

Commentary on Joshua 2:3-9, 15-16, 22-24

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Series*) for **Sunday, June 19, 2011**, is from **Joshua 2:3-9, 15-16, 22-24**. Five **Questions for Discussion** follow the *Bible Lesson Commentary* below.

(Joshua 2:3) Then the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab, “Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come only to search out the whole land.”

Joshua sent two spies to Jericho to learn more about the city’s defenses. They hid in Rahab’s home, and her home was in the outer wall of the city. Rahab was a prostitute, and the king must have heard that these Israelite “visitors to his city” had come to her home. They may have gone to her home because they expected they could learn much from her about the city and the city’s inhabitants because of her familiarity with the city and its citizens. They might have also considered the fact that it would be easier to escape from the city if they were located in a home in the outer wall.

(Joshua 2:4) But the woman took the two men and hid them. Then she said, “True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they came from.

Rahab risked her life by hiding these two spies. She admitted the truth that the king obviously knew: two men had come to her home. However, she told the king’s messengers a lie when she said that she did not know that the men were Israelites, for she encouraged the spies by telling them how much the city feared the Israelites because of what God had done for them. Under the stress of the situation, she may not have been able to deceive or mislead the king’s messengers without telling him a lie.

(Joshua 2:5) And when it was time to close the gate at dark, the men went out. Where the men went I do not know. Pursue them quickly, for you can overtake them.”

Rahab did deceive the searchers by pretending to help them, offering them a solution: “Pursue them quickly, for you can overtake them.” With this “helpful” suggestion, she probably hoped they would leave quickly or search her home more quickly and not discover the spies she had hidden. Though Rahab had come to faith in the true God based on the reports she had heard about God’s mighty deeds with the Israelites, she did not as yet know the law of God.

(Joshua 2:6) She had, however, brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax that she had laid out on the roof.

Rahab had taken great care to hide the spies well, but God also protected Rahab and the spies, for the searchers did not find them. Rahab did the best she knew to

do to protect the servants of God, and God honored her efforts by protecting her and those in her family who came to her home when the war with the Israelites began. Her home in the city wall did not collapse with the rest of the wall when it came tumbling down.

(Joshua 2:7) So the men pursued them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. As soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.

The whole city of Jericho had heard about the Israelites, knew where they camped, and knew their intentions to enter their land and conquer them. The searchers pursued the spies as far as they dared, following what they thought would be the spies natural escape route toward their camp. They did not draw closer to the Israelite camp for fear of their lives.

(Joshua 2:8) Before they went to sleep, she came up to them on the roof

The two spies must have anticipated the possibility of sleeping safely on Rahab's roof because of how much she had helped them avoid detection. They trusted God to protect them and guide them safely back to Joshua so they could make their report. They trusted Rahab, whom they probably presumed God had inspired to hide them. They waited on the roof for Rahab to give them further directions for their lives depended on her guidance and God's hand upon them and her.

(Joshua 2:9) and said to the men: "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that dread of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you.

God used Rahab to encourage and inspire these spies, as well as protect them. No matter what else they learned, she motivated them to take a good report about the morale of the city and the land back to Joshua. They could report about the city's lack of confidence in defending the city when going to war with the Israelites. Whereas forty years earlier ten Israelite spies reported their dread at the great size of the people in the land, these spies could report the dread the people of the land felt when contemplating the Israelites and their God, Who would fight with them to give them the land.

(Joshua 2:15) Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the outer side of the city wall and she resided within the wall itself.

Rahab gave the spies, and through them Joshua, a report that would encourage all Israelites, and then she helped them escape by using a rope through her window on the city wall. We are not told, but perhaps Rahab kept the rope in case she ever needed to escape her home in case of fire or other disaster, much like some buildings have fire escapes.

(Joshua 2:16) She said to them, “Go toward the hill country, so that the pursuers may not come upon you. Hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers have returned; then afterward you may go your way.”

Rahab knew these spies might not know the land around the city or how persistent those searching under orders of the king might be, so she gave them further advice on where to hide and for how long to hide. The spies trusted her and followed her advice so they could return home safely.

(Joshua 2:22) They departed and went into the hill country and stayed there three days, until the pursuers returned. The pursuers had searched all along the way and found nothing.

The Book of Joshua says that the spies did exactly as Rahab advised and they were not caught. Likewise, the searchers searched as Rahab misled them and they found nothing. The whole event extols the value of Rahab in helping God’s people. She became an honored woman in Israel as the first convert in the Promised Land when she came to believe in the true God and follow His law. King David and Jesus Christ also descended from her (see Matthew 1:5).

(Joshua 2:23) Then the two men came down again from the hill country. They crossed over, came to Joshua son of Nun, and told him all that had happened to them.

We have this report in such detail only because the two spies reported in detail to Joshua and this was the first report of spies under his command. Joshua himself had served as one of the first spies under the command of Moses, and likewise, Joshua brought Moses a good report that demonstrated faith in the true God. Whereas the first spies under Moses feared the people (with the exceptions of Joshua and Caleb), these spies told how God protected them from the people and there were none to fear. In addition, according to Moses’ law, two witnesses were sufficient; whereas, Moses had sent twelve into the Promised Land.

(Joshua 2:24) They said to Joshua, “Truly the LORD has given all the land into our hands; moreover all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before us.”

Joshua praised God after hearing their report. The spies did not compare their size and numbers to the size and numbers of their enemies in the Promised Land. They did not fear the height of the Jericho’s walls (and they did not yet know God’s plans for taking the city). They trusted God and trusted in God’s fighting for them and with them as God promised. Unlike the spies Moses sent forty years earlier, they reported that the people were melting in fear of them. If someone melts in fear before you, they cannot or will not be able to defend themselves.

Five Questions for Discussion

1. What would you do if you were in Rahab's place and the king or his messengers came to you with the request to reveal the truth about the enemies of Jericho and any secret spies that had come to your home? What might have made this situation difficult for her?
2. Do you think Rahab was right or wrong to tell a lie to protect the Israelite spies? How can the unexpected situation or the pressures of the moment make it difficult to deceive someone who is not worthy to receive the truth (such as someone wanting information from you because they want to murder someone) without telling a lie?
3. What is the difference between deceiving someone and lying to someone? Are both wrong? Why or why not?
4. What did Rahab tell the spies that might have indicated that she had come to believe in the true God? How might her belief in the true God have helped her?
5. In what ways by words and deeds did Rahab encourage the spies, and how might what she said and did encourage Joshua and the Israelites when they made their report?

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