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Joshua 2

“Rahab: A Redeemed Life”

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When Joshua chapter two opens, the Israelites are camped at Shittim, on the east side of the Jordan River, and they are poised to cross over into the Promised Land. The Lord is leading the people to cross the Jordan, moving from east to west, to take the city of Jericho, and Joshua is led of the Lord to send two spies on a reconnaissance mission.

Jericho is mentioned four times in the Bible. The city is also known as the City of Palms (date palms). It is surrounded by several fresh water springs, and since water is a precious commodity in Israel, Jericho was a natural habitation that has attracted civilizations for thousands of years. In fact, Jericho is considered to be the oldest city in the world.¹ The Hebrew name for Jericho is Yericho, which means fragrant.² In 1994 the city was handed over to the Palestinian Authority by the Israeli government.

In this study, we will learn more about Rahab, and her reaction to who God is, and how to be rescued and redeemed.

The Reaction Of Rahab

1. The reputation of the spies had preceded them, and more specifically, the reputation of the God of the spies had preceded them.
2. After the king’s messengers left, Rahab went up on the roof and talked with them about the reaction the whole town had concerning the news they’ve heard about the God of Israel.

¹ Damascus, Syria is considered to be the oldest continuously occupied city.

² Balsam, cyprus, roses, and other fragrant plants and products were and have been produced there.

- a. **Joshua 2:10** - *"We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed."*
3. By word of mouth they had heard the powerful and profound news of the mighty works of God that had taken place hundreds of miles away.
4. In **Joshua 2:9, 11**, we learn that Rahab told the spies that *"...a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below."*
5. Rahab emphasized the great fear that fell on the people, which was their reaction to the news about God.
6. Their fear was not a healthy fear of God as in awesome reverence, but a terrifying fear that caused them to dread God.
7. Rahab's reaction was very different, because she acknowledged to the spies that *"the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below,"* but rather than reacting with fear, she reacted with faith, and turned to the spies to ask for *"kindness."*
 - a. **Joshua 2:12a** - *"Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you."*
 - b. The Hebrew word for kindness is *cheded*, which means mercy or unfailing love.
8. Rahab basically came right out and asked to be saved!
 - a. **Joshua 2:12b-13** - *"Give me a sure sign that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and that you will save us from death."*
 - b. Obviously, she meant being physically saved, but little did she know that she would end up being saved spiritually, too!
9. This scene is a picture of two typical reactions people have toward God.
 - a. Some, like the people of Jericho, have fear *about* God.
 - b. Some, like Rahab, have faith *in* God.
 - c. One keeps distance and one draws near.
 - d. One sees God as punishing, and one sees God as loving.
 - e. One sees God as vengeful, and one sees him as merciful.

- f. Two completely different reactions to the same news that God is great and mighty and awesome.
10. If we think that the people who had the greatest fear of God were the ones who felt the most guilt about their lives, we would be mistaken, because if anyone had reason to feel guilty about their life, it would have been Rahab, the town prostitute, who didn't run from God, but ran toward God.
- a. The difference between running from God and running toward God is your view of God.
 - i. If you see him as vengeful, then you will naturally want to avoid him.
 - ii. If you see him as merciful, then you will naturally want to run toward him.
 - b. There is a place for the vengeance of God and the justice of God, but the Bible teaches that it's reserved for those who are defiantly opposed to God and die in their rebellion against God.
 - c. Today, as long as we have breath, we must recognize the Bible teaches us that God is merciful, loving, and forgiving, and if we don't run to him because we have too much guilt, then we don't have a right understanding of whom God really is.
 - d. Rahab had a right view of God, which is evident since she appealed to the mercy (cheched) of God, and that was because she saw God as merciful and forgiving, and one who desired to rescue sinners.

The Rescue Of Rahab

11. [Joshua 2:15](#) tells us that Rahab helped the spies escape, but before they left, she made them agree to rescue her and her family when they returned to take the city.
- a. [Joshua 2:17-18](#) - *"The men said to her, 'This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house.' "*
 - b. They gave her instructions to mark her home with a scarlet cord tied in the window, which may have been a reminiscence of the first Passover in Egypt when the Israelites marked their homes with the red blood of a lamb, and God's mercy that was extended to the people in those homes.
 - c. Whatever they were thinking, the scarlet cord is clearly a picture of Christ.
 - i. Jesus Christ is revealed in every book of the Bible, and in the book of Joshua, he is first seen as a scarlet cord, and in the same way a red rope brought mercy to the people who marked their home and

believed God by faith, the shed blood of Jesus brings mercy to the people who believe God by faith.

12. Rahab believed God and by faith she tied a red cord in her window!
13. Rahab didn't try to argue with them that their way was too narrow-minded!
 - a. "Don't all cords lead to God, so why not a blue one or a green one?"
14. Rahab didn't try to debate with them as to whether or not there was another way to be saved!
 - a. "What if I just put a candle in the window or how about if I just wave out the window?"
15. No, Rahab was just grateful for God's mercy, so she believed the way to be saved and was rescued by faith.
16. This is the first time that any promise of salvation is mentioned to anyone outside the Jewish line.
 - a. Rahab has two things going against her: she's a Gentile Canaanite *and* a prostitute!
 - b. Don't be fooled by what some have to believe about Rahab, that she was an innkeeper; she was in fact a prostitute.
 - i. The KJV calls Rahab a "harlot."
 - ii. Rahab is mentioned three times in the New Testament, and two of those times she's called a "prostitute."^{3 4}

The Redemption Of Rahab

17. [Joshua 2:22-25](#) - *"When they left, they went into the hills and stayed there three days, until the pursuers had searched all along the road and returned without finding them. Then the two men started back. They went down out of the hills, forded the river and came to Joshua son of Nun and told him everything that had happened to them. They said to Joshua, 'The Lord has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us.' "*
18. Rahab's rescue is not the end of the story, because we read about her in [Matthew 1](#).

³ [Hebrews 11:31](#) - *"By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient."*

⁴ [James 2:25](#) - *"In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?"*

- a. The genealogical record of Jesus Christ, in the gospel of Matthew, is traced through Joseph's line, all the way from Abraham to Jesus.
 - i. Even though Joseph is not Jesus' biological father – God was – his lineage is evidence that Jesus was the heir of King David, which was a requirement for the Messiah.
 - b. [Matthew 1:5](#) tells us Rahab married a Jew named Salmon, and their son was Boaz, who had a son named Obed, who had a son named Jesse, who had a son named David!⁵
 - c. From Rahab, all the way down to the birth of Messiah, Jesus Christ is found to be the “son of David.”
 - d. Isn't that just like God to save a heathen prostitute and allow her to be in the genealogical line that leads up to the birth of the Messiah, Jesus Christ!⁶
 - e. Rahab's story is one of redemption, not only because she was rescued, but also because God redeemed her life for an amazing purpose.
 - f. In [Hebrews 11:31](#), Rahab is listed as being faithful, and in [James 2:25](#), she's known for being righteous.
19. [Psalm 103:2, 4](#) – *“Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits... who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion.”*

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Joshua 2](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. How would you describe your reaction to God, did you have fear *about* God or did you have faith *in* God? (See #9 and #10 above)
4. Did you debate with God as to whether there are other ways to be saved? (See #12 – #15 above)
5. Read and discuss [Psalm 103:2, 4](#).
6. Have you ever looked at your life, and the accumulation of sin and regret, and wondered, “Could God bring something wonderful out of all this? Could God ever take the mess I've made of my life and bring purpose for his glory?”

⁵ [Matthew 1:5](#) – *“Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab...”*

⁶ Rahab was the great, great, grandmother of King David.

7. Allow the people in your group to share personal stories about the ways God made something out of their life.
8. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: approach God with faith, not fear; believe in the way God says to be saved (that Jesus died on a cross for the sins of the world, and by believing in him, they will be saved, because Jesus is their "*scarlet cord.*")

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).