

Conquest of Canaan – Rahab and the Spies Josh. 2:1-24

Introduction:

Joshua 2 is a very critical chapter in the history of Israel. They have been promised “a land flowing with milk and honey” from the very beginning (Ex. 3:8). They have heard the speech of Moses in the wilderness, as Israel camped on the east side of the Jordan River. They have defeated the two kings that were on this side of the river (Og and Sihon). God has promised to be with Israel and Joshua as they fight for this land. Now they are ready to take this land and claim it for their own.

I. Retell the story of Rahab (2:1-24).

- A. The spies come to Rahab (2:1-7).
 - 1. Joshua sends two spies to spy out the land in secret (2:1).
 - 2. They come to the house of Rahab (2:1).
 - 3. While they were there, the king of Jericho found out about these spies; and he sends to Rahab and demands that she turn over the spies (2:2-3).
 - 4. Rahab lies to the men of Jericho and tells them that the spies had already departed her house (2:4-5).
 - 5. The spies were, in actuality, on the roof of her house (2:6).
 - 6. The men of Jericho ran after the spies of Israel in an attempt to capture them (2:7).
- B. Rahab makes a deal with the spies concerning her life (2:8-22).
 - 1. Rahab tells the spies that the people of Jericho are terrified of Israel because of what they have heard (2:8-11).
 - 2. Rahab begs the spies not to kill her and her family when they destroy Jericho (2:12-13).
 - 3. The men agree to this, telling Rahab to hand a scarlet rope from the window (2:14-20).
 - 4. Rahab agrees to this and sends the spies into the mountain (2:21-22).
- C. The spies return to Joshua and report of all that they have learned (2:23-24).
 - 1. The spies are greatly encouraged because of what they have learned in Jericho.
 - 2. As Israel is ready to fulfill the promise of God and obtain this land, we can imagine the excitement of what the spies have learned.

Practical Application:

II. Some look at this story and ask, “Why did God reward Rahab for lying?”

- A. Notice why the answer to this question is important.
 - 1. Some will use this story to show that God is not consistent in dealing with sin.
 - 2. Some will also use this passage to try and show that the Bible contradicts itself, thereby making it a book that is not from God.
- B. God has always used people, just as they were, to further His cause.
 - 1. Notice some other individuals that God used that God used to further His purpose.
 - a. **Pharaoh (Ex. 5-12)**.
 - 1) **Ex. 5** – Moses comes to Pharaoh and demands him to let Israel go free.
 - 2) Pharaoh refuses to let Israel go, and God uses his stubbornness to show His power.
 - 3) God did not force Pharaoh to be stubborn, but He did use that stubbornness for the greater purpose.
 - b. **The prophecy of Balaam (Num. 23-24)**
 - 1) Balak, the king of Moab, called for Balaam to come and prophecy against Israel.
 - 2) Balak offered Balaam great riches and treasures if he would curse Israel.
 - 3) At first, Balaam is told not to go by God.
 - 4) However, Balaam kept asking God until God allowed Balaam to go.
 - 5) Even though Balaam was stubborn and more concerned with fame and riches, God used him to bless the children of Israel four times.
 - c. **Shalmaneser, king of Assyria (II Kgs. 17); and Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (II Kgs. 24-25)**
 - 1) God used both of these kings to subdue Israel and Judah.
 - 2) God was using these kings to punish His people for their disobedience.
 - 2. The point is this: God used individuals and nations, whether they were moral or immoral, to fulfill His purpose.
 - 3. God has always given us “free moral agency.”
 - a. God allows us to do what we want to do.
 - b. He does not force us to do anything.
 - c. In this case, God simply used what Rahab had done to further His cause; He did not force her to lie.
- C. It is also important to note that Rahab was not known as a moral person.
 - 1. Remember that she was a harlot (also known as a prostitute) (**2:1**).
 - 2. If she was willing to be a harlot, she was also willing to lie on any given occasion.
 - 3. The question could easily be asked of God, “Why did You use a prostitute to fulfill Your purpose?”; instead of, “Why did you reward Rahab for lying?”

- D. While it is true that God never condemned Rahab for lying, it is also true that the Bible never says that God rewarded her for it.
1. She was rewarded for her faith in hiding the spies.
 2. She was not rewarded for lying.

III. Rahab had great faith in God.

A. Rahab was known throughout history because of her faith.

1. She is mentioned in **Heb. 11**, a chapter that is sometimes called “Faith’s Hall of Fame.”
2. Despite her lifestyle, Rahab had faith in God.

B. The faith of Rahab was an active faith.

1. In order for Rahab to have true faith, she had to put that faith into practice.
 - a. We see the fulfillment of her faith in Josh. 6, when Jericho was destroyed.
 - 1) Joshua’s command to the people: “Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent” (**6:17**).
 - 2) Joshua’s command to the spies: “Go into the harlot’s house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her” (**6:22**).
 - b. It was her faith that saved her.
 - 1) **Heb. 11:31** - By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.
 - 2) **Js. 2:25** - Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?
2. The context of **James 2:14-26** teaches us a great deal about active faith.
 - a. Question: “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?” (**Js. 2:14**).
 - b. The entire idea of James 2 is to show that “faith without works is dead” (**Js. 2:26**).
3. Rahab put her faith in God first, even above her own life and the life of her family.
 - a. If the men would have discovered that she had hidden the spies, they would have killed her immediately.
 - b. It was because of her faith (her active faith) that she was willing to hide the spies on her roof.

C. We are also able to see how she obtained such great faith.

1. Notice **Josh. 2:10-11**.
 - a. She heard what God had done.
 - b. She heard of what had happened in Egypt.

- c. She heard of what had happened to the two kings of the Amorites on the east side of the Jordan River.
 - d. When she heard of these things, she understood that the God of Israel was the only true God.
2. Today, we get our faith in the same way.
- a. We have to hear the word of God to obtain that faith.
 - 1) **Rom. 10:17** - So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
 - 2) We hear that word by listening to it being taught; and also by reading it for ourselves.
 - b. This is the only way that we can have the faith that Rahab had.
3. When we hear that word, we must be obedient to it.
- a. **Mt. 7:24-27** - Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: {25} and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. {26} Now everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: {27} and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.
 - b. **Lk. 11:27-28** - And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!" {28} But He said, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

Conclusion:

We can learn a great deal from the faith of Rahab. She was willing to put God first no matter what happened to her. We must have that same kind of faith today.