

Joshua 2

Written by K B Napier
Thursday, 22 June 2017 18:20

This describes the very beginning of the taking of Canaan. The massive collection of Hebrew tribes had already conquered the Amorites to the south-east of Jordan. Now they were poised to begin the taking of the rest of Canaan, starting with Jericho. Just as the Hebrews began their war with only two spies, so modern Christians can wage resistance to evil with just one man or woman, living aright and being holy. (Date for this chapter is approximately 1400BC).

Verses 1&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.

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.

Joshua sent out two spies to bring back information regarding Jericho and its surrounding land. They were "*sent out of Shittim*". We are not sure if this was the place west of Jerusalem or the place east of the Jordan where the Hebrews camped before crossing the Jordan, but it does not alter the account. Did they cross from east to west... or west of Jordan to travel east to the city? We cannot say for certain, but it is likely they went from the east.

Jericho was about five miles west of the Jordan and heavily fortified. The men arrived in Jericho city itself and found lodging in an harlot's house. That is, she was either a temple whore, or a straightforward prostitute. We are not told why the spies stayed in her house... was it because they were directed there by God, or by Joshua? Or, was it a 'random' choice (again from God, given the outcome)?

Rahab was praised for her faith, in James, and was married to Salmon who was descended from David and thus connected to Christ. This should interest modern Christians who have preconceived ideas about who we should trust and why we should avoid certain people. Really, it comes down to discernment and prompting by the Lord. It is likely discernment guided the

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spies to Rahab.

The spies arrived in the city at night, before the gatekeepers closed the main gates. Probably, it was the gatekeepers who informed the king, via soldiers, that two strangers had entered. They rightly assumed the spies ("children of Israel") came to plot against Jericho. Perhaps the Hebrews dressed differently, or simply spoke a variant tongue... but their arrival sparked immediate interest. Rest assured that modern Christians who speak for Christ will always be marked and their details kept for future harassment!

Verses 3-6

1.

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.

2.

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:

3.

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.

4.

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.

Though tantalizing details are not given, we may assume from the narrative that the gatekeepers, or someone they advised, followed the two men to Rahab's house. And so the king commanded Rahab to bring out the two men to be arrested as spies.

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But, Rahab, for reasons not fully exposed to us, decided to hide the men. She then lied to the king's men, saying the spies had come to her but then left by the main gate just before it was locked for the night... the soldiers had better chase after them quickly or they would disappear!

Evidently, the soldiers ran to the gate to chase after the spies. In reality, Rahab took them to the roof of her house, which was built against the city wall, some rooms built on the wall itself. Her roof was used to store flax in the sun, and she hid the men under the flax. The flax grew on stalks, and after carding, was used to make material/linen for clothing. The flax plants were "*laid in order*"

on the roof, which implies that Rahab was one who worked at collecting and processing the flax for an income, and who obtained extra money by being a common prostitute. It is interesting that God's word praises the woman despite her unholy 'profession', and even though she lied.

Verses 7-13

1.

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.

2.

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

3.

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.

4.

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.

5.

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.

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6.

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:

7.

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.

The king's men chased after the two spies towards the river Jordan. Jericho knew the massed people of Israel were camped across the river, so deduced they would run back that way. They chased as far as the fords, the crossing point, before giving up; it is reasonable to suppose they did not wish to be caught by the soldiers of Joshua. It was now night, and the gate of Jericho was locked.

Meanwhile Rahab talked to the spies she had hidden. From her conversation we can say that all of Canaan knew what was happening and was fearful of the incoming tribes. Even Rahab knew that the Hebrew God had given them the land, causing all the people to be terrified of their fate. They heard of what happened forty years previously at the Red Sea, and of the recent successful war against the Amorite kings who were "*on the other side*" of the Jordan. Their names were Sihon and Og, and they were "*utterly destroyed*".

At that time Moses was still alive and leading the people. Og was king of Bashan, and was related to the race of giants of Rephaim.

Sihon refused to allow the massed tribes of Hebrews to pass through the Amorite land. Given the numbers of Israelites, this was very foolish! When he and his country was subdued, Moses gave the land to Gad. A similar fight occurred between the successful Israelites and Og, with the same victorious result. This is why the people of Jericho and the rest of Canaan were now truly afraid of the new invasive claimants to their land.

It was no small victory, for Og alone had sixty fortified cities. The cities of Sihon were famed at the time, and his kingship and army were mighty and vicious. Thus, when the coming Hebrews

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defeated both Amorite kings in quick succession, Rahab was convinced that the land was given to them by their God, and such power would soon overcome the rest of Canaan... a reasonable assumption!

The two kings of the Amorites were known for their ruthlessness. Yet, the newcomers beat them solidly, and the other people of Canaan quaked, losing all hope. It is what happens when God's people believe and go forward in holy strength. Rahab even used God's true names, Jehovah 'elohiym, saying that He ruled both Heaven and earth. If the woman had been a liar and wanted the spies dead (after all, she, too, was quaking with fear) she could easily have handed them over to the king's men. But, she was in God's hand, displaying faith in the One True Lord.

Rahab wanted reassurance that when the Hebrews overtook Jericho, they would leave her and her family alive, in recognition of her kindness towards the spies. This was a very real request for when an army took a city they swarmed over the walls and killed everyone in their path.

Verses 14-17

1.

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.

2.

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.

3.

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.

4.

And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear.

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The spies accepted her request, saying that if she kept silent about them, they would honour the promise and treat her and her family well. This is right and proper, in any age. Except for enemies of God who hate Him and us. Then, promises cannot be made, unless the Holy Spirit gives a special dispensation to an individual.

Knowing she would be safe, Rahab tied a cord/rope to an anchor point in one of her rooms and dangled it to the ground, so the spies could climb down to freedom. Rahab advised them to run for the nearby mountain to hide for three days, by which time the soldiers would return, unsuccessful. The men did so, after telling her they would not be guilty of breaking their oath if she reneged on her promise to stay quiet.

Christians should understand that any promise they make under duress is not enforceable or binding. In normal circumstances no Christian should make a promise they know they will not keep – their word should be their bond. And no Christian should readily and easily vow an oath, for God demands that it must be kept. And, any promise based on sin is invalid.

Verses 18-20

1.

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.

2.

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.

3.

And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear.

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Having made clear their position regarding the oath, the spies told Rahab what to do. When the Hebrew soldiers came against Jericho, she was to tie a scarlet cord to the window she let them escape from... a cord they handed to her themselves. She was also to gather together the family members she wished to save from death, into her house for safety. In Egypt, the Hebrew occupants of any house not displaying blood painted on the lintels of the doors, would die. Likewise, if any of the family strayed into the street during an attack, they would die, for leaving the place of protection.

This implies that soldiers would be advised which window and house to leave alone when they scaled the walls from outside the city. I suggest this is what happened because there is no mention of putting an identifying cord on the front door in the street. It would mean the soldiers who thus climbed the wall would go through the house to get into the street. The two men repeated the warning that, if Rahab did not keep her promise, she and her family would die anyway.

Verses 21-24

1.

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.

2.

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.

3.

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:

4.

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.

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Rahab agreed to the words of the spies, and they disappeared into the night. It seems she immediately tied the scarlet cord (also a symbol of hope) to her window. The spies hid on the mountain for three days. Perhaps they even saw the soldiers of Jericho leaving. The spies left the mountain and crossed the Jordan at the fords, to report back to Joshua. Rightly, they said the whole country was so afraid of them, that victory was assured... the country was theirs.

Do you believe in this kind of victory against enemies and circumstances? You cannot expect it if you are being sinful, but if you repent and hand over your entire life, lived in holy fashion, to God, you can expect results. At this time in history the wicked are massing around us determined to destroy us and God's word, but their evils are short-lived and they will receive God's wrath very soon.

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