Rahab and the Fall of Jericho

Bible Stories Anthology — Joshua 2; 6

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> **Romans 15:4** *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

Why These Stories Were Written — Romans 15:4

Paul had just quoted a thousand-year-old psalm and applied it to Christ (Romans 15:3, quoting Psalm 69:9), and then he explained why he could: *whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning*. **Written aforetime** — the scriptures that already stood before this present age of grace opened at Pentecost: the record God gave through Moses, the prophets and the writings, along with the Gospel accounts of Christ's earthly ministry, which belong to that same time before Pentecost. (When Paul wrote these words, the scriptures he had in hand were the Hebrew scriptures; the Gospels had not yet been written down.) **Written for our learning** — "learning" is the Greek word for *teaching*, the very word rendered "doctrine" in 2 Timothy 3:16. These are not quaint tales; they are doctrine in narrative form. Adam, Ruth and David never knew us, but God did, and He had their lives recorded with us in mind — written *for* us, though not all of it written *to* us, which is why we read Israel's history as our instruction and not as our marching orders. **Through patience and comfort of the scriptures** — "patience" is literally *remaining under*, the staying power we gain from watching men and women stay under a load; "comfort" is a *calling alongside*, the strength God brings when He meets them there, which is why Paul calls Him "the God of patience and consolation" in the very next verse. **That we might have hope** — not a wish, but confident expectation: the return of Jesus Christ and everlasting life with Him. That is why these accounts exist, and it is how they should be read.

A Scarlet Cord in the Window

The first city in the promised land was a fortress. Its walls were so strong that forty years earlier they had terrified an entire generation of Israel into turning back. Its king was on alert. Its gates were shut.

Inside those walls lived a woman whose name was not respectable. She was a Canaanite and a prostitute. She had never seen the Red Sea part or eaten the manna. All she had was what she had heard about Israel's God — and she believed it.

When two Israelite spies came to her house, she hid them, lied to the king's men, and let the spies down the city wall by a rope. In return she asked for one thing: *when your God gives you this city, save my family*. They gave her a sign, a cord of scarlet thread to tie in her window.

Days later, Israel marched around the city in silence, once a day for six days, with priests blowing rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day they marched around seven times, the trumpets sounded, the people shouted — and the walls fell down flat. Everything in Jericho was destroyed, except one house on the wall with a scarlet cord in the window.

That woman became one of the ancestors of King David and of Jesus Christ. The New Testament names her three times: in the Messiah's genealogy (Matthew 1:5), in the roll of faith (Hebrews 11:31), and as an example of faith that acts (James 2:25).

The Setting

When. Forty years after the Exodus. Moses had died on Mount Nebo, and God had told Joshua, **"Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan"** (Joshua 1:2). Israel crossed the Jordan in

the spring, at harvest time, and kept the Passover at Gilgal **"on the fourteenth day of the month"** (5:10). By the reckoning most often used, this was about 1406 B.C.

Where. Jericho stood on the west side of the Jordan valley, about five miles west of the river and north of the Dead Sea, at a spring that made it a green oasis in the desert — **"the city of palm trees"** (Deuteronomy 34:3). It is one of the oldest continuously inhabited sites in the world and lies some 800 feet below sea level. It guarded the main routes up into the hill country of Canaan. To take the land, Israel had to take Jericho.

The city. Jericho was not large in area — probably less than ten acres — but it was heavily fortified. Excavations have shown a stone retaining wall at the base of the mound with a mud-brick wall on top, and a second wall higher up; houses were built between and against the walls. Rahab's house was **"upon the town wall"** (2:15).

The administration. The **Mosaic Law** administration. Israel had the Law, the tabernacle, the priesthood, and the ark of the covenant, which went before them into the Jordan and around Jericho.

Forty years of fear. Rahab's words show that the Canaanites had been afraid of Israel since the Red Sea. The spies of the previous generation had reported **"the cities are walled, and very great"** (Numbers 13:28), and Israel had refused to go in. Now their children stood before those walls.

The Story, Told Faithfully

Two Spies and a Harlot's House

> **Joshua 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.*

"Two men to spy secretly." Forty years earlier Moses had sent twelve spies, and ten brought back fear. Joshua, one of the two faithful spies of that earlier mission, sent only two, and secretly.

"An harlot's house, named Rahab." The Hebrew is *zonah*, a prostitute. The Jewish historian Josephus and some later writers softened it to *innkeeper*, and the two occupations did often overlap in the ancient world. But the New Testament uses the plain Greek word *pornē* (Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25). Scripture does not hide who she was. A stranger's coming and going at such a house would attract little notice, which may be why the spies went there.

Her name, *Rahab*, means *broad* or *wide*.

The King's Men at the Door

> **Joshua 2:2** *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.*
>
> **Joshua 2:3** *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.*
>
> **Joshua 2:4** *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:*

> **Joshua 2:5** *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.*
>
> **Joshua 2:6** *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.*
>
> **Joshua 2:7** *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.*

"It was told the king of Jericho." The spies had been spotted. Jericho was on alert.

"The woman took the two men, and hid them." Rahab made a choice at the door that put her own life at risk. If the king found out, she would be executed as a traitor.

"There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were … whither the men went I wot not." Rahab lied. ("Wist" and "wot" mean *knew* and *know*.) As with the Hebrew midwives in Egypt, scripture records the lie but never praises it. What the New Testament praises is her faith and her act of hiding and sending away the messengers (Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25). As this series understands it, God honoured her faith in Him, not her deception; He did not need her lie to protect His servants.

"Stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof." Flax was harvested in the spring and its stalks were dried on flat roofs before being soaked and beaten into fibre for linen. This small detail fits the season exactly: Israel crossed the Jordan at harvest (3:15), in the spring.

"The way to Jordan unto the fords." The pursuers assumed the spies would run straight for the river crossings back to Israel's camp.

Rahab's Confession

> **Joshua 2:8** *And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof;*
>
> **Joshua 2:9** *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.*
>
> **Joshua 2:10** *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.*
>
> **Joshua 2:11** *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.*

This is one of the great statements of faith in the Old Testament, and it came from a Canaanite.

"I know that the LORD hath given you the land." Not *I think* or *I fear*: *I know*. She used God's covenant name, *the LORD* (YHWH).

"We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you." That was forty years earlier. The news had been told in Jericho for a generation. **"And what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites … Sihon and Og."** That had happened only recently, on the other side of the Jordan.

"Our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man." The whole city had heard the same reports Rahab had heard. They all knew what the God of Israel had done. The difference

was what they did with it. The rest of Jericho shut the gates and prepared to fight. Rahab believed. **"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"** (Romans 10:17).

"For the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." Here is the heart of her faith. Canaanite religion had gods of the storm, gods of the sea, gods of death and fertility, each with its own realm. Rahab confessed that the LORD is God over *everything*, above and below. Moses had used almost the same words: **"the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else"** (Deuteronomy 4:39). A Canaanite woman who had never heard Moses spoke the confession of Israel's own creed.

The Oath and the Cord

> **Joshua 2:12** *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:*
>
> **Joshua 2:13** *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.*
>
> **Joshua 2:14** *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.*

"Since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house." The word for kindness is *chesed*, covenant faithfulness, loyal love — the word used so often of God's own love. Rahab asked the spies to make a covenant with her.

"My father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have." She did not ask only for herself. Her first thought was her family.

"Our life for yours." The spies pledged their own lives to her safety.

> **Joshua 2:15** *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.*
>
> **Joshua 2:16** *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.*
>
> **Joshua 2:17** *And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear.*
>
> **Joshua 2:18** *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.*
>
> **Joshua 2:19** *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.*
>
> **Joshua 2:20** *And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear.*
>
> **Joshua 2:21** *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.*

"Her house was upon the town wall." She let them down by a rope from her own window, out the outside of the city.

“Hide yourselves there three days.” The hills west of Jericho are full of caves. She sent them the opposite way from the pursuers.

“Thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window.” Here is a remarkable Hebrew word. “Line” is *tiqvah*. Everywhere else in the Old Testament, *tiqvah* means **hope** — **“there is hope in thine end”** (Jeremiah 31:17); **“the hope of the righteous shall be gladness”** (Proverbs 10:28). Only here, in this chapter, does it mean a cord. The root means to wait for, to stretch toward, like a line pulled taut. Rahab’s cord was literally her *hope*, hanging in the window. The figure of a word carrying two meanings at once is **amphibology**.

“Scarlet.” A bright red dye made from the crushed bodies of an insect. Scarlet was the colour of costly cloth, and it was used in the tabernacle and in Israel’s cleansing rituals (Leviticus 14:4; Numbers 19:6). Many readers have seen in the scarlet cord a picture of the blood of the Passover lamb on the doorposts in Egypt: a red sign on a house, so that everyone inside would be spared when judgment came (Exodus 12:13). The parallel is striking, though scripture itself does not draw it.

“Whosoever shall be with thee in the house.” The promise covered everyone inside the house with the cord. Anyone who went out into the street was on his own.

“She bound the scarlet line in the window.” She did it immediately — not when the army appeared, but the moment the spies left. She believed the promise before she saw anything.

> **Joshua 2:24** *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.*

“Even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.” Forty years earlier, ten spies had come back saying *we were in our own sight as grasshoppers* (Numbers 13:33). These two came back with Rahab’s words in their mouths: the Canaanites were the ones afraid.

Across the Jordan

> **Joshua 3:15** *And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,)*
>
> **Joshua 3:16** *That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho.*
>
> **Joshua 3:17** *And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.*

“Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest.” In spring the river was in flood from the snows of Mount Hermon.

“The waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam.” God stopped the river about twenty miles upstream, and Israel crossed **“on dry ground,”** as their parents had crossed the Red Sea. Jericho saw it happen. (Earthquakes have occasionally collapsed the high clay banks near Adam, the modern Tell ed-Damiyeh, and dammed the Jordan for hours; one did

so in 1927. If God used such means, the timing — the moment the priests' feet touched the water — was still His miracle.)

The Captain of the LORD's Host

> **Joshua 5:10** *And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho.*
>
> **Joshua 5:11** *And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day.*
>
> **Joshua 5:12** *And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.*

At Gilgal Israel kept the Passover, the first in the promised land. The next day they ate the grain of Canaan, and **"the manna ceased."** Forty years of daily bread from heaven ended the day it was no longer needed.

> **Joshua 5:13** *And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?*
>
> **Joshua 5:14** *And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?*
>
> **Joshua 5:15** *And the captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.*

"There stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand." Joshua went up to him and asked the natural question of a general: *Are you on our side or theirs?*

"Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come." *Neither.* He was not there to take Israel's side. He was the commander of the LORD's armies, and the question was whether Israel was on the LORD's side.

"Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy." Almost the same words spoken to Moses at the burning bush. As in that story and at Peniel, this was God's messenger speaking with God's authority, an angel commanding God's host (compare the angel God sent before Israel, **"my name is in him,"** Exodus 23:21). As this series understands it, the battle of Jericho was not Israel's battle. It was the LORD's.

Seven Days, Seven Priests, Seven Trumpets

> **Joshua 6:1** *Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.*
>
> **Joshua 6:2** *And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.*
>
> **Joshua 6:3** *And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.*

> **Joshua 6:4** *And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.*
>
> **Joshua 6:5** *And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.*

"Jericho was straitly shut up." "Straitly" means *tightly*: the city was sealed.

"See, I have given into thine hand Jericho." Past tense. Before a single step was taken, God spoke of the victory as already done. Speaking of a future certainty as if already past is the figure **heterosis** of tense (the prophetic past).

The strangest battle plan in history.

- **March around the city once a day for six days.**
- **Seven priests with seven trumpets of rams' horns** before the ark. These were *shofars*, rams' horns, the same horn blown at Sinai (Exodus 19:16) and for the year of jubilee. The Hebrew here is *shopharoth hayyovlim*, "trumpets of the jubilee" or "of the ram."
- **On the seventh day, march around seven times.**
- **Then a long blast, and a great shout.**
- **And the wall will fall down flat.**

Seven appears again and again: seven priests, seven trumpets, seven days, seven circuits. In scripture seven is the number of spiritual completeness — God's work finished, as at creation.

> **Joshua 6:10** *And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout.*

"Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice." Six days of silent marching. Imagine the people of Jericho watching from the walls: an army that did nothing but walk around and go home, day after day, with only the sound of horns. And imagine Israel, forbidden to speak. There would be no complaining this time. Forty years earlier, their parents' mouths had kept them out of the land.

> **Joshua 6:15** *And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.*
>
> **Joshua 6:16** *And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city.*

"Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city."

The Walls Fall

> **Joshua 6:20** *So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.*

"The wall fell down flat." Literally *fell in its place*, fell down under itself.

"The people went up into the city, every man straight before him." No siege ramps, no battering rams. Each man walked straight in from where he stood.

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days" (Hebrews 11:30). The faith was in obeying a command that made no military sense.

What archaeology has found. Jericho has been excavated many times, and scholars disagree sharply about the dating. In the 1930s John Garstang believed he had found walls that fell in Joshua's day. In the 1950s Kathleen Kenyon dated the destruction of the fortified city to about 1550 B.C. and concluded there was no walled city for Joshua to conquer; radiocarbon dates published in 1995 supported a date around then. In 1990 Bryant Wood re-examined the pottery and other evidence and argued the destruction came about 1400 B.C., matching the biblical date; that dating is still disputed. What is not disputed is what the excavators found in the destruction layer, and it matches Joshua 6 remarkably:

- **The mud-brick walls had collapsed** and tumbled down to the base of the stone retaining wall, forming a ramp up which attackers could climb "straight before them."
- **The city was burned** (6:24).
- **Large jars full of grain** were left in the houses. That means the siege was short, the city fell in the spring after harvest, and the attackers did not plunder the food — exactly as the command to take nothing for themselves required (6:18).
- **A stretch of houses built against the lower city wall on the north side was left standing** where the wall there did not fall. No one can say whose houses they were. But the finding fits the story of a house on the wall that survived.

The date remains disputed. The story's details do not depend on archaeology, but where the evidence is clear it fits the account well.

The Ban

> **Joshua 6:17** *And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.*
>
> **Joshua 6:18** *And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.*
>
> **Joshua 6:19** *But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.*

"The city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD." "Accursed" is *cherem*, *devoted*, set apart wholly to God, either for destruction or for His treasury. Nothing was to be kept for personal gain. (One man, Achan, disobeyed, and it cost Israel dearly at Ai in the next chapter.)

> **Joshua 6:21** *And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.*

This verse is hard, and the library's study *God: Deliverer, Not Destroyer* does not soften it: the command included children. That study gathers what scripture itself says about why.

- **Four centuries of patience.** God told Abraham his descendants would wait, **"for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full"** (Genesis 15:16). God waited over four hundred years.
- **The stated reason. "For even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods"** (Deuteronomy 12:31). The Canaanites sacrificed their own children. The command was **"That they teach you not to do after all their abominations"** (Deuteronomy 20:18). When Israel later failed to carry it out, Israel's own children ended up on Canaanite altars (Psalm 106:37-38).
- **An open door.** Everyone in Jericho had heard what Rahab heard. Rahab believed and was spared. Later the whole city of Gibeon made peace and was spared and defended: **"There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon"** (Joshua 11:19) — which implies that making peace was possible for others.
- **The language of ancient war.** Ancient accounts of conquest regularly used sweeping, total language. As that study notes, the conquest was reported in the conventional language of ancient warfare, and the later books show many Canaanites still living in the land.

Why children were included, the text does not fully explain, and this series does not pretend otherwise. What scripture does show is a God who waited four centuries, named the reason, and spared everyone who turned to Him.

Rahab Saved

> **Joshua 6:22** *But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her.*
>
> **Joshua 6:23** *And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel.*
>
> **Joshua 6:24** *And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD.*
>
> **Joshua 6:25** *And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.*

"Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman … as ye sware unto her." Joshua kept the oath the spies had made. In the destruction of the city, the first order of business was rescuing Rahab.

"Her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred." Everyone who had come under the scarlet cord was saved.

"Left them without the camp of Israel." At first they stayed outside the camp. As Gentiles, they had to be made clean before joining Israel. But not for long:

"She dwelleth in Israel even unto this day." The Canaanite woman became an Israelite.

"Because she hid the messengers." As the library's study corrected in its later edition, Joshua gives the reason she was spared as her act: she hid the messengers. Hebrews names the faith behind the act: **"By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace"** (Hebrews 11:31). James says the same from the other side: **"was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?"** (James 2:25). Her faith showed itself in what she did.

Joshua's Curse

> **Joshua 6:26** *And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.*

Jericho was to stay a ruin as a memorial of God's victory. Whoever rebuilt it would lose his sons. About five hundred years later, in the days of the wicked king Ahab, it happened exactly:

> **1 Kings 16:34** *In his days did Hiel the Beth-elite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.*

Where the Story Leads

To the Messiah

Rahab in the Messiah's line.

> **Matthew 1:5** *And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;*
> **Matthew 1:6** *And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias;*

Matthew's genealogy of Jesus Christ names only a few women, and every one is surprising: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and "her that had been the wife of Urias" (Bathsheba). A Canaanite prostitute from a city under the ban married Salmon of the tribe of Judah, and became the mother of Boaz, who married Ruth the Moabitess, and became the great-great-grandmother of King David. The Messiah's own family tree shows that God's grace reaches the outsider and the sinner. **"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"** (Luke 19:10). Jesus told the religious leaders, **"the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you"** (Matthew 21:31).

Jericho again. Fifteen centuries later, Jesus came to rebuilt Jericho. There a despised tax collector named Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see Him, and Jesus went to his house and said, **"This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham"** (Luke 19:9). Salvation came to another house in Jericho.

The scarlet cord. As this series understands it, the scarlet line in the window pictures the same truth as the blood on the doorposts at the Passover and the bronze serpent on the pole: God provides a sign of deliverance, and those who shelter under it are spared. It points to the blood of Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, was raised from the dead, and ascended to God's right hand, where **"he ever liveth to make intercession"** for those who come to God by Him (Hebrews 7:25). **"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow"** (Isaiah 1:18).

Joshua. *Joshua* (*Yehoshua*) means *the LORD is salvation*; in Greek it is *Iēsous*, the name *Jesus*. Joshua led God's people into the promised inheritance. As this series understands it, the one who gives His people their true inheritance bears the same name.

To the Grace Administration

Strangers brought near. Rahab was a Gentile, an outsider, **"without God in the world."** So were most believers today. **"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ … Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God"** (Ephesians 2:12-13, 19). Rahab went from outside the camp to dwelling in Israel; believers go from strangers to members of God's household.

Faith comes by hearing. Rahab never saw a miracle before she believed. She heard, and she believed. **"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation"** (Ephesians 1:13).

Saved by grace, shown by works. Rahab was not saved because she was good. **"To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness"** (Romans 4:5). But her faith did not sit still; it hid the spies and tied the cord. **"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also"** (James 2:26).

No one is too far gone. God did not require Rahab to clean up her life before He would save her. He saved her, and then her life changed. **"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us"** (Titus 3:5).

Family. Rahab's first concern was for her family, and everyone she brought under the cord was saved. Believers today can pray and work for their families' salvation with the same concern.

Walls that fall. The walls of Jericho fell not by Israel's strength but by God's power when His people obeyed. **"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds"** (2 Corinthians 10:4).

A trumpet and a shout. As this series understands it, Jericho's last day — a trumpet, a shout, and God's people going up — is a picture of the believer's hope: **"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them"** (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

To the Topic of Faith and Outsiders

- **Faith often appears where it is least expected.**
- **Everyone heard; only one believed.** Knowledge is not faith.
- **True faith acts** — and takes risks.
- **God's grace reaches the worst,** and changes them.
- **God keeps His promises to the letter,** even in the middle of judgment.
- **Obedience that makes no sense to men** can bring down walls.

The Main Takeaway

Rahab, a Canaanite prostitute inside the walls of Jericho, heard what the LORD had done and believed that He is God in heaven and on earth; she hid Israel's spies, tied a scarlet cord — her "hope" — in her window, and when the walls fell at the shout and the trumpets after seven days of silent marching,

she and her whole family were saved; she lived in Israel and became an ancestor of David and of Jesus Christ, showing that God's grace reaches anyone who believes, and that true faith acts.

- **Faith comes by hearing** God's word and believing it.
- **Everyone in Jericho heard;** Rahab alone believed.
- **Faith acts:** she hid the spies and bound the cord.
- **God's promise covered everyone under the sign.**
- **The battle is the LORD's;** obedience brings the walls down.
- **God's grace brings outsiders into His family** — and into the Messiah's line.

For Our Learning — The People

- **Rahab.** A Canaanite harlot of Jericho who believed, hid the spies, was saved with her family, married Salmon, and became an ancestor of David and of Jesus Christ.
- **The two spies.** Sent secretly by Joshua; swore to spare Rahab and kept their word.
- **Joshua the son of Nun.** Moses' successor, one of the two faithful spies of forty years before.
- **The king of Jericho.** Sent men to Rahab's house; perished with the city.
- **The captain of the LORD's host.** God's messenger with drawn sword, commanding the LORD's armies.
- **The seven priests.** Blew the rams' horns before the ark.
- **Salmon.** Of Judah; Rahab's husband and father of Boaz (Matthew 1:5).
- **Hiel the Bethelite.** Rebuilt Jericho in Ahab's day at the cost of his sons.

For Our Learning — Customs and Orientalisms

- **Walled cities** with houses built on or against the walls.
- **Shutting the city gate at dark.**
- **Flat roofs** used for drying flax and other crops.
- **Spring harvest** of flax and barley; the Jordan in flood.
- **Oaths sworn by the LORD** as binding covenants, even with outsiders.
- **Scarlet dye,** costly and bright, from an insect.
- **Rams' horns (shofars)** blown for signals, festivals, and jubilee.
- **Circling a city** in procession.
- **The ban (*cherem*):** a city devoted wholly to God.
- **Staying outside the camp** until made clean.
- **Curses on rebuilding a destroyed city.**

For Our Learning — Figures of Speech

A figure of speech is a deliberate departure from the plain, ordinary way of saying something, used by God to add emphasis and feeling. These are the ones in this story:

- **Metaphor** — “our hearts did melt” (2:11): courage gone.
- **Merismus** — “in heaven above, and in earth beneath” (2:11): everywhere, all things.
- **Amphibology** — *tiqvah*, a word meaning both “cord” and “hope” (2:18).
- **Idiom** — “his blood shall be upon his head” (2:19): he is responsible for his own death.
- **Heterosis of tense (prophetic past)** — “I have given into thine hand Jericho” (6:2), before the battle.
- **Hyperbole** — “all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you” (2:9, 24).
- **Polysyndeton** — “her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had” (6:23), stressing that everyone was saved.

What the Bible Actually Says

- **Rahab was a harlot;** the New Testament says so plainly.
- **Scripture records Rahab’s lie but never praises it;** it praises her faith and her act.
- **All Jericho had heard of the LORD’s works;** only Rahab believed.
- **“Line” in 2:18 is *tiqvah*,** the word for “hope.”
- **Rahab bound the cord at once.**
- **The captain of the LORD’s host was not “for us” or “for our adversaries.”**
- **The walls fell flat,** and every man went straight in.
- **Rahab was spared “because she hid the messengers,”** by faith (Hebrews 11:31).
- **Rahab’s whole family was saved.**
- **Joshua’s curse on Jericho’s rebuilder came true** (1 Kings 16:34).
- **Rahab is in the genealogy of Jesus Christ** (Matthew 1:5).

God’s Will and Intent

- **God wants all people to hear and believe,** Canaanites included.
- **God saves by grace through faith,** and faith shows itself in action.
- **God keeps covenant** with those who turn to Him.
- **God fights for His people** when they obey.
- **God judges wickedness** after long patience.
- **God brings outsiders into His family.**
- **God was building the line of the Messiah** — Jesus Christ, crucified, raised, and ascended — through the most unlikely people.