

CHAPTER 7, THE BATTLE BEGINS

TIMELESS TRUTH: FAITH IS THE VICTORY.

Israel had spent the last 40 years on a road to nowhere. A lot can change in 40 years. All of the people who were slaves in Egypt had died, except for two, Joshua and Caleb. Moses had died too. Joshua had been his right-hand man and he was Israel's new leader. The wilderness of disobedience and defeat was behind them now and a new generation camped at Canaan's edge.

A lot had changed during the wilderness years, but God had not. The promise He'd made to Abraham over 600 years before was about to turn into reality. The LORD spoke to Joshua saying, *"Be strong and courageous, for I am with you. Be careful to obey my law"* (p. 89). Joshua listened well. He had spied out the land as a young man and trusted God to give it to them as He'd promised. Now he sent two spies into Jericho to appraise the land. They were hidden in the house of Rahab, a prostitute who protected them from the king of Jericho. She boldly confessed her faith in the LORD as the one true God who had given the land to Israel. The spies responded to her faith by agreeing to save her whole family when they attacked Jericho.

This new generation of Israelites had heard the stories about crossing the Red Sea on dry land; now, their first steps into the Promised Land were taken across another patch of dry land when God parted the Jordan River – another highway leading into God's promise.

When they reached Jericho, the military strategy was unorthodox. The priests marched the Ark of the Covenant around Jericho's walls each day for six days. On the seventh day, they marched around the city seven times. Their parade concluded with the sound of trumpets and shouts as they completed a seventh circle around the city. Amazingly, the walls of Jericho collapsed! Jericho was destroyed and Rahab and her family were saved.

The land of Canaan was a place of conquest and victory for Israel. When Israel obeyed, God faithfully delivered her enemies into her hands. When they failed to trust Him, they missed out on the fulfillment of those promises. Even the temporary defeat at Ai caused by disobedience was later turned to victory when the people followed God's command. In the annihilation of entire cities, we see God's holy intolerance of sin. In the account of Gibeon, we see God's mercy extended to a people who were willing to follow the true God. After taking the entire region by force, Joshua divided up the land by tribe as Israel's inheritance.

The chapter closes with Joshua's final words as he recounts the stories of God's faithfulness and deliverance. God will keep His promises. He will also let us choose whether or not we will participate in the blessings of His promises. These stories of God's people are our stories too and, like Joshua, we must *"choose this day whom [we] will serve."* Joshua stated he and his *"household [would] serve the LORD"* (p. 101). What will you choose?

- 1. What basis did Joshua have for being “*strong and courageous*” (p. 89)? Which assurances that God gives Joshua most strengthen and encourage you?**
- 2. What concerns might Joshua have had as he accepted the reigns of leadership from Moses? What can we learn from the people’s response to Joshua that can apply to changes of leadership at our church?**
- 3. Rahab told the two spies: “*I know that the Lord has given you this land*” (p.90). Upon what was her declaration of faith based? How could she be a prostitute, so easily tell lies, and not be a part of God’s chosen people, yet be attributed with great faith?**
- 4. Rahab hid the spies and then lied to the authorities when they came looking for them (p. 90). When, if ever, is it okay to lie? How do you know?**
- 5. Review the main points of the covenant that God made with Abraham. (See the summary for Chapter 2, also p. 13.) What examples can you find in this chapter that show God’s faithfulness to its fulfillment?**
- 6. Joshua is known for his statement “*As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD*” (p.101). How can you lead your household to serve the Lord?**

When the story of Joshua opens, the Israelites are *outside* of the Promised Land while the Canaanites are *inside* the Promised Land. In order for God's divine plan to move forward, the Israelites need to take up residence in the land while the Canaanite inhabitants must be removed from the land.

The character of Rahab is a prime example of the many ironies in the Joshua narrative. She was the quintessential Canaanite, yet she showed more faith than the Israelites showed while they wandered in the wilderness for the previous forty years!

I. Rahab: Woman of Flaws

- A. Throughout all of Scripture, Rahab is known as "Rahab the Harlot" or "Rahab the Prostitute." She is never able to shed her baggage and its accompanying title. Yet, as we shall see, it is almost as though God continues to remind us of her past in order for us to see His work in her and others like her – including ourselves!
- B. The narrator includes many sexual innuendos throughout the story so that there can be no doubt about Rahab's occupation and activities at the time the story took place.
- C. At the story's opening, Joshua's spies got to Jericho and seemed to go immediately to the house of the prostitute Rahab. The text offers no apparent explanation for what appears to be questionable behavior for two "holy" men of Israel.
 1. Some have suggested that they went there to avoid being noticed.
 2. Perhaps Rahab's house was the only available lodging in the city.
 3. Was the brothel the best place to uncover the valuable information that they sought?
 4. Or was Rahab's house the best place to uncover something else? Perhaps they decided to mix business with pleasure.
- D. The spies "stayed there." This is an acceptable translation of the original language. However, the verb *shakab* is also used to refer to sexual relations. Similar to the English term "sleep," this Hebrew term can mean both to lie down or to lie together sexually. Given the nature of Rahab's hospitality, the language is at least suggestive.
- E. Rahab's name itself means "broad." Not unlike our English pejorative, Rahab/broad can easily refer to a woman of ill-repute.
- F. The sexual references continue when the king's men ask Rahab to give up the men who have "entered unto" her.
- G. Rahab is as Canaanite as a woman could be! Canaanite religion incorporated sexual immorality into worship. This is the whole rationale for God's using Joshua to eradicate the Canaanites from the land. Their skin color or ethnic differences were not the problem; their religion was the problem. Their sexual immorality coupled with idolatry combined to form a toxic temptation for Israel, and God wanted to protect Israel from it. And rightly so, for idolatry and its accompanying immorality became Israel's most persistent sin. It is clear from all the sexual innuendos mentioned that the author does not want his reader to miss just what a "bad girl" Rahab was. For it is in light of all this that her faith is so outstanding and astonishing.

II. Rahab: Woman of Faith

- A. Rahab seems to be the only competent person in the entire episode!
 1. The spies are clearly not very competent because word quickly spread to the king that they were in town and at her house.

2. The king's men were not very competent. They believed Rahab's deception and, like Keystone Kops, scurried about in every direction seeking to find the spies.
- B. Look at Rahab's confession—it is remarkable what she perceives and knows (p. 90-91)! She could be teaching Sabbath School to Israel's children!
 1. *"I know that YHWH has given you this land."*
 2. She not only knew the specific name of Israel's God, but she knew that He had promised them the land.
 3. She and her fellow Canaanites were fearful because she/they knew that YHWH would do exactly what He planned.
 4. She seemed to have more faith in the LORD's deliverance than Joshua did. If Joshua had been certain, then why send out the spies?
 5. *"We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt."*
 - a. She was acutely aware of God's redemptive work on Israel's behalf.
 - b. She knew the exact body of water that was dried up.
 - c. She knew the two kings that Israel's army destroyed.
 6. *"For the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below."*
 - a. The LORD is only referred to in this way by two others in the OT: Moses (Deuteronomy 4:39) and Solomon (1 Kings 8:23).
 - b. It is stunning that this Canaanite woman would refer to the LORD this way.
 - c. She even asked the spies to swear by YHWH's name that they would protect her family when they destroyed Jericho. Her fear demonstrated that she truly believed that God would give Jericho over to Israel.
- C. While "Moses, Solomon, and Rahab" might not sound like obvious heroes of faith, they are!
 1. Rahab became a part of the community of faith **by faith**. She married Salmon and became the father of Boaz, (husband of Ruth). She was the great-great grandmother of King David and in the direct line of Messiah Jesus (Matthew 1:5)! She and Ruth are both examples of Gentile women of faith!
 2. She is listed among the heroes and heroines of faith in the "Hall of Faith," Hebrews 11. "By faith, Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace" (Hebrews 11:31).
 3. James uses Rahab as an example of one whose outward works demonstrate her inward faith. "In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?" (James 2:25).

III. Implications and Applications

- A. Rahab was saved by faith in the One True God of Israel. Salvation is available to all by faith.
- B. One can be both saved by faith and still entrenched in the sin or circumstances of one's culture.
- C. God's goodness transcends cultures and peoples.
- D. God's plan to include Gentiles by faith was there from the beginning.
- E. God's past work (revelation) provides the basis for our faith in what He will do in the future.
- F. God saves the "unlikely" sinner. Therefore, I should not prejudge the "likeliness" of someone accepting Jesus as Savior when I share the gospel.