

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2018  
Rahab, a remarkable woman

There would have been a time when most people would have known the story of the Battle of Jericho, but probably not now. To say that Israel took the Promised Land by the direction of God will not sit well in today's politically sensitive climate, but that is what the Bible says!

Just before the fall of the city, we encounter a little story about a woman called Rahab. Joshua, who is the new leader of the Hebrew people after the death of Moses, sends two spies to see what lies ahead of them. The scouting trip is especially to look at the walled city of Jericho, a city which is to be taken and utterly destroyed. This is quite a strange thing for Joshua to do given the previous experience of spying out the land in Moses day which led to the 40 years of wilderness wandering. However, Joshua sends out two spies only. It was two of the twelve who brought a good report of the land in Moses day, hence Joshua sends out two whom he can trust.

The spies enter Jericho and are hidden by Rahab. She was a prostitute, so possibly, no one would have especially noticed men coming and going from her house. However, they were recognized as Hebrews and the authorities came for them. Rahab hid them and protected them in exchange for a promise from the spies that when the armies of Israel attacked, they would be spared. That in brief is the story, and the outcome was that she and her family were spared the total destruction that came upon the city of Jericho at the hands of the Israelites.

There are several matters that we would do well to consider.

1. What the people of Jericho had heard about the People of Israel.

Chapter 5 verse one tells us that the people west of the Jordan had heard about the drying up of the Jordan River and the people crossing it on dry ground. People today come up with all sorts of theories to explain this away. People have always done this, but the fact is that that is what the people who lived through the events had heard about and accepted! This event they attributed to God, and that is what is important. We need to realise that we in the West today are unlike most of the people in the rest of the world. We live with what Missiologists call, 'The Excluded Middle.' For most people in the West of today, we live very conscious of the material realm alone. Many will concede that there may be 'a something' else out there and give credence to Spiritism, Eastern Mysticism, and other systems of faith and behavior. However, most people exclude the possibility that the spiritual realm has an impact upon the day to day experience of material, physical living. This is the realm of miracles and healings, dreams and visions, angels and demons.

The reason given for this is that we are advanced and have left behind such superstitious ways. There is another reason why the West excludes the possibility of an

interaction between these material and spiritual realms, and is basic, it is pride and self-sufficiency. Our wealth blinds us to the truth.

In Chapter two, verses nine to eleven, Rahab expands on what has been heard. The people of Jericho have heard about the Red Sea crossing, and presumably they had also heard about the fate of Pharaoh and his armies who were destroyed at the Red Sea. They had heard about the two kings that were destroyed, Sihon and Og East of the Jordan. The effect of this was that the whole body of people were in fear and they were reduced to hopelessness. It was not because they were scared of a group of ex-slaves, but because they realized that there was a power behind and with these people. They had a God with them who was giving them the success. God was getting the glory!

Chapter six, verse one tells us the response of the people of Jericho. They had battened down the hatches, closed up the city and were hoping that their walls would keep them safe. It was not going to happen!

We can sum up their situation in one little phrase. The fear of God was upon them.

2. The effects of this on the people and on Rahab.

Can you see the difference in the response of the people of Jericho and of Rahab? The people responded in fear. Rahab responded in fear which led to faith. Look at her words as reported in chapter two and the second half of verse eleven.

“... for the Lord your God is God in heaven above on earth below.”

This is a statement that comes from faith. Not only did she find faith, but she responded, she acted on it. Firstly, she hid the spies. This could have landed her in trouble if the spies had been caught in her home. She would have suffered the fate of a traitor, but she threw her lot in with the Hebrews and not her own people. That was faith. Secondly, she asked for salvation in return for her hiding of the spies. Once again, she had already embarked on a way of faith, and this also was a request of faith. The spies were under no obligation to offer her anything. She was a pagan, outside any promise of God.

The point is that at this point of the story, all the people in Jericho knew the same things about the Israelites, but only Rahab responded in faith, she recognized in part who God was, and responded to this. It is astonishing that no one else responded as she did. In the days of Lot, the people did not respond to the message of the angels and Sodom was destroyed with only Lot and his two daughters making it out alive! In Jesus time, He wept over the city of Jerusalem because they rejected Him and His message of salvation. The history of the Bible is that only a few are saved. This is what makes faith and salvation so precious. Even though it is offered to all, there are relatively few that respond. This is very serious. Never think that because salvation is a free gift from God

that it is cheap or available on our terms. Salvation is a free gift of God, but it is given to faith. Seek to find faith, seek to be found by God.

3. What Rahab asked of the spies and what they required of her.

Rahab asked to be spared when the destruction came. Not only that, but she asked for the lives of her family, and she got what she asked for. She was an intercessor and an evangelist!

The spies agreed to this, but there was a condition. She had to tie a red cord on her window, and when the hordes of soldiers stormed the city, they would pass by the house displaying the red cord. Now, this is why we need to know our Bibles and be familiar with the stories and histories. The story of Rahab and the red cord should ring some bells for us.

The Passover, red blood was to be displayed on the door posts and lintels and when this was seen, the angel of death would pass over all such homes and the eldest child would not die. The Blood of the Lamb of God, the perfect Passover sacrifice covers those who believe for the removal of condemnation and death. This thing that Rahab was told to do, is a shadow of the Lamb of God who was to come, and of the Passover which had been given to the Hebrews as they came out of Egypt. It is all the same symbolism, the same act of obedience and faith that saved the Hebrews from death in Egypt, Rahab from death in Jericho, and all those who believe in Jesus in the World. Salvation is by faith, and has always been by faith, there is no other way to be saved from death but by faith, either in the Old Testament days or now, all is by faith.

It is not enough just to know about God. It is not enough to be in fear or dread of God. James tells us that even the demons believe in God and tremble – a bit like the inhabitants of Jericho. We are to believe in Him and respond to Him as Rahab did.

On the day of Pentecost, many of those who heard what Peter said responded by crying out, 'what must we do to be saved.' They were told that they must act on faith and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. They did and showed their response by being baptized. Acts 2.37ff.

All the people in Jericho had the same information as Rahab. They had received the same message, but only Rahab acted on it and believed. The result was that she and her family were saved from the coming destruction. As a little aside, Matthew 1 verse 5 tells us that she is included in the genealogy of Christ! Is that not truly astonishing, that a pagan woman of questionable reputation actually was one of the forbears of Christ! That is the dignity that faith brings!

Faith is crucial, it is the grace that makes the way for all other graces. Faith is given a most prominent place in Scripture. Hebrews 4 verses 1-2 tell us the verdict of God on the People of Israel. They failed because the message they received was not combined with faith. This is like going to the doctor and being prescribed anti-biotics. However, we

do not combine the getting of the medicine with taking it, so we do not get better, but instead get sicker and die! How stupid we would think a person was to be given a lifesaving drug, but they put it on the shelf, and don't take it. However this is what we do, we hear, but do not act upon the message with faith!

A similar passage in 1 Corinthians 10 verses 1-5 tells us that God was not pleased with most of the people who came out of Egypt. Why? Because they did not believe despite all they had seen and heard!

Application.

1. We have seen how Rahab and the other people responded in different ways. One way led to life, the other to destruction. We may have sat in Church for most of our lives, come up through Sunday School, become a Communicant Member, taken vows and joined the Church of Scotland. We may have a belief that there is a God of some sort above. We may have had a sense from time to time that God is near, or we may regard Him as beyond any approach being so high in heaven. However, every generation of history tells us that many such people live in such a way, but never come to a specific faith in Christ. They do not believe in who He tells us He is, nor do they believe in what He says He has done through the Cross. They do not believe and know that they belong to the vast ranks of God's people and that their home is in heaven.

A fear and awe of God did not save the people of Jericho. It was by faith that Rahab and all others are saved. Act upon what we have heard, believe, enter into that state of trust in Christ alone. As the walls of Jericho could not save the inhabitants, so sitting within the walls of a Church building will not save us.

As the red cord was the sign and seal which marked Rahab for safety, act faith upon the shed blood of Christ for pardon and cleansing and a new relationship with God.

2. It is possible to be a Bible Scholar, a minister, a Theology Professor at a noble university, and not act on what we know. Knowledge, Philosophy, Science does not save, but truth acted upon by faith. Rahab threw her lot in with the God of Israel when she protected the spies. She did this in faith, and it was the acting of faith without reservation. Once she hid the spies there was no going back, her life was in their hands. We must cast our lives wholly upon God or we die.

Today many people want to mix and match. A little bit of the Bible, some sayings from Eastern Mystics, a bit of Koran, vitamins and healthy eating and going here and there to hear a good speaker or the latest 'new thing.' God must be loved for Himself. It will not work if we try to have many lovers, God will not be one of many. That, by the way is the first commandment!

3. There is not much time left. Many of us are growing older. Even for the young there is no guarantee of a long life. Many of you know this. Today is the day of salvation. Many people think that they can sort out the God thing when they want to, or think that they

can turn to God on their death beds. Others have never seriously engaged with the Bible and comfort themselves with the false thinking that a God of love would never send someone to an everlasting hell, but at the last, God will let everyone into heaven. Others think that if we do our best, (whatever that is) and have not hurt anyone, that that is enough to get us into heaven. All that I can say to any such is this. Do you really think so, what evidence can you give? What is the difference between what you think and pie in the sky? Have you studied what the Bible says?

4. There is no guarantee that we will see our parents and children and families saved. However contrast Rahab and Lot. Rahab left Jericho safe with her family. Lot left Sodom with his two daughters alone. The account of Lot says that 'he lingered,' he was in love with Sodom, with the world, and barely escaped. Rahab escaped Jericho because by her faith she had already resolved to leave it all behind her, and she did not linger. Too many of us in the West, would linger and try to gather our goods together, even when the emergency process on the ship is to leave all our personal belongings behind and flee for safety. The best thing we can do for our families and loved ones is to respond whole heartedly in faith and flee to Christ. They may or may not come with us, but consider the difference between Rahab who was whole hearted and Lot who lingered and loved the world!

5. Rahab threw her lot in fully with the Hebrew people. Throw our lot in fully with the people of God we are connected to. Be involved in the Church and don't float about its edges! Consider this, Rahab became a member of that chain of generations through which Christ came. If that does not prove the super abundant blessings of faith, what does? She became fully linked into the Hebrew people. Hebrews 11 verse 31 mentions her as one of the hero's of faith. What a situation, one such as her being written of in the ranks with Abraham and Moses, and all because of faith!