

Joshua Chapter 2 and part of Joshua Chapter 6

Introduction:

Rahab shelters two “spies” – see Hebrews 11 v 31 and James 2 v 25 (“messengers”), showing that Rahab acted in faith and was justified by her deeds. Despite her label as ‘Rahab the prostitute’, she is included in the genealogy of Christ (see Matthew 1 v 2 to 5) – she married Salmon, and her son Boaz married Ruth in his role as *לִוְיָאֵל* (*go-el*, or kinsman-redeemer); their son Obed was King David’s grandfather.

Jericho’s original name was *Bet-Yerah*, ‘House of the Moon God’; it lay some 10 km west of the river Jordan and about 10 km north of the Dead Sea, not far from the ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah. Jericho was the capital of the Amorites and probably the dominant city of Canaan...

Rahab hides and protects the spies (Joshua 2 v 1 to 7)

This episode takes place during the three days Joshua commanded the nation to wait on the banks of the Jordan (Joshua 1 v 11). God has a special purpose for this delay. We are not told who the two spies are – Jewish tradition suggests they may have been Caleb and Eliezer the High Priest (though they are described as “young men” in Joshua 6 v 23).

Why did they go to the prostitute’s house? Though awkward, it was a perfect place to hide and remain anonymous, all the more necessary because the city was on strict guard. In the culture of that day, there was a strong tradition of hospitality. If someone was a guest in your house, you had a duty to protect them and care for them. But Rahab went much further – she put her own life on the line for these men...

- Did Rahab do the right thing when she lied to the king’s men (v 4, 5)?

The Bible simply reports Rahab’s lie; it does not praise or excuse it. Perhaps if she had beforehand determined in her heart to not lie in obedience to God, he would have made a way for her to preserve the life of the spies without lying. Rahab’s lie is not justified, but it does show courage – consider that she was a pagan sinner in a culture wholly given over to the worship of false gods and immorality, with no previous contact with the word of God or the things of God. It is interesting that in the New Testament she is known as ‘Rahab the prostitute’, not ‘Rahab the liar’...

But this story still poses a moral dilemma: did Rahab do the right thing? What would you have done? This was war-time – what about saints like Corrie Ten Boom who hid Jews in her house in Holland during the Nazi occupation in the Second World War? Can a Christian be a spy? Remember that in war-time David resorted to deception and broke the Law when he and his companions ate consecrated bread, yet Jesus declared him blameless – see 1 Samuel 21 v 1 to 6 and Matthew 12 v 3 to 6...

Rahab’s faith (Joshua 2 v 8 to 21)

- How did Rahab demonstrate her faith? How did her faith kindle the faith of the spies? What can you say about Rahab’s love for her family (v 12, 13)?
- What parallel is suggested by the house protected by the scarlet cord? See Exodus 12 v 21 to 23.

The scarlet cord in the window (v 18) would be the signal to the army of Israel that the people in Rahab’s home were to be spared. Despite Rahab’s wishes, 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. As early as the first century, commentators such as Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr, Ireneaus, Origen and others saw this scarlet cord as a symbol of the blood of Jesus...

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Mission accomplished (Joshua 2 v 22 to 24)

- How successful was this as a mission of military reconnaissance?

The reconnaissance mission might not have helped 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. But 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...

Rahab after the fall of Jericho (Joshua 6 v 15 to 25)

- How does this sequel show God's faithfulness to Rahab? How does the story show the faithfulness and trustworthiness of Joshua and the young men who had been spies?

Rahab and her family coupled their faith in the God of Israel with a willingness to follow through on what God's messengers told them to do: stay in the house with the scarlet cord hanging from the window.

"But Rahab the prostitute and her father's household... Joshua saved alive" (v 25): here we see a contrast between judgment and salvation. All of Jericho heard about the God of Israel (Joshua 2 v 8 to 11), but only Rahab and her family responded positively in faith towards God with that knowledge...