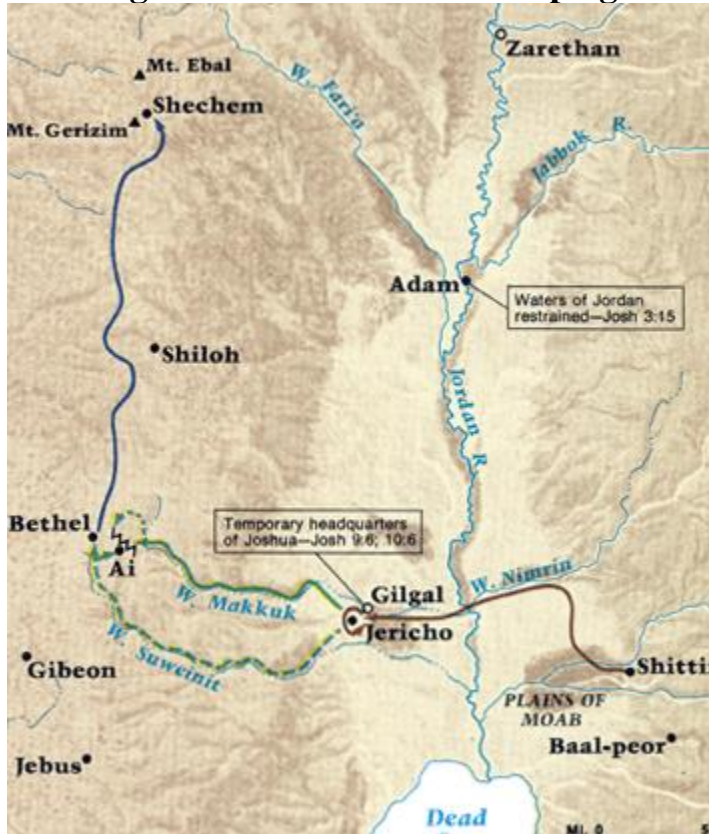


Joshua

September 13, 2009

Joshua 2

I. Crossing the Jordan/Central Campaign: Chapters 2-8



The distance from Jericho to Ai is about 13 miles, and approximately the same distances from Shittim to Jericho.

As we review this map, we see why the king of Jericho might have been a little concerned with the Israelite army close by.

II. Jericho and Rahab: Josh 2:1

Josh 2:1

1 Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. "Go, look over the land," he said, "especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.
NIV

Verse 1 We have seen failure in the Israelite from Shittim in regards to foreign women:

Num 25:1-3

25:1 While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, 2 who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods. 3 So Israel joined in worshiping the Baal of Peor. And the LORD's anger burned against them.
NIV

Verse 1 We have seen failure in the Israelites sending out spies. Numbers 13-14. In that case, 12 spies were dispatched. Two trusted the Lord; one of them was Joshua. Ten did not trust the Lord. Will the spies fail again, and cause disbelief within the Israelite camp?

- Verse 1 If God has given the land to Israelites and have promised them victory, why does Joshua have to send out spies? Given these points concerning verse 1, a reasonable person might conclude that this initial thrust into Canaanite territory is not starting well and has a significant chance of failure.
- Verse 1 Rahab was running an inn. It was a logical place for visitors to the city to stay; she was undoubtedly a prostitute as the NT verifies. It should be noted that came (went) and lay down (stayed) are terms used in the OT for sexual activity. This does not mean that sexual activities occurred...only that the language means that it is possible. Indeed, given the ritual purity necessary for Israelites in battle in the book of Joshua and the recent tragedies with the Moabite women during the Balaam incident (see above), it is hard to believe that they would have engaged in such wrong behavior.
- Verse 1 How she went from a Canaanite Prostitute to an Israelite wife (and eventually an ancestor of Jesus Christ) must have been an interesting story. Only the initial steps in that process are chronicled in the book of Joshua.

III. Jericho and Rahab: Josh 2:2-7

Josh 2:2-7

2 The king of Jericho was told, "Look! Some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land." 3 So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land." 4 But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from. 5 At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, the men left. I don't know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them." 6(But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.) 7 So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.
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- Verse 2 The citizens of Jericho were likely on high alert in any case; Sittim was only a little more than 10 miles from Jericho.
- Verse 3 Someone snitched on the spies. We are not told whom. Perhaps there were other travelers who overheard Rahab and the spies speaking. Or perhaps, someone recognized them as Israelites and guessed their mission.
- Verse 4 Was Rahab correct in lying? Should we follow her example?
No, we should not follow her example, but we should be careful in judging her. Ideally, in such situations, we should attempt to find a way whereby can fulfill all of God's commands, but to judge someone who must react quickly to come up with the optimal solution is clearly not correct as well.

Rom 3:7-8

7 Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?" 8 Why not say — as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say — "Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is deserved.
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- A similar question would concern the two spies. Could they be spies and have fulfilled their task without also lying?
- Verse 7 The city would have been relatively small but filled with people. It appears Jericho was heavily guarded city. Perhaps, the residents and its king were aware of the large Israelite army on the edge of their territory and were at high alert.
- Notice how Rahab's bargaining with both city officials and the spies begins in verse 4 take up most of the chapter. Clearly, her character represents the primary point of the chapter.

IV. Rahab's Illegal Proposal: Josh 2:8-13

Josh 2:8-13

8 Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof **9** and said to them, "I know that the LORD has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. **10** We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. **11** When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. **12** Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign **13** that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and that you will save us from death."

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In Verses 9-11, we see Rahab's great testimony of faith. It reflects God's promise to the Israelites:

Ex 15:14-17

14 " The peoples have heard, they tremble; Anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia. **15** "Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; The leaders of Moab, trembling grips them; All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. **16** " Terror and dread fall upon them; By the greatness of Your arm they are motionless as stone; Until Your people pass over, O LORD, Until the people pass over whom You have purchased.

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How did Rahab know the latter part of this verse? Did everyone else in Jericho also know? Why were only Rahab and her family saved? Some of the words had been given over 40 years ago; so perhaps, they have been communicated throughout the land, and especially so since the victories in Trans-Jordan. Verse 11 is interesting, a partial quote of Deut. 4:39; critics point this out as something very unlikely for Rahab to have heard or quoted; they forget that she has been conversing with the spies much more than what is recorded here as the context suggests. While we are not told how she heard all of this, we can be sure that the Holy Spirit was working in her to help her understand it.

In verses 12 and 13, Rahab proposes a relationship that is inappropriate for the Israelites to accept per the law:

Deut 7:1-4

7:1 When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations — the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you — **2** and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. **3** Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, **4** for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you.

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Eventually, we know that she will intermarry with them as well. What justification do the spies have for sinning (or rather breaking the law) by agreeing to her terms? Whenever someone accepts the Lord fully, they are accepted into the community regardless of what the prevailing law says at the time. Examples are Rahab, the Gibeonites, and Ruth (also in Jesus' ancestry).

V. Agreement: Josh. 2:15-21

Josh. 1:15-21

15 So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. **16** Now she had said to them, "Go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves

there three days until they return, and then go on your way." 17 The men said to her, "This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us 18 unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house. 19 If anyone goes outside your house into the street, his blood will be on his own head; we will not be responsible. As for anyone who is in the house with you, his blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on him. 20 But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear." 21 "Agreed," she replied. "Let it be as you say." So she sent them away and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

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This section contains what seems like an incredible strange place for a conversation. Perhaps it occurred immediately before she let them go down the rope.

She tells them how to escape, and then we hear from the spies their version of the agreement. Notice the use of “swear” and of “oath” (which is the same word as “treaty” in Deut. 7). There can be no doubt that the spies were breaking the commandments of Deut. 7.

The spies tell her to tie a scarlet cord on her door. Scarlet represents blood and has both good and bad connotations in the Bible. The cord tied on Zerah, son of Judah and another ancestor of Jesus, was also scarlet.

VI. Get Ready: Josh. 2:22-24

Josh. 2:22-24

22 When they left, they went into the hills and stayed there three days, until the pursuers had searched all along the road and returned without finding them. 23 Then the two men started back. They went down out of the hills, forded the river and came to Joshua son of Nun and told him everything that had happened to them. 24 They said to Joshua, "The LORD has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us."

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The two spies escape and give a great report to Joshua, much as the two spies (Joshua and Caleb) in Numbers 13-14 and different than that of the 10 spies from that episode. We do not see any reproach concerning Rahab. Undoubtedly Joshua was pleased!

VII. Additional Thoughts on Rahab

The following are shown in this text concerning Rahab:

1. She was a prostitute, and it is not clear that she stopped being one immediately as a result of her interaction with the spies.
2. She is clearly motivated by fear (even if we can see the transformation of that fear into something good).
3. She lies to protect herself and the spies.
4. She drives a shrewd bargain with the spies.

While we cannot doubt that her conversion was real given the Biblical accounts that it was, we would have serious questions about someone's salvation if these four points is all that we knew about her. In the end, we see God's saving grace at work in her.

In Chapter 9 concerning the Gibeonites, we will have an additional discussion on this grace. We have two examples in Joshua of God's grace at work in Rahab's family and in the Gibeonites. Given the widespread fear of the Israelites and their many victories, why do we not see more Canaanites coming over to the Israelite cause?