

Bright Beginnings part 3

We Have Heard About the Lord Your God

Joshua 2:1-24; focal verses 8-14

Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof [9](#) and said to the men, I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. [10](#) For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. [11](#) And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. [12](#) Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign [13](#) that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death. [14](#) And the men said to her, Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the LORD gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you.

Last Week

Series: Bright Beginnings
Topic: A New Rest
Proposition 2: Move Forward In Unity

This Week

Topic: A New Faith
Proposition 3: Move Forward in Faith

Last week we finished chapter one which focused on entering the promised rest unified and together. The land of the Canaanites had been promised to the children of Israel but they would have to go in and fight together to possess it together.

Today we continue at chapter two. Joshua sends two spies into the land to search out Jericho. The text for today describes their journey into the land, their time with Rahab, their sneaky escape out of the city, and concludes with their report to Joshua.

What I find very interesting is the fact that this whole chapter is unnecessary. The promise that had been given was that the land was theirs. The entire book of Joshua is about God fulfilling His promise to Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob and focuses on conquering the land that was promised. The spies were sent to search out the land and to come back and report on the land. The story could continue fine without this pause to focus on Rahab.

Imagine for a moment if we read the chapter without any reference to Rahab. We would only need to read 2:1 and 2:22-24. If you compare this with the first time spies were sent out to search the land, the comparisons would be identical.

First Israelite Reconnaissance Mission (Num 13)

- Moses sent our 12 spies.
- They were gone for 40 days.
- They came back with a bad report: We can't take the land. They're too big. We're afraid of them.

Second Israelite Reconnaissance Mission (Josh 2:1, 22-24)

- Joshua sent out two spies.
- They were gone for three days.
- They came back with a good report: We can take the land. God has given us the land. Everyone is afraid of us.

However, the author of the book of Joshua for some reason inserts this account of Rahab into the middle of this. Why include this story about Rahab? What is this story about?

Perhaps if we look at a diagram of the literary construction of the chapter we might have a better understanding of the central message the author is trying to communicate.

Literary Construction

Crossed Jordan from Joshua (1a)

Hidden in House (1b)

Pursued by king (2-3)

Protected by Rahab (4-7)

Rahab's confession (8-14)

Spies covenant (17-21)¹

Protected by Rahab (15-16)

Pursued by "pursuers" (22)

Hidden in Hills (22)

Crossed Jordan to Joshua (23-24)

¹ I have chosen to follow a chronological construction as opposed to a strictly textual construction. Even though verse 15 states she let the men down through the window, it seems most logical that the conversation of verses 16-21 actually took place before the men went out the window. It is unlikely that Rahab climbed down with the men to have this conversation and then climbed back up the wall to her house. The Bible will often give broad statements then fill in the details in subsequent verses (eg. the creation account is told in Gen 1 while more detail is given in chapter 2. See also 1 Kg 6:14 & following).

At the center of this chapter is Rahab's confession of faith and the covenant promise of salvation from the spies. At the heart of this passage is the gospel. This chapter is about being saved by faith. Rahab is the first Canaanite to trust in the God of Israel.

Was Rahab Hostess or Harlot?

The first verse of chapter two introduces us to Rahab. Who was Rahab? Who was this woman who welcomes these Israelite spies? We are told two things about her. First, that she has a house and, second, that she is a prostitute.

Joshua 2:1 And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, Go, view the land, especially Jericho. And they went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there.

Down through the years there has been some debate as to whether or not Rahab really was a prostitute. Josephus maintained that was an innkeeper or a hostess and not a harlot. The Targums (first century B.C. Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Scriptures) used a word (*pundeqita*) that meant innkeeper.² However, the Hebrew text used a word that (*zonah*) meant prostitute.

The two references in the New Testament Greek (Heb 11:31 & James 2:25) text (Πορνῆ) of Scriptures also uses a word that means prostitute. Charles Spurgeon said, "I am persuaded that nothing but a spirit of distaste for free grace would ever have led any commentator to deny her sin."³ I agree with the clear meaning of the words used in Scripture and with Spurgeon. It seems clear that Rahab was a prostitute.

Why Go to A Prostitute's House? (2:1)

The fact that she was a prostitute might have been the reason that the men chose her house. They presumably desired a means of entering the city in a way that would arouse the least amount of suspicion. Perhaps it was not usual for various men to be seen coming and going from Rahab's house.

Men of Israel Discovered (2:2)

Nevertheless, these men were detected and the king of Jericho was told, (2:2) "*Men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land.*" We are not told how they were discovered. I'm not convinced that it is profitable to speculate.

² Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua: The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1981) p. 69.

³ C.H. Spurgeon, in the sermon *By Faith Rahab* preached at The Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens, 1857. (Source: <http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0119.htm>).

The king sends word to Rahab's house. The literary tension builds. The king commands, (2:3) *"Bring the men out who have come into your house, for they have come to search out the land."* Rahab was prepared for this and she had hidden the men on the roof of her house.

Rahab Protects the Spies

Rahab tells a story (2:4-5) to get the guards quickly out of her hair. She told them that they were there but that they left the city as sun down. "If you hurry you can catch them."

I wonder if there was a moment of hesitation. Was there an exchange of looks? Did the guards think, "Is she lying? Should we search her house?" Was Rahab scared to death? Perhaps her profession had provided her enough experience at hiding her heart and concealing her emotions that the guards never doubted her.

It is treason to harbor spies who seek the destruction of the city in which you live. If they spies were found in her house, she would be killed. But it would appear that God was watching out for her.

Perhaps one of the guards said to the other, "She's right, if they just left, they won't know we're following so we can catch them. If they're still here inside the city, we'll post watch at the gate and catch them if they try to leave. We need to go now. Either way we'll get them."

The pursuers believe her. They run off chasing the wind.

Rahab takes a deep breath lets out a sigh of relief. They're gone. The danger has passed. walks up to the roof and has a conversation with the spies that will change her life forever.

At night, before you go to sleep don't you think about the events of the day?

It's as if the camera zooms in on this rooftop conversation under the stars. She comes up and tells the men they can come out from hiding. Then she has a heart to heart with them.

Joshua 2:8-14

Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof [9](#) and said to the men, I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. [10](#) For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. [11](#) And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. [12](#) Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign [13](#) that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death. [14](#) And the men said to her, Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the LORD gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully

with you.

Rahab Knows Something (v.9)

There is no doubt in her. She says, *“I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you.”*

She *knows* that the land has transferred ownership. She knows this and she believes this. The land has been sold. She knows the Lord has given the land to Israel. She’s heard about the promise that God gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. She’s been told about the history of Israel.

She also knows that fear of Israel has fallen on them and not just them, but “all the inhabitants of the land.” She’s talking about more than Jericho. She knows that all of Canaan has been handed over to Israel and all the peoples of the land are terrified.

This fear of Israel that she speaks of was the fulfillment of God’s promise. When Israel was delivered from Egypt God had promised that he would put the fear of them upon all the nations.

This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you on the peoples who are under the whole heaven, who shall hear the report of you and shall tremble and be in anguish because of you.
(Deut 2:25)

Here’s part of the song that Moses sang after being delivered from Pharaoh’s army and crossing the Red Sea on dry land.

Ex 15:14-16

*The peoples have heard; they tremble;
pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia.*

*15 Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed;
trembling seizes the leaders of Moab;
all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.*

*16 Terror and dread fall upon them;
because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone,*

Rahab’s words confirm this testimony. She believed God’s promise and that promise evoked fear.

Rahab Has Heard Something (v.10)

Why are they afraid? They are afraid because of what they have heard. Rahab tells the two men what she and all her people had heard.

For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. (2:10)

Forty-Year-Old News

They had heard of the wonders⁴ God had performed for Israel. They had heard about Egypt and the drying up of the Red Sea. It might be interesting to note this news is 40 years old. Egypt and Red Sea crossing had happened forty years before and yet Rahab remembers it. The news had affected her and perhaps even then it began to work on her heart.

They had also heard about Sihon & Og, the two Amorite kings. This would be more recent news and much closer to home, probably as close as ten miles away. They had heard that those two kingdoms were completely destroyed.

Melting Hearts

Hearing news like this had a devastating effect upon the people. Look at verse 11.

And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, (2:11)

Their hearts melted. Notice that Rahab includes herself in the melting heart syndrome. She said, “**our** hearts melted.”

The phrase translated “there was not spirit left in any man” in a similar construction is found in 1 Kg 10:5 to describe the Queen of Sheba’s response to seeing all of Solomon’s wealth. That verse says, “there was no more breath in her.” When they heard about Egypt, the Red Sea, Sihon, & Og, it took their breath away.

This is like coming home and finding out that Donald Trumpkin has just purchased the company that owns your mortgage. Everything’s fine for a day or two. Then you’re talking to your neighbor four houses down and he’s weeping because Trump just called said he’s calling in the remaining debt and if he can’t come up with the cash, then their out of house. As your walking back to your house there’s sickening queasiness in the pit of your stomach. As you are passing by the house two down from yours you hear the phone ring and then the crying and screaming begins. You wonder, “Is that Trumpkin? No, couldn’t be.” You walk in your door and the phone rings. You answer. “Hello.” The voice on the other end says, “Good evening. I’m a representative for the office Donald Trumpkin. He owns your house. We need the balance on the mortgage paid within 20 days.”

It takes your breath away. Jericho was facing a real pattern of certain destruction and now that destruction was knocking on the door. The heart of every man in Jericho melted.

⁴ See Ex 3:20; 7:3; 11:9-10; 15:11; Deut 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 26:8; 34:11.

She Confesses Something

Yet Rahab confesses something that no one else in Jericho did. The last half of 2:11 “...for the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.”

She confesses with her mouth that the God of Israel was God of all gods. She said, “He is God in heaven and on earth.” He is the sovereign ruler of the universe. There is only one God and He is the God of Israel.

Her heart melted when she heard the news, but she does something no one else does. She is willing to throw her life in with Israel and see if she can live.

Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign [13](#) that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.

She begs for her life. She says, I have helped you, now you help me. Give me a sign that you will save my life and the lives of my family and deliver us from death.

She knows her life is under condemnation. She knows death is certain. She knows that land belongs to Israel. That's why she's willing to help these men. She wants to live and she knows the only place life resides is in the camp of Israel. Death is everywhere else.

“Genuine faith never rests content with being convinced of the reality of God, but presses on to take refuge in God.”⁵

These men agree. 2:14 *“Our life for yours even to death: If you do not tell this business of ours, then when [not if] the Lord gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you.”*

This is the Great Exchange. Jesus exchanged His life for ours. He died so that we might live. He entered sin so that we might exit sin. He was broken so that we might be healed. He was wounded so that we could be strengthened. He loved us that much.

Do you believe this? Do you surrender to this? Is Jesus the love of your life?

⁵ Dale Ralph Davis, *Joshua: No Falling Words*, (Scotland, Christian Focus Publications, 2008), pp. 27.