

## Joshua Chapter 2

This chapter deals with the expedition of the two spies sent out by Joshua to go and spy out the land, especially the city of Jericho. Unlike the twelve spies sent out 40 years earlier, these two spies are not named. Like Caleb and Joshua, however, they carried out their task faithfully and brought back a true report of their findings.

Jericho is a city that had to be taken by the Jews, as it stood in the way of their progress into the land. It is a picture of the world which always stands as a stumbling block and a hindrance to the people of God in all ages. After Jericho had been destroyed, Joshua placed a curse not only on the city itself but also on anyone who ever dared to rebuild it. Joshua 6:26 says, "Cursed be the man that buildeth this city Jericho". He would see all his children die in the attempt. This was fulfilled in the experience of a man called Hiel. He did rebuild the city – he laid the foundation in his first born, Abiram, and he set up the gates in his youngest son Segub. Thus the curse was fulfilled in this man who dared to rebel against the mind of God. Jericho is also mentioned in the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke's gospel. A certain man sets off on a journey from Jerusalem to Jericho. It was a downward road physically as well as spiritually, and on the journey the man fell among thieves.

The two spies came into the house of a harlot called Rahab, but their presence is made known to the king of Jericho. The king commands them to be brought but Rahab hides them under stalks of flax on the roof of her house. She then tells what appears to be an outright lie to the king. She said that they had been there but they had now left the city and advised the king to send men after them. The question must be asked, "Is it ever justified to tell a lie?" We know that Abraham told the same lie twice ie that Sarah was his sister and not his wife. This almost led to disastrous consequences, both in Egypt and in the land of Abimelech for both Pharaoh and the king might have taken Sarah to wife. Abraham might have excused himself by saying that it wasn't a lie for in reality Sarah was his half sister – the daughter of his father but not the daughter of his mother. Still, he didn't tell the whole truth, when the whole truth obviously made such a difference. Sadly, his son Isaac told the same lie in relation to Rebekah his wife, also in the land of Abimelech.

What does the law have to say about lying? One of the 10 commandments given by Moses was, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour". And what does the New Testament have to say? Paul writes in Colossians 3:9, "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds". In John's epistle, we are to walk in the light as He is in the light. We are to live transparent lives.

But does the end ever justify the means? What about Genesis chapter 27 for example. Had not God said to Isaac and Rebekah regarding their twin sons that "the elder shall serve the younger". Despite being the younger twin, Jacob would become the more prominent of the two. Jacob and his mother contrived to get the blessing by deception and lies, but would God not have fulfilled His own word in His own way?

So, here in Joshua chapter 2, could not the Lord have saved the lives of the two spies without the intervention of Rahab?

However, in the remainder of the chapter, we discover why Rahab did what she did. She says to the two men, "I know that the Lord hath given you the land". Hebrews chapter 11 tells us that she said this by faith. Chapter 11:31 says, "By faith Rahab the harlot perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace". James also speaks of her in chapter 2:25 of his epistle. "Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" Some might have said of Rahab that she was a traitor to her own people, that she had betrayed her own city. But faith always puts God first. The same could also be said of Abraham

when he offered up Isaac. If Rahab put God before her city, was not Abraham putting God before his son, Isaac. In the eyes of men, he was guilty of attempted murder, but his works justified him by faith.

So how did Rahab come by this faith. She had heard how that, forty years earlier, God had brought the nation on dry land through the Red Sea. Pharaoh and his army on the other hand were drowned in that same sea. This same God preserved Israel for forty years in a wilderness, and when two kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og, resisted them, both were utterly destroyed. Rahab knew that God had given Israel the land of Canaan and who could stand in their way. Not even Jericho, with its great walls could resist a people whose God was the Lord.

Rahab also expresses what was in the heart of her fellow citizens. "Our hearts did melt because of you". The men of Jericho feared but they would still have resisted had they been able to. Fear is not the same thing as faith. The Lord said one day, "The demons also fear and tremble". The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, but it is only the beginning, not the end.

So what else produced this faith in the life of Rahab? She continues in verse 11, "For the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and in earth beneath. The God of Israel was not just another God, like the many gods of the heathen. He is God in heaven above. He is the one and only true God.

Having hidden the spies and having declared her reasons, she now makes a plea for herself and her family to be delivered from death. The two men gave their word, and Joshua commanded them to go and ensure the lives of Rahab and her family when the city did fall. Although the wall fell down flat, that part of the wall where Rahab lived was clearly spared the same desolation. Chapter 6:23 tells us that she came out of all her kindred. The woman not only had faith for herself, she had sufficient faith to persuade all her family that the only place of safety was in her home. She thus had more success than Lot who tried to persuade his two sons in law to accompany him and his two daughters and his wife out of Sodom. We read concerning these two men that Lot's words seemed to them as idle tales. How sad that an immoral woman like Rahab achieved more than Lot, the nephew of Abraham.

The spies put their own lives behind the promise given, "Our lives for yours". There was only one condition – "If ye utter not our business". This is repeated in verse 20 – "And if thou utter this our business, we will be quit of this oath".

Rahab lets the men down by a cord through the window of her house which was on the wall, and this same scarlet cord was to be bound in the window as a sign to the army of Israel that this home should be spared. Some see in this scarlet cord a picture of the blood of Christ shed at Calvary. We shelter under the precious blood for our salvation. One can also compare the cord to the blood of the lamb that was shed on that first Passover night in Egypt. The blood was spread upon the lintel and the door posts and those who were sheltered under the blood were saved. All those in Egypt not under the blood lost the firstborn of the home. In Jericho, only those within this home would be saved. Those outside it would perish.

The covenant having been agreed on both sides, she sent them away. On the advice of Rahab, they hid three days in the mountains until such time as the pursuers had given up and returned to the city. When the spies returned, they were able to confirm the fear in which they were held by the citizens of Jericho.

One can hardly close this chapter but comment on the place of Rahab in Jewish history. She was not just physically preserved in the city but she finds herself part of that lineage that would lead eventually to the Lord Jesus Himself. In Matthew 1:5 we read, "Salmon begat Boaz of Rachab, and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth, and Obed begat Jesse". Rahab became the mother of Boaz, the husband of Ruth.