



**Adult Sunday School Lesson Summary for January 11, 2009
Released on Wednesday, January 7, 2008**

"Rahab's Commitment"

Lesson Text: Joshua 2:1-4, 8-14; 6:22-25.

Background Scripture: Joshua 2; 6:22-25.

Devotional Reading: Hebrews 11:23-31.

Joshua 2:1-4, 8-14

1 And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into a harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.

2 And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither tonight of the children of Israel to search out the country.

3 And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country.

4 And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were:

.....

8 And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof;

9 And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.

10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.

11 And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

12 Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token:

13 And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.

14 And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the Lord hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee.

Joshua 6:22-25

22 But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her.

23 And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel.

24 And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord.

25 And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

TODAY'S AIM

After participating in this lesson, each student will be able to:

1. State the factors that caused fear for the Canaanites, but faith for Rahab.
2. Give a modern example of someone who has the godly courage of Rahab.
3. Describe how he or she will adopt Rahab's courage in one area of life.

Introduction

One of the favorite activities of many college students is touring with a musical group. The logistics for such tours are much tougher than the inexperienced onlooker could possibly imagine. There are not only concerts to prepare for but also numerous plans for everyone together.

Such events pale to almost nothing, however, in comparison to the movement of over two million people from one land to another. We cannot imagine the logistics involved in Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan. Nevertheless, in the case of a touring music group or of a relocating nation, the key to success is the commitment of the individual members of the group. Last week we noted the dedicated commitment to God of two midwives. This week another woman is the focus of our attention.

Lesson Background

The book of Joshua begins with the Israelite nation encamped in the plains of Moab, across the Jordan River from Jericho. That city was the first military objective in Canaan. It had been at least 120 years since the Egyptians began the oppression of Israel, as described in the previous lesson. During that time Moses had been born, and he had fled Egypt at the age of 40 (Acts 7:23-29). At the age of 80 (Exodus 3:10; 7:7), Moses was called by God to return to Egypt to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses died at the age of 120 (Deuteronomy 34:7), while the Israelites were camped in Moab (Numbers 21:20).

The stay in the plains of Moab lasted quite some time. During that interval the king of Moab sent for Balaam to come and curse Israel. It was at least a 400-mile trip one way to secure Balaam, and he did not come until the second appeal. These two trips thus required that the king's representatives travel no less than 1,600 miles (Numbers 22).

Israel also fought extensive campaigns against two major groups who lived on the eastern side of the Jordan (Numbers 21:21-35). These were against Sihon and the Amorites (the nearest group to the north and east; Deuteronomy 2:24-37) and against Og, the king of Bashan, an area east of Galilee. The latter conflict involved capturing 60 cities (Deuteronomy 3:4), and such campaigns take time.

A military census was taken at the end of the wilderness wanderings, with the total number of men available being 601,730 (Numbers 26:51). It seems to have

been a custom to keep a large part of the army on the home front, so a much smaller number was available for the conquests in the Transjordan area (that is, the area to the east of the Jordan River). Then came time to cross that river into the promised land (Joshua 3, 4).

Concealing the Spies (Joshua 2:1-4)

First a bit of reconnaissance is needed. The verses selected for this lesson yield a thrilling account of spying, intrigue, treason, courage, and hope. They primarily involve Rahab (a prostitute in Jericho), two unnamed spies, and Joshua.

1. Why did Joshua send two men to Jericho to spy? (Joshua 2:1)

The word *Shittim* represents a place in the plains of Moab. Joshua sent two men to look over the land to determine what he needed to do in order to capture the land. Joshua knew that God promised the new land to the Israelites. Joshua didn't send the spies out of unbelief. Rather, Joshua knew that he would have to do his part in capturing the land promised by the Lord.

We should note that Joshua sent the men in secret. In other words, Joshua didn't allow the other Israelites to know that he sent spies into the land. Memories of being one of the 12 spies about 39 years prior must be on Joshua's mind (Numbers 13:8, 16). Joshua remembered that when Moses sent spies into the promised land, ten of the twelve spies caused the nation to lose faith in the Lord over getting the land. Joshua wanted to ensure that in case the men had doubts about capturing the land, that it wouldn't spread to Israel and cause the nation to go back into the wilderness for another 40 years.

2. Why was Rahab's house a good place for the spies to stop?

The spies viewed Rahab's house as a place where they could "get lost." Rahab's house provided an opportunity for the spies to have shelter and some freedom. People go in and out of an harlot's house, and they would fit in with the normal traffic of her house. (Schaeffer, *Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History*, Crossway)

It is interesting that God uses many people who are often scorned or are weak spiritually to accomplish His ends. The list of such people includes Matthew (a tax collector), Gideon (a fearful person), Moses (a murderer and a refugee in a foreign land for 40 years), Jacob (a deceiver), and Jonah (a reluctant prophet).

The spies entered the house thinking no one would notice them. They would be wrong as word spread to the king of Jericho about their presence.

3. In what ways have you seen God use those considered "unworthy" to accomplish His purposes?

When we make a statement of the unworthiness of someone to be used by God, we are in fact sitting as a judge of God. Instead, we should give praise to God for the fact that He chooses to use *any* of us! The fact that He sent Jesus to die for us means that we all fall into the category of being unworthy.

God frequently uses those who appear to be unworthy by the standards of this world. First Corinthians 1:27-29 reminds us that God can use those who seem foolish, weak, base, and despised to demonstrate His wisdom, strength, and majesty. God accomplishes His will by using even those who reject Him; pharaoh is a prime example (Exodus 9:12). We want to make sure we don't fall into this category.

4. How did the King of Jericho respond when he heard that men from Israel had come? (vs. 2, 3)

Upon receiving word of the spies' presence in Jericho, he immediately sent word to Rahab to turn the men over to him. He explained that the spies were spying the

land, and their presence was a threat to national security. The king was thinking that Rahab would obey him out of her patriotic duty to her country.

5. What was Rahab's response to the king? (v. 4)

It is likely that Rahab and *the two men* are aware of the danger of the situation. Thus the precaution of hiding may already be accomplished. The hiding place is on the roof, under stalks of flax that are there to dry (Joshua 2:6, not in today's text).

Rahab chose to disobey the king. She responded by saying that the spies left her house and she didn't know where they went. Rahab's actions reveal that she had some understanding of the God of Israel. Though she had this understanding, she was not a part of the Israelite faith. We can then say that she wasn't aware of God's law. That does not mean that Rahab's lie was justified, but God can use a person's sin to bring about his purpose (cf. Rom. 8:28). That doesn't mean that God caused or even condone Rahab's lie, but God can turn the results of sin into His favor. We must also remember that God also forgives the sins of believers through the sacrificial system in the Old Testament, and by Christ's blood in the New Testament.

When Rahab was accepted into the nation of Israel, she would then learn about the law, and would have to change her ways, especially since she would be part of the lineage of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:5-6)

A Heartfelt Concern (Joshua 2:8-14)

6. What things did Rahab and others know about the Israelites, and what did this cause in Jericho? (vs. 8-11)

Rahab had significant knowledge of God since she expressed that He was giving the Israelites the land. She used the personal name of God, "Yahweh" (translated "Lord") in her statement. This is the personal name of the one true God. She spoke as if His plan was an accomplished feat. This reveals the strength of her faith in her early understanding of God.

She also said that the people of Jericho feared the Israelites greatly and that this fear was widespread over the whole land. Moses had foretold this fear at the Red Sea: "Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased" (Exod. 15:15-16).

Rahab used the word "terror" in describing how the people were feeling about the presence of Israel because terror had fallen upon them, the people were fainthearted; that is, they had lost their courage and were timidly watching and waiting to see what was going to happen next.

7. What special request did Rahab ask of the spies, and upon what she did base her request? (vs. 12,13)

Knowing that the Lord was going to conquer her land, she took action to try and take care of her family. She asks the spies to spare her and her family due to her kind actions towards them. Rahab expected the spies to feel sympathy towards her since she saved their lives by hiding them from the king.

She asked for an oath based on her kindness to these men. The Hebrew word translated "kindness" in verse 12 is *hesed* and is often translated "lovingkindness." "Among people, *hesed* describes a bond of loyalty such as is established between relatives, friends, or allies. An act of *hesed* is carried out by free choice in harmony with the relationship (Richards, Expository Dictionary of Bible Words, Zondervan). This word also expresses the unfailing love of God.

8. What is the difference between the ways Christianity and the world view the value of keeping one's word? How do we resist the world's viewpoint?

Most people like to consider themselves to be truthful and honest. Yet many will succumb to the postmodern viewpoint that it's important to keep one's word only as long as it "works." Yet our word is at the core of our being. Our faithfulness to our word is the basis of our integrity and reputation. Breaking promises, forsaking marriage vows, and using bankruptcy to get out of debt all are forms of failing to keep our word. To be a person of one's word demands that he or she first take time to consider all promises, vows, or contracts being entered into. Commit yourself only to those things you are fully persuaded are right and that you can honor.

9. Upon what oath did the spies assure Rahab of being spared? (v. 14)

The spies swore their lives that they would remember Rahab and spare her. If they failed to save her, then they would forfeit their lives. However, Rahab was required to keep the mission secret. Rahab was putting herself in immediate danger; if the king found out she was helping the spies, he would have had her put to death. Who knows what kind of torture the king would have had for Rahab for her treason.

Rahab knew that God had the power to deliver nations unto the Israelites. She also knew that God had the power to save her and her loved ones. We cannot fail to marvel at the level of faith she exhibited with a limited knowledge of God, especially when we compare how puny is the faith of many of God's children today who have known Him and His Word for many years.

A Promise Kept (Joshua 6:22-25)

10. What was the outcome for Rahab when Jericho was defeated? (vs. 22 - 25)

Chapters 3 – 6 describe the miraculous deliverance of Jericho into the Israelite's hand. After receiving unusual instructions from the Lord (Josh. 6:1-5), he commanded the people to do just as he had been told. After marching around the city repeatedly and finally sounding when told to do so, the people witnessed the amazing fall of Jericho's wall (v. 20). This enabled them to enter the city and completely destroy everyone in it (v. 21).

Joshua and the Israelites were faithful to the covenant promise given to Rahab. This happened before the city was looted and burned. Everything that was ordered to be destroyed, was, including all people other than Rahab's family. Everything that was not destroyed was put into the Lord's treasury (see Joshua 6:17-19).

11. How can our faith be effective for saving our own families?

We first have to make a distinction between physical and spiritual "saving." Rahab's act of faith led to the sparing of the physical lives of her family, but did it lead them to accept the God of Israel and thus save them spiritually as well? We don't know for sure, but the right actions of one can have a powerful influence on others.

This is especially so in regard to salvation and Christian living. Remember: God has no grandchildren. Each person must individually make a personal decision for Christ. Yet by example a Christian may influence a family member who is lost to come to Christ. Prayer is a powerful tool in this regard. Also see 1 Corinthians 7:14.

Conclusion

Hebrews 11:30,31 states that "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." In all human

generations, whether before or after Calvary, faith in God has been the deciding factor in salvation.

Practical Points

- 1.** We never know in whom God might be working to produce faith (Joshua 2:1).
- 2.** Those who recognize God's work will recognize and honor God's servants (vs. 2-4).
- 3.** God often confirms His word to us through other people (2:8-11; cf. 1:3).
- 4.** Faith entails a willingness to abandon previous loyalties and join God's people (2:12-14).
- 5.** We cannot expect God's blessing if we do not keep our commitments to others (6:22-23).
- 6.** Those who serve God's people are serving God, and they will be amply rewarded (v. 25).

Prayer

Almighty God, thank You for the examples of men and women who were prompted by their faith in the choices they made. Give us wisdom today to choose what is pleasing to You and in accord with Your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.

Thought to Remember

Our words acquit or condemn us.

Anticipating Next Week's Lesson

It has been mentioned that this was a time for miracles for Israel. Crossing the Jordan River on dry land was one of them. Everything centered on the ark of the covenant that accompanied God's people. Those carrying it stood still in water, and God stopped the river's flow. Joshua replaced Moses, and the delayed occupation of Canaan began. Study Joshua 3:1-13 "Commitment in Leadership" in anticipation of next week's lesson.

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