

Rahab and the Spies of Joshua – Part 2

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Rahab protects the spies of Joshua in Jericho in exchange for her family's lives
2. aim – to cause us to seek the will of God in every aspect of our lives, no matter how uncomfortable
3. passage – Joshua 2:1-24

b. outline

1. The Spies Come to Jericho (Joshua 2:1-7)
2. The Spies Promise Rahab Protection (Joshua 2:8-21)
3. The Spies Return to Joshua (Joshua 2:22-24)

c. opening

1. the **process** of this pericope
 - a. the entire chapter belongs to a single pericope – it has *great detail*, but it is a *single story*
 - b. and, due to its length, I will not read the entirety of the chapter up front
 1. because I intend to *exposit* the text, meaning I will be reading *much of it* as I go along
 2. because I have “endured” far too many sermons where the preacher reads a *huge* chunk of Scripture at the outset, and then “barely” touches any of it in his preaching
 3. because I hope that you are reading the text *ahead of time*, in **preparation** for the sermon
 - a. something I intend to address more fully as I reprise my camp sermons **over two Sundays**
2. the **place** in this pericope
 - a. up to **v. 8** is simply the story of the spies coming to Jericho and being lodged by Rahab
 1. it is the **contextual** part of the story – its sets the context of what is taking place
 2. **i.e.** the spies go to Jericho and lodge with Rahab, the king finds out about their arrival, she hides them and denies their presence, and a search gets underway for them
 3. **point:** it reminds us of the **utter unworthiness** of Rahab to be saved, yet how God **elect her** to be included in his plan of redemption, even to being a part of the line of the Messiah
 - b. the remainder of the chapter is the **covenant** established between the spies and Rahab
 1. **i.e.** since she has been “successful” in protecting them, will they now promise *their* protection?
 2. **IMO:** *it contains one of the greatest professions of faith in all of Scripture ...*

II. The Spies Promise Rahab Protection (Joshua 2:8-21)

Content

a. Rahab confesses her faith in the Lord (vv. 8-13)

1. **note:** I am calling Rahab's statement a **confession** because I interpret it to be such = she is “telling what she knows,” the keyword of her statement being “*I know that*” (**v. 9**)
 - a. she doesn't start with “I feel that ...” – her confession is a statement of faith based on *understanding* and *knowledge* – this is *not* an emotional appeal to the spies
 - b. **principle: a confession of faith in the Living God must (by definition) begin with an understanding of truth; knowledge of both who God is and what God has done**
 2. **i.e.** faith is based on *objective truths that effect one's ability to trust*, life-altering realities ...
2. she confesses what she “*knows*” to be true **historically** (**vv. 9-10**)
 - a. first, that “*the LORD*” (**i.e.** Yahweh) has given the Israelites the land (**see below re: the Lord**)
 1. **note:** although the Israelites have not *yet* crossed the Jordan, it is obvious that *they intend to do so* given that they have amassed to the E (**i.e.** spies in the city *imply* this)
 2. the “*inhabitants ... melt away*” (**see also v. 11**) = the people *inherently know* that they will not be able to stand **militarily** against the Israelites; they are **resigned** to their defeat
 - a. **i.e.** a few million Israelites against a city of 1000-1500 is quite lop-sided
 - b. second, that the history of the Israelites is well-known to her *and the whole city*
 1. **remember:** the events of the Red Sea and the Amorite kings being defeated are separated **by 40 years** – but, the events are *now* linked in her mind (and in the minds of the Canaanites)
 - a. from the perspective of the Canaanites, the *initial* Exodus is followed by 40 years of “nothing”
 1. the Israelites simply “wander around” for 40 years, giving the Canaanites “pause”
 2. **i.e.** over *two generations* they probably come to think of the Israelites as no threat

- b. but now, with the Israelites moving into Gilead *and destroying Sihon and Og* (i.e. the Amorite kings), they (once again) become a military threat to Jericho (i.e. the connection)
 - c. **her confession**: whatever “impetus” brought them out of Egypt and across the Red Sea has “awakened” to bring them out of the wilderness and across the Jordan (**Amorites**)
 - 3. she confesses what she “knows” to be true **theologically** (v. 11)
 - a. first, she *repeats* that “our hearts melted” (or “no spirit left in any man”) = something *powerful* is about to descend upon us, and we will not be able to resist it – we are **resigned** to our fate
 - b. but, she then *connects* these historical realities **to a theological reality**: that the power behind the Israelites *is a true God, a Living God* who is *God over all* (i.e. we are resigned to him)
 - 1. **IOW**: she “connects the dots” – the historical events above are orchestrated by a *divine Being*
 - 2. **note**: the author puts the term “LORD” on her lips to register that she is referring to Yahweh
 - a. the *actual* word she uses is unknown; she probably has *no* knowledge of the name of God
 - b. but, the author *fully understands* who she is referring to, and “fills that in” in the story
 - 3. **remember**: this woman is a pagan, involved with all of the gods of the Canaanites (e.g. Baal)
 - a. these “gods” are all she has ever known, and (for her) they are “real” (i.e. the religious practices that give rise to their “existence” are all around, and the people *utterly believe* in their existence and power; e.g. they “pray” to them for their crops, etc.)
 - b. but, she now confesses (by implication) *that they are all fictitious* (as they are!)
 - 1. i.e. these “gods” exist insofar as men “make them up” as a part of their desperate need for something “spiritual,” to fill their need for *divinity* (e.g. **Acts 17:29f**; Paul in Athens)
 - 4. she confesses “*he is God*” (emphasis on *is*) – a God who is “*in the heavens above*” and “*on the earth beneath*” = an actual *Living Divine Being* who occupies all the spaces of power
 - a. **note**: her understanding of the nature of this God is *extremely* limited, even as it was for the Israelites themselves – however, she knows *enough* and (**IMO**) only because it is this God who has *revealed himself* to her (i.e. allowing her to understand what others do not)
 - c. **her confession**: the “power” behind the Israelites is a God *who is powerful* because he *is* God – she understands that Israel (and these spies!) are being led by *him*
 - 4. she confesses what she “knows” to be true **logically** (or *consistently*, vv. 12-13)
 - a. “*now then*” = this is where knowledge turns to *trust*: she now “connects the dots” **personally**
 - 1. i.e. she takes what she knows to be true both *historically* and *theologically*, and connects that to her own life – what she realizes to be true *in her head* now *flows out of her heart*
 - b. she makes a *simple request*: since I have “*dealt kindly*” with you, please deal kindly with me
 - 1. her request is a bit of a **quid pro quo** = you owe me something for what I have done
 - 2. however, given her statement re: Yahweh in v. 11, it is reasonable to assume that her request is *actually* to the God of the Israelites, not the spies *per se*
 - a. she knows that *they* are not able to fulfill her request; only *their God* can do so as he brings his power to bear over Jericho (i.e. the spies are just his *emissaries*)
 - b. but, since the spies are the *agent* of the Lord, she has no choice but to ask *them* ...
 - c. so, she makes a *fuller request*: please save alive all of my family when the city is destroyed
 - 1. she *knows* that the Israelites are not coming *just* to sack the city, but to *kill all of its inhabitants*
 - a. **IMO**: given her knowledge of Yahweh, she realizes that Jericho (she?) *deserves* this fate
 - d. **her confession**: I appeal to the God of Israel to look with kindness upon me – to treat me with *favor* as I appeal to his compassion, to recognize my *utter dependence* upon him as God
 - 1. **note**: **James 2:25** treats her actions in saving the spies (i.e. the *quid pro quo*) as an act of faith
 - a. he argues that she is not actually “*earning*” the favor of God *per se*, but is trusting in the Lord *all along* and acting in a way that *shows* that she trusts him to save her
 - b. i.e. she *demonstrates* her faith in the God of the spies by protecting them
 - 2. her request of the spies *flows out* of her *preexistent* trust in the God of Israel, and now she appeals to him (through them) for his mercy; that he will show *his faithfulness*
 - 5. the parallel of her confession to our own in Christ (**in her actual order above**):
 - a. first, trust in Christ begins with understanding of the *theological reality* of who Jesus really is
 - 1. we must first see him as “*Lord*” (**Romans 10:9**) – that he is Yahweh incarnate and that we are in a *desperate state*, as pagan sinners doomed to the judgment he brings
 - b. second, trust in Christ continues by seeing the *historical actions* of Jesus for what they really are
 - 1. we must recognize his incarnate work as salvific, that his death, burial and resurrection are the *objective realities* upon which our understanding of him is built
 - c. third, trust in Christ is completed by appealing to the *logical consequences* of those things to us
 - 1. we must *appeal to him* (by faith alone) that he bring his mercy to bear upon us, and we must *continue* to trust in that mercy by how we live out that trust in him day by day

b. the spies covenant with her before the Lord (vv. 14-21)

1. **covenant:** a contractual arrangement of specific promises based (typically) on mutual responsibilities
2. the promises made by the spies to Rahab have all the earmarks of a covenant:
 - a. **v. 14:** the covenant is *established* – if she will keep their secret, they promise to save her
 - b. **vv. 15-16:** she *agrees to the terms* by letting them down out of the city through her window
 - c. **vv. 17-18:** the *sign* of the covenant is established (**i.e.** the scarlet cord), a visible reminder of the terms and conditions, which will be the identification of her house during the siege
 1. **i.e.** covenantal signs = Adamic: the Tree; Noahic: the rainbow; Abrahamic: circumcision; Mosaic: the law; Aaronic: the tabernacle; Davidic: his throne; New Covenant: **Christ's blood**
 2. **ironically:** scarlet is often associated with the color of blood (**e.g.** Catholic cardinals), but also with immorality like prostitution (**e.g.** the Great Harlot of **Revelation 17:1-6**)
 - a. **IOW:** just as Rahab relied upon a scarlet cord to remind the Israelites who she was, so believers in Christ “wear” the color of his blood to identify themselves before God
 - d. **vv. 19-20:** the *specific conditions* of the covenant are outlined – everyone brought into her house will be protected; if they leave the house and flee from the Israelites, no protection is offered
 1. **note:** when the walls fall at the trumpet blast (**6:20**), her living space would be exposed – Rahab’s “temptation” would be to flee inward, but she has been told to stay put for protection
 - e. **v. 21:** Rahab embraces (**i.e.** trusts) the covenant made, and hangs the scarlet cord – she puts her trust in the God of the Israelites *to do what his emissaries have said he will*

III. The Spies Return to Joshua (Joshua 2:22-24)

Content

a. the spies return across the Jordan

1. they report that their time in Jericho means that the Lord has given the land to the Israelites
2. **i.e.** they have *accomplished their goal* = they have *confirmed what Joshua already knew*

b. the application of the spies going to Jericho

1. **the days of destruction are coming; God has proclaimed judgment upon the nations**
 - a. **question: how do you plan to get through it? have you gone to Yahweh, recognizing who he is and what he has done in Christ Jesus, and hung your scarlet cord in the window?**
 - b. **what's the basis for your assurance: your “readiness” (like the people of the city) or your reliance upon a covenant whose specific condition is “trust me to save you?”**
 - c. **IOW:** let's not flee from danger when the “walls” fall in, but let's stay put in the promises of God