

What Difference Can Faith Make?

International Bible Lessons

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

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“Rahab 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’” (Joshua 2:9—NRSV).

“Rahab 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’” (Joshua 2:9—ESV).

“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” (Joshua 2:9—KJV).

As far as we know, Rahab became the first person in the Promised Land to reject the idol worship of her people and begin following the true God. After converting to the faith of the Israelites, she married an Israelite named Salmon and became an ancestor to King David and Jesus the Messiah (Matthew 1:6). Because she was a former prostitute, Rahab’s spiritual experience shows that the inhabitants of the Promised Land could place their faith in the true God, find salvation, and join the Israelites in obeying God’s Law.

Rahab first confessed her faith in God to the two Israelite spies she hid in her home, saying, “I know that the LORD has given you the land.” She called God by the name God gave Moses, “LORD,” which in many translations is in all capital letters because it replaces the sacred name of God, “Yahweh” or “Jehovah.” By faith, she recognized that God’s gift of the Canaanite land to Israel was an established fact. She had heard about the miraculous work of God in the lives of the Israelites, and she knew about the promise of a homeland that God had given them. She trusted in God’s promises and viewed them as future historical events that God would accomplish without fail. She believed that the Israelites only needed to receive this gift of land from God, as they conquered their enemies with the help of God, for “all the inhabitants of the land” melted in fear before the Israelites and their God.

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Thinking Further

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?