.” ⁶ (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.) ⁷ So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.

2:4-5 Was Rahab justified in lying to save the lives of the Israelite spies? Although the Bible does not speak negatively about her lie, it is clear that lying is sin. In Hebrews 11:31, however, Rahab is commended for her faith in God. Her lie is not mentioned. Several explanations have been offered: (1) God forgave Rahab’s lie because of her faith; (2) Rahab was simply deceiving the enemy, a normal and acceptable practice in wartime; (3) because Rahab was not a Jew, she could not be held responsible for keeping the moral standards set forth in God’s law; (4) Rahab broke a lesser principle—telling the truth—to uphold a higher principle—protecting God’s people.

2:4-5 There may have been another way to save the lives of the Israelite spies. But under the pressure of the moment, Rahab had to make a choice. Most of us will face dilemmas at one time or another. We may feel that there is no perfect solution to our problem. Fortunately, God does not demand that our judgment be perfect in all situations. He simply asks us to put our trust in him and to do the best we know how. Rahab did that and was commended for her faith.

2:6 Flax was harvested in the fields and piled high on the rooftops to dry. It was then made into yarn, which was used to make linen cloth. Flax grows to a height of three or four feet. Stacked on the roof in bundles, it made an excellent hiding place for the spies.

Rahab's Confession Of Faith – Verses 8-14

8 Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof **9** and said to them, “I know that the LORD has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. **10** We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. **11** When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. **12** “Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign **13** that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them—and that you will save us from death.” **14** “Our lives for your lives!” the men assured her. “If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the LORD gives us the land.”

2:8-10 Many would assume that Rahab—a pagan, a Canaanite, and a prostitute—would never be interested in God. Yet Rahab was willing to risk everything she had for a God she barely knew. We must not gauge a person's interest in God by his or her background, lifestyle, or appearance. We should let nothing get in the way of our telling people the Good News.

2:11 Rahab recognized something that many of the Israelites did not—the God of heaven is not an ordinary god! He is all-powerful. The people of Jericho were afraid because they had heard the news of God's extraordinary power in defeating the armies across the Jordan River. Today we can worship this same powerful, miracle-working God. He is powerful enough to destroy mighty, wicked armies, as he did in Jericho. He is also powerful enough to save us from certain death, as he did with Rahab.

2:12-13 That you also will show kindness to my father's house: Rahab's desire to see her family saved, and the length she went to save their lives, shows that her love should be noticed, as well as her faith.

2:12-13 Swear to me by the Lord: This shows that Rahab longed for assurance by asking for an oath. She wanted to leave her sinful life and culture and go with God's people.

Rahab's Salvation: The Scarlet Cord – Verses 15-21

15 So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. **16** She said to them, “Go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there three days until they return, and then go on your way.” **17** Now the men had said to her, “This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us **18** unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your

house. ¹⁹ If any of them go outside your house into the street, their blood will be on their own heads; we will not be responsible. As for those who are in the house with you, their blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on them. ²⁰ But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear.” ²¹ “Agreed,” she replied. “Let it be as you say.” So she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

2:15 In Joshua’s day it was common to build houses on city walls. Many cities had two walls about 12 to 15 feet apart. Houses were built on wooden logs laid across the tops of the two walls. Rahab may have lived in such a house with a window that looked out over the outside wall.

2:15-20 Bind this scarlet cord in the window: This was the signal to the army of Israel that the people in this home were to be spared. Despite Rahab’s desire, despite her faith, despite the promises of these spies, she would have perished unless she put her trust in a blood-red cord cast down from her window. Without the scarlet cord, she could not have been saved.

2:15-20 And she bound the scarlet cord in the window: Rahab immediately put her faith into both the identification and safety of the scarlet cord. She also trusted in the ones who made the promise about the scarlet cord (according to your words, so be it). According to your words, so be it: Rahab’s destiny was to marry one of the princes of Judah and be found in the lineage of King David and Jesus Himself.

Joshua would be a savior for Rahab, but a judge of the rest of Jericho. In the same way, Jesus is a savior for those who trust Him, but a judge for those who reject Him.

Mission Accomplished – Verses 22-24

²² When they left, they went into the hills and stayed there three days, until the pursuers had searched all along the road and returned without finding them. ²³ Then the two men started back. They went down out of the hills, forded the river and came to Joshua son of Nun and told him everything that had happened to them. ²⁴ They said to Joshua, “The LORD has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us.”

22:23 And told him all that had befallen them: Considering how God will have them conquer the city of Jericho, how did the information from these spies help in the battle for Jericho? Jericho was one of the strongest and most heavily fortified cities of Canaan; if Israel could conquer it, the whole land would be before them — but how did this reconnaissance help them with the eventual battle? It didn’t help them at all!

22:24 Truly the Lord has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us: The reconnaissance mission didn’t help with military strategy, but it did help in encouraging the faith of these spies and the whole nation. This was far more important than a good battle plan.

22:24 There was another purpose at work in sending the spies: to save Rahab. In this, we see the extent God goes to in bringing one woman and her father’s house to salvation — someone seemingly “impossible” to save. You may know some people that seem “impossible” to save, but God’s hand is not too short or too weak to save people like Rahab, and He can work in amazing ways to bring salvation.