

Minor Characters In Major Roles Lesson 8 – Rahab

“You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.”
James 2:24

- Visitors, prayer requests, prayer

Acts and Facts

- “I lived in one of the oldest cities in the world”
- “I married Salmon and had a son named Boaz, so I’m in the Messianic lineage of Christ”
- “Although I was a Amorite, I believed in the power of Jehovah, and was spared, along with my family”
- “I hid Joshua's spies on my roof”

Context (refer to map)

1. After 40 years in the wilderness, Israelites finally heading into **promised land**
2. Moses has died, and God has put **Joshua** in charge
3. Israelites are camped at **Shittim** (a.k.a. Abel-Shittim), which is about 15 mi E.S.E. of Jericho, just across the **Jordan**
4. Joshua decides that the **first raid** will be on **Jericho** <Read Josh 2:1>
5. This reading raises **many questions**:

Q: Why do you suppose Joshua sent spies? Didn’t he trust that the Lord would deliver?

A: He remembered God’s command to Moses (sending *him* and 11 others) (Num 13:1-2)

A: “*Trust in Allah, but tie up your camel*” We need to use the resources God gives us! Faith looks for the principles of Scripture that apply, gathers information, then based biblical principles and the facts, moves ahead trusting in Providence.

Q: Why do you suppose Joshua sent them secretly?

A: Joshua remembered his own “spy days” and how important it would be to keep a bad report under control. Remember, of 600,000 men over 20 years of age, only Joshua and Caleb entered the promised land (see Numbers 13, 14)

Jericho

1. **Oldest** inhabited city in the world
2. Strategic **location**—trade route control between Palestine and the East
3. Attacking here first was **smart** and **wise!** <Read James 1:5-6>
 - a. Just **5 miles** beyond the Jordan (easy access from Shittim)
 - b. One of most **formidable** fortresses in the land
 - c. Would give Israel a **strong foothold** in Canaan
 - d. **Split** the Canaanite forces (hinder **communication** and **supply lines**)
 - e. **Demoralize** the Canaanites
4. **Walled city** was heavily **fortified!**
 - a. Actually **two walls**, about **15 feet apart**
 - b. **Outer** wall was **6 feet** thick
 - c. **Inner** wall was **12 feet** thick

- d. Both walls were about **30 feet tall**
- 5. Walls were **linked** by houses built across the **top** (city was **very crowded**)
- 6. Very interesting **archaeological notes** concerning archeology and the excavation of ancient Jericho in the early 1930's in *Halley's Bible Handbook* published by **Zondervan** and *Willmington's Guide to the Bible* published by **Tyndale**

Rahab's Character

- 1. Bible mentions Rahab **eight** times
- 2. Six of those times she's described as a **harlot**. Clearly this is, and was, a **sin** to God.
- 3. Some "**theories**" have been floated about this
 - a. She was only an "**innkeeper**" and the term "harlot" is **misapplied**
 - i. **No!** The Bible never calls her anything else—clearly, **her character was not good**
 - ii. Some would have us believe that God **can't use sinners**, that folks have to "cleaned up their act" before God can work in their hearts
 - b. Corollary: She was formerly of ill fame, and only the stigma remained
 - i. We have no support for a "**sanitized**" version of her character—**she was a harlot**
- 4. Consider her **relative** status (and relative morals)
 - a. Countrymen were **utterly without morals**
 - b. Canaanites were so "far gone" that God ordered them **destroyed!**
 - c. Canaanite **priestesses** were public prostitutes
 - d. Rahab's profession was not considered as disgraceful as it would be today
- 5. Given her situation, she would have had **little understanding** that she was "**sinning**" even though we know she **believed** in and **feared** Jehovah (as Israel's **protector**)

The spies end up at "Rahab's Place"

- 1. Another question from verse 1:

Q: Why is it that the spies "*came into the house of a harlot... and lodged there?*"

A: The **providence** of God:

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." (Rom 8:28)

A: Also, they were using the **skills** God had given them (hey, they were spies after all!)

- a. Such houses had a lot of "**drop in**" traffic
- b. Their presence would be **less conspicuous**
- c. People there may have been willing to "**look the other way**" more easily

Rahab's Works

- 1. King finds out that spies have come to Rahab, so he sends for them <**Read Josh 2:2-7**>

Q: What has Rahab done here?

A1: She took a **stand** against the king of Jericho by hiding these "enemies of Jericho" (**treason!**)

A2: She **lied** to the king's men to protect them

A3: She sent the king's men on a **wild goose chase** to allow the spies to escape

Q: So she hid the spies and lied about it. Is **one** of these **worse** than the **other**?

A: Hiding the spies was treason, plain and simple. The Bible is silent about her lies.

Rahab's Faith

1. <Read Josh 2:8-11>
2. So, Rahab knew about Jehovah, as did other residents of Jericho
 - a. Israelites struck **fear** into the hearts of their enemies! They were **notorious!**
 - i. This was **prophesied** <Read Deut 2:25>
3. Look closely at **verse 9**:
 - a. "*I know...*"
 - b. Rahab really **believed** in Jehovah!
4. Her faith is **confirmed** in Hebrews <Read Heb 11:30-31>
 - a. Notice how **faith** is linked to **obedience**
5. James also mentions her faith <Read Jas 2:18-20, 24-26>
 - a. She had **Godly faith**—faith that causes **action** (even to the point of risking death)

Rahab's Request

1. <Read Josh 2:12-13>
 - a. She's not only thinking about herself, but her **family**
2. Notice the spy's reply <Read Josh 2:14>
 - a. They're pledging **their lives for hers** if she is not kept safe
 - b. Notice their **confidence** in Jehovah ("*when the Lord gives us the land*")

The Agreement

1. <Read Josh 2:15-20>
 - a. Rahab lived "**on the wall**" in one of those houses which bridged the two walls
 - b. Not surprising that she kept some rope near the window!
 - c. Different Hebrew words used for "rope" and "cord" (thread)
2. Scarlet cord holds much significance
 - a. Reminds us of the Passover (Exodus 12)
 - i. Blood on the **lintel** and **doorposts**
 - ii. **Death angel** would "pass over" the house, sparing the **first born**
 - b. Also reminds us of the **blood of Christ**
 - i. His blood marks us for **salvation**
3. Note the spies emphasis on her "doing her part" (vv. 14, 17-20)
 - a. Again, a **reminder** of how **Godly faith** really **works**

The Spies Escape

1. <Read Josh 2:21-24>
2. Rahab sends the spies **west** to the **hill country**, knowing the king's men would look **east** on the **roadway**
3. When they return to **camp**, Joshua hears the "**good report**"
 - a. Note the **confidence** of the spies

The Outcome

1. <Read Josh 6:1-5>
2. And that's exactly what happened! On the seventh day, the walls "came tumblin' down."
3. What about Rahab? She and her relatives were **saved!** <Read Josh 6:22-25>

The Lesson of Rahab

1. This is a beautiful **illustration** of God's **grace**!
 - a. He's no respecter of persons, but **accepts, forgives, and uses us** because of who and what **Christ** is, **not** who or what **we** are!
 - b. She had **faith**
 - c. God **spared** her
 - d. Included her in the **Messianic line** (ref: Matt 1:5)
2. Clearly God **could have chosen other miraculous methods** to deliver Jericho into Joshua's hands, **but he chose to use Rahab**
3. She had the type of **faith** that leads to **action**!
 - a. Her actions **justified** (acquitted) her in God's sight (ref: Jas 2:25)
4. She is **praised** for her faith, not condemned for **lying**
 - a. Similar to the **midwives** who were blessed for **refusing** to kill **babies** (ref: Ex 1:19-20)
 - b. She obeyed **GOD** rather than **men** (ref: Heb 11:31)

Characteristics of Rahab

1. Faithful
2. Justified
3. A doer, not just a hearer.