

Joshua 2:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Joshua's decision to send spies parallels Moses' earlier reconnaissance (Numbers 13), but with key differences. This mission involved only two men (versus twelve) sent 'secretly' (cheresh, שְׁחֵרֵשׁ), avoiding the public knowledge that led to Israel's previous failure. Joshua learned from history—the previous generation's unbelief after hearing the spies' fearful report led to forty years of wilderness wandering. The spies' arrival at Rahab's house appears providential rather than coincidental. The Hebrew zonah (זֹנָה, 'harlot') indicates she was a prostitute, yet God sovereignly directed the spies to the one Canaanite who would demonstrate faith. Rahab's house on the city wall (verse 15) provided strategic location for gathering intelligence and escaping detection. God's grace in using a Gentile prostitute to advance His redemptive purposes demonstrates that salvation depends on faith rather than moral merit or ethnic identity. Rahab's inclusion in Christ's genealogy (Matthew 1:5) and commendation in Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 confirms her genuine conversion and faith.

Historical Context

Jericho was a heavily fortified city controlling the Jordan River crossing into Canaan. Archaeological excavations reveal massive defensive walls and a prosperous Late Bronze Age city. The city's strategic importance made it the

logical first target for conquest. Spying missions were standard ancient Near Eastern military practice before assaults on fortified cities. Rahab's profession as a prostitute, while morally condemned, positioned her to hear news from travelers and merchants. Ancient Near Eastern cities typically had red-light districts near gates or walls where commerce and immoral activity intersected. The narrative makes no attempt to justify or minimize Rahab's sin, but demonstrates God's grace in saving sinners who turn to Him in faith. This account occurred approximately 40 years after the failed spying mission of Numbers 13-14, showing God's patience in giving Israel a second chance to enter the land in faith.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does God's use of Rahab—a Gentile prostitute—challenge our assumptions about who God saves and includes in His redemptive purposes?
2. What does Joshua's wisdom in learning from Moses' mistake teach about the importance of studying redemptive history?
3. How do you respond when God works through unlikely people or circumstances to accomplish His purposes?

Interlinear Text

וַשְׁלַח	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	בֶּן	נֹון	מִן	הַשִּׁטִּים	שְׁנַיִם	אֲנָשִׁים
sent	And Joshua	the son	of Nun	H4480	out of Shittim	two	H376
H7971	H3091	H1121	H5126		H7851	H8147	
מִמִּגְדֹּלִים	חֲשֵׁתָהּ	לֵאמֹר	לֹכֶד	רָאָה	אֶת	הָאָרֶץ	אֶת
to spy	secretly	saying	H1980	view	H853	the land	H853
H7270	H2791	H559		H7200		H776	
יְרִיחוֹ	וַיֵּלֶכְהוּ	וַיָּבֹאוּ	בֵּית	אִשָּׁה	זוֹנָה	וַשְּׁמָהּ	
even Jericho	H1980	and came	H1004	house	into an harlot's	named	
H3405		H935		H802	H2181	H8034	
רַחַב	וַשְׁכְּבוּ	שָׁמָּה:					
Rahab	and lodged	H8033					
H7343	H7901						

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 11:31 (Parallel theme): By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

James 2:25 (Parallel theme): Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

Matthew 1:5 (Parallel theme): And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

Numbers 25:1 (Parallel theme): And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.