

**A Harlot, Two Spies, and a Scarlet Cord:  
Joshua 2:1-24 Explained  
Scriptures for Today**

**Joshua 2:1-24**

And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there. 2 And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country. 3 And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country. 4 And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were: 5 And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them. 6 But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof. 7 And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate. 8 And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof; 9 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. 10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. 11 And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. 12 Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: 13 And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death. 14 And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee. 15 Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall. 16 And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way. 17 And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear. 18 Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. 19 And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him. 20 And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear. 21 And she said, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window. 22 And they went, and came unto the mountain, and abode there three days, until the pursuers were returned: and the pursuers

sought them throughout all the way, but found them not. 23 So the two men returned, and descended from the mountain, and passed over, and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all things that befell them: 24 And they said unto Joshua, Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.

## INTRODUCTION

Imagine you're one of the two spies. You've got your secret spy outfit on. You've crossed the Jordan River. You've entered enemy territory. Every face is unfamiliar. Every person could betray you. Every step could be your last.

You walk right through the gates of Jericho. The strongest city in Canaan. Massive walls. Armed soldiers. Watchmen everywhere. And somehow your cover is blown. The king already knows you're there. The search is on. The city gates are about to close.

Where do you run? Who can you trust? The last person in the world you would expect. A woman named Rahab. A harlot. And yet this woman becomes one of the greatest examples of faith in the entire Bible. Let's see why.

## I. GOD OFTEN USES UNEXPECTED PEOPLE

### **Joshua 2:1**

And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.

Immediately people ask a question. Why Rahab? Why a harlot? Why not a king? Why not a priest? Why not a wealthy businessman? Let me ask you something. If I asked you before this sermon: "Who is one of the greatest examples of faith in the Bible?" – How many of you would have answered "Rahab the harlot?" Probably nobody.

Why Rahab? Because God loves using people nobody expects. He does this all the time. Think about Scripture. Moses was a fugitive. David was a shepherd. Peter was a fisherman. Paul persecuted Christians. Rahab was a harlot. Yet God used every one of them.

Never assume someone is beyond salvation. Never assume someone is unusable. Never assume God cannot change a life. Now look what happens next.

### **Joshua 2:2-3**

And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country. 3 And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country.

The spies haven't even been in the city very long and the king already knows they're there. Think about that. Jericho wasn't some sleepy little town. Jericho had guards. Jericho had soldiers. Jericho had a king. The spies have already been discovered. The mission is in danger.

The men are in Rahab's house, and the king of Jericho is asking her to bring them forth out of her house. What is Rahab going to do? Is this harlot going to turn over the men to her king, or is she going to help the spies that Joshua sent there?

Imagine being one of those spies. You're sitting inside Rahab's house. Suddenly there's a knock at the door. The king's men are outside. They're looking for you. If Rahab turns you in, you're dead. Do you trust her? What would you do?

**Joshua 2:4-6**

And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were: 5 And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them. 6 But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof.

Rahab hides the spies under stalks of flax on her roof and then lies to the king about them being there. Now ask yourself: Why? Why would she risk her life for complete strangers? Why would she protect men she had never met?

The answer is coming. Let me ask you this. Why is Rahab helping them? Money? Fear? Politics? What's motivating her to help these spies from another nation? The answer is coming soon, and it's one of the greatest confessions of faith in the entire Bible.

**Joshua 2:7**

And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate.

The pursuers leave the city. They are going after the spies that remain in Rahab's house. They are going after people who aren't out there. The gates are shut. The spies are trapped inside Jericho or so they may think. Humanly speaking, they're finished. Trapped inside. But God is already working behind the scenes.

**II. FAITH BEGINS BEFORE YOU SEE THE MIRACLE**

**Joshua 2:8-9**

And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof; 9 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.

How does Rahab KNOW that the Lord hath given them the land? Has she seen the walls fall? Has she seen Jericho conquered? Has she seen Joshua win a battle in Canaan? They just crossed over. No battles yet in Canaan. She hasn't seen anything like that.

This is the heart of the chapter. Notice exactly what she says. "I know that the Lord hath given you the land." She says, "I KNOW" meaning she is 100% sure. Not "I hope." Not "I think." Not "Maybe." "I know." Now think about that.

How many walls have fallen so far in Jericho? None. How many battles have been won in Canaan? None. How much of Canaan belongs to Israel yet? None. Yet Rahab already believes. Why? Faith sees victory before the walls fall.

**Joshua 2:10**

For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.

She heard about the Red Sea. She heard about battles on the other side of the Jordan River before they crossed over. She heard about Sihon. She heard about Og. Faith came by hearing. The whole city heard. Most didn't believe, but Rahab believed. Everybody had the same information. Only Rahab responded in faith.

**Romans 10:17**

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

That's what happened with Rahab. She heard the truth about the mighty acts of God and decided that only the one true God could have done these things. She believed.

**Joshua 2:11**

And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

This may be the greatest statement in the chapter. "For the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath."

A Gentile harlot, not an Israelite, understood something many Israelites never understood. The God of Israel is the true God. The people of Jericho heard the same reports. Some hardened themselves. Rahab believed. The difference wasn't information. The difference was faith. Rahab had simple faith in God that led her to risk her life for those two spies.

Imagine a football game. There's two minutes left in the game. Your team is down by 35 points or 7 touchdowns. The other team has the ball. Everybody knows the game is over. That's Jericho. Rahab looked at the scoreboard before anyone else did. She realized God had already won. Game over. Faith sees victory before the walls fall.

**Joshua 2:12-13**

Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: 13 And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.

Rahab now asks for mercy. And notice something beautiful. She doesn't just ask for herself. She asks for her father. Her mother. Her brothers. Her sisters. Her household. She wants her family saved. That ought to remind us of soul winning. When someone truly believes God, they want the people they love to be saved too.

Put yourself in Rahab's shoes. She knows judgment is coming. She knows Jericho is doomed. If you knew destruction was coming, who would you think about first? Your parents. Your children. Your brothers. Your sisters. That's what Rahab is doing here. That's what you need to be doing now.

**Joshua 2:14**

And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee.

The spies agree. A covenant is made. A promise is given. Now the tension shifts. Will Rahab trust the promise?

### III. THE SCARLET CORD

**Joshua 2:15**

Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall.

Think about God's providence here. He already knew who would help the spies. God is guiding these events to bring about His purposes. Her house was built into the city wall. Is that a coincidence? No. God had already placed her exactly where she needed to be. She lets them out of the city by sending them down a cord through the window.

**Joshua 2:16-17**

And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way. 17 And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear.

Rahab tells the spies to hide in the mountains for three days. She gives them the plan. The pursuers will return from looking for you in three days. The plan is set. The escape begins.

**Joshua 2:18-20**

Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window

which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. 19 And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him. 20 And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear.

Now we come to the most famous part of the chapter. The scarlet cord. "Thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by." When judgment came upon Jericho, everyone inside that house would live. Everyone outside would perish. The promise was clear.

Imagine Jericho on the final day. Picture the city of Jericho. Trumpets sounding. Walls shaking. Dust filling the air. People running everywhere. Panic taking over. And hanging from one window is that scarlet cord. That one small scarlet cord meant the difference between life and death. Looked just like an ordinary cord but to Rahab it was a promise.

Now notice something important. The cord itself did not save Rahab. The God behind the promise saved Rahab. She simply believed what God had said.

**Joshua 2:21**

And she said, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window.

Rahab has awesome faith. "According to your words, so be it." Immediately. No delay. No excuses. No hesitation. She obeys due to her faith. She believed the promise. So she obeyed the instructions. Faith sees victory before the walls fall.

**IV. RAHAB RISKED EVERYTHING**

People often miss this. Rahab had to choose sides. Let me ask you a question here. When the walls of Jericho fell down, what side of the wall did Rahab want to be on? Jericho's side or God's side.

There was no neutrality. She had to pick a side just like you do today and tomorrow and the next day. She could stand with Jericho. Or she could stand with God. She could not do both. Helping the spies was treason against her city.

If she was discovered, she could have lost everything. Yet she chose God. That's faith. Faith is trusting God even when there is a cost.

## V. GOD REWARDS FAITH

### **Joshua 2:22**

And they went, and came unto the mountain, and abode there three days, until the pursuers were returned: and the pursuers sought them throughout all the way, but found them not.

The spies obey Rahab's instructions. They hide in the mountain for three days. The pursuers never find them. God protects them.

### **Joshua 2:23**

So the two men returned, and descended from the mountain, and passed over, and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all things that befell them:

The spies return safely to Joshua. The mission is complete. They tell him everything.

### **Joshua 2:24**

And they said unto Joshua, Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.

What an ending. Compare this to Numbers 13. The ten spies said: "We can't do it." These two spies say: "The LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land." Same land. Same giants. Same enemies. The difference wasn't the size of the enemy. The difference was the size of their FAITH. Different all because of faith. Rahab the harlot played a huge part in this.

God didn't change. The cities didn't change. The faith changed. And because faith changed, everything changed.

Now here's what makes Rahab's story even more amazing. Joshua 2 is not the end of her story. She survives Jericho. She joins Israel. She marries. She has descendants. And eventually she appears in the lineage of Jesus Christ Himself.

### **Matthew 1:5**

And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

### **Hebrews 11:31**

By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

Faith sees victory before the walls fall.

## Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, Rahab looks like the least likely person in Jericho to be saved. A Gentile. A harlot. Living in a condemned city. Yet by the end of the chapter she becomes the greatest example of faith in the city.

The king didn't believe. The soldiers didn't believe. The city didn't believe. But Rahab did. And her faith changed everything.

Answer this question: "Who do you believe had more faith? Rahab or the two spies?" Rahab may have had more faith than the spies. She already knew the city is lost. The spies are there trying to figure it out. Rahab already has it figured out. She already KNOWS.

The lesson of Joshua 2 is simple: Faith sees victory before the walls fall. Rahab knew it was over. Rahab believed God before the walls came down. The spies believed God before the battle began.

And the question for us today is this: Do we believe God before we see the miracle? Do we trust God's promises before we see the outcome? Because faith doesn't wait until the walls fall. Faith believes God before the walls ever begin to shake.

Let's pray.