

## RAHAB AND HER LIE (Joshua 2)

This morning we were looking at an event in Jericho centring around how Jesus gave sight to blind Bartimaeus (Mk. 10:46-52). We glanced very briefly at the occasion, - in the Old Testament, - where He appeared to encourage Joshua, just outside the walls of Jericho.

The background is this ... For over forty years the children of Israel had been wandering through the wilderness, after their exodus from captivity in Egypt ... Their ultimate destination was the land of Canaan, - the Promised Land. When they came to Mount Nebo and looked across at the city of Jericho, there was great excitement. However, when they came from Mount Nebo, - on the most northern end of the Sinai desert, where Moses died, - they soon realised their aspirations were in jeopardy because they saw how foreboding the city was. It had such high and thick walls which seemed impenetrable ... and its people invincible.

Just before the battle was to begin though, Joshua, - who succeeded Moses, - had a very special visitor, **Joshua 5:13** And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood **a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand**: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? <sup>14</sup> And he said, Nay; but as **captain of the host of the LORD** am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? <sup>15</sup> And **the captain of the LORD'S host** said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so. ... This was what is known as a 'Christophany', - an Old Testament appearance of the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ. ... Jesus is God, God is eternal, therefore Jesus is eternal. Indeed, He appeared on a number of occasions in the Old Testament, and at this particular time He had come to Joshua **as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come**.

Prior to this event, they were still on the other side of the Jordan River, ... they had come down from Mount Nebo, and were camped on the fringes of the wilderness. From there, Joshua sent two spies to explore the city of Jericho and its inhabitants. Previously, - forty years earlier, - Moses had sent *twelve* spies, but this time only *two* were sent, - it is often better to work in small numbers. (In fact, Joshua had been one of those original spies).

They were sent out at night, under cover of darkness. They crossed the River Jordan, crept up to the strongly fortified city of Jericho, somehow got inside its

great walls, and found a place from which they could carry out their reconnaissance.

The place they found would act as their ‘base of operations’. Had they known it was a house of prostitution, though, I think they might have looked for somewhere else, - surely such an establishment would have been busy! However, it was into such a place the Lord had directed them because there was a woman there whose heart, - unbeknownst to anyone, *even her*, - He was preparing to include in His future plans for His people. **Joshua 2:1** *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 an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.*

In Old Testament times names usually gave an indication concerning the person. The name ‘Rahab’ means “broad, wide, proud”, - if this name had significance (!), it would describe a woman who lived for herself and nobody else. I suppose her kind of life would have made her like that. ... She was a most unlikely person for God to use ... nevertheless, He led the two spies into her home.

The spying of the two men did not go unnoticed, - they mustn't have been much good, - for it seems that at the start of their mission, v.2 *it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country.* The authorities in Jericho knew the men had infiltrated the city, they knew when they had come in, and they knew what they were there for. ... They mustn't have been very good spies! ... And in fact, the king knew exactly where to send his investigating officers, v.3 *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.*

And then these two spies, - who obviously weren't experts in their field, - were in danger of being arrested ... and the mission to conquer Jericho looked as if it was in jeopardy. Nevertheless, God had the two men there even though they were acting like ‘amateurs’, and even though it seemed as if failure was staring them in the face. Despite all the potential difficulties though, He would look after them.

From the other perspective, the king of Jericho was terrified. He had heard of this massive multitude of people that had come from Egypt, and how they had ‘defied all the odds’ through the wilderness journey ... and they were menacingly encamped on the other side of the River Jordan ... which was far

too close for his comforts! And so here is a king, - with armies, with a heavily-fortified city, - who is frightened and who wanted to halt the threat before it got any further.

The woman, Rahab, was of no help to the king, for she *took the two men [the spies], and hid them*, and when the authorities came looking for them, *said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were (v.4).* ... “Yes, they came here, but I didn’t know where they had come from. I had never seen them before.” ... Now, if she had stopped there, that would have been fine ... *But* then she said, <sup>5</sup> *And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them.* ... Rahab, that is a bare-faced lie you have told! ... There is no other way to describe it, - *she lied ... it just flowed out of her!* ... And the ‘But’ at the beginning of v.6 indicates the writer of the book understood she told a lie (<sup>6</sup> *But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof.*)

What is the Lord doing using a woman like that?! She is a ‘harlot’, a prostitute. She is a liar. She is a very bad woman ... What is He doing with her?! ... The Hebrew word that is translated ‘harlot’ could also be translated as “one who keeps an inn”. That could mean she looked after a four-star hotel ... except for the fact James 2:25 and Hebrews 11:31 say she was a harlot. So, that was how she made her living, and what took place on her premises, - she was a prostitute ... She might even have had other prostitutes working for her.

In her business, I would reckon it was something she did quite a lot ... telling lies! It would have been ‘second-nature’ to her. I reckon she could have looked the wives of many of her clients in the eyes and told them bare-faced lies, - she would have been so *accomplished* at it! She probably wouldn’t even have called it lying. It’s just the way her business was done, in her line of work! ... And we don’t need to make excuses for her, and neither do we need to try and explain what she did by calling it something else, - *it was a lie* she told those soldiers searching for the Hebrew spies.

How do we ‘get around’ this problem of Rahab and her lie? ... Okay, she would have been well-used to telling lies ... but, one way you could try to justify her lie is that you could say her care for her two Israelite guests hinged upon a very important ancient Middle Eastern code of courtesy. They were her guests, and Middle Eastern courtesy required her to protect them, - that was her duty of ‘honour’. ... It was similar to how Abraham invited the three travellers into his

home, when he was encamped in the plains of Mamre (Gen. 18), and also similar to how Lot invited his guests into his home in Sodom (Gen. 19).

So, - the argument could be, - it was an important custom that Rahab looked after her guests ... and so it is of very little consequence that she lied to deceive the soldiers, v.5 it came to pass [about the time] of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them.

... Is there any occasion when telling a so-called 'white lie' is permissible? ... By lying, Rahab prevented the capture of the two Israelite spies, - she potentially saved their lives and helped the advancement and invasion by the Israelites of her own city of Jericho. Was her 'white lie', therefore, *ignored* because good came out of it? ... She is the only Gentile honoured for her faith in Hebrews 11:31 ... Does that mean, in those circumstances, she did the right thing?

But, *can* her lying be justified? ... I'm sure if she had not have lied God would have saved the two spies anyway. ... God had a plan for her life in sending those two spies to her home ... and you can be very sure God had all eventualities covered! In fact, it would have been interesting to see how He would have achieved His plan if Rahab had *not* told a lie ... if she had told the truth instead! ... I believe that what the Lord did in Jericho was fantastic, - it was a miracle, - ... but if Rahab would have told the truth, instead of telling a lie ... the miracle of the capture of Jericho would even have been greater!

In Proverbs 12:22 Solomon says, <sup>22</sup> **Lying lips are abomination to the LORD.** ... God Himself cannot lie. ... Yes, but under the circumstances, - some would argue, - Rahab did not technically tell a lie ... she merely 'played the soldiers at their own game'. ... 'When in Rome, do as the Romans'. Telling lies was a part of their daily conversation, therefore, when Rahab told a lie, it didn't really count as a lie. ... And there are also those who would argue that a lie can be acceptable if the motive is for good, - the end justifies the means.

... Well, other than telling a lie, what could she have done? ... If she didn't feel she could tell them the truth, she could have said nothing ... and then she wouldn't have told a lie, but that might have implicated her and made her look guilty. And she was always used to looking after 'Number One'! Another tact she could have tried was to answer their question with a question of her own ... When they burst into her home and asked her, "Where's the two men?" ... she

could have replied, “What two men are they?” ... and she could have frustrated their line of questioning until they gave up and left her house.

... She told a bare-faced lie though. She did not try to work her way around it, - she told a lie! ... And yet the Lord blessed this woman! ... She didn't deserve to be saved when the city would be destroyed, *but* God, *nevertheless*, had mercy upon her ... and He sent those two spies directly and particularly to her home with saving her on His mind. That is the essence of the Gospel, - that is how grace works, - God sends the Gospel in order to save sinners who do not deserve to be saved! By their own efforts, - by what they say and by what they do, - they could never achieve sufficient to either attract His attention or warrant His grace. Grace is God's goodness in Christ that we do not deserve. There is not a single person He has saved that has earned it. Outside of His grace, there is no salvation ... And so, Rahab, - even with her sin, - fits perfectly into God's plan.

And it began to be realised by Him sending those two spies into her home ... God came to judge a sinful city, - a city whose inhabitants in their entirety were about to come under His wrath and be destroyed ... and yet, He saved Rahab. Her lifestyle, and what she was in the past, became irrelevant for she believed in the salvation that can only be given from the one true God.

Yes, but let's not forget *this lie!* ... I do not see any way how we can either forget or justify Rahab's lie. For Scripture to be consistent, there is no basis for defending her deception as acceptable for God could have saved her and the spies without lying. ... God can work in amazing ways to achieve His purposes ... and He doesn't need us to compromise truth to help Him, - He does not need His people to use the devil's tactics! We know that truth should be maintained, regardless of *any* situation.

Let's step back and 'look in the mirror'. When we became Christians, did we become 'perfect' overnight? When we wakened up the next morning, did we stop sinning ... and we have never sinned since? ... Do you remember the things you used to do, that looking back on them now ... you no longer do because, as a Christian, you realise you shouldn't have done them? Yes, you became a Christian, - you were born again, - but you must confess there were things you did that now looking back ... *they were wrong*. ... I would suggest we all fall into that category.

Then, even coming up to more recent times, has there been anything you have done that was not honouring to the Lord? ... My point is, here is a woman who,

- before God's grace took hold on her life, - every day she lived she *wallowed* in sin. We could not dare to begin to speculate on the extent of this woman's evil ... and yet God saved her. Yes, she told a lie, - and we must not defend her, for it was wrong - ... but which one of us would dare 'cast the first stone'?!

The longer you are a Christian the more you learn to obey God and His Word ... but just see 'where this woman was coming from' ... She didn't have a Godly mother and father. ... She did not have a Bible. She never prayed. She never attended a Bible Study. Before this particular day she had never met a Jew ... Jehovah was foreign to her ... She had nothing going for her, and yet God saved her ... He reached down into the pit and He lifted her up and out.

What is the point of studying this event in the life of Rahab? ... It is surely not to concentrate on the lie she told, - we must not make excuses for it, or try to explain it away. Scripture never commends her for telling a lie, - and neither is she commended for her ethics, but she *is* commended for her *faith*, **Heb. 11:31** *By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.* In fact, her hospitality towards the spies is explicitly commended, and nothing more.

The moment she lied, she had a faith that was new and tender ... and it was weak and required strengthening. She never had to contend with anything like this before. She was used to lying and cheating, - it was what her business thrived on. Before these two men entered her home, she had no knowledge of Israel's Jehovah. This was a whole new experience for her.

She was used to the complete opposite of the Israelite Law of God, - the only 'law' she had to abide by was, 'Don't get caught!' Her culture was corrupt and violent ... where good ethics was an alien concept. ... The way she responded is simply the way you would expect from a brand-new believer under those very vulgar circumstances.

Here is the point ... Her initial and immature faith, - undeveloped as it was, - immediately was demonstrated in how she received those spies from an apparent hostile nation, *she had received the spies with peace (Heb. 11:31).* ... She didn't have to, but she did, - ... and she didn't know it, but God was working in her life ... and she not only hid the two spies, but she also embraced their cause. By so doing, she entrusted her future to their God.

Then, when they were leaving to go back to their own people, she made them promise ... <sup>8</sup> And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof; <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall.

The scarlet cord ... God took out of her the heart of a prostitute and He placed a new heart within her. He took away her sin, and He took her out of her sinful lifestyle ... How do we know that? We'll see in a moment ... Yes, He knew what kind of a woman Rahab was, but He could see through all the debris in her life and He worked in her heart so she would heed the warnings the spies gave her and she made preparation for the coming of the judgment of the Lord. She made sure she was prepared!

Therefore, the proof of her *faith* was not to do with the lie she told, but the proof of her faith was in the fact **Heb. 11:31** *By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace* for James also commented, **James 2:25** *Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?* ... She could have handed those two spies over to the authorities for money, - after all that was why she was in the business she was in, - but she didn't. ... The lie was neither commended, overlooked, or made excuses for, - the lie was not what saved her ... What saved her was the fact she trusted in the promises of the God of Israel. ... <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall. ... Nothing but believing faith made such a dramatic change in the character of a woman like this. ... *The scarlet cord.*

And yes, how do we know God took her out of her sinful lifestyle? Let's turn to Joshua chapter six to see how the city of Jericho was captured by the army of Israel, **Joshua 6:21** And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword. **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. ... **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.

So Rahab, - a Gentile, a non-Jew, - and her family were welcomed into the nation of Israel. Then we turn over to the New Testament, **Mt. 1:1** The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. **2** Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; **3** And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; **4** And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; **5** And ***Salmon begat Booz of Rachab***; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; **6** And Jesse begat David the king ... And also in Ruth 4:18, Now these are the generations of Pharez [*Pharez/Perez was the son of Judah, the son of Jacob/Israel, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham*]: Pharez begat Hezron, **19** And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, **20** And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat **Salmon**, **21** And Salmon begat **Boaz**, and Boaz begat **Obed**, **22** And Obed begat **Jesse**, and Jesse begat **David**. ... Rahab married Salmon (of the tribe of Judah), and she had a son called Boaz. Then Boaz married Ruth the Moabitess and she had a son called Jesse who he had sons, one of whom was David ... And you can keep following the line on through until you come to Jesus ... and follow it further until you come to the throne in Heaven, where John saw the same Lord Jesus Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5).

Rahab from the pagan, Gentile, condemned city of Jericho was privileged to become a member of the family of the Saviour. ... That is a privilege every child of God is blessed with. It doesn't matter what you were before, - it is what the Lord has made you into that matters. He met you at the point of your need, and He saved you. He took you, and you have been learning from Him ever since ... You know He died for you, and He loves you, and He is coming back for you ... And it is going to be a great day of indescribable glory when we see Jesus face-to-face.



Like as it was in Jericho, it will also introduce a time when His indescribable judgment will be poured out upon this earth ... Society's rampant rebellion will be called to account, judged, and destroyed. ... The only protection is the 'scarlet thread' of the blood of Christ upon your heart ... otherwise you will have nothing to save you. ... It was the scarlet thread hanging out Rahab's window in Jericho ... It was the blood of the lamb spread upon the doorposts in Egypt ... And at Calvary, it was the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ that has accomplished one-and-for-all our redemption, **Heb. 9:22** *without shedding of blood is no remission* for sin.

Oh, what a Saviour that He died for me!  
From condemnation He hath made me free;  
"He that believeth on the Son," said He,  
"Hath everlasting life."

All my iniquities on Him were laid,  
All my indebtedness by Him was paid;  
All who believe on Him, the Lord hath said,  
"Hath everlasting life."

Do you know this Saviour ... regardless of what you have been or where you have come from? Believe that He died for you, repent of your sins, and call upon Him to cleanse you ... and accept Him as your Saviour and Lord. Amen.