

Joshua 2

What action did Joshua take prior to leading the Israelites across the Jordan to take possession of the Promised Land (v. 1a) He sent out two spies to Jericho. This was not an indication of a lack of faith on his part; rather, it was a matter of military strategy.....a carefully concealed mission. Not even the Israelites were to know of it lest an unfavorable report dishearten them like it had their fathers at Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 13:1-14:4).¹

Where did the spies stay? In the house of a prostitute named Rahab. How the spies chose that house is not revealed.

In addition to securing military information, what was God's purpose for the visit of the spies to Jericho? A sinful woman was there whom God in His grace purposed to spare from the judgment soon to fall on the city. So the Lord, moving in a mysterious way, brought together two secret agents of the army of Israel and a harlot of Canaan who would become a proselyte to the God of Israel.²

What did the King of Jericho do when he found out about the spies (vv. 2-3)? The disguise of the spies was not adequate. The entire city was on alert, knowing about the camp of Israel opposite them across the Jordan. Someone detected the agents, followed them to Rahab's house, and quickly returned to report to the king. The king quickly sent messengers who demanded of Rahab that the spies be surrendered.

How did Rahab respond to the king's order (vv. 4-6)? When she saw the soldiers approaching her house she took the spies and hid them beneath the stalks of flax which had been placed on her flat roof for drying.

Hastening down to open her front door to the king's messengers, she freely admitted that two strangers had come to her house, but how could she know their identity and mission? "They left here at dusk, just about the time the city gate is closed," she lied. "But if you hurry you can probably catch ... them."³

In keeping with oriental custom the privacy of even a woman such as Rahab was respected and the king's men refrained from bursting into her house and searching it.⁴

What did the King's men do (v. 7)? The soldiers took Rahab at her word, made no search of her property, but quickly set out on a wild-goose chase due east to the fords of the Jordan, the most likely escape route.⁵

Was Rahab wrong to lie since her falsehood protected the spies? Are there some situations in which a lie is acceptable? The lie of Rahab was recorded but not approved. The Bible did approve her faith demonstrated by good works (Hebrews 11:31) but did not comment on her falsehood.⁶

After the king's messengers had left, how would you describe the remarkable conversation that then took place between Rahab and the spies (vv. 8-11)?

v. 9 Rahab disclosed that she believed that the LORD, the God of Israel, had given them the land of Canaan. Though the army of Israel had not yet crossed the Jordan River, Rahab stated in effect, "the Conquest is as good as over."

She also revealed to the spies the priceless information that the inhabitants of Jericho as well as the rest of Canaan were utterly demoralized: "*All who live in this country are melting in fear because of you.*" Since a major objective of the spy mission was to assess the morale of the enemy, this was indeed "music to their ears."

v. 10-11a She recognized the terror of the people because of the power of Israel's God which parted the Red Sea for the Hebrew slaves 40 years before, and more recently gave them victories over Sihon and Og, the mighty kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan (Numbers 21:21-35). Now, that same God was closing in on them, and they knew they were in trouble.

v. 11b Then Rahab declared her faith in Israel's God: "*For the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.*" Responding to the word she had received about the mighty working of God, Rahab believed, trusting in His power and mercy. And that faith saved her. Her name is memorialized in the Faith Hall of Fame ([Hebrews 11:31](#)).

How could Rahab have such a remarkable faith and still be a harlot and so glibly tell lies? The answer may be that as she initially responded in belief to the message she heard about God's works, she later responded to further messages concerning God's standards of life....and obeyed. After all, spiritual maturity is gradual, not instantaneous. Even John Newton, who wrote the gospel song "Amazing Grace," continued for some time after his conversion in the slave trade before he was convicted about this vile and degrading practice and gave it up.⁷

What request did Rahab make of the two spies (vv. 12-13)? For physical protection for her family just as she had shown kindness to them. She furthermore asked for a sign that her extended family would not be harmed.

How did the two men respond to Rahab's plea (v. 14)? The response of the spies was immediate and decisive. In essence they answered, "When the LORD gives us the land, that is, Jericho, we will keep the agreement. If you don't report our mission, we will protect you and your family or forfeit our own lives"⁸

What did Rahab do next and what did she tell the two men to do (vv. 15-16)? She helped them escape and told them how to evade their pursuers.

What directions did the two men give to Rahab (vv. 17-20)? The spies again confirmed the pact by repeating and enlarging the conditions Rahab must abide by. First, her house must be marked by a scarlet cord hung from the window. Because of the position of the house on the city wall, the cord would be clearly seen by the Israelite soldiers again and again as they would march around the walls.

Second, Rahab and her family were to remain in the house during the attack on Jericho. If anybody wandered out and was killed, the guilt for his death would be his own, not the invaders'. Finally, the spies again emphasized that they would be free of this oath of protection if Rahab exposed their mission.⁹

How did Rahab respond (v. 21)? To these conditions, Rahab agreed, and after the spies left, she tied a scarlet cord in the window.

What did the two men do next (v. 22)? They followed Rahab's directions and hid in the hills for three days until the soldiers of Jericho gave up the hunt.

How did their journey end (vv. 23-24)? They returned to Joshua's camp and reported to Joshua about their strange and stirring adventure especially the alarm and utter despondency of the Canaanites. Their confident conclusion was, "*The LORD has surely given the whole land into our hands for all the people are melting in fear because of us*" (cf. v. 9; [Exodus 23:27](#); [Deuteronomy 2:25](#)).¹⁰

God spared the lives of Rahab and her household because of their faith in God's promise through the spies. From the human perspective, salvation always depends on believing a promise from God (cf. [Genesis 15:6](#); [John 3:16](#)).¹¹

¹ Donald K. Campbell, "Joshua" in *the Bible Knowledge Commentary*: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 330.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid. 331.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 332.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Joshua, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 32.