

# Rahab the Harlot

## Women of the Old Testament—part 6

June 12, 2016

### DAY 1: Rahab's dilemma

1. The Hebrews are about to invade the promised land. Their first objective is the heavily fortified city of Jericho. Joshua, who took over after Moses' death prepares for the invasion.

*Joshua 2:1 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.*

*Joshua 2:2 The **king** of Jericho was told, "Look! Some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land."*

*Joshua 2:3 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."*

2. Rahab is suddenly met with a dilemma. The Hebrews spies are inside her house, and the king knows they entered her house! She must make a decision on the spot! Here are her options:

- a. Turn in the spies, save herself and her family from *immediate* execution for treason, but risk her family's and her deaths in the coming battle for Jericho.
- b. Lie about the spies, get caught and face immediate execution for treason.
- c. Harbor the spies, and cut a deal with the Hebrews, that they might spare her family from death. Will the spies and the Hebrew army honor this deal?

3. When confronted at your front door what would you have done and said to the king's agents?

4. Word had already come to Jericho about the Hebrew nation's exodus from Egyptian slavery, the destruction of the Egyptian army and several battles won against other kings on their way to the Jordan River. Rahab is already convinced that her city, Jericho, is doomed. On this belief, she believes her only chance of saving her family is to cut a deal with the Hebrew spies.

*Joshua 2:4 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."*

<sup>5</sup> *At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, the men left. I don't know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them."*

<sup>6</sup> *(But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.)*

5. What strikes you about Rahab's choice?

## DAY 2: Rahab's faith that aligns itself with life

1. The agents leave Rahab's house in search of the two spies.

*Joshua 2:7 So the men (king's agents) 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 (city) gate was shut.*

*Joshua 2:8 Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof<sup>9</sup> and said to them, "I know that the LORD has given this land to you 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.*

2. What has Rahab learned about the God of the Hebrews?

*Joshua 2:10 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.*

3. Do you get the sense that Rahab doesn't just "easy-believe" that God "exists," but that God really does not have all that much to do with daily life? Or do you sense that her belief in God is REAL, real enough to fully align her life with God?

*Joshua 2:11 When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.*

4. The events you just read about may be the only information Rahab has ever had about the God of the Hebrews, yet she is **clearly aligning her life** with what **she knows about God!**

5. Jot down what **you know** about God, below:

6. When you think of aligning your life with the God who is, how are you doing?

a. What areas of your life are pretty aligned with God and His will?

b. What areas of your life need to be aligned with God and His will?

### DAY 3: Rahab's deal

1. Rahab continues to talk to the two Hebrew spies she is harboring on her roof.

*Joshua 2:12 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*

*<sup>13</sup> 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."*

2. The spies realize they “dodged a bullet” when Rahab did not rat them out to the king’s agents to save her own hide.

*Joshua 2:14 "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."*

3. The spies and Rahab are on the same page.

*Joshua 2:15 So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall.*

4. Rahab shows her good faith but taking the chance of letting the spies go free, through the window of her house that is built into the city wall.

5. BEFORE they left, here are the details of their agreement.

*Joshua 2:16 Now she had 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."*

*Joshua 2:17 The men said to her, "This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us <sup>18</sup> 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.*

*<sup>19</sup> If anyone goes outside your house into the street, his blood will be on his own head; we will not be responsible. As for anyone who is in the house with you, his blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on him.*

*Joshua 2:20 But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear."*

*Joshua 2:21 "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.*

6. The scarlet cord hanging in the window, reminiscent of the red blood painted over the door of the families during the tenth plague, sparing the Hebrews’ first born from death.

7. What strikes you about Rahab in today’s verses?

#### **DAY 4: Rahab's day of salvation**

*Joshua 2:22 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.*

<sup>23</sup> *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.*

<sup>24</sup> *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."*

1. The time for invasion of the promised land had come. The time of mercy and delayed punishment for the inhabitants of the city-states had ended. Justice for rebellion and evil was finally coming.

2. After seven days of circling Jericho with the Ark of the Covenant, the walls of Jericho “come ‘a tumblin’ down,” as the old song goes.

3. The Hebrew army brought about the victory.

*Joshua 6:22 Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her."*

<sup>23</sup> *So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel.*

*Joshua 2:24 Then they burned the whole city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD's house.*

<sup>25</sup> *But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho--and she lives among the Israelites to this day.*

4. Rahab and her family had been spared the judgment of God due to Rahab's simple belief in God, and aligning her life with that belief.

5. When her extended family witnessed the destruction of their city, and that only they were spared due to Rahab's faith, what do you imagine happened to the members of her family?

6. This story may be shocking to you. God's judgment is not just a theological topic to ponder. Sin is serious, and creates far more misery than we can imagine. It robs us and those around us of the joy we can only know in pursuing God and living for Him.

7. In one sense, judgment is the reminder that we do not live in a world where we can do whatever we want without severe consequences. Is there some repenting for you to do?

## DAY 5: The lessons of Rahab the FORMER harlot

1. There are three important times when Rahab is mentioned in the New Testament. The first is in the genealogy of Jesus! (Please note: When reading Old Testament genealogies, there are times when not everyone is mentioned in a family lineage. There are names that may be “skipped,” so as to highlight the people actually named in the passage. An example would be in speaking of Mindy’s great, great-grandfather, a noted missionary in China in the late nineteenth century. If a biographer wanted to connect quickly Mindy’s connection back four generations, the writer could “paraphrase” the lineage by writing, James Graham, the father of Mindy Gatchell).

*Matthew 1:5 Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse,*

2. There are several “stunners” in the genealogy of Jesus. One is that several former prostitutes are included, like Rahab! It’s not what “Hollywood” would expect, but it reminds us of the deep well of God’s mercy and the transcendent power of God’s grace to transform us and make us new creatures!

*Hebrews 11:31 By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.*

3. The second verse we’ll look at is from Hebrews 11, often called “God’s Hall of Fame.” Hebrews 11 contains a long list of people who walked by faith in ways that inspire us to do the same. Why do you think Rahab is included in Hebrews 11?

4. The third verse we’ll look at is from the book of James.

*James 2:25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?*

5. Rahab’s faith is used by James to illustrate that just “faith,” if “faith” only means mental assent to God’s existence is of no use in salvation. The “faith” that saves is faith that takes God at His word regarding the necessity of repentance from sin. That kind of faith is going to be seen in some type of behavioral change, or in “works” –faith put into action that demonstrates the reality of saving faith.

6. As we close this week studying Rahab, I was struck that all of Jericho had heard about the Lord’s power through the Hebrew people, and yet only Rahab was willing to humble herself and seek the God of the Hebrews. Everyone else in Jericho heard the same message about God, but everyone else refused to humble themselves, let alone repent of their ways.

7. What will you remember most about Rahab?