

Joshua 2:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Rahab's confession stands as one of the most remarkable professions of faith in the Old Testament. The Hebrew verb *namasnu* (נִמְסַנֵּעַ, "did melt") literally means to dissolve or become liquid, vividly depicting terror that utterly destroys courage. Her declaration "the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" uses the covenant name *Yahweh* (יְהֹוָה) and affirms comprehensive monotheism—*Yahweh* alone reigns over all creation, both celestial and terrestrial realms. This echoes the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4) and anticipates Solomon's prayer (1 Kings 8:23), affirming God's unique sovereignty. Remarkably, this confession comes from a Canaanite prostitute rather than an Israelite. Her faith demonstrates that salvation transcends ethnic boundaries when one trusts the true God. The theological significance is profound: Rahab heard the reports of God's mighty acts (Exodus deliverance, defeat of Sihon and Og) and responded in faith, while Israel often witnessed miracles yet doubted. She becomes a model of Gentile inclusion in redemptive history, appearing in Christ's genealogy (Matthew 1:5) and commended for faith in Hebrews 11:31 and works in James 2:25. Her confession demonstrates saving faith's components: intellectual acknowledgment of truth, fear/reverence for God, and active trust expressed through harboring the spies.

Historical Context

Jericho was a heavily fortified Canaanite city-state controlling the Jordan River crossing into Canaan proper. Archaeological excavations at Tell es-Sultan (ancient Jericho) reveal massive defensive walls and a prosperous Late Bronze Age city. Rahab lived in a house built into the city wall (Joshua 2:15), a common practice in ancient Near Eastern cities where the double wall system created dwelling spaces. Her profession as a prostitute (Hebrew *zonah*, זָנָה) placed her on society's margins, yet positioned her to hear news from travelers and merchants entering the city. The spies Joshua sent arrived approximately 40 years after the original reconnaissance mission that had provoked Israel's unbelief (Numbers 13-14). Unlike those fearful spies who saw Canaanites as giants, these spies found a Canaanite woman whose faith surpassed Israel's. Rahab's knowledge of Israel's history demonstrates how widely God's reputation had spread through Canaan. The Exodus occurred 40 years earlier, yet its memory terrified Canaanite populations. This fulfilled God's promise that He would send terror before Israel (Exodus 23:27, Deuteronomy 2:25). Her faith response contrasts sharply with other Canaanites who hardened their hearts like Pharaoh.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Rahab's faith as a Gentile prostitute challenge our assumptions about who God saves and the backgrounds from which true believers emerge?

2. What does it mean practically to confess that God reigns 'in heaven above and earth beneath,' and how should this comprehensive sovereignty shape our daily decisions?
3. How can we cultivate faith like Rahab's, who believed based on hearing reports of God's works rather than demanding personal signs or experiences?

Interlinear Text

וְנִשְׁמַע	לְבָבְךָ	לְפָנֶיךָ	וְלֹא
And as soon as we had heard	did melt	these things our hearts	H3808
H8085	H4549	H3824	
קַמָּה	עַד	רַבָּה	מִפְנִיכָּם
neither did there remain	any more courage	in any man	because
H6965	H5750	H7307	H3588
		H376	H6440
יְהִי הָאֱלֹהִים	הָאֱלֹהִים	בְּשָׁמָן	עַל
of you for the LORD	he is God	he is God	in heaven
H3068	H430	H1931	H8064
			H4605
מִתְּחִנָּתְךָ	בְּאָנָתְךָ		
and in earth			
H776	H8478		

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 4:39 (References God): Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.

Joshua 5:1 (References Lord): And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel.

Isaiah 13:7 (Parallel theme): Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt:

Joshua 7:5 (Parallel theme): And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.

Psalms 102:15 (References Lord): So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.

Psalms 83:18 (Parallel theme): That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.

1 Kings 8:60 (References God): That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God, and that there is none else.