

JOSHUA

CHAPTER 2

¹ 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. ² And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country. ³ And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country. ⁴ And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they *were*: ⁵ And it came to pass *about the time* of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them. ⁶ But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof. ⁷ And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate. ⁸ And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof; ⁹ And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that *were* on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. ¹¹ 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. ¹² Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: ¹³ And *that* ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death. ¹⁴ And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee. ¹⁵ Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house *was* upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall. ¹⁶ And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way. ¹⁷ And the men said unto her, We *will be* blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear. ¹⁸ Behold, *when* we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. ¹⁹ And it shall be, *that* whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood *shall be* upon his head, and we *will be* guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood *shall be* on our head, if *any* hand be upon him. ²⁰ And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath

which thou hast made us to swear. ²¹ And she said, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window. ²² And they went, and came unto the mountain, and abode there three days, until the pursuers were returned: and the pursuers sought *them* throughout all the way, but found *them* not. ²³ So the two men returned, and descended from the mountain, and passed over, and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all *things* that befell them: ²⁴ And they said unto Joshua, Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.

2:1–24 The mission of the two spies and the account of Rahab. The practice of reconnaissance and espionage is as old as war itself (cf. Jdg 7:10–11; 1Sa 26:16). Rahab became a convert to the God of Israel and a famous woman among the Hebrews. She is honored in the NT for her faith (Heb 11:31) and for her good works (Jas 2:25). (CSB)

2:1 *sent ... from Shittim.* The invasion point was in the plains of Moab facing toward the Jordan and Jericho (Nu 33:48–49). The Hebrew word *Shittim* means “acacia trees,” which grow in the semi-arid conditions of the desert. (CSB)

Abel-shittim, “brook of the acacia trees,” located 8 mi from the Jordan River, opposite Jericho, in the plains of Moab (Tell el-Hammam or Tell el-Kefren; cf Nu 25:1; 33:49–50). Area offers strategic locations overlooking plains of Moab. (TLSB)

spies. Scripture does not condemn the use of spies either here or in Nu 13, where the Lord commands their use. Joshua uses his “spirit of wisdom” (Dt 34:9). Jesus says that His disciples are to be “wise as serpents” even while they are “innocent as doves” (Mt 10:16). (TLSB)

Joshua’s act of sending spies does not contradict his faith in the covenant LORD and God’s recent promises of victory for Israel. Neither did Moses’ employment of his brother-in-law Hobab as guide in the desert (Num 10:29) take away from his trust in the LORD as the Guide of Israel. The people of God are to be “as shrewd as snakes” and “as innocent as doves” (Mt 10:16). While at times God makes clear that the only right action for his people is passive inaction in “quietness and trust” (Is 30:15) and being “still” (Ps 46:11 [ET 46:10]), Joshua here demonstrates trust through a confident, proactive mission. The Scriptures never commend laziness and presumption, but often call for confident activity from those who know the promises of their saving LORD. This is illustrated, for example, in Jesus’ two parables in Mt 25:1–13 and Mt 25:14–30. Joshua continues to draw on his God-given “spirit of wisdom” (Deut 34:9) as he dispatches from Shittim the two spies. (CC)

About thirty-eight years earlier at Kadesh-barnea, Moses had sent Joshua himself into Canaan as part of the twelve-man spy mission lasting forty days (Numbers 13). The unbelief and fear of the ten spineless spies on that reconnaissance effort resulted in immediate death by plague, almost four decades of wandering in the wilderness, and eventual death under God’s judgment for the whole rebellious generation. (CC)

The strategy of Joshua is now different from that failed enterprise in at least three ways.

1. Joshua sends just two spies, not one from each of the twelve tribes, as Moses did earlier. Their number may correspond to the number of spies in the earlier mission who were faithful, that is, the duo of Joshua himself and Caleb. While representation from all twelve tribes will be called for later to illustrate the unity of the covenant nation (e.g., Josh 4:4–7), Joshua does not follow that procedure here. The author does not name the tribe or tribes of the pair. (CC)

2. Joshua speaks secretly to the two agents (see the textual notes on 2:1). Apparently even the other Israelites do not know about the spy mission. If the two return with a report of massive city walls, a surging river, harrowing experiences, and—from a human point of view—slim chances for success, the whole nation will not hear (and have the opportunity to respond faithlessly, as Israel did before). The spies will report to Joshua himself, as 2:24 will show. (CC)

3. While the spies are to gather information on the land as a whole, they will center their efforts on one part of Canaan: “Jericho” (2:1). Joshua would know from meditating on the Torah (as God directs him to do “day and night” in Josh 1:8) that the LORD is not expecting him to take the whole land in a few months or even in a single year. Such a demand might have been psychologically disheartening. The LORD through Joshua will drive out the Canaanites “little by little” over some years so that the land will not become desolate and the wild animals proliferate (Ex 23:28–30; Deut 7:22) from too few Israelites in a “spacious land” (Ex 3:8). Joshua can concentrate on Jericho now and later move on to other portions of central Canaan. Then he will sweep to the south and finally to the north, all in step-by-step fashion. The process of conquering, it appears, will take some seven years, followed by more years of taking firm possession of the land by the individual tribes. But first is the spying out of Jericho! (CC)

especially Jericho. The primary focus of the spies. It was a fortified city, was well supplied by strong springs, which helped to make it an oasis, and was located just five miles west of the Jordan. Its name probably means “moon city,” and archaeological excavations there reveal continuous occupation back to at least 7000 B.C. (CSB)

Key city because it controlled the routes into the heart of Canaan. It was near the main fords across the southern Jordan, and it controlled the fresh spring water vital to the area. To take Jericho would be a first step in taking the heart of Canaan (cf Nu 13:18–20). (TLSB)

Joshua’s “spirit of wisdom” (Deut 34:9) leads him to send the spies to Jericho. It is the key city of central Canaan for several reasons: it controls the major passes into the heart of the land to the west; it is near the main fords across the southern Jordan that link the area with the east; and it holds control over the fresh spring water critical to the district. To conquer Jericho would be a first big step in taking the heart of Canaan. (TLSB)

prostitute. Josephus and other early sources refer to Rahab as an “innkeeper” (see NIV text note), but see Heb 11:31; Jas 2:25. (CSB)

Context shows their purpose was to gather information. Rahab’s house may have served as an inn and was an ideal place for soaking up information on Jericho and the area. Because the house was built into the city wall (v 15), a quick escape from the city would be possible. Ultimately,

the Lord's grace leads them to this house so that He may rescue Rahab for eternal salvation. She will even become an ancestress of Jesus (Mt 1:5). (TLSB)

Two issues of theological ethics arise in our pericope. These regard Rahab as a prostitute and Rahab's deception of the king's messengers. Regarding the first issue, we may ask, Why do the two spies—men under the covenant of Moses, who know the Sixth Commandment from Ex 20:14 and Deut 5:18—enter the house of the “prostitute” Rahab in Jericho and lie down there (2:1)? We offer the following points:

First, Joshua 2 makes clear that the two spies avoided fornication and any deviation from their duty under God. Men who were weak in faith may have been sorely tempted, but it appears that Joshua selected men who were strong in faith and who gave no thought to either theological or physical harlotry. Their conduct is in accord with 1 Cor 6:15–16. (CC)

Second, Rahab's house, with its lingering reputation, may offer special cover. Two male travelers in a sex-saturated society would not attract special notice by entering a house associated with prostitution. (CC)

Third, Rahab's residence, if open to the many travelers coming to the strategic city, may be the best place in town for spies to soak up information on Jericho and environs, as Joshua instructed. They enter what may have been a bad house for a good cause. (CC)

Fourth, her house, as part of the city wall (2:15), is ideal as a place of quick escape if the spies' project is uncovered. They would not be trapped in the city center. (CC)

Fifth, the LORD's hand of grace leads them to the house of Rahab. What sometimes appear to be random happenings in life are later shown to be God-determined events leading to a grace-filled conclusion. The LORD has plans for Rahab's earthly and eternal salvation. During the subsequent millennia her story will accent to Bible readers God's unmerited forgiveness and love, even for the worst of sinners. *God even chooses Rahab as a link in the line of the Savior (Mt 1:5)*. The grace of God shown to Rahab the prostitute through Joshua's men anticipates *the grace that God will show through Jesus Christ, the NT Joshua, who will show compassion to sinful women* (e.g., Lk 7:36–50; Jn 8:3–11). (CC)

Sixth, the NT indicates that Rahab was justified through faith before God (Heb 11:31) and even justified by her good works before other people, since her actions revealed her saving faith (James 2:25; see further below). Thus she illustrates James 2:18: “By my works I will show to you my faith.” Ongoing willful activity as a prostitute certainly would be incompatible with saving faith and justification by grace, which is attributed to her. We may conclude, then, that she abandoned her sinful profession. We may even ask, Were her days of prostitution already over at the time of the spies' visit? (CC)

Seventh, perhaps she had ceased being a prostitute when she heard of the LORD's miracles and judgment upon Egypt and the Amorite kings, since those events and Israel's impending conquest of Canaan struck fear into her (Josh 2:9–13). Hearing about God's judgment and Law would convict the hearer of his or her own sin (the second use of the Law). Moreover, it would also

serve to curtail and prevent sinful behavior (the first use of the Law). Her house may well have served as an inn for travelers in the days when she was a prostitute (see the textual notes on 2:1), but by the time of the spies' visit (when her house obviously is still a public place), perhaps she was no longer engaged in "the world's oldest profession." If that is the case, the author is speaking of her in terms of her past life as a prostitute. By reminding the reader of her past, he thereby accents the grace of God toward her. One might compare her to Mary Magdalene, known as the woman from whom Jesus had cast out seven demons (Mk 16:9). (CC)

2:2 *it was told.* Even though Rahab has concealed the spies at her house with flax, their cover has been blown. An unnamed informer (or informers) tells the king of Jericho about their presence and purpose. The king ultimately would be in charge of the security of the city-state. The best-laid plans of the spies to avoid detection failed. Not only their safety, however, but also the destiny of Rahab and her family and the greater mission of all Israel are in jeopardy. (CC)

king of Jericho. The major cities of Canaan were in reality small kingdoms, each ruled by a local king (attested also in the Amarna letters of the 14th century B.C.; see chart on "Ancient Texts Relating to the OT"). (CSB)

Canaan at this time consisted of city-states, each with a king. Ch 12 names 31 such kings. The Amarna Letters, written about the time of Joshua, show that these Canaanite kings thought of Egyptian pharaohs as their overlords and protectors. (TLSB)

2:5 Author simply records the facts and does not comment on the appropriateness of Rahab's deception. Account does not use the word "lie" to describe what she does, nor do the two NT passages that speak of her actions (Heb 11:31; Jas 2:25). We do not owe the truth to people who will use it for evil. (TLSB)

Rahab disobeys the king's order delivered through his messengers to bring out the spies she has hidden. Her civil disobedience is in harmony with the words of the apostles, who were given strict orders by authorities not to teach in Jesus' name, but who responded, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). (CC)

Now, what about the much-discussed question of Rahab's lie? Rahab does more than arrange the bare flax to cover the spies. She rearranges the bare facts to cover for them. The author of Joshua, however, does not pause to comment on the moral issue of deliberate deception. The writer neither condemns nor defends her deception as he reports what happens at her house. Teachers of the Scriptures are also wise not to exaggerate the issue of her deception at this point, but experience shows that questions arise. When they do, some comment is necessary. The following points may be appropriate responses. (CC)

First, it is important to consider why the two NT passages commend Rahab. Hebrews focuses on her positive action of sheltering the Israelite spies:

By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobeying, having received the spies with peace. (Heb 11:31) (CC)

James too points to her welcome of the spies, but he also alludes to her deception of the Canaanite king's men:

Likewise, was not Rahab justified by works, having received the messengers and *having sent (them) away by another road?* (James 2:25) (CC)

Both of these inspired authors of the NT consider the big picture, the episode of Rahab as a whole. She confessed Israel's God as the one, almighty God of heaven and earth (Josh 2:9–11). She took a stand against the pagan Canaanites and sided with the Israelites and their God. She was resourceful and risked her own safety for the sake of God's people. By doing so she assisted the Israelite conquest of the land according to God's will. (CC)

Second, the NT passages do not endorse every detail about Rahab. They certainly do not consider her activity as a prostitute to be a model for Christians to imitate. Neither do they necessarily consider her deception as model behavior for other believers to follow. (CC)

Third, Rahab's good works were not without sin. In the same way, everything done by a Christian—who remains both saint and sinner throughout this life—is still tainted with sin, no matter how good of a work it may be. Faithful pastors can affirm that even as they carry out Christ's ministry of preaching the Gospel and ministering to the saints, their actions too are not free from all sin, yet God still works through them to accomplish the salvation of his people. (CC)

Fourth, Rahab's purpose is to protect the lives of the two Israelite spies as well as her own life and that of her relatives. She is acting in the spirit of the Fifth Commandment (Ex 20:13; Deut 5:17) and wants to preserve life. That fact, however, does not imply a general principle that “the end justifies the means”; her desire is in harmony with God's will. She betrays her fellow Canaanites, but they face God's impending judgment, and she knows that they rightly will be defeated by the Israelites under God (Josh 2:9, 11). Her situation stands in contrast to that of, for instance, harboring a murderer or using deception to try to thwart justice. (CC)

Fifth, Rahab must respond “on the spot” without the benefit of a seminar on ethics. She does what she thinks is best under the circumstances. Some questions easily answered theoretically in the setting of a church or seminary after a long discussion are not always as easy to answer quickly under pressure in the sinful world. (CC)

Sixth, ancient cultural values about hospitality made it a matter of personal and religious integrity to protect any guest who had been received into one's house. Rahab is protecting her house guests as her culture demanded. That is not to say that all cultural practices are morally sound. (CC)

Seventh, Rahab becomes a justified believer and confesses faith in the one true God (Josh 2:11). As such, she is declared by God to be completely forgiven and purely holy in his sight right away. Justification is instantaneous. Sanctification, however, is a long and ongoing process that extends throughout life. Rahab, the former prostitute, may grow in sanctification in her thoughts, words, and actions, but the sinful nature will always inhere in her throughout life. One might compare her to Abraham, who was justified through faith (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3, 20–24), but who nevertheless told lies about his wife, Sarah, out of selfish motives in order to save himself (Gen 12:10–20; 20:1–18). (CC)

Eighth, our delight is in the first predicate applied to us in the expression *simul iustus et peccator*, “saint and sinner at the same time.” Our joy as *saints* whom God has freely justified by grace for Christ’s sake is not that we have made the right decision in every conundrum. (CC)

Ninth, not all forms of deception are necessarily immoral. The two spies themselves have been crafty. In Josh 8:2 the LORD orders an ambush, a military stratagem involving deception. In Ex 1:15–21 the midwives deceived Pharaoh to protect the lives of Hebrew baby boys, and God approved of what they did. Clever deception in sports is often called “skill,” and no one accuses the opponent of an ethical lapse or violation of the rules when he “fakes out” or “decoys” the other.

2:6 *roof*. Flat roofs of ancient houses made them practical as work spaces, spare rooms, storage areas, or as drying floors for crops (Jgs 16:27; 1Sm 9:25). (TLSB)

hidden ... under the stalks of flax. Rooftops in the Near East are still used for drying grain or stalks. Rahab’s cunning saved the lives of the two Israelites but put her own life in jeopardy. (CSB)

. Used to make linen clothing, sails, rope, and lamp wicks. Author does not explain how Rahab hid the men with the flax. (TLSB)

2:7 *fords of the Jordan*. Shallow crossings of the Jordan, where the depth of normal flow averages only three feet. (CSB)

Shallow places in the Jordan gave Jericho strategic importance. Definite article “the” may indicate that they were well known and used often. Cf 2Sm 19:16–19. (TLSB)

Gate was shut as soon as the pursuers had gone. The quick closing of the city gate (2:7) testifies to the deep fears of the citizens of Jericho. The words of Rahab in later verses (2:9–11) show that their dread does not result merely from the Israelite army marshaled across the river. Their horror is at the LORD himself, his acts of judgment against his enemies (the Egyptians and Amorites in the past; now the Canaanites), his salvation of his covenant people through miraculous means, and his total authority over all the universe. (CC)

The deepest human fears arise from a sense of guilt, rejection of the only living God, and the sense of his impending and deserved judgment. Jericho has chosen manmade gods and superstitions over “the LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love toward thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Ex 34:6–7). Jericho’s unrepented sin has now reached the “full measure” spoken of by God to Abraham when he promised the patriarch that his descendants would come back again to Canaan in the fourth generation (Gen 15:16). (CC)

2:8–11 Rahab’s confession has a significant concentric structure:

- a. “I know”;
- b. “a great fear ... has fallen on us ... all who live in this country”;
- c. “We have heard”;

- bb. “our hearts sank and everyone’s courage failed”;
- aa. “the LORD your God is God.”

Rahab’s personal confession forms the outer frame (a.-aa.); the inner frame (b.-bb.) offers the military intelligence that the spies report back to Joshua; the center (c., v. 10) sums up the news about the Lord that occasioned both the Canaanite fear and also Rahab’s abandonment of Canaan and its gods for the Lord and Israel. Her confession of faith in the Lord and her accurate information about the Lord’s triumphs over powerful enemies are astounding. That the hearts of the Canaanites were “melting in fear” (v. 9) was vital information to the spies. (CSB)

2:9 *I know*. Rahab reflects her saving faith (Heb 11:31; Jas 2:25). She has somehow learned about the Lord of salvation and His plans for Israel. Because faith is always God’s gift, He ultimately is the author of her faith (1Co 12:3). Ambrose: “After she believed in God, she found salvation” (NPNF 2 10:377). (TLSB)

The roof of Rahab’s house is the place not only of concealing the spies but also of revealing her faith in the LORD. She freely confesses the one true God and his purposes for his people. Rahab’s faith is obviously central in this section. It thrives in the middle of Canaanite fears. It results in her securing from the spies an oath in the LORD’s name. Her soul and the souls of her family will be saved. (CC)

melt away. Hearts disintegrating in fear. Moses had prophesied this “melting” of Canaanites in Ex 15:15, where he uses the same Hbr verb. (TLSB)

Two more statements of Rahab in Josh 2:9 are syntactically coordinate clauses expressing the content of what Rahab knows. The second and third object clauses are synonymous: “I know ... that the dread of you has fallen upon us” and “that all the inhabitants of the land have melted before you.” Her faith includes the knowledge that the LORD is using Israel as his agent of judgment against the sins of the pagan people now in the land. Her use in 2:10 of the technical verb related to *cherem* likewise testifies to this (see the textual note above on this word in 2:10). The two kings and their people who opposed Israel and tried to block God’s plan of salvation had the *cherem* applied. (CC)

2:10 *we have heard*. Word of two dramatic events traveled far: Israel’s crossing of the Red Sea by the hand of the Lord 40 years earlier, and Israel’s recent defeat of two kings east of the Jordan River. (TLSB)

completely destroyed. See NIV text note. (CSB)

2:11 *no spirit*. Or, “no courage.” (TLSB)

the LORD your God, He is God. Rahab’s saving faith shines in her confession. She knows the special name for the true God of free and faithful grace: the Lord, or Yahweh. She acknowledges that He is God of all. (TLSB)

Luther comments on the conversion of Rahab and the power of the Word:

Thus when Rahab the harlot in Joshua 2 saw that the whole city was in danger, she attached herself to the spies and begged that they might save her and her family. For the hearts of some to whom the godly come in the world are always touched. . . . For the Word is not taught without fruit, but it gathers a congregation in the world not only from those who hear it by word of mouth and who are in the church of the patriarchs, but it also brings in outsiders and strangers who have been preordained. (AE 6:227) (CC)

Rahab is often compared to the penitent thief on the cross (Lk 23:40–43). While one thief was perishing, the other confessed his hope in Jesus: “Remember me when you come into your kingdom” (Lk 23:42), and the Lord pledged, “Today you shall be with me in paradise” (Lk 23:43). Rahab and the penitent thief both were publicly known as sinners. Both were under the authority of a “Joshua” and facing imminent death. Both were saved by grace and confessed their faith. (We do not know just how or when either was brought to faith.) Both are incorporated into “Israel,” the redeemed people of God. There are also differences too. Rahab is saved in soul and spared untimely death of the body. The cross took the physical life of the thief, though he is saved for eternity. Yet they are alike in that the souls of both are now in paradise, and on the Last Day, upon Christ’s return, both will be raised in body to inherit the eternal Promised Land. (CC)

Because of her God-given faith, manifested by her deeds, Rahab is a part of the catalog of the great people of faith listed in Hebrews 11. James 2:21–26 connects Israel’s great ancestor Abraham with Rahab the prostitute and shows that they were both declared righteous through faith demonstrated by deeds. In Rahab, faith gave birth to actions. True faith always is active in love (Gal 5:6). (CC)

2:12 *swear*. Oath that Rahab requests from the spies is evidence of her faith in the saving God, because she insists that they swear “by the LORD.” She ties her future safety to the Lord by a solemn oath. (TLSB)

show kindness to my family. The Hebrew for “kindness” is frequently translated “love” or “unfailing love” and often summarizes God’s covenant favor toward his people or the love that people are to show to others. Rahab had acted toward the spies as though she was an Israelite, and now she asks that Israel treat her similarly. (CSB)

Rahab’s concern is for the entire household. (TLSB)

Rahab pleads not only for herself, but also for her parents’ entire household. In light of her faith, it would be strange to think that her concern is only for her family’s *physical* safety. A woman who has just confessed her faith in the LORD so freely may have already spoken to her family about him and his covenant of grace, or she may do so in the near future. Thus her concern for her family can be seen as part of her new life of sanctification. Her love is a fruit of faith and not just a natural human concern for the physical welfare of her relatives. (Unbelievers too demonstrate the latter.) She is a woman of faith and therefore of sanctification. (CC)

sure sign. Their oath to spare the whole family (v. 14). (CSB)

Oath in the Lord's name guarantees safety. Rahab needs no other sign because the Lord is always faithful to His name. (TLSB)

2:14 *Our life for yours.* The spies vow to give their very lives, if necessary, to keep their promise and protect Rahab. (TLSB)

yours. Hbr plural, showing their pledge extends to Rahab's entire family. (TLSB)

when the LORD gives us the land. All were convinced of the inevitable victory of the Israelites over the city of Jericho. (CSB)

kindly and faithfully. The terms of the pledge made by the spies echo Rahab's request (v. 12). (CSB)

2:15 *let them down by a rope.* The faithfulness of Rahab does not end when she secures the oath she wants. With a rope, she lets the spies down through a window of her house. It seems that she lived within a chamber of a casemate city wall that was Jericho's defense. Rahab urges the spies to head for the hill country toward the west (2:16), while the pursuers are searching toward the east, in the direction of the Jordan (2:7). It is this detail of her continuing faithfulness that James notes as a second proof of Rahab's living faith: after "she received the messengers," she "sent (them) away by another road" (James 2:25). The hills in the area have many nooks and caves for hiding. In caves a few miles to the south, the Dead Sea Scrolls remained hidden for about two thousand years, some in three-foot tall clay jars. Two clever agents, though twice as tall as those jars, could hide in similar caves for days without notice, especially with their pursuers chasing the wrong way. (CC)

the house ... was part of the city wall. There is archaeological evidence that the people of Jericho would occasionally build their houses onto the city wall. Although this evidence predates the time of Joshua, it may still serve to illumine this verse. Alternatively, the Late Bronze fortifications at Jericho may have included a casemate wall (a hollow wall with partitions), and Rahab may have occupied one or more rooms inside it. (CSB)

Three possibilities of construction: (1) Rahab's house may have made use of part of the city wall for an inner wall, with its upper story extending higher than the city wall; (2) her house may have been built on timbers across two parallel city walls several yards apart; or (3) most likely, her house consisted of one or more chambers within a "casemate" wall, which has two long parallel walls subdivided by cross walls that create little rooms. Those rooms could be used for living or storage, or they could be filled in for defensive purposes. Archaeology has uncovered many examples of casemate construction in Israel. (TLSB)

2:16 Ancient Hittite document stipulates that an enemy invader must be tracked for three days. Perhaps that rule was widespread and known to Rahab. She anticipates what is about to take place and devises a plan for the spies' safety. Jas 2:25–26 shows that her actions are evidence of living faith. (TLSB)

2:17 *guiltless*. Spies are declaring by this word that they will be exempt from the obligations of their oath if Rahab does not meet certain conditions. Cf v 19: “his blood shall be on his own head.” (TLSB)

2:18 *scarlet cord in the window*. The function of the red marker was similar to that of the blood of the Passover lamb when the Lord struck down the firstborn of Egypt (see Ex 12:13, 22–23). The early church viewed the blood-colored cord as a type (symbol) of Christ’s atonement. (CSB)

Not the rope of v 15. Cord would mark the house to be safeguarded by Israel. From the time of the Early Church, Christians attached symbolism to this blood-colored cord, associating it with the blood of Jesus (see *ANF* 1:8). However, a connection between Christ’s blood and the symbol of the cord is not absolutely certain. (TLSB)

The function of the cord of scarlet thread may be purely practical. It may serve as an outstanding marker of the house that Israel will safeguard. Scarlet may have been the ancient equivalent of today’s “optic orange” (worn by hunters and highway workers for safety). The author mentions no further significance of the cord and its color, nor does the NT. (CC)

Nevertheless, Christian interpreters from the time of the early church down to the present have attached symbolism to the blood-colored cord and have associated it with the cleansing blood of Christ. The former “woman of scarlet”⁸ was “justified” or declared righteous (ἐδικαιώθη, James 2:25) through the scarlet-colored blood of the Lamb, whose sacrifice was prefigured by the sacrifices of the covenant nation of which Rahab becomes a member. Especially relevant may be the Passover lamb, since Josh 5:10–12 will narrate the celebration of the first Passover in Canaan, and St. Paul declares, “Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor 5:7). The fact that Rahab’s family is kept safe in the house marked by the scarlet cord may also remind us of the first Passover, forty years earlier in Egypt, when the blood of a lamb on the doorposts and lintel marked and saved the families of Israel from the death of the firstborn. It may also remind us of our eternal safety in the church, the household of God, through the blood of Jesus Christ. (CC)

The grace and mercy of the LORD toward Rahab will not end with her rescue. Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus shows that Rahab has the honor of being an ancestor of the Savior. Mt 1:5–6 takes the unusual step of including two women in the genealogy, and both of these women are heathen converts who were incorporated into Israel—Rahab the Canaanite and Ruth the Moabitess. (CC)

2:19 *his blood will be on our head*. A vow that accepted responsibility for the death of another, with its related guilt and the retribution meted out by either relatives or the state. (CSB)

Those who go outside the safety of Rahab’s house will be responsible for their own destruction when Israel comes to take Jericho. (TLSB)

2:20 *business*. Hbr *dabar*, “word,” “instruction.” The king of Jericho and others already know that these men are involved in the “business” of spying. The specific “business” that Rahab must not reveal may relate to the instructions about the scarlet cord. (TLSB)

2:21 *they departed*. The city gate had been closed (v 7). However, v 15 suggests that when Rahab let the spies down by a rope through a window, they landed outside the city wall. (TLSB)

2:22 *into the hills*. Directly west of ancient Jericho were the high, rugged hills of the central mountain ridge in Palestine. They are honeycombed with caves, making the concealment and escape of the two spies relatively easy. (CSB)

West of Jericho (cf v 16); part of the mountainous backbone of Canaan. (TLSB)

The action narrative picks up in 2:22 where 2:16 left off. Much of the Hebrew vocabulary of those two verses is the same. This shows that just as Rahab (2:21) faithfully carried out the instructions of the spies (2:18), so too did the spies (2:22) follow her counsel to them in 2:16. The section in between, 2:17–21, was a topical unit with the dialogue centering on the oath and its conditions. Now the action moves forward. (CC)

In order to hide in the hill country, the spies had gone west, in the opposite direction of Israel’s camp at Abel Shittim to the east of the Jordan. After staying there three days, as Rahab advised (2:16), they backtrack east toward the Jordan and cross the flooding river (3:15). Upon their safe return to camp, they report to Joshua for debriefing. (CC)

2:23 *passed over*. Crossed the Jordan. (TLSB)

2:24 In their debriefing with Joshua, the spies all but repeat Rahab’s words in v 9. The spies’ conclusion is based on the facts they have gathered, but esp on the promises of the Lord to give this land to Israel. They thus speak from a perspective of God-given faith (cf Nu 13). (TLSB)

The account of these two agents is far different from the withering report of the ten disbelieving spies from among the dozen sent to reconnoiter Canaan thirty-eight years earlier (Numbers 13). Those past and these present spies saw the same basic conditions in Canaan. The difference is that these two young men give their analysis from a stance of trust in God’s promises. From their perspective of faith in the LORD, their account is like the earlier minority report of Joshua and Caleb and the antithesis of the “bad report” (רָבָה, Num 13:32) given by the majority of ten. (CC)

Faith in God’s promises makes all the difference in the way we report on the condition of our lives. Without Scripture-based trust that the LORD controls all things for the good of his people (Rom 8:28), it is easy to give a negative report like that of the ten spies in Numbers 13. The realities surrounding God’s people today may include some of the same evils faced by ancient Israel. The catalogs of sins practiced by Israel’s neighbors but forbidden to Israel in Leviticus 18 and 20, for example, include idolatry; various kinds of sexual immorality, including homosexuality; and child sacrifice. Christians today face increasing intolerance and persecution. There are terrorist attacks; the possibility of nuclear holocaust; economic uncertainty; loss of employment; problems of health; pollution; moral decay all around; the deterioration of schools; experiments in cloning humans; the specter of abortion, euthanasia, and the culture of death. Within the church there are scandals; disregard for the sacred Scriptures; acceptance of false

doctrines; abandonment of salutary worship practices; the appointment of unfit persons to church offices (e.g., the ordination of women and homosexuals); and widespread unfaithfulness, even apostasy. (CC)

Yet while resting on God's promises we can be both realistic and hopeful—even joyful. We can report that we are “more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Rom 8:37). Even the cataclysms that will accompany the end of the world are signs of hope for the believer. In the middle of events that will cause people to faint from terror, believers can stand up, lift up their heads and proclaim this message: Contrary to all appearances, our redemption through Jesus Christ draws near! (CC)

Ch 2 Joshua sends two spies to Jericho, where they find a people filled with fear, but they also find a person who shares their faith: Rahab the prostitute. Our deepest human fears arise from a sense of guilt and the deserved judgment of God. Although these fears flourished at Jericho, as they do today, the God of free and faithful grace grants forgiveness, safety, and peace to repentant sinners, who are justified by grace through faith in Christ and who perform works that prove their God-given faith (Rm 3:22, 24; Jas 2:25–26). • We praise You, Lord, that You call people of all kinds out of the darkness of their sin and haunting fears into the light and safety of Your grace. Amen. (TLSB)