

## **IF WALLS COULD TALK: RAHAB THE HARLOT AND THE SPIES (Joshua 2:1-25)**

Do you like spy thrillers? Most people do. Espionage is at the center of a story in the Bible highlighting a woman named Rahab. This woman lived on the city wall of Jericho. This is important to our story, for this wall of the city witnessed the escape of two spies from Israel whom Rahab received and then she sent them safely away from the suspicious King of Jericho. After Jericho fell, Rahab and her family would dwell safely in Israel and she figures in the lineage of Jesus (*Joshua 6:25, Matthew 1:5*).



The two spies were young (Joshua 6:2) and no doubt agile for this important task of spying out the land and Jericho. After their escape, they would stay hiding in the mountains for three days and probably, due to the Jordan River being so high this time of year, had to swim the fords in order to report back to Joshua. They entered the city of Jericho and entered into Rahab the harlot's house. This was a strategic move because she was a harlot. Men coming to her house would probably not create suspicion. They lay there at Rahab's house on top of her roof under cut stalks of flax which were there to dry. Rahab carefully placed them in order over each one of the young spies to hide them from detection.

When Rahab was asked by the King's messengers about the spies, she admitted of knowing about the two, but said, "*I knew not whence they were.*" (*Joshua 2:4*). She added that the men about the time of the closing of the gate went, but she did not know where they went (*Joshua 2:5*). She encouraged the messengers to pursue the spies, saying they could probably overtake the spies if they went quickly. Rahab lied about the two spies. We should not presume that God allows us to lie in certain situations. God does not commend Rahab's lies with his silence, any more than his silence commends Rahab being a harlot. We should realize that Rahab, being of Jericho and a harlot was a woman whose character was not necessarily patterned after the teachings of God. Today, God in speaking through Christ commands Christians to "*lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings* (*Colossians 3:9*).

God does commend the faith of Rahab. She occupies a place in Scripture among those of old who manifested saving faith. *“And in like manner was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works, in that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way?” (James 2:25)*. Her faith in God moved her to receive the spies. Her faith saved her later when Jericho fell into the hands of the Israelites. *“By faith Rahab the harlot perished not with them that were disobedient, having received the spies with peace” (Hebrews 11:31)*.

Rahab’s faith was not a blind faith, but a faith based upon evidence. When hiding the spies, she told them two reasons why the hearts of her people melt away before the Israelites. They had heard that Jehovah had dried up the waters of the Red Sea when delivering His people from the Egyptians. She also knew of the defeat of the two kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og, whom God destroyed before His people in the land of the Amorites (*cf. Numbers 21:21-35*). She knew of God’s prior actions and then by faith could reason that God would be victorious over Jericho. Today we read and know of the miracles of Jesus and should reason that He is able to save us from our sins. *“Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name” (John 20:30-31)*.

Rahab asked the spies to promise, due to her kindness shown them, that when they come to overtake Jericho, she and her father’s family would be saved. Their promise to save her and her family was conditioned upon her not telling others of their business in Jericho. Only if her family would stay in her house during the siege would they promise to deliver them from death. Rahab wanted a token or pledge that would secure their promise to her. The token was the scarlet rope or cord with which she uses to drop the spies down the wall. By putting the same cord in her window, the Israelites would see it and not destroy the house’s inhabitants. Both Rahab and the spies were careful in their promises or oaths. They were not quick to make rash promises, and were serious in fulfilling them. The Spies knowing they would fulfill their end of the promise say, *“We will be guiltless of this thine oath which thou has made us swear” (Joshua 2:17; cf. Ecclesiastes 5:2, Deuteronomy 23:21-23, Matthew 5:33-37)*.

After three days hiding in the mountains, the spies returned to report to Joshua on the east side of the Jordan. They informed Joshua as to what Rahab had said about the hearts of the people of the land: *“Truly Jehovah hath delivered into our hands all the land; and moreover all the inhabitants of the land do melt away before us” (Joshua 2:25)*. Through the spies, God had allowed insight into the heart or spirit of the land they were about to conquer. Surely the spirits of the Israelites were lifted with confidence as their faith in God was strengthened. By faith they knew that God had delivered Jericho and the land to His people.

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

1. Why did the spies go to Rahab the harlot's house when they came to spy on Jericho?
2. Is it alright to lie to help others just like Rahab the harlot did?
3. Rahab the harlot is remembered in the New Testament for what two things?
4. Rahab's faith was a:
  - (a). a blind faith with no prior evidence
  - (b). a confident faith based upon prior evidence.
  - (c). a faith filled with doubt.
5. How does Rahab's faith illustrate saving faith for us today?
6. Why were the Spies and Rahab careful in what they promised in their oaths?
7. What benefit to the Israelites was the report from the two young spies?