

When Moses sent spies into the land almost forty years prior to this event, he sent one from each tribe, twelve spies. While they all agreed it was a fertile land only two said they should go in and take it, and that it was a land of milk and honey (Numbers 14:7,8ⁱ). Milk and honey by the way means it was good for pastureland and crops. Milk comes from their herds and honey from the flowers of trees and plants. The ten naysayers were worried about the giants, an extremely tall race of people who lived in some of the cities.

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.* Joshua 2:1 This time Joshua, who was one of the twelve that spied out the land the first time, chose only two loyal men of faith. He had learned that representatives and voting often went according to the fears of men. That is why the church today is to be led by elders who meet the qualifications in Titus and Timothy (Titus 1:5-9ⁱⁱ). Their lives show they are men of faith and will therefore operate in faith at God's leading in the Word instead of the whims of man.

He didn't announce their mission to avoid the possibility of a repeat of his past experience. The two men went into Jericho and stayed at a prostitute named Rahab's house. This does not mean they employed her services. Prostitutes' homes in that age were the local hotels. They had an extra room for their customers to stay.

² *And it was told to the king of Jericho, "Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land."* Joshua 2:2 Someone noticed the two men and could probably tell by their dress and speech that they were Israelites. Since the huge company of Israelites were camped just across the Jordan, there would have been concern that they could be spies. The king was notified.

³ *Then the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land."*

⁴ *But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said, "True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from."* ⁵ *And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them."* Joshua 2:3-5 The king ordered that the men be brought out of Rahab's house. Rahab had hidden them. She lied, claiming she didn't know where they came from and that they left before dark. She suggested the king quickly make a search for them.

This brings up the issue of lying to protect someone. Sin is a serious matter, but some sins are more serious than others. Apostle Paul describes sexual sin is a more serious sin than some because it affects the body which is God's temple (1 Corinthians :18,19ⁱⁱⁱ). Judaism teaches that when two commands conflict, we should consider which is weightier. Would it be more evil to lie or to turn the men over when it would mean their death? That would make her complicit in murder. In Nazi Germany, the Christians who hid Jews would lie to protect the lives of the Jews they were hiding. Should they have told the truth and watched them be taken to the camps to die?^{iv}

We rarely face this serious of a conflict, so we should never use the concept to justify having our way in a matter. There are times we must tell the truth even when it personally costs us a great deal. In the situation with Rahab, she was risking her life to

protect the lives of the two men. Her lie could have had her executed if they were found. She acted in faith and is commended for doing so in Hebrews 11:31.^v

⁶ But she had brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof. ⁷ So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. And the gate was shut as soon as the pursuers had gone out.

Joshua 2:6,7 Rooftops were a good place to dry grain. She hid the two men under the piled-up stalks of grain and then helped them escape after the search was over, by letting them down by rope out of her window. She would later hang a red cord in that window to identify her home when the Israelite army came. Centuries later The Apostle Paul would use the same escape tactic to flee a trap set for him in Damascus (Acts 9:23-25^{vi}). The men of Jericho went after them all the way to the Jordan river, which is only about a mile from the ancient city.

⁸ Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof⁹ 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. Joshua 2:8-11 Before hiding the men, Rahab made a deal with them. She told them that the people in Canaan had heard how God had led the Israelites to cross the Red Sea and parted the waters for them, as well as the defeat of the Amorite kings, Sihon and Og. She made a confession of faith that the God of Israel was the God of the heavens above and the earth beneath.

Because of the evil in those cultures, God instructed the Israelites to devote certain cities to destruction. That meant everything would be destroyed and everyone would die. Nothing could remain. This also put fear into the people of Canaan. Their hearts melted. They knew the God of the Israelites was God of heaven and earth, which means there is no place that can escape His justice. And still, they chose to resist Him.

We must stop here to explain what seems to be barbaric to us. It is one of the Bible critics' main arguments against the Bible. How could a loving God wipe out a culture? To understand this, we must look back to the time of Abraham. God promised Abraham that he would inherit the land but told him that first the iniquity of the people must come to the full (Genesis 15:16^{vii}). That would be four hundred years later. In other words, over the next four centuries, God knew the wickedness of the people of the land would become like those people before the flood who only thought of evil continually (Genesis 6:5^{viii}). Their religious ceremonies were orgies. Their sacrifices were their own children. Massive fields of sacrificed babies in ceramic jars have been discovered by archeologists.

The other factor we must consider is that the nation of Israel was a theocracy. God was making a judgment. Only God can say when a people group is so wicked that annihilation is the only solution before they corrupt other people. Israel was the only true theocracy in history. Genocide today is only done out of greed. We cannot compare the judgments of God with those of man, for God knows every detail of every heart. Man knows next to nothing in comparison. Devoting a city to destruction was obviously not for personal gain. When someone tried to make it so in the account of the conquest of Jericho, God judged that person (Joshua 7:25^{ix}). That is because it sent a mixed message.

The people were being destroyed because of the gravity of their sinful culture, not for any personal gain. It was also a warning to Israel that this could be their fate if they turned to the same evil practices.

I would like to point out the effect of the testimony of God in a person's life. No missionary came from Israel and witnessed to Jericho of what God had done. The news was carried by others. **Your godly life can influence those whom you have never met.** I often tell testimonies of people I never met. Their faithful, godly lives and what God accomplished through their prayers and service testify that God is God in heaven and earth. Every believer's life should testify to that fact.

At the same time, God saw one family, in the entire city that had faith in the God of Israel. It was certainly not who we would have chosen, but God sees the heart (1 Samuel 16:7^x). Everyone else in Jericho heard the same news but decided to try to resist God. He sovereignly sent the two spies to the house of that person of faith. She made her confession of faith. She risked her life for that faith, believing that the only way to save herself and her family was to side with God's people. What a picture of grace! What picture of faith in action! In fact, she is commended two times in the New Testament for acting on her faith (James 2:25^{xi}; Hebrews 11:31). Even more importantly, she ended up in the genealogy of the Messiah (Matthew 1:5^{xii})!

There within a city of pagans prepared to fight Israel's God was a prostitute who upon hearing the testimony of Israel began to have faith in God. The people of that time and place were pantheists. They believed there were gods over certain areas. How could God save her? With God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26^{xiii}). We can never guess who among our family and friends will turn to faith in Jesus. It is often the most unlikely ones. If God can reach into this pagan city and save one family, he can save anyone! That includes you and me. He is looking for people who will by faith place their trust in Him regardless of how they have lived to that point in their lives.

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." Joshua 2:12,13 Rahab wanted the spies to promise to save her and her family. As we read on, we find that the whole family must take shelter in her home to be saved. That would look suspicious. And why weren't the men required to be ready to battle against Israel? Somehow on that last day, the entire family barricaded themselves inside her home. That meant that they too were placing their faith in Israel's God. After all, to that point there had been no battles, just marching around the walls. So we can see it was indeed faith in the God of Israel, not Israel's military might or war machines. Was it Rahab's faith that encouraged the family to believe? And when she told them the plan, she had to have faith that none of them would betray her to the king.

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." ¹⁵ Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was built into the city wall, so that she lived in the wall. Joshua 2:14,15 The spies promised that if she died, they too would die. They promised to deal kindly and faithfully with her, as long as she did not tell their whereabouts. Kindness and faithfulness are the two most commonly mentioned attributes of God (*emet* and *hesed* Psalm 25:10^{xiv}). In other words, they would deal with her as God had dealt with them. The agreement now sealed with an

oath, she let them down by a rope through the window. I have always referred to it as “the over the wall in a basket trick.” She probably waited until nightfall so that darkness might hide their descent. If she was caught doing this she would surely be executed. This action was putting her life into the hands of Israel's God.

¹⁶ And she said to them, “Go into the hills, or the pursuers will encounter you, and hide there three days until the pursuers have returned. Then afterward you may go your way.” ¹⁷ The men said to her, “We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours that you have made us swear. Joshua 2:16,17 Rahab even suggest the best way for them to avoid capture. Instead of taking the road, she told them to go into the hills and wait for three days. Then they could return to the Israelite camp on the other side of Jordan. Joshua had given the people three days to prepare to cross. Her suggestion lined up with God's timing.

The hills around Jericho are the opposite direction from where they needed to go. It was a good strategy. Nearby was what is called the Mount of Temptation. The cliffs there have many caves, some of which are monasteries today.

¹⁸ Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father's household. ¹⁹ Then if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless. But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head. ²⁰ But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless with respect to your oath that you have made us swear.” Joshua 2:18-20 The oath for protection had three qualifications. Her family had to be inside her home, and she had to hang a scarlet cord in her window. It reminds us of the blood on the doorposts during the last plague in Egypt in which the family was to stay inside their house until the plague passed over. Perhaps that was what was on the spies' minds. The final qualification was that she could not tell anyone about them or the oath would be voided.

²¹ And she said, “According to your words, so be it.” Then she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window. Joshua 2:21 Rahab agreed to the deal. Then in faith she tied the scarlet cord in her window. It is interesting that it is scarlet. That may have been chosen because the dye was expensive and it was unlikely anyone else would have had that color hanging from their window. But perhaps it was God's design to look forward to the blood of Christ that makes possible the salvation of our souls through faith.

When we hosted the Masterpiece Christian Art show, we had one painting that had angels looking down on the earth from a heavenly balcony. Over the railing hung a red sash that dropped down toward the earth representing salvation through faith in the blood shed for us. Come into the house of God with your whole family and shut the door behind you until judgement passes over (Exodus 12:22,23^{xv}), which is exactly what the Jews did in Egypt. There is a scarlet cord of symbolism that runs throughout the Old Testament.

²² They departed and went into the hills and remained there three days until the pursuers returned, and the pursuers searched all along the way and found nothing.

²³ Then the two men returned. They came down from the hills and passed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they told him all that had happened to them. Joshua 2:22,23 The men followed her suggestion. The search party looked in the wrong direction as "all along the way" would have meant toward the Jordan. After three days - wait, I've

heard that expression before. Now think of this. If they were hiding in a cave, then after three days they come out and cross the Jordan, which is a picture of death, only they are crossing in the opposite direction, would that not picture resurrection? Red chord, three days in the earth, and crossing back over Jordan! I think it is too much of a coincidence. It makes me wonder if this was one of the things Jesus shared on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:44^{xvi}). Now, skeptics would say I see Jesus in everything. Amen! May it be so!

²⁴ *And they said to Joshua, "Truly the LORD has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us."* Joshua 2:24 Just like the faithful two spies, Joshua and Caleb (Numbers 14:30^{xvii}), these two men report that the LORD has gone before them and put the fear of Him in the hearts of the inhabitants of the land. They see them already melting away because of God's prevenient grace. The providence of God had taken them to the only family of faith in the whole town. And Providence seeks throughout the whole earth to find the hearts that will open to His light and life (2 Chronicles 16:9a^{xviii}).

Our Joshua has gone before us through this life. He has written our days in His book before one of them came to be (Psalm 139:16^{xix}). He has planned good works in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10^{xx}). Let us be strong and very courageous to meditate on God's words day and night for then we too will be successful (Joshua 1:8^{xxi}), for the Lord will finish the work He has started in us (Philippians 1:6^{xxii})! The enemy of our soul melts away before Him. His victory is ours as well for we are in Him.

Looking back over this account we see the hand of Providence guiding both the spies and Rahab. We see their mutual faith trusting in the circumstances God had orchestrated. A thousand things could have gone wrong. They could have been found in the flax on the roof or spotted going down the wall. One of Rahab's family members could have lacked faith and spoiled the whole plan. Our minds can come up with every possible scenario for failure, but faith believes in the providence of God. Faith sees what God has done in the past and trusts Him for the present circumstances and future as well.

When we put our faith in Christ Jesus, we enter the spiritual land Jesus called the kingdom of God (Matthew 21:31^{xxiii}). Circumstances test our conviction that the whole land of that kingdom of God is indeed ours. We see the enemies of the world, our old nature, and the devil and his demons at work. But brothers and sisters, the battle is already won. Our Joshua is already victorious (Matthew 28:18^{xxiv}). Those hindrances we see will be gone forever. His Word promises it is so. The providences of God in our lives reminds us it is true. *Truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands!* Hallelujah!

Questions:

- 1 Why were only two spies sent?
- 2 Why is Rahab's lie seen as faith?
- 3 Why might the red scarf be significant?
- 4 What influenced Rahab to convert?
- 5 Why is God's dealing through Israel different from how He works in nations today?
- 6 Why did God demand the destruction of the city?
- 7 In what ways did Rahab express faith?
- 8 In what ways did the spies express faith?
- 9 What part did providence play in this account?
- 10 How can we apply this account to our lives?

ⁱ **Numbers 14:7-8 (ESV)**

⁷ and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, “The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. ⁸ If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey.

ⁱⁱ **Titus 1:5 (ESV)**

⁵ This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—

ⁱⁱⁱ **1 Corinthians 6:18-19 (ESV)**

¹⁸ Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,

^{iv} Jesus justified breaking the Sabbath law of not working when His disciples at grain the pulled and hulled. He reasoned that David at the shewbread when His men were desperately hungry, and concluded that God desires mercy more than sacrifice. See Matthew 12:1-8

^v **HEBREWS 11:31** By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. ^v

^{vi} **Acts 9:23-25 (ESV)**

²³ When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, ²⁴ but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him, ²⁵ but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.

^{vii} **Genesis 15:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

^{viii} **Genesis 6:5 (ESV)**

⁵ The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

^{ix} **Joshua 7:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ And Joshua said, “Why did you bring trouble on us? The LORD brings trouble on you today.” And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones.

^x **1 Samuel 16:7 (ESV)**

⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

^{xi} **James 2:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

^{xii} **Matthew 1:5 (ESV)**

⁵ and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse,

^{xiii} **Matthew 19:26 (ESV)**

²⁶ But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

^{xiv} **Psalms 25:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

^{xv} **Exodus 12:22-23 (ESV)**

²² Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning.

²³ For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you.

^{xvi} **Luke 24:44 (ESV)**

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

^{xvii} **Numbers 14:30 (ESV)**

³⁰ not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.

^{xviii} **2 Chronicles 16:9a (ESV)**

⁹ For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him.”

^{xix} **Psalms 139:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

^{xx} **Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

^{xxi} **Joshua 1:8 (ESV)**

⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

^{xxii} **Philippians 1:6 (ESV)**

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

^{xxiii} **Matthew 21:31 (ESV)**

³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you.

^{xxiv} **Matthew 28:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.