

## Joshua Chapter 2- John Karmelich

1. My title for this lesson is: "Remembering our first priority of Christian living - caring about the salvation and spiritual growth of others". Now there's a mouthful. ☺
  - a) In the last lesson I stated the underlying issue of the whole Book of Joshua was about "warfare against sin". My point here is, as important as it is to deal with our sin issues, our first priority as Christians is to tell others of Christ. As we live our new life trusting in God, but we should help others to join us and grow in that life choice.
2. Let me tie this concept to the book of Joshua. In Chapter 1, God was ordaining Joshua as the new leader of the Israelites. Joshua's first command was for everyone to prepare for his or her new life in the Promised Land. Understand that this was not a time to relax. To go into the Promised Land meant warfare and killing whoever was living there.
  - a) The spiritual aspect behind the concept of the "Promised Land" is all about learning to trust and grow in God's grace for one's life. It is about "killing" sinful ways of our life. It is also about learning how to trust in God instead of trusting in one's own ability to have victories over whatever it is we face.
  - b) Chapter 1 was all about preparation prior to beginning a new lifestyle of following God. Chapter 1 was a lot like understanding the fact that God exists, He is in charge, and He wants to rule over our lives. The actual process of crossing over the Jordan to enter the Promised Land does not begin until Chapter 3.
3. This leads us to Chapter 2. Before we actually enter the Promised Land, which is Chapter 3, we have Chapter 2. (There's a brilliant observation. ☺) In Chapter 2, Joshua sends two spies over the Jordan River to the nearest major city, which is Jericho. Joshua told these two guys to spy out that city. Their job "turned out to be" a living witness for God and help out a specific person and her family living in Jericho to be saved from the coming destruction and turn to God.
  - a) The more one thinks about Chapter 2, the stranger it gets. Let me explain: In Chapter 1, God tells Joshua in effect to enter the Promised Land and go conquer it. One would think that Chapter 2 would be the big production of everyone actually crossing the Jordan and "just start fighting". In other words, why have this chapter about two unnamed spies prior to entering the land? Is that a lack of trust in God's ability to give them victory by sending out two spies first to see what was happening?
  - b) My second mystery about Chapter 2 is why were the two spies were unnamed? The bible is not shy about naming all the people that did "just about everything". Yet, we are never given the names of these two spies. Why are their names deleted from the record?
    - i) What I suspect is the reason, leads back to my title for this lesson. The real purpose of the two spies was not to gather military information, but to be a witness to a woman named Rahab and her family.
    - ii) In other words, before the Israelites stepped in and conquered everyone in this city, they first needed to see if anyone there was interested in being saved.
  - c) Think of it this way: The Christian message to the world is in effect, one day death and destruction is coming to everyone. Whether you (unbeliever) want to face it or not, one day you will die and be judged by God for your unwillingness to turn to Him. At the same time, this world will be destroyed one day as it is permanently ruined by sin. The only "antidote" to this problem is to turn and give one's life to the God of the Universe.
    - i) That was the witnessing job of these two unnamed spies. Despite whatever sin issues these two spies had, before "cleansing" the land, the first order of business is to try to save people.
    - ii) This leads back to my lesson title. Our Christian purpose for living is to be a witness for God. We are to care about (and spend time on) leading others to Him.

- d) God wants to work on us (as believers) for the rest of our lives. God wants to change us to be more like the kind of person He wants us to be. God does this to Christians by taking up residence inside of us. He then works to change us from the inside out. My point here is during that life-long process, we are still to be a witness for God and help to bring others into the kingdom. In other words, we don't wait to be "perfect" to be a witness to others. We start now so God can work on others while he is working on us.
4. This leads me to the next major character in Chapter 2, which is a woman named Rahab.
- a) Rahab and her family are the only people in Jericho who will get saved prior to the battle.
  - b) This is the woman that helped these two spies in Jericho. The only thing we know about this woman's background is she is a harlot and/or runs a house of prostitution. She is the one who gets saved along with her family.
  - c) This leads to another question: Of all the people that God calls to get saved, why pick a prostitute? A clue is that in the bible, when one turns away from God, it is called idolatry. The sin of idolatry is often compared to adultery because now one is "fooling around" with another god!
    - i) We learn of this woman, who is living the life of a harlot (prostitute). The good news is this woman is willing to make a "u-turn" in life and choose the God of the Bible. Since this woman was willing to turn to the God, we have two unnamed witnesses (i.e., the two spies) to help her and her family turn to God.
  - d) Let's think about this chapter another way: God called the Israelites to go destroy all the current residents of the Promised Land. So, is it a violation of that command to go save this woman (Rahab) and her family? God never said to spare anyone, just to go wipe them out! So was being a witness to this family a violation of that order?
    - i) The answer is as that God does not call us to physically destroy those who refuse to turn from a sinful lifestyle. If anything God wants us to reach out to the unsaved to see if anyone wants away from that lifestyle and turn to God.
    - ii) God did call the Israelites to conquer these people and "spiritually speaking" it is a reference to conquering over sin and turning from a sinful lifestyle. Still, don't forget the idea we are talking about real warfare and a literal conquering!
    - iii) The point is, as it relates to this chapter and my lesson title, is that God wants us to "save who we can" as we are turning from our own sins. In other words, don't let the fact that God calls us to turn from sin to stop us from trying to rescue others who see the futility of living that type of lifestyle. Let us not be so busy focusing on our own lives that we don't make the effort to help others who desire to turn from sin to the God of this world.
    - iv) That is why, prior to the Israelites actually conquering the land of Israel, we have a chapter about two unnamed witnesses (the spies) going into the Promised Land and actually saving people who are interested in turning to God.
  - e) With all of that symbolism now down on paper for us to contemplate, ☺ it's time to actually read about Joshua and his orders to these two men to spy the land.
5. Chapter 2, Verse 1: Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. "Go, look over the land," he said, "especially Jericho."
- a) The first thing we read of Joshua is he sends out these two spies.
  - b) A little bit of background might be helpful here:
    - i) The term "son of Nun" is like addressing Joshua by his full name. Most people in bible times only had one name. Their full name would be to one's first and only name, followed by a reference to who was their father.
    - ii) The second word to explain is the word "Shittim". The Israelites were camped out in the desert on the east side of the Jordan River. Just west of the river was the city of Jericho. So wherever Shittim was, it was near Jericho, across the Jordan River.

- c) This leads us to the orders given to the two witnesses. As of this moment in time, Joshua knew that his orders were to cross the river and start conquering. Joshua was preparing for that big moment when all of Israel had to cross over the river.
    - i) The closest city across the river was Jericho. Joshua then logically figured, it was the first city he had to take on. Joshua had not yet known about marching around the city and watching the walls fall down. (That is coming in Chapter 6.)
  - d) So why send out two spies? Why not just go out and start conquering?
    - i) Part of the reason is that Joshua needed to know what he was up against. Spying out the size of the city and the size of their army helps one to prepare for warfare.
    - ii) So why send "two" guys? I suspect it was because 40 years earlier, Moses sent out 12 spies. When Moses sent 12, two brought back a good report and 10 a bad report. Joshua was one of the two guys that brought back a good report. Therefore, Joshua just picked two unnamed guys he trusted to go spy out the land.
    - iii) One of the great lessons of this chapter is that we are not always aware of God's plans for us in our lifetime. God may call us to go to "some place" for Him. It is often on the trip itself that He reveals to us the true purpose of that trip. In other words, once one is committed to following God, be open to the fact that God may reveal new information to us once we are at where God wants us to be.
      - a) These two men were sent to spy out the land. We discover that their true purpose of their journey was to be a witness to Rahab the harlot.
      - b) Whatever information these two men actually brought back as spies didn't do much in that the way the Israelites won this battle was by watching the walls of the city fall down. Again, that is coming up in Chapter 6.
    - iv) Meanwhile, I'm still haven't finished Verse 1 of Chapter 2. ☺
6. Verse 1 (cont.): So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.
- a) What scholars "suspect" happened, is that the two spies worked their way across the river and went inside the city's gates and then had to go hide inside Rahab's house. Whatever information they gathered prior to entering this house was not stated.
  - b) So why stay in a house of prostitution? For starters, it is a safe place to go. Think about this logically: People who go to a house of prostitution don't want to be seen publicly. It is someplace one goes secretly. People inside a house of prostitution don't ask a lot of personal questions and other guests there don't ask who else is there.
  - c) I should comment here that some scholars try to argue that it was not really a prostitute's house. The argument is based on the fact the same Hebrew word translated "harlot" is also translated as "innkeeper" as in a hotel operator. Remember that in ancient times, "inns" were not considered desirable places to stay. That is why "inn's" and houses of prostitution were considered synonyms.
    - i) We know it was a harlot's (prostitute's) house because the New Testament says so. The New Testament has references to Rahab and the fact she was a harlot. (See Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25). The Greek word for "harlot" definitely means just that and cannot be translated innkeeper. My point is if you believe the New Testament is the word of God, then there is no debate about what that term means.
  - d) My final point here is that the two men did not come here to "get a little action" ☺ while working on their spying mission. They went here as it was a fairly safe hideout, or at least they thought it would be. We will read in the next verse that the leaders of Jericho had his own spies (guards) who found out Joshua's two men did stop at this place.

7. Verse 2: The king of Jericho was told, "Look! Some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land."<sup>3</sup> So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land."
- a) Let's start by thinking about the Israelites from the perspective of the king of Jericho.
    - i) Understand that in these times, one could be a king of just "one city" as opposed to a king of a big territory. The leader of just one city is called a king.
    - ii) Next, if there were one to two million strangers camped out near your city, I guarantee you are going to keep an eye on them. Therefore, the king of Jericho had his "eyes upon" all the Israelites currently living across the Jordan River.
    - iii) I suspect that the king of Jericho had people on his side of the river watching for anybody trying to cross that river at that time. I should also point out that this happened in the spring when the river is at its largest (See Joshua 3:15) and crossing the river is a challenge and someone swimming across is noticeable.
    - iv) The point is, the two spies who had crossed the river and were spotted by guards in Jericho and they reported to the king that these spies had entered the house of Rahab. The king sent guards to Rahab's house and demanded in effect, "Bring out the two guys who are the spies."
8. Verse 4: But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from."<sup>5</sup> At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, the men left. I don't know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them."
- a) I suspect that if someone ran a house of prostitution, one thing that such a person would be good at is hiding his or her guests if need be.
  - b) Rahab told a handful of lies to the guards who were looking for the spies. She said that she did welcome these two spies in her house, but to her, they were just strangers who she figured were new customers. Here is the "lie": At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, the two men made their escape when it is hard to see people's faces. The lie continues with "If you go quickly now after them, you may catch them."
  - c) Next, let's talk about the fact that Rahab lied to protect these two men. There is no getting around the fact that she broke one of the 10 commandments to not be a "false witness". (See Exodus 20:16.) There is no getting around the fact that she lied.
    - i) The bible neither commends the lies nor denies them. The bible just reports these lies as a matter of fact. So was it excusable? No. Let's face it, if God didn't want these two men to get caught, He could have made it so no one spotted them.
    - ii) The point is that the fact she lied supports the fact that Rahab was more loyal to the spies than she was to her own people. It doesn't excuse the fact of her sin, but it simply shows where her loyalty was at.
    - iii) The bible does have a handful of stories where a person does defy the authorities in order to be obedient to God. In such cases, the bible figure may still have to face the wrath of the local authority even though such an action may have been what God wanted them to do.
9. Verse 6: (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.)
- a) The original Hebrew does not have parenthesis around this verse. Many English translations put Verse 6 in parenthesis as it "flows better" around the surrounding text.
  - b) The point is Rahab had a hiding spot prepared for the two spies.
  - c) It's best at this point if I explain what is "flax". It is a substance used, among other things to make garments. In fact, linen garments were made from flax. The same material used to make the Jewish priest's linen garments was used to hide these two men.

- d) It was not an unusual site to have flax laid out on a roof. To prepare flax, it has to soak in water and often it was dyed a certain color. Then it would commonly lay out flat on a roof to dry. If the guards spotted the flax on the roof, it would not be an unusual site.
    - i) As a side note, there is a famous chapter in Proverbs that teaches how to be a "righteous woman". One of the characters of such a woman is the fact she gathers and prepares flax. (See Proverbs 31:13). That does not mean women today have to prepare flax in order to please God. The implication is that a woman is not afraid to work with her hands for the benefit of her family and her household.
10. Verse 7: So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.
- a) Meanwhile the king's guards had believed her lie and went out of the city in pursuit of the spies. Remember that the spies were still in the city, under the flax on the rooftop.
  - b) The text also makes the point that king's guard took the road that lead to the "fords of the Jordan". That is the most likely place an Israelite spy would run to at this point. The "fords" is not a location of old Ford Automobiles. ☺ (I couldn't resist telling that one.) It is the place where a river widens or spits and therefore, a good place to cross that river. The point is the guards took the most logical way to go. That fact will be important later when the two spies actually leave the city.
11. Verse 8: Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof <sup>9</sup> and said to them, "I know that the LORD has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you.
- a) Now that the guards had left the city, Rahab went up to the roof and said in effect to the two spies, that she knew God had given this land (i.e., where she lived) to the Israelites.
  - b) The speech leads to a lot of interesting facts. The first thing to catch is that it was no accident that two spies picked Rahab's home to lodge. The location of where they lodged may have just seemed like a logical choice to make. It turns out that God was "behind the scenes" and wanted the spies to come to this house as to rescue Rahab and her family.
    - i) My point here is to "beware" of coincidences. There is an old joke that the word "coincidences" does not exist in the Hebrew language. The joke is a coincidence is when God is working in the background. Let me put it another way, "Beware of coincidences, they happen all the time, but you shouldn't trust in the fact that whatever is happening is "just" a coincidence."
  - c) The next thing to catch from these two verses is that Rahab revealed to the two spies that all of Jericho was worried about all those Israelites just across the river. There was a real sense of fear about the Israelites. We'll explain what the fear was in the next two verses.
  - d) One thing to "start" to catch now is the fact that Rahab was willing to "plead for her life to the representatives of the God of Israel" even if she knew nothing of their (our) God.
    - i) It is one thing to fear the wrath of God. It is quite another to want to turn to Him.
    - ii) I believe just from these verses alone that Rahab was saved. God does not desire we know a lot about Him prior to turning to Him. God "works on us" after we are saved but desires we come to Him just as we are. Rahab fits that description.
      - a) In the New Testament, Rahab was mentioned along with the "Great men of faith" in Hebrews 11:31. I believe the evidence she was saved began with her confession of who "God was" (The God of the Hebrews and the God of the world). The next thing to catch is her desire to protect those who belonged to God (the two spies) here in these verses.
    - iii) Getting back the "fear of God", Rahab announced that all of Jericho had a fear of the God of the Israelites but in effect, that is "all they had". My point is it is one thing to fear the wrath of God and it is another to have the desire to turn to Him.

12. Verse 10: We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. <sup>11</sup> When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.
- a) In these verses, Rahab is continuing her speech to the two spies on the roof.
  - b) In Verse 10, Rahab says how it is common knowledge in Jericho that God had parted the Red Sea for the Israelites (that was 40 years earlier) and how the Israelites defeated the cities of Sihon and Og. Those battles occurred during the 40-year wilderness wandering. The point is that all of Jericho knew some of the Israelite history over the last 40 years.
  - c) The important point here is that Rahab says in effect that the "God of the Hebrews" is also the true God in heaven.
  - d) This leads back to some of my introduction comments for this lesson. This woman was part of a race of people that God called the Israelites to wipe out. The two spies could have killed Rahab and her family and still be carrying out God's orders to this point.
    - i) The real point is that despite the fact that God gave the command to wipe out this nation there were still people willing to repent and turn to God. He (God) was willing to make an exception for anyone (and I'll argue everyone) that was willing to turn to Him prior to carrying out that destruction process.
  - e) I suspect the rest of Jericho also feared the God of the Hebrews, but the difference is that Rahab was willing to turn to that God for protection. The rest of Jericho did fear being attacked by God, but were not willing to turn to Him.
    - i) Think of that in today's terms: Many people fear death and fear the wrath of God, but still refuse to truly turn their lives over to Him. In other words, most people enjoy their lives "as is" as opposed of turning control of their lives over to God. They fear God's wrath, but enjoy their lives "as is", so they don't want to change.
    - ii) Now remember why God had called on destruction for the current residents of the land of Israel. Their sins had gotten so bad (they killed their children out of a sign of loyalty to their false gods) that a "mercy killing" was now necessary by God. At the same time, God was still waiting for anyone willing to repent and turn to Him. That is why Rahab and her family were saved.
  - f) Let me explain this whole thing from another perspective:
    - i) Way back in Genesis, Abraham was talking to God about the coming destruction of the Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham asked God in effect, "If there are 50 righteous (i.e., God fearing) people living in those cities, would He (God) be willing to spare them? God said yes. At that point, Abraham started to "haggle". Abraham asked, "What if there were forty righteous people there"? God again, "Yes, I would spare those cities for forty people". Abraham eventually got down to ten people before he was afraid to go any further. (Source Genesis 18:22-33.)
    - ii) So why am I bringing that issue up here? The one question Abraham didn't ask, but I'm sure he considered is, "What if there was only one righteous person (i.e., a person willing to turn their lives to God) living there? Would God spare that place until that one righteous person is removed? I believe the answer is yes.
    - iii) If you have ever wondered why God doesn't destroy some "wicked" place today, the answer is to study Abraham's "haggling" with God. Any particular city (or country) is safe because there is at least one righteous person in that city. To be "righteous" simply means to live a life that is "God fearing".
    - iv) That is what I see here in Jericho. God cannot begin the destruction of Jericho until God first "marks out for protection" those who are His.
    - v) Therefore, the mission of these two spies changed. Their mission is now in effect, to "mark for salvation" those who are saved before the destruction comes.

13. Verse 12: Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign<sup>13</sup> that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and that you will save us from death."
- a) In case you have forgotten, Verses 9-13 are all a speech by Rahab to the two spies.
  - b) What is really going on here is that Rahab is pleading for her life and her salvation. Rahab is giving evidence of her trust in God and wants to entice the two spies to "draw up a plan" to be able to save Rahab from the fate that is to come.
  - c) It's funny to think about this from another angle: A harlot (prostitute) is somebody who gives of herself for money to strange men. Yet, here is this harlot, willing to give of herself to the God of the Universe for the sake of protection.
    - i) She doesn't ask to be rescued from her lifestyle, but that may be a "given" just by the fact she wants to be saved from the destruction of Jericho.
  - d) Meanwhile, back in these verses, Rahab is pleading for some sort of sign from the two spies that they would spare her and her family in exchange for her plea of loyalty.
    - i) To put this another way, she was willing to put her "actions" where her faith was. We as Christians are saved by "faith alone". (Ephesians 2:8.) But if we have "faith" then our actions should naturally follow that faith.
    - ii) If the spies said no to her request for protection, she may still be eternally saved. The point is two spies understood their new roles as missionaries to help people willing to draw closer to God and help them.
    - iii) It is our role of Christians to help others draw closer to Christ and to lead them to eternal salvation. Along the same line of thinking, the spies should be commended for coming up with a plan to allow Rahab and her family to be saved.
  - e) Notice that Rahab wasn't only thinking of herself, but her family as well. It is not known whether or not her family had faith in the God of the Universe to be willing to be saved. What Rahab did have is the faith to reach out to those she loved. That is also a sign of faith that God is willing to work with.
14. Verse 14: "Our lives for your lives!" the men assured her. "If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the LORD gives us the land."
- a) The spies give their response to Rahab. They said in effect, "If you don't tell anyone why we are here, we will spare you and your family when God gives us this land."
  - b) Notice the confidence of the two spies. They said "when" God gives us this land. They had great faith that God would give them the land of Israel. Whoever these two unnamed spies were, Joshua chose "good men" for this job who trusted in God.
  - c) So why did these two spies put this condition on her faith? After all she did believe in the God of the Hebrews as "the" God. Why make her say in effect "If you protect us, then we will spare you and your family?" The answer is the spies were still concerned for their own safety. She did hide them under her roof, but the spies didn't know if she would "break" under pressure once they were gone.
    - i) My point is Rahab would be eternally saved no matter what happened. The spies were giving Rahab a new test for her to grow in her faith. This test would help Rahab grow in her faith and it would help the spies escape, but I believe it has no bearing on the fact she was saved.
  - d) Here's a question to ponder: If the two spies represent people who are "witnesses" for God, does this mean we should test other believers in God as they did? These two spies said in effect, "If you go along with our plan, we will treat you kindly and faithfully".
    - i) Let me put this question another way: If someone comes to our home and says "I am a fellow Christian and I demand you do this or that, are we obligated to do so? Are we failing to show Christian love if we fail to do as they say? The short answer is "no". There is a big difference between "half to" versus "should".

- ii) If a Christian orders us to do something, we are not obligated to do that. Whether we should do it or not is a separate question and it depends on what is asked and what is the situation. More often than not, we should help people who are asking for help, but that is different than if a stranger "orders" us to do something.
  - iii) Getting back to the two spies, should they have put this test on Rahab? Think of it this way: The goal of the two spies was to save the lives of Rahab and her family. If that family walked out the city gates, the rest of the city would consider them traitors and go after them. This plan was a way to spare their lives and help them to what all of them knew what was the outcome: The Israelites would win.
  - iv) Therefore, back to the question of "Should we test other Christians?" The general answer is no as God is more than capable of working on our faith without others trying to help. On the other hand, we should do our best to help other believers live another day and have an opportunity to draw closer to God. That is what these two spies did.
15. Verse 15: So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. <sup>16</sup> Now she had said to them, "Go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there three days until they return, and then go on your way."
- a) At this point in the story we are now reading of Rahab helping the spies to escape. The method of escape was by a rope that was used to let the spies down the city wall.
  - b) For those that know the "falling wall of Jericho story" (coming up in Chapter 6), the Israelites defeated Jericho because God made the wall fall down. What's my point here? It is that the most "unsafe" place to be in Jericho would be a house built up against the city wall. At the same time, these two spies tell this woman they will be safe as long as they stay in this house. It's just a "neat little detail" how God worked this out, despite the upcoming collapse of the city wall.
  - c) So where did Rahab get the rope? Did she happen to have a bunch of rope in the house? (I could make a connection with being a prostitute, but I won't go there. ☺) My only point here is that the word for "rope" is the same word used for the flax that was drying on the roof. Rahab was resourceful enough to use that flax to help these men escape.
  - d) Rahab then tells the two men in effect to go "this" way, because the city guards that went after you went "that" way. She is telling them to go in a different way than the guards.
  - e) I want to point something else out, that ties to Chapter 1. In the first chapter, Joshua told the Israelites to prepare, as they were going to cross the Jordan in three days. Now here are these men who were told to go hide themselves for three days. My point is I believe the spies just barely made it back to "base camp" in time for the great river crossing. God worked it out so they didn't get caught, they would rescue a family that trusted in the Him and worked it out so that the two spies still get back for the big river-crossing event.
16. Verse 17: The men said to her, "This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us <sup>18</sup> unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house. <sup>19</sup> If anyone goes outside your house into the street, his blood will be on his own head; we will not be responsible. As for anyone who is in the house with you, his blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on him. <sup>20</sup> But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear."
- a) Rahab made the two spies promise that she, and whoever was in her home (built up against the wall) would be rescued from the upcoming destruction of the city.
  - b) The two spies make a reference to a "scarlet cord" that was used to let them down through the window. It is the same colored flax that was described earlier in the lesson.
  - c) For those who don't know, the color "scarlet" is essentially the color red. It is a blood red color. Therefore, Rahab had some flax (the material used to make linen) that was dyed in a red color and she used that to make the rope that was used to lower the men.

- d) I want you to stop and visualize this picture from outside the walls of Jericho. Visualize a typical ancient city wall that surrounded the whole city. It was probably 2-3 stories high. There were probably some windows along that wall. If Rahab had a window, so did others. There was probably only one gated entrance to this city. When the Israelites marched around the city wall (coming up in a few chapters), they would see this long red cord hanging from one of the windows.
- i) That red cord was a sign to the Israelites of who was to be spared from this battle.
- e) Is it a coincidence that the cord was blood red? Of course not. ☺ It is another symbol that "blood" is our eternal protection in that we are "covered by the blood of Jesus" for our sins.
- i) Think about when the Israelites were back in Egypt and they were spared from the plague of the death of the firstborn sons. (See Exodus 11-13.) The reason they were spared was because they had the "blood of the lamb" smeared on the doorposts of the houses where they lived. If one was an Israelite at that time, and they didn't have the blood smeared on their door, they would lose their firstborn son. In other words, it wasn't the fact they were Jewish that saved them from this plague. They were saved only if they choose to put blood on their doorposts.
- ii) This leads us back to this story. Anybody who was staying in Rahab's house was saved from the upcoming slaughter, not because they were good people, but because they were trusting in the "red cord" that was hanging on the wall.
- iii) To put this in "Christian vocabulary", we are not saved because we are good people. We are saved because we are putting our trust in "God's blood" being sufficient for the covering of our sins. In the same way the Israelites were spared of the plague of death is the same way Rahab's family was spared the plague of death: That is by "blood" covering them.
- iv) By the way, based on this symbolism, it is my personal theory (although I can't prove it) that the rope used put on the wall was "dyed red" via lamb's blood. Again, it is just my theory, as the text does not say how it got red.
- f) This leads us back to the text itself. Noticed that anyone who trusted in the scarlet cord hanging on the wall would be saved. In other words, if Rahab's family didn't trust in the God of the Jewish people (who is the God of the world), then all they had to do is avoid her home. If they did put their trust in God, they would be saved not because they are good people, but because they trusted in the fact the red cord hanging from the window would be their "ticket" to safety from the coming destruction.
- i) Again, it is similar to our "ticket" to salvation, in that we are trusting in the "blood" being sufficient payment not only for our sins, but for anyone else who wanted to join in that trust. Rahab's family members joined in that trust.
- ii) As to the eternal salvation of Rahab's family members, the blood spared their death in the upcoming battle, but their salvation depends upon their trust in God.
- g) Now let's get back to the theme of this lesson, which is about being a witness for God.
- i) The two spies were living witnesses to Rahab. Despite the fact she was part of a people that God ordered to be destroyed, she was spared for the act of helping out other people who were also "spared" from eternal destruction.
- a) At the same time, she "spread" her witness for the true God by inviting her family to stay with her under the protection of the red cord.
- ii) If you recall from the last lesson, I stated that the underlying theme of Joshua is about our lifelong battle against sin. The "Promised Land" is not symbolic of heaven, but it is symbolic of our rich, full life in trusting God in every aspect of our lives. That also means to be aware of our sins and turn away from them.
- a) To "take over" the Promised Land, the Israelites must destroy those who are there. That is symbolic of fighting the sinful influences of our lives.

- iii) My point to all of this is that just because the Israelites were about to conquer this land, that shouldn't stop them from being a witness to others who wanted to trust in the same God that the Israelites trusted in.
  - iv) In other words, we don't have to be perfect in order to share our salvation with others. Until the actual destruction of our lives (think death) takes place, it is never too late to turn from one's sins and help others turn from their sins. That is the symbolism behind the two unnamed spies helping Rahab and her family learn to trust in God. It spared their lives from the destruction of the city of Jericho and "as a bonus" it gave them eternal life. ☺
17. Verse 21: "Agreed," she replied. "Let it be as you say." So she sent them away and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.
- a) In Verse 21, we have Rahab agreeing to the terms laid out by the two spies.
  - b) The important point is that because of her faith in God, she wanted to follow through with that faith and take action in order to save herself and her family. It is a reminder of the principal that saying we believe in God is "one thing", to follow through on that belief is proof to people around us that we are truly trusting in God.
  - c) Notice that Rahab tied the scarlet cord immediately after the spies departed. She told the men to go hid for a few days until the guards that were looking for them would give up.
    - i) Think of it this way: She could have waited at least three days to put the scarlet cord in the window, as nothing would come of it for at least three days.
    - ii) In fact, if the king's guards saw the scarlet cord hanging from the window, it could be trouble considering the fact that these guards questioned her about the spies visit to her and why was this rope now hanging from the window. In other words, Rahab could be in trouble with the local authorities if the king's guards, who are now outside the wall looking for the spies spotted the scarlet rope.
18. Verse 22: When they left, they went into the hills and stayed there three days, until the pursuers had searched all along the road and returned without finding them.
- a) The spies left and hid in the surrounding hillside area for three days. Why three days? Because that was the length of time Joshua gave them to go do the spying!
  - b) Can one make a spiritual connection between the fact the scarlet cord hung there for three days and after three days the Israelites would come to Jericho and see that cord? Sure. By itself, it is not much of a sign. What is to be noticed is the Old Testament is full of subtle hints of something significant happening on the third day. Just as the Jesus' death was for a total of three days until "new life began", so this scarlet cord was the protection of Rahab and her family for three days until "new life began".
  - c) Notice that after three days, the king's guards went back to Jericho and gave up looking for the spies. Did the king order them to come back after three days? I doubt it. My point is that it is an "interesting coincidence" that just as Joshua ordered the spies to come back after three days, so the king's guards gave up looking after three days. Remember the Jewish unofficial definition of a coincidence: It is God working in the background!
19. Verse 23: Then the two men started back. They went down out of the hills, forded the river and came to Joshua son of Nun and told him everything that had happened to them.<sup>24</sup> They said to Joshua, "The LORD has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us."
- a) The first thing I want you to notice is that in terms of "spying", these two men did not do very much. The text does not mention anything about the spies report to Joshua in terms of how big was Jericho's army or any other relevant military information. All the two spies did was get into town, hide in Rahab's house, and then hid in the hills for a few days until the search party looking for the spies had "presumably", given up.

- b) I wonder if the spies were nervous about giving their report to Joshua. The good news that the spies did report that the residents of Jericho had fear of the Israelites. The "bad news" is that the spies didn't do a lot of spying as they were on the run for three days.
  - c) The text says the spies told Joshua everything that had happened. This means the two spies told everything that happened and didn't happen on their spy mission.
    - i) The important thing is that God did protect the two spies and got them back in the three day time period before Joshua would lead the Israelites to cross the river.
  - d) The fact that only the good news of their spy mission was reported and all that "happened to them" was taken as a positive sign. In other words, the fact that Jericho feared the Israelites is all the news that Joshua needed to here. Joshua knew that God would somehow make it possible for the Israelites to win the battle, so in that sense, knowing the weaknesses of the Jericho army was not important. What was important was that Jericho was afraid of the Israelites and that fear could be used as an advantage to rally the troops.
  - e) The other good news that is implied is that Joshua agreed to preserve Rahab and her family. Joshua understood God's principal of being loyal to others who are also loyal to their God and helping to protect them.
20. I want to end this with one other thought about Rahab:
- a) Once this battle was over and she had to live among the Israelites, I suspect she had a hard time of it. Once one has the reputation of a harlot, one is going to have to live with people talking behind your back for a long time. The good news is the bible recorded that she got married, and became part of the royal line that lead to David and eventually to Jesus. Her name and story are enshrined forever for billions of people to study and learn from. (Source Matthew 1:5.)
  - b) Despite whatever ridicule she might have put up with among the Israelites would "pale" in comparison to the fact she would now live forever in heaven. Further, her witness for God got her listed as one of the great people of faith in Hebrews, Chapter 11.
  - c) So Rahab and the spies both did well. What are "we" to get out of this lesson?
    - i) For starters, we as Christians are not just to "sit around" waiting for God to clean up our lives. We are to look for opportunities to be witnesses for Him, both to believers and unbelievers. Rahab had faith in God even before she met the two spies, but the two spies gave her an opportunity to put her faith to the test.
    - ii) Those who are saved are called by God and not by us. God gives us the opportunity to help people grow in their faith and work as a team to learn to trust God more and more with our lives. Therefore, the lesson for believers is to be a witness for Jesus always, as we never know who already has some interest in God and we can be given an opportunity to help people grow in their faith in Him.
  - d) The other lesson for us is about the two spies. It is a reminder to us to be open to what God may have in store for us for the future. God usually does not reveal our entire future to us in one moment of time. God often say in effect, "do this" and after we have done that, then we get further revelation.
    - i) Know that the "future revelation" may not be a sign or "words" from God. My point is what God wants from us may becomes obvious as we are moving "forward" and trusting in Him for our lives. These two spies had no idea that they were going to be a witness to Rahab and her family. They just did as Joshua told them to do and "ended up" being a witness for God.
21. Let's pray: Father, thank you for this lesson about Rahab and the two spies. May we learn from her faith to trust in You in all situations no matter how difficult they look from our perspective. Helps us to remember that You and You alone care for our lives, want to see us make a difference for you. Help us to trust You as we go out and do make a difference for Your kingdom. Guide us to the ultimate victory You do have for us. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.