

RAHAB AND THE SCARLET LINE

BIBLE TEXT : Joshua 2:1-24

LESSON 153 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Joshua 2:1-24

¹ And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.

² And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country.

³ And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country.

⁴ And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they *were*:

⁵ And it came to pass *about the time* of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them.

⁶ But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof.

⁷ And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate.

⁸ And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof;

⁹ And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Two Spies Concealed in Rahab's House

- 1 Joshua sent two men to spy out Jericho secretly, and they came to Rahab's house, Joshua 2:1
- 2 It was reported to the king, and he sent to Rahab to bring forth the men, Joshua 2:2, 3
- 3 Rahab hid them and told the king's men that they left at dark and they should pursue them, Joshua 2:4, 5
- 4 She concealed them on the roof, and in vain the men sought them unto Jordan, Joshua 2:6, 7

II Rahab's Covenant with the Two Spies

- 1 Rahab feared the Lord, for the inhabitants had heard of the victories given Israel, Joshua 2:8-10
- 2 Great fear was upon the people, and Rahab knew that Israel's God was the God of Heaven and earth, Joshua 2:11
- 3 Having showed the spies kindness, she besought them by an oath and token to save her and her house alive, Joshua 2:12, 13
- 4 The men agreed to show them kindness, if she would not disclose their business, Joshua 2:14

III The Token of Deliverance of Rahab and Her House

- 1 Letting them down by a "cord" from her house on the wall, she urged them to flee to the mountains, Joshua 2:15, 16
- 2 The men instructed her to bind the scarlet cord in the window as a token of their deliverance, Joshua 2:17, 18;

Exodus 12:13

¹³ And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye *are*: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy *you*, when I smite the land of Egypt.

- 3 "Whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house . . . his blood shall be upon his head," Joshua 2:19, 20;

Exodus 12:22

²² And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip *it* in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.

IV The Return of the Men to Israel's Camp

- 1 Rahab sent them away and bound the scarlet line in the window, as agreed, Joshua 2:21
- 2 They hid in the mountain until the pursuers went back, Joshua 2:22
- 3 Returning to Joshua, they recited their mission and the fear of the inhabitants toward Israel, Joshua 2:23, 24

NOTES:

The inhabitants of Jericho were Canaanites, a people who practiced the same idolatry and wickedness that characterized all the tribes occupying the land promised to Israel. This people had heard about Israel's God, for the news had reached many lands. They knew how the Lord brought Israel out of Egyptian bondage, how He dried up the Red Sea, led them through the wilderness,

is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.

¹⁰ For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that *were* on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.

¹¹ And as soon as we had heard *these things*, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he *is* God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

¹² Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token:

¹³ And *that* ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.

¹⁴ And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee.

¹⁵ Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house *was* upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall.

¹⁶ And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way.

¹⁷ And the men said unto her, We *will be* blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear.

¹⁸ Behold, *when* we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which

and delivered the two kings of the Amorites into their hands. And terror came upon them because of Israel, now encamped opposite Jericho, just east of Jordan. Yet the mighty miracles wrought inspired no fear or reverence for God. They remained idolaters and unbelievers (**Hebrews 11:31** 31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace).

Rahab's Faith in the God of Israel

And these were the evil conditions in which Rahab grew up — surrounded with the idolatry and wickedness of her townsmen. There was not a godly man among them, and she knew of no other religion than the idolatrous worship and the iniquity connected with it which was conducted in their temple, where from her childhood, no doubt, Rahab was taken.

Yet, brought up in ignorance and darkness, with no friend or relative to help her, when Rahab merely heard of the miracles of the God of Israel, and the blessings of Heaven which attended His people, a ray of faith and hope entered her dreary heart. Surely there was, after all, a God of power somewhere, far, far above these vain gods her people worshiped! Their impious religion had done nothing good for her. Her hungry heart longed for something better. And when these two strangers from Israel's camp called at her inn, new hope sprang up.

The Visitors from Israel's Camp

Joshua sent these two men to spy out the land, for Jericho, a high-walled city in the valley of the Jordan, was the first stronghold which lay across their pathway in entering the Promised Land. And scarcely had these men arrived at the inn on the wall, which Rahab was keeping, than word reached the king. And he sent officers to arrest them, who came, saying, "Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country." But Rahab had befriended and hid them, and persuaded the officers to pursue after them to the Jordan.

When the officers were gone Rahab proceeded to the roof where she had concealed them, saying, "I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you." These words express remarkable faith on the part of one who all her life was surrounded with unbelief. The miracles which attended the Israelites on their marches struck terror to all the inhabitants. The Lord told His people before it came to pass that He would put the fear of them upon all nations: "This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee" (Deuteronomy 2:25). Even in this Christian dispensation there is still a certain fear of the people of God. It is written, "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things. . . . And of the rest durst no man join himself to them" (Acts 5:11-13). Thus, true to God's Word, terror fell upon all the inhabitants of Canaan, as Israel was about to enter the land, not because they were great in number, or stronger than other nations, but because their God was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Yet of these multitudes who were shaking with fear, there was just one soul — Rahab the innkeeper — who turned to Israel's God for a refuge.

The Token of Rahab's Safety

thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee.

¹⁹ And it shall be, *that* whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood *shall be* upon his head, and we *will be* guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood *shall be* on our head, if *any* hand be upon him.

²⁰ And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear.

²¹ And she said, According unto your words, so *be* it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window.

²² And they went, and came unto the mountain, and abode there three days, until the pursuers were returned: and the pursuers sought *them* throughout all the way, but found *them* not.

²³ So the two men returned, and descended from the mountain, and passed over, and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all *things* that befell them:

²⁴ And they said unto Joshua, Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.

At this stage, Rahab sought to enter into a covenant with the two men whom she had befriended, that she and her family might be spared when Israel came against Jericho. "The LORD your God," she confessed, "he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: and that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death." And seeing that Rahab had dealt well with them, to this the men agreed on condition that "ye utter not this our business."

It was evening; darkness had fallen; and the gates were closed; but Rahab let them down outside the wall by a cord through the window; and urging them to hasten, she said, "Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way." And for a "true token" the men took the scarlet line, by which she had let them down, and told her to bind it in the window, when they came into the land, and to bring all her family into the house where they must abide. Thus would the Israelites know by this token that every soul in the house was to be saved alive.

The True Token for God's People

The scarlet line bound in the window of Rahab's house is a beautiful symbol of the memorable provision the Lord made for the deliverance of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. On the night of their deliverance the blood of the slain lamb was to be sprinkled on the lintels and doorposts of their dwellings, inside which they were commanded to abide. And the Lord said, "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:12, 13).

One day, many centuries later, when John the Baptist stood in the midst of a multitude near Jordan, a lone Figure approached them. And John, pointing to Him, cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, said, "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (I Corinthians 5:7). The Blood of the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world" is the fulfillment of the "true token" of our redemption.

**"Under the Blood, the precious Blood,
Under the cleansing, healing flood;
Keep me, Saviour, from day to day,
Under the precious Blood."**

Rahab and Her Family Saved Alive

When the men had given Rahab a true token, she sent them away and bound the scarlet line in the window. "So the two men returned, and descended from the mountain, and passed over, and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all things that befell them: and they said unto Joshua, Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us." And when

Israel crossed over Jordan, they carried out the attack against Jericho as the Lord commanded them. The walls fell flat; and the Israelites utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass with the edge of the sword. And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein, except the silver and gold and other metals which were to be put in the Lord's treasury.

But Joshua instructed the two men to go into the house, where the token was bound in the window, and bring out Rahab and her family. "And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had" (Joshua 6:23). It is also stated in verse 25 that "she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day." Rahab was thus adopted into the "family" of Israel, and in Matthew's genealogy she is recorded as an ancestress of the Lord Jesus Christ (**Matthew 1:5** ⁵ And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse).

Rahab is included among the "Heroes of Faith" in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, stating that by faith she perished not with them who believed not, when she received the spies with peace (**Hebrews 11:31** ³¹ By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace). This reveals that when she besought the two men for a "true token," she was looking away to the God of Israel by faith for her deliverance, rather than only to the spies. And God gave her a token — it was the scarlet line in the window, which harked back to the token given Israel — "the sprinkling of blood," by which even an idolatrous Canaanite can be made a child of God, and be adopted into His family.

**"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day:
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away."**

Rahab could look back to those dark days when she was a Canaanite, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But oh, what a change — transformed by grace divine!

QUESTIONS

- 1 Of what nationality were the inhabitants of Jericho?
- 2 How did they compare morally and religiously with the other nations in the land?
- 3 News concerning Israel reached the land. What was it they heard? and what effect did it have on the people?
- 4 What was the difference between Rahab and her townsmen?
- 5 Of what event was the scarlet line in the window a symbol?
- 6 In what respect are these two incidents similar?
- 7 Why did Rahab befriend the two men from Israel's camp?
- 8 What was the result of the kindness she showed them?
- 9 What were some of the future events of her life after she was saved alive from the destruction of Jericho?
- 10 What passage of Scripture confirms her faith in God and her salvation?