

• *Jericho – a city degraded by sin*

• *Scheduled by God for total destruction*

1. Being as fully informed as possible about God's calling

2. New converts can serve God immediately

After the call to conquer Canaan¹, the first major task was the conquest of Jericho. It was a pagan city, whose people were so degraded in sin that God had scheduled it for total destruction. It was about ten miles north of the point where the river Jordan flowed into the Dead Sea. Jericho is the world's oldest known city. A town was first built at Jericho in the seventh millennium BC. In the days of Joshua (about 1200 BC) it was a town which had already existed for over five thousand years! Canaanites lived there at that time and the city had strong walls around it. God had tolerated its sin for centuries but now God required its extermination.

1. Normally we should want to be as fully informed as possible about what God is calling us to. When Joshua was called to destroy Jericho, he first sent out spies to view the land and investigate it¹. Generally speaking we should get as good a grasp of the facts of any situation we face as is possible. Anything God does not want us to know He is able to keep from us. Our job is to be well-informed. There is no virtue in ignorance. We do not trust in our own knowledge too much – but we do not cultivate ignorance either. We find out as much as we can but then look to God to enable us to use our knowledge aright.

2. Rahab is a classic example of the way in which a new convert can serve God immediately. A young believer can break free from past entanglements and be swiftly used by God. The spies arrived at the city, went through the gates and took accommodation in a very disreputable lodging-house where a prostitute named Rahab was living¹. This girl had recently come to faith in the God of Israel (as 2:8–9 makes clear) but she had not yet broken free from the life she had been living. Her house was still the kind of place where stray men might be hanging around, a good place – it seemed – for spies to hide. However the spies had been noticed². Soon soldiers from the king of Jericho were asking Rahab about her visitors³. Rahab got the spies to hide⁴. Then she lied and told the soldiers that the Israelites had left⁵. Actually they were hiding beneath stalks of flax. 'Flax' was a plant from which linen was made⁶. The red linen cloth which was produced from it could be exported to surrounding countries. After the plant was cut it would be dried on the roofs of the houses.

The soldiers were deceived by Rahab. Soon they left and the city gates were shut¹. Then Rahab told the spies how she had come to faith in the God of Israel². The news of the crossing of the Sea of Reeds and the defeat of the Amorite kings had reached her³. It had put fear into the hearts of many but it brought faith to the heart of Rahab⁴. She was a young believer in the God of Israel.

Rahab has a suggestion. If the spies will preserve the life of Rahab and her family, she will help them escape¹. Her home is built into the city wall and has a window to the outside². They must

¹ 1:1-18

¹ 2:1a

¹ 2:1b

² 2:2

³ 2:3

⁴ 2:4a

⁵ 2:4b-5

⁶ 2:6

¹ 2:7

² 2:8-9

³ 2:10

⁴ 2:11

¹ 2:12-14

² 2:15

escape and run to the hills until the danger is past^{□3}.

□3 2:16

• *A mixture of spirituality and inconsistency*

Rahab is a mixture of spirituality and inconsistency. She still lives in a house known for welcoming dubious characters. She quite cheerfully lies to the king's men. The New Testament commends her faith^{□1} and her good deed in receiving and helping the spies^{□2}. Was she a spiritually-minded lady or not? Well, she lied but in the circumstances it was the lesser of two evils. People who criticize Rahab do not have many practical ideas about what she should have done instead! I am one of her supporters. It was better to lie than to betray the spies.

□1 Hebrews 11:31

□2 James 2:25

• *Better to lie than betray the spies*

3. Rahab's cloth - an illustration of the way of salvation

3. **Rahab's cloth is an illustration of the way of salvation.** The spies promise that Rahab will be safe on one condition. She must mark out her house with a cord of red fabric. Anyone she wants kept safe must stay in the house with her. When the Israelites invade, the people in the house marked by the red linen cord (made from the flax!) will be preserved with its inhabitants^{□1}. A simple faith in this 'way of salvation' suggested by someone else will be her safety when the judgement upon Jericho comes.

□1 2:17-19

• *Noah's ark*

It reminds us of Noah's ark. Anyone who sheltered in Noah's ark was safe from God's judgement. It reminds us of the Passover. Anyone who sheltered under the blood in the day when judgement advanced through Egypt was kept safe. Above all, it reminds us of the cross of Jesus. Anyone who shelters under the blood of Jesus will escape when the day comes when sin is punished. Jericho is about to come under God's judgement. Faith in the promise of the spies will bring safety. But it is a faith that trusts in the cloth, which is coloured red, like the blood of Jesus. Rahab's 'salvation' was by faith in a protection that someone else had decided on.

• *The Passover*

• *Above all the blood of Jesus*

4. Rahab is expected to be totally loyal to Israel

4. **Rahab is expected to throw in her lot with Israel.** She is now an honorary member of a new nation, Israel. She must be totally loyal to Israel and not reveal what has happened^{□1}. She agrees^{□2}. The men hide in the hills until the danger is past^{□3}. Then they take the good news to Joshua^{□4}. They confidently predict Jericho's fall^{□5}. But another piece of good news is the story of a prostitute whose faith is already helping forward the kingdom of God.

□1 2:20

□2 2:21

□3 2:22-23a

□4 2:23b

□5 2:24



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