

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, שְׁרֶשׁ), 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

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

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

אֶנְשׁוֹת יְמִינָה שְׁנָתִים הַשְׁטָה יְמִינָה וְשֶׁל חָ

sent And Joshua the son of Nun H4480 out of Shittim two H376

H7971 H3091 H1121 H5126

H7851

H8147

וְאֵת בְּאֵת כָּז אֶת רְאֵת רְאֵת מִרְגָּלִים

to spy secretly saying view the land H853

H7270 H2791 H559

H7200

H776

וְשֶׁמֶת הַזֹּגֶן הַאֲשֶׁר בַּבָּיִת לְכָז וְיַרְחִיחָז

even Jericho and came into an harlot's named H8034

H3405 H1980

H1004

H2181

שְׁפָהָה: וְשָׁכַבְוּ בְּתַבָּ

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.