

Rahab Protects the Spies Sent to Jericho

Joshua 2:1-7

Joshua 2:1-7 - *“Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho.” So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there.² And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, “Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country.”*

³ So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, “Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country.”⁴ Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So she said, “Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from.⁵ And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them.”⁶ (But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.)⁷ Then the men pursued them by the road to the Jordan, to the fords. And as soon as those who pursued them had gone out, they shut the gate.”

Background Notes

As we read the account of the Israelite spies in Jericho, I'm sure two big questions came to your mind. Number one, what were these men of Israel, from God's people, doing in the house of a prostitute? And, number two, what about Rahab's lie? Rahab lied to protect these spies. There's no doubt that she lied! Does this mean that the Bible teaches or condones lying -- in certain situations?

Why did these spies go to the house of a prostitute? It was a very practical decision. What better way to conceal your mission? Who would suspect two men in a place where other men were coming and going? Furthermore, what better place to pick up information about the city, and not be questioned in return?

These two spies didn't go to Rahab's house for sex -- they went to get information about the strengths and weaknesses of the city of Jericho. In addition, verse 15 says that Rahab's house was on the city wall, so it was an ideal location for escape. And finally, let's not forget about the sovereignty of God here. God knew the heart of Rahab and the faith that she would show in the true God, and so He ordained that these two spies would stay with Rahab.

What about Rahab's lie? First of all, when reading historical accounts in the Bible, we should always distinguish between what **did** happen and what **should have** happened. That's a principle of biblical interpretation. There's no doubt that Rahab told a lie -- but that fact doesn't mean that the Bible is teaching that she **should** have lied. The fact that Rahab lied doesn't mean that it's OK to tell a lie in a difficult situation -- even if you think that greater good can come from your lie.

Rahab is never commended for her lie – either here or in the New Testament. Rahab is mentioned in the New Testament in Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25. In both places she is commended for her faith in God and her good works of faith in hiding the spies -- but she is never commended for telling a lie! God certainly could have protected the spies in another way. His hands were not tied. Rahab did not have to lie!

So the Bible is not teaching here that it's OK to lie – even for a good cause, or in the time of war. I do not believe in “situational ethics” or “wartime ethics.” Rather, I believe in a “non-conflicting moral absolutes” system of ethics. Did you hear that? One more time, I don't believe in situational ethics – that says you should always choose to do the “loving” thing. Who's to determine what the loving thing is? I don't believe in wartime ethics - that normally it's wrong to lie, but in war time you can lie if it's necessary.

I believe that the Bible teaches a non-conflicting moral absolutes system of ethics. What is that? This system says that there will always be a “right” thing to do, and that we will not have to end up making the less evil choice of two evil choices. For example, this system would say that that God will never put you in a situation where you must commit adultery in order not to murder - or that you must murder in order not to commit adultery. Or that you must lie in order not to steal -- or you must steal in order not to lie. No, in this system the moral absolutes do not conflict.

In a “non-conflicting moral absolutes” system of ethics, there will always the right thing to do, and it will never be “the lesser of two evils.” The Lord Jesus always did the right thing, and it was never the lesser of two evils. He lived in this real world, and we are to follow His example.

Doing the right thing is not always easy, and it may even cost us our lives. Even if it looks like our decision may result in hurt to other people, we must leave that in the hands of God.

What do you think our Lord would have answered if He had been hiding Jews in Germany during World War II, and the Gestapo had asked Him if he was hiding Jews? Would He have lied to protect the Jews, or would He have betrayed the Jews? Now some of you are thinking here probably that He would have zapped the SS troopers, right? Well, I think He would have done what He so often did -- He would have chosen a third alternative. He might have asked, “By whose authority do you ask me that question?” Or maybe He would have just been silent. It's true that He might have been shot or imprisoned and the Jews discovered, but He wouldn't have lied or betrayed the Jews; He would have done the right thing.

For further study on this topic, please read the article called [Exercise in Ethics](#) on the GCM website (www.GrowingChristians.org).

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. Believers should be aware of satanic strongholds.

The book of Joshua is a handbook for spiritual warfare. Jericho was a stronghold of the enemy. It blocked the entrance into the central part of the Land that God had given His people. Now remember that the Promised Land is a spiritual picture of the spiritual Land that God has given us. As God wanted His people in the Old Testament to enjoy the Promised Land, so God wants us today to enjoy the spiritual blessings that He has given us in Christ.

Satan wants to keep us from enjoying the blessings of the spiritual land of blessing. In the spiritual picture that God has given, the king of Jericho appears to be a picture of Satan. Just as the children of Israel were to search out Jericho and check out its strengths and weaknesses, so we believers should be aware of satanic strongholds.

For example: in this western world, materialism is a satanic stronghold -- it's a Jericho! We are surrounded and bombarded with materialism every day, because Satan controls most of the media. Many Christians are caught up in the desire for more money and bigger and better earthly possessions. As a result we are not enjoying the spiritual blessings that God has given us in Christ. Materialism is a Jericho; it's a satanic stronghold that blocks the entrance into the land of spiritual blessings in Christ. I wonder how many spiritual blessings we aren't enjoying because of materialism? Are you aware of this, fellow believer? Am I?

As believers, we need to be aware of satanic strongholds. We need to search out the Jericho of materialism -- and other strongholds as well. We need to search these things out in the light of God's Word and see how materialism (or other strongholds) is controlling our lives.

We need to see what has to be done to conquer and eliminate satanic strongholds so that we can possess and enjoy the spiritual land that God has given us. It can be done! 2 Corinthians 10:4, "*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.*" Believers should be aware of satanic strongholds.

2. Believers should be aware of satanic strategy.

The king of Jericho had his stronghold to block the entrance into the Land, and he also had his strategy. The enemies knew what God had done for His people in bringing them out of Egypt and through the Red Sea and the wilderness. They knew how God had fought for them on the other side of Jordan in eliminating the Amorite kings, Sihon and Og. The king of Jericho's strategy for protecting his stronghold was to get rid of the two spies. He knew about the spies and was out to get them -- but God protected them.

Do you see the spiritual picture? Satan is not ignorant. He knows the works of God and what God has done on His people's behalf. Satan knows all about us, and his strategy is to keep us out of the land of blessing. He wants to keep us

from knowing about the strongholds that will block our way to victory. But God will protect us and will enable us to be aware of his strategy.

We should not be so concerned about Satan that we lose our focus on Christ. No, our focus should be positive -- it should be on the Lord! But believers should be aware of satanic strategy.

Practical Application

Remember, God has His “Rahabs” out there to protect us.

Who would have ever thought that God would use Rahab, a prostitute in a pagan city, to protect the two Israeli spies? Do you see the application? We don't have to fear Satan. God can protect us -- even through unbelievers!

Several years ago, Christian students in Campus Crusade for Christ at Dartmouth College undertook an evangelistic project. Unfortunately the students were stopped from passing out free copies of C.S. Lewis' book, **Mere Christianity**. Well, guess who came to the rescue? God used the non-Christian administration to OK their project -- in the name of intellectual freedom! How about that? How's that for a turning of the tables? Praise the Lord!

Just as God protected the spies in Jericho, and just as He protected the Christian students at Dartmouth College, so God can take care of you as you serve Him. You don't have to run scared. You don't have fear Satan. Remember that God can use His “Rahabs” out there to protect you!