

Joshua 2, Spies

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Preacher: John Howard

[0:00] system so we record it without anyone up here having to do anything. We'll see what happens. Now you've got to do this for me. If you don't do this, then we're wasting our time. You've got to open up a Bible. Yours or one in the pew. If you don't have one, ask. I'll get you one.

If you need a Bible, let me know and I'll give you one. But you're opening up to the book of Joshua chapter 2. Joshua chapter 2. You need one?

Oh, you got me. Joshua chapter. Now this is a story that most of us know. The problem is the whole first part of Joshua is we know these stories really well. We teach them to little kids. They can tell you all about these stories.

You know, Joshua. What happens? The wall fall down. You know, we tell that story a lot. But there's a lot more to this story than just the walls fall down. And we're going to be looking at the two spies that went into Jericho and were hit by the prostitute Rahab.

And I want us to, we're going to read the first seven verses of chapter 2 and just sort of get a start on what's going on. And hopefully we're going to learn something as we go through this.

[1:15] Alright, let's read. In fact, let me ask somebody else to read because I sang really loud this morning. My voice won't last. Somebody read one through seven.

Anybody. Joshua, son of Nun, sent out two spies out from Shittim secretly and instructed them to find out what he can about the land, especially Jericho.

They stopped at the house of a prostitute named Rahab and spent the night there. The king of Jericho received this report. Note well, Israelite men have come here tonight to spy on the land.

So the king of Jericho was sent. This order to Rahab, turn over the men who have come to you, the ones who came to your house, for they have come to spy on the whole land.

But the woman hid the two men and replied, Yes, these men were clients of mine, but I didn't know where they came from. When it was time to shut the city gate for the night, the men left.

[2:17] I don't know where they were headed. Chase after them quickly, for you have time to catch them. Now she had taken them up to the roof and had hidden them in the stalks of flats.

She had spread out on the roof. Meanwhile, the king's men tried to find them on the road to the Jordan River. Near the port, the city gate was shut.

As soon as they set out, in pursuit of them. Alright, so there are two spies. Now Israel's camped at what's called Shittim. And that's where they're sent from.

Now this location has significance. And when you know the significance, you go, Oh, and then we got Rahab's profession. So we're going to look back at Numbers 25.

Now I don't know if you're going to find it. You don't have to find it. But Numbers 25, verses 1-5. Here's what it says. This is when Israel arrives at this location. When Israel arrived at Shittim, the people began to commit, and it says people.

[3 : 21] Let's just be honest. It was the men. The people began to commit sexual immorality with the daughters of Moab. These women invited the men, or the people, to the sacrifices of their gods.

Then the people ate and bowed down to their gods. And when Israel joined themselves to Baal Peor, the anger of the Lord flared against Israel. The Lord said to Moses, Arrest all the leaders of the people and hang them up before the Lord in broad daylight, so that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel.

So Moses said to the judges of Israel, Each of you must execute those men who were joined with Baal Peor. And as a result of this, 24,000 men died.

Now Joshua is sending two spies secretly. Also, I want to compare that to the way Moses did it. Remember back when they were at Kaddish, Moses said, send us one man from each tribe, and we're going to go and go in and check out the land and tell us what's there.

Is it fruitful? How are the cities? What are the inhabitants? Very much in the open. Joshua sends two spies in secret. The twelve men come back.

[4 : 36] Only two of them have a good report. They all say, oh, the land's rich, but the enemy is big, giants, and they live in tall, fortified cities. It's impossible. And immediately, because that report was publicly made, people became discouraged.

Joshua is a military man. He's sending his spies in secret. He's already told the people, because the Lord said, tell the people in three days we cross the river.

So he's already told the people, go through the camp and tell the people, get ready, we're crossing the Jordan. So the people are busy getting ready, there's no question, we're crossing the Jordan River. And he tells the two spies, now go into the land, see what you see, and particularly pay attention to Jericho, because that's the first city we're going to come against.

Now Jericho was probably a modest sized city. I don't know what you think, but you know, depending on what you remember from someone telling you the story, you know, huge walls and a big city.

But it couldn't be too big because they walked around it seven times in one day and still had the energy to attack it. So it was probably a modest sized city. It probably did have casemate walls.

[5 : 49] They're pretty sure it had two walls, an outer wall and an inner wall. And what was common was the outer wall was the outside wall was the wall of houses. In fact, one person described it and said, in all likelihood, the buildings of the city formed the wall.

They were tightly against the wall. And of course, it was more heavily built than the rest of the walls because it was the outer wall. And then there was an inner wall. You know, you really like inner and outer walls.

Well, I love him and he gets inside the one and you got him on both sides. And of course, over time, people built houses in there. And that's probably what happened is Rahab's house got built in between the two walls in front of her house on the one wall and the back of her house on the other wall.

And they probably, at most, the walls were probably two story high. They were real high. And so, the task of the spies was to go check out the city. And so, they go into Jericho.

What would you do? Would you stand outside and go, well, it looks like it's over. It might be a bad man. Or would you go, let's go find out what's going on. How do we get in the city? What are the walls like?

[6 : 54] What are the people thinking? Intelligence, stuff that we need to know. So, they go in. All right, jump down here.

So, what they do when they get in there, they go where people go. Where do they go? Well, it turns out that Rahab's house, she was a prostitute.

And in those days, and most likely, she had an inn of sorts. Remember, she had a room where she'd serve food and drinks. And she had rooms upstairs where she serviced her customers.

And people coming into town knew that that was the place to go. You went there if you wanted to get refreshed. You were a stranger, that's where you went. You get food, you get drink, and whatever else you wanted while you're there.

It was so common, I'm going to start skipping ahead and remember what the king said. He said, go to Rahab's house and tell her to turn the men over. He just expected they'd go there. Now, there's a possibility when I told them they were seen going there, but he would expect that.

[8 : 02] In fact, the law was, a common law of that time in the Gentile areas was that if you were a prostitute slash innkeeper and you had foreigners coming into your establishment, you were to tell the king.

And if you didn't, you'd be executed. You were very suspicious of foreigners. These were dangerous times. You never knew who was coming through. And so that was the law.

And so Rahab, you read what she reports back to the king when we get there. He'd go, yeah, it makes sense why she'd say that. And so they go in.

Now, it's interesting. You see, I think we don't often notice this, but the Lord likes to do things. He says, remember back when the spies came and then what happened to Shittim about the women of the town, moral in, you know, that stuff.

They fail. Why do they fail? Sexual immorality. 24,000 die. That's a lot of men to be doing bad things when they're not supposed to be doing.

[9 : 13] You know, just think of that one next time. Where's young Mark? Oh, he left. Oh, there he is. Hang him up in daylight. All right.

Here you have two spies in a similar situation. They're tempted. In fact, the text of the war, if you read the text, it actually uses suggestive words.

They came in as suggestive. In other parts of the Old Testament, that meant that they had sexual relations. They laid down another suggestive word. But then it always clarifies it.

It says, yeah, that temptation was there, but these men didn't do that. They came into the house. They laid down the roof hidden. They did this.

So, what they're doing is the author is saying, we need to notice the parallels between the failure of Israel and the success of these two men. There's a pain.

[10 : 10] I want to tell you, you know, Adam fell, right? Why? Because he failed to obey God's command. Jesus is the second Adam. What did he do?

He succeeded. Why? Because he did what Adam failed to do. He was obedient to God's will. He said, a lot of things God says, all right, we're going to try this and we're going to blow it.

He says, okay, later on, we're going to try it again in a little bit different sort of situation. See if you get it right this time. And by the way, if we blow it, he'll do it again. Because there's lessons to be learned.

There's lessons for Israel to be learned here and they're learning one right here. Okay? So, now the words got back to the king or he suspects that, well, he knows that there are spies from Israel have come into the city.

He sends men down to Rahab's establishment knowing that that's where they're probably going to go. If you think about it, you go into a drinking establishment, you're sitting around drinking, you can ask questions.

[11 : 11] What's this town like? What's the king like? What's the soldiers like? I mean, people are going to just, we're strangers in town. Tell us about this place. This is where you're going to get information.

And so, the king sends men to the establishment and he says, let's find out what's going on. Now, it's also very, very clear from the text that the king and therefore all the inhabitants of the city were very aware that there was a million Israelites camped out at Shittim.

Now, I don't know about you, but if somewhere in Georgia there was a million Russians camped out and they've been moving around, I'd be a little nervous too, wouldn't you?

Especially if a couple of them showed up in the area and said, hmm, what kind of town is Sanford? What kind of police department do you got? What do you do for this? Is there a National Guard unit nearby?

What kind? There's a problem. We need to get these guys caught. They know about the recent defeat of the kings on the eastern side of the Jordan River.

[12 : 28] The Amorites have been destroyed. They have been wiped out. Two huge groups of them are gone. So, the king wants to get these guys to find out what's your intention, what's going on.

And he says in Joshua 2.3, he says, turn over the men who came to you, again a suggestive term, the ones who came to your house, correcting the suggestion, for they have come to spy on the whole land.

Now, these were soldiers or armed men and they went to that house. But Rahab had already made a decision to hide them. This wasn't, oh no, there are soldiers downstairs, I might get executed.

Here, hide. It was, she had already hidden them before the men came. She knew in all likelihood that someone would be come looking for them.

She made the decision to hide them. And she had already prepared the report that she was going to give about them leaving the city. In fact, if you read it again, look at that, it says, in verse 4, but the woman hid two men and replied, yes, these men were clients of mine.

[13 : 51] What does that mean? They were customers. They were customers and they weren't just buying glasses of wine. But I didn't know where they came from. I'm innocent.

I didn't know they were Israelites. When it was time to shut the city gate for the night, they left. So the gate, they left just as the gates were being closed.

But don't worry, if you head, go out, try to catch them. You catch them. It hadn't happened that long ago. So I get the opinion that this is pretty close to that time. They hadn't been, those gates hadn't closed long because when the men leave, they go chase them, they open the gates, let them out, and close the gates again.

Rahab had it all figured out how she was going to respond. She knew exactly who these people were. Okay, let me find my place.

Well, note here that whereas the women of Shittim had lured the Israelite men to sex and seeing here a prostitute whose job it was to earn money that way did not but protected them from capture.

[15 : 10] And that the original 12 spies, one of the things they, well, 10 of the 12 spies, I'll show you Joshua was one of them, but 10 of them reported that the walls of the cities were high and thick, impenetrable.

We can't do this. Instead, these two guys are not overwhelmed by the walls at all. In fact, they go right into the city an entirely different way of approaching things. And they found the city vulnerable.

Alright, now, let's go down to verses 8-14. I get somebody to read those. Now, before they laid down, she came up to them on the roof and said to the men, I know that the Lord has given you the land and that the terror of you has fallen on us that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you.

For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you. And when you came out of Egypt and what you did to the two kings of Amorites who were beyond the Jordan at Sion and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.

How far did you say? Through 14. Okay. And when he heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you. For the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

[16 : 30] Now therefore, please swear to me by the Lord, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's household and give me a pledge of truth.

And spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters with all who belong to them and deliver our lives from death. So the men said to her, our life for yours if you do not tell this business to ours.

And it shall come about when the Lord gives us the land that we will deal kindly and faithfully with you. Okay. So before the kingsmen come to the house, she's taken up on the roof and she's hid them under the stalks of flax.

And she explains why she's helping them. We're going to look at that. She says, the whole land is terrified of the Israelites.

That everyone is aware how they left Egypt. When did that happen? Over 40 years. 40 years prior. People heard about the Red Sea and the Egyptians dying there.

[17 : 42] How the Lord split the sea and the people went through 40 years before and that's already on their minds. They know that story. They understand a miracle occurred that the God of Israel split the sea they passed through and the Egyptian army was destroyed.

They already have them on their radar. We need to watch out for this big mob of people wandering the desert. Then she mentions the next thing.

As they came up around, 40 years later, they came up around the east side of the Jordan River and they come to the land.

It's a very rich and beautiful land and they destroy the Amorites. Killed two kings and two and a half tribes asked Moses, let us keep this land.

This is a good land. And they agreed. He agrees, you can have it but you got to go help fight the battles for the rest of the tribes to get their land too. And they hear about how they didn't just defeat those armies, they annihilated the people.

[18 : 50] There is nobody left except Israelites in that land now. And the people in Jericho are terrifying. Terrifying.

Now it's interesting. When Israel got to Kadesh and were trying to go into the lands, their hearts melted and their courage failed. But when the two spies come in to Jericho, Rahab tells them what?

We are terrified and our hearts have melted. Opposite situation is joker. And she says something that is probably the most important confession made in this whole book.

And she says, I know the Lord and that's another way, that's the kind way of saying Yahweh. I am that I am.

I know that the Lord, Yahweh, is handing this land over to you. And then she says, for the Lord, Yahweh, your God is the God of heaven above and earth below.

[20 : 04] She's saying, I know your God is not just a local God. Your God rules the heavens and rules the earth. Now, she is a Canaanite.

A Canaanite. There is no other statement of faith to rival this in the entire book except Joshua's speech which occurs in chapter 24.

She rehearses Israel's history and its effects on her fellow Canaanites and then comes to the conclusion that God of Israel is the God that is the true God and is going to give this land to them.

You see, we can see irony again. When the first spies came back and reported they didn't believe their God was the God of heaven and earth even though he had performed miracles for them.

And here you have a woman who only knows the reports of that happening and she says, I know your God is the God of heaven and earth. There is no doubt about it and he's given you this land.

[21 : 26] And she asked for a promise. What did she ask the spies to do for her?

Give her something to keep their promise so there's a prayer. They actually swear an oath. The oath is, she says, I want my mother and my father and my brothers and my sisters and all who belong to them and all the servants and slaves to be kept from death when you take this city.

In her mind, it's happening. There is no doubt. That city is going to be in Israel's hands. And she's asking for them to spare her family.

family. Now, on the basis of her confession of faith, she's asking for her family to be spared. And the spies say something very interesting.

If you die, may we die too. In other words, when the city falls, and if you should die, any of those people should die, we will give our lives up as well.

[22 : 39] they say, you've been loyal to us, we'll be loyal to you. And so she gets that.

And what do they do? There's the next section that's going to be sort of a negotiation, and I'm not going to read it. It's a negotiation on the terms of this contract.

Now, it goes like this. Now, if you report us, the deal's off. If you betray us, the deal's off. If you're not in the house, the deal's off.

Anybody left outside, they're on their own. But as long as you stay in this house, we've got a deal. And what do they do to mark the deal?

How are they going to know which house out of all the houses in Jericho is the one? They're going to do what? They're going to put a red cord on it. Now, we've got another parallel going here.

[23 : 42] Think back before they left Egypt. What did God tell the Israelites to do? Mark your house with what color is blood? Red.

Mark the doorway with red blood. And what will happen? Everybody inside will be passed over. now, we know for a fact that there were more than just Israelites in those houses.

There were some Egyptians and other peoples who were there that go, I think this God's serious. These people are, we need to be, can I be in your house tonight?

And they were passed over. And when they left Egypt, when Israel left Egypt, they went with them. here we have a Passover. In Egypt, it was the angel of death that passed over.

In Jericho, it's going to be the men of God, Israel, passing over as God's agents. And everyone who wasn't passed over dies. Everyone, to include all the animals.

[24 : 46] You see a paragraph? God's saying, I will pass over you, but there has to be something, and it's a red cord in this case. And she lets the men down.

And she tells them before they go down, now don't go back down the road toward the fords. Go to the hill country to the other side of the city. It's a wilderness. They won't look for you there, because they're not expecting you to go there, expecting you to go back down to the river to cross over to your people.

Hide out for three days. Now, here's the point. Joshua, when he sent the spies out, said three days we crossed the Jordan. So the spies had to be back before the end of the third day.

And in Hebrew, a lot of times when they say, like, in three days, and then today, tomorrow, and then on the next day, sometime we're going to do this. You know, it doesn't have to be a full day like we were saying.

Three days we're going to do this. You go, one day, two days, three days. Okay, now we're going to do it. It's on a third day. And so these men have to get back to, they hide out for two days in the hills and then they get back to Joshua.

[25 : 53] And it's important they get back in time. You're in the wrong direction. I'm lost. Here we go. Alright.

Now, when they get to Joshua, verse 24, what does that say? Just verse 24.

And they said to Joshua, Surely the Lord has given all the land into our hands, and all the inhabitants of the land moreover have melted away before us.

You know what they did? They quote Rahab, except they had one word. Surely.

Surely. Their experience in Jericho and their interaction with Rahab has convinced them. Not only is the Lord going to, but surely the Lord, for sure, it's going to happen.

[27 : 06] It's going to happen just like God said it would. He's going to give the land and its inhabitants to them. Now, think about this.

Who orchestrated the two men meeting Rahab? God. Why did they have to meet her?

Because she became a woman of faith who recognized God's working and was willing to help them out of all the inhabitants of the city.

She had put her faith in the Lord, the God of Israel, and she helped them make their mission successful. See, this story is full of importance.

It shows the reversal of earlier affairs of Israel, the spies and the people who entered the land, and now she's also important because here is Rahab, a Canaanite prostitute.

[28 : 10] The ultimate outsider. Think about that. The person who has so many strikes against them under the Jewish law.

I mean, first of all, she's a Canaanite. They've all been consigned to what? Death. She's a prostitute. She should be what? Stoned. She's, you know, a woman. Who trusts a woman?

An outsider. And she would have died in the destruction of Jericho with her whole family, with everybody else.

But because of her faith in Yahweh, God, she was spared. Her and her household were spared. Not only spared, they became part of the people of God.

they became part of Israel. She became an insider because of her faith. And she's not the only foreign woman that becomes an insider.

[29 : 12] Can you think of another one we recently studied who was an outsider who became an insider? Ruth. She was even worse than Canaanite.

She was a Moabite. Israel wasn't supposed to have anything to do with the Moabites. They were the evil of evil. Yet, Ruth became the wife of Boaz.

And interestingly enough, both Rahab and Ruth are found in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. She was incorporated into Israel.

God always planned to include outsiders in the family of God. Did you know that? You know how I know that?

Well, God told Noah and then later he told Abraham that all the people of the earth would find blessing through them. Well, all the people of the earth doesn't mean just Israel.

[30 : 11] It means all the people of the earth. the covenant with Abraham was intended to bring a blessing to all the people of the earth. Genesis 12, 3, 4.

And other women, like Ruth, an outsider, people banned from association with Abraham were becoming included because of their faith. Now, you think about that.

If that's true, what would have happened? Remember when Jonah, we said Jonah went to Nineveh and he preached destruction. Repent or die.

Repent or die. What happened? They repented. What happened? They lived. What if the two spies had been sent into town and they met Rahab and she says, I've been spreading the word.

It's not just me, but this house where I live, I have my family, but next door, my neighbors believe too. Can their families be in that house and you spare them too? How about the ones across the street from us?

[31 : 09] Is it possible that more inhabitants of Cana could have been spared death and destruction? And the answer is yes, if they put their faith in the God of Israel, Yahweh.

God didn't want to kill everybody just because they were Canaanites. He wanted to bring judgment on the people, but if they repented and would have come to faith, just like Rahab did, they could have been spared.

Now, think of somebody else who might be in that boat, might have been in that boat. How about us?

Aren't we outsiders? Aren't we Gentiles? I don't think any of us have any Jewish background. We're all outsiders. What happens to the people who are on the outside now?

What's going to happen to them? Destruction. Destruction. They're all going to die with no hope. What happens to us, though? We're insiders now.

[32 : 19] So what do we have? Hope. We were just doing Philippians in my Sunday school class. The hope of the resurrection to attain the fullness of Christ.

How did we get there? We didn't just sort of piddly D down the road and someone said, you. Faith. We believe the God of Israel.

Yahweh is the God of heaven and earth and sent his son to save us and bring us into relationship and take us to be with him in his kingdom forever. The same as Rahab, the same as Ruth.

So you see, this story includes a whole lot more than this wall is falling down. And hopefully what I've shared will inspire you to read. And I really want you to do that. Go back and read and think deeply about it.

And see how God works to bring all things together to fulfill his purpose. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your grace. Lord, I confess, I know I was on the outside.

[33 : 32] I didn't even know what that meant and I didn't really care. But you, through your grace, your faithfulness, drew me to follow you and to put my hope and faith in you, to find life in you.

And that's true of all us here, Lord. Help us to grasp that you're in the business of saving people, of rescuing those that will put their trust in you, whether they be Canaanite, Moabites, or just plain old Gentiles like us.

Thank you. Thank you for showing us that you don't give up. You don't give up on your people. you always bring your purpose to be fulfilled. And sometimes, Lord, when we look at the genealogy, it's just amazing how crooked the line is, but it always gets to where it needs to be.

You will succeed. We look forward to the day that you send Jesus back to take us home, to be with you forever. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.