



# RAHAB'S FAITH

*Posted on May 1, 2019 by Alan Wilson*



The children of Israel as they enter into the Promised Land, Canaan, have a few major challenges ahead of them. Their great leader Moses has died and there are a lot of people in Canaan who do not like, or want the Israelites anywhere near them. The entire generation that set out from Egypt 40 years earlier have all died, except two young men; Joshua and Caleb.

These

two men had spied out in advance the Promised Land together for Moses. They had returned enthusiastically about the prospects of Israel's new homeland confirming what God had already told them. The time was now right to enter into Canaan. The Israelites now under the leadership of Joshua are camped along the Jordan River directly opposite the city of Jericho.

Wisely

Joshua did not get his army ready and just attack. Just as Moses had done years before, Joshua sent spies ahead to gather military information about what lay on the other side of the Jordan and Jericho. The two spies head off and the first person they meet is a woman called Rahab. Was it by sheer chance they meet her out of all the thousands of people they could have met? Was it by sheer chance she would meet two very culturally different men? Rahab's whole life and her future would soon be changed through this encounter.

What

do we know about Rahab? It's not a name that many women are called today. Many women are called after Mary, Ruth, Hannah, Lydia, Rachel, Rebecca, Sarah, Martha, Elizabeth, All biblical names. But no Rahab. That gives you a clue. Not many men are called Judas either.

The

first thing we are told about her is in the very first verse; she is introduced as a prostitute named Rahab. I wonder what she looked like and what she dressed like. She was an immoral woman who had No concept of sexual purity.

She

lived in a sex obsessed pagan society that was fanatically devoted to everything that God hates. This culture like Sodom and Gomorrah was on the verge of God's judgement. Their generational descent into the abyss of moral and spiritual corruption had been intentional, and now it was irreversible.

It appears that Rahab has always been a willing participant plying her trade. Now that God had called for the complete destruction of the entire culture because of their extreme wickedness, why shouldn't Rahab also receive the just desserts of her own deliberate sin? Good question.

Rahab as we would say was; the dregs of society. She made her living catering to the most depraved insatiable sexual appetites. It's hard to imagine how someone like her could ever be changed. Her house was not in some back alley of the city, but perched on the famous walls. She was in a prime location of her red-light district. We could safely assume that her trade was a financial success given the location.

Jericho was part of the Amorite kingdom which was a totally depraved and violent pagan culture. In fact, their culture was so depraved with witchcraft and child sacrifice going back to the time of Abraham that their evil lifestyle was the very reason God granted Abraham and his heirs rights to their land, driving them of it. So, the spies enter into the city of Jericho to check it out. A bit like a Mission Impossible Team. Looking for a place to spy out the land they came across Rahab. The location of her house seems to have been the ideal spot.

The Israelite spies did not seek to take advantage of her for immoral purposes. Perhaps this being what won her trust over in the first place. They were not here to use and abuse her unlike the other men who came through the doors of

her house. These men were different, they were sober and serious. Presumably, they treated her with dignity and respect while they were staying with her. Maybe they told Rahab something about their God and the ways in which he had saved, lead and provided for them. Amazingly she was spiritually open to the way God was working through these two spies.

Everyone in Jericho already knew that the Israelite nation was now camped across the river a short distance away. They had heard about the Hebrews escape from Egypt now they were seeing them with their very own eyes. And they were frightened. Rahab now finds herself where she could make a fair bit of money if she turned in these two spies. But she didn't. She hid them. She misdirected the officials and saved the lives of the two spies, even though this put her at considerable risk of losing her own life.

At this point for someone who lived their life through wicked, corrupt ways it seems alien that someone like her would turn down the chance to make a lot of money, and put her own life at risk. Not only is this sudden change in her attitude unexpected, it runs counter to every instinct that normally would motivate a woman like Rahab.

What could possibly bring such a dramatic change in a person's life, and in such circumstances. God. God is the answer.

Suddenly God touches her life in some amazing way. Over the years of her tough hardened life; had she come to realise that her life should not be like this. The lies, the perverted sex, the booze, the cheating, the brawling.

Is this the level I am at? I cannot do this anymore. I need a clean break. But

how? There comes a point in a person's life where this awakening; this light comes on. Everybody is different. For some it's like a Damascus Road experience, for others it's more of an Emmaus Road experience, gradual. Either way something changes. With her new-found faith undeveloped as it was, we see immediately that it bears the fruit of action. The bible tells us; 'faith without deeds is dead'. Rahab did something; she took the spies in, making herself vulnerable. With this act she was putting her faith into action. She not only hid them, she embraced their cause, entrusting her whole future to their God, and our God.

There

is absolutely nothing but faith in God, that could have made such a dramatic, sudden change in the character of such a woman. She had heard of the mighty acts and wonders he performed with the Hebrews. Now she had met real flesh and blood people, spies, who knew him and worshipped him. She was prepared to follow them and their God.

What

about you today? Have you sat maybe for years in the pews of a church, hearing Sunday by Sunday the stories of God's mighty acts and his miracles? Listening carefully to the scriptures, and the prayers and the sermon. But that's as far as it goes. The trust, the stepping out in faith needed; is still absent. After it was clear that the king's messengers were gone for the night, Rahab went back up to the roof to speak with the spies. It's really quite amazing what she says 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 because of you.'

What

was it that caused her in particular to trust in God? It was fear. Fear of God. Is it a bad thing to be frightened of God? No, it's not. Our affluent western societies across the globe generally speaking have no fear of anything. No fear of the police, the courts, getting caught, libelling or slandering anyone. People generally have no fear.

A

life sentence for murder is around 8 years in prison or less. You hire a barrister or better still you get the state to pay for a barrister to get you off. There is no fear of doing wrong. Knife crime in London is out of control.

Years

ago, in the UK you would never have heard of a child being suspended from school; now it's a daily occurrence. Most people have no fear of God. Afterall What's he going to do? I; am my own authority. My rights trump everyone else. I must be allowed to do what I want to do. And the state will back me up. Right or wrong.

But

they forget one thing; there will be a day of judgment for every human being who lives on this planet. That judgement will be carried out by the living God of Israel. This is what Jesus Christ says 1500 years later, after the battle of Jericho; 'I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgement for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.'

We

all know what happened next. God intervened in a way that made clear to everyone in Canaan that he was fighting for Israel. He demolished the massive walls of Jericho without any military means whatsoever. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day the Israelites marched around the city 7 times, blew a ram's horn, and shouted. Instantly the wall of the city fell down flat. All except one part of the wall.

Rahab

and her house were spared. In chapter 6 we are told the two spies went into the ruins and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her entire family and left them outside the camp of Israel. They received the protection they had been promised.

Rahab

is a beautiful example of the transforming power of faith in God. Although she had few spiritual advantages and little knowledge of the truth, her heart was drawn to God. She risked her life, turning her back on a way of life that did not honour God, and walked away from everything but her closest family members. But they too came into the community of God. We never hear of Rahab again in the Old Testament. But her name comes up in the New Testament. Her name is mentioned 3 times in Hebrews and the book of James where she is held up as an Example of faith, for both men and women. Rahab's faith was anything but dead.

But

the most amazing occurrence of Rahab's name, though in the NT is the very first time it appears. It appears on the very first page, in the very first paragraph, of the first gospel, Matthew.

Matthew

begins his account of Christ's life with a lengthy genealogy tracing the entire lineage of Jesus from the time of Abraham.

There

in the list of Jesus' ancestors', we unexpectedly come across Rahab's name. 'Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David'.

It

is highly unusual for women to be named in Hebrew genealogies at all. Yet in the Bible, the greatest manifesto of human rights ever written, Matthew mentions 5 women all of them notable for various reasons; Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary the mother of Jesus. Three of them knew what it was like to be an outcast, stigmatised because of who they were. Yet God is able to work all things together for good. Rahab was saved by God spiritually as well as physically not because of her good acts like protecting the spies.

She did not earn God's favour by any good deeds. She is not a lesson in how to better ourselves

through self-improvement. She is a reminder that God by his grace can save even the worst of offenders and turn a habitual sinner into a saint. Proving there is hope for everyone.

*Rev. Alan Wilson is a Presbyterian Minister in Northern Ireland, where he serves a large congregation, supported by his wife. Before he took up the call to serve Christ, he was in the Royal Ulster Constabulary for 30-years. He has two children and two grandchildren and enjoys soccer, gardening, zoology, politics and reading. He voted for Brexit in the hope that the stranglehold of Brussels might finally be broken. He welcomes any that might wish to correspond with him through the [Contact Page](#) of The Postil.*

The [photo](#) shows, "The Harlot of Jericho and the Two Spies," by James Tissot, painted ca. 1896 to 1902.

