Rahab Welcomes Spies

Josh 2:8-13; 6:16-17
SS Lesson for 09/27/2026

Devotional Scripture: 2 Sam 17:17-20; Heb 11:31

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary
Key Verses: Joshua 6:17

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

WELCOMED THROUGH GOD'S REPUTATION (JOSH 2:8-13)
- *Reputation based on knowledge (8-9)*
  - Knowledge from the enrichment of God (1 Cor 1:5)
  - Knowledge from the light of God in our hearts (2 Cor 4:6)
  - Knowledge of insight to discern what is best and pure (Phil 1:9-11)
  - Knowledge of the mystery of God (Col 2:2-3)
  - Knowledge that is renewed by God (Col 3:9-10)
- *Reputation based on what has been heard (10)*
  - Hearing is being receptive to what God's says (1 Sam 3:10)
  - Hearing has as its foundation the intent to practice what one has learned (Heb 5:14)
  - To truly hear God one has to know God (1 John 4:6)
  - Hearing means spiritually discerning what God says (1 Cor 2:14)
  - Not only should one hear, but also do God's word (James 1:22)
  - The goal of hearing is to gain more knowledge and depth of insight (Phil 1:9-10)
- *Reputation based on faith (11)*
  - The result of faith should be action (2 Cor. 4:13)
  - It is not the size of faith, it is the power of the object of faith (Luke 17:5-6)
  - Even in faith, we need encouragement (Romans 1:12)
  - Anything not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23)
  - Some questions should give over to faith (Job 38:1-4)
- *Reputation based on promise of deliverance (12-13)*
  - Deliverance that is continual and proven (2 Cor 1:10)
  - Deliverance from all troubles (Ps 34:19)
  - Deliverance from trials (2 Peter 2:9)
  - Deliverance from the hands of enemies (1 Sam 12:10-11)
  - Deliverance from evil attacks (2 Tim 4:18)

WELCOMED RESULTING IN GOD'S VICTORY JOSH 6:16-17
- *Victory through proclamation (16)*
  - Proclaimed because deliverance will come (1 Tim 4:15-16)
  - Proclaimed by being obedient (Eccl 11:6)
  - Proclaimed because it is our purpose (Luke 4:43)
  - Proclaimed because God must find us doing His will (Luke 12:42-43)
- *Victory through destruction (17)*
  - Destruction by the Almighty God (Isa 13:6)
  - Destruction because of man's sinful nature (Gal 6:8)
  - Destruction by a just God (2 Thess 1:6-9)
  - Destruction of the ungodly (2 Peter 3:7)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM J. HAMPTON KEATHLEY, III
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites were on the verge of crossing the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Moses had died, and the new leader, Joshua, initiated the conquest by sending two spies on a reconnaissance mission to evaluate the land of Canaan in general and the city of Jericho in particular (Joshua 2:1). During Moses' leadership, the Lord commanded that twelve spies be sent into the land (Numbers 13), one of whom was Joshua himself (13:8; 14:6, 30, 38; etc.). However, this time, the decision to send spies was likely Joshua's. He undoubtedly wanted to know more about Jericho's fortifications and its inhabitants. Cities in the ancient world were situated in locations that favored three things: defensibility, access to water, and access to trade routes. Jericho was no exception. The city of Jericho mentioned in the Old Testament was located northwest of the Dead Sea and about five miles west of the Jordan River. Freshwater springs are in the region, causing the city to experience fertility in the wilderness, leading to the city's nickname, "the City of Palms" (Deuteronomy 34:3; 2 Chronicles 28:15). Archeology reveals that there is more than one location for Jericho as the city was rebuilt from time to time (compare Joshua 2:1; 6:26; 8:2; Judges 3:13; 2 Kings 2:4). The complex rebuilt by Herod is mentioned in the New Testament (examples: Mark 10:46; Luke 19:1). The modern city of Jericho includes more than one of the ancient sites. The Israelite spies entered Jericho and went to the house of a woman named Rahab. The text refers to her as a "prostitute" (Joshua 2:1). The underlying Hebrew word has a broad range of meanings, including "prostitute" or "innkeeper." Centuries later, the writers of the New Testament, who wrote in ancient Greek, identified her as a prostitute (Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25). Regardless of her profession, she was an independent woman with financial means whose house may have been similar to a modern-day hostel or motel. As a bit of speculation, the spies may have gone to Rahab's place because (1) strangers going to her home would not be unusual, (2) the location of her home on the wall could facilitate an emergency escape, and/or (3) the Lord led them there because she was an astute individual who was developing a faith in the God of Israel. But the spies were noticed. During the ensuing investigation, Rahab lied to the king and misdirected the pursuers (Joshua 2:2–7). Our lesson text begins with Rahab's revealing of her motives for hiding the Israelite spies.

Key Verses: Joshua 6:17

17 Now the city shall be doomed by the Lord to destruction, it and all who are in it. Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Welcomed through God's Reputation (Josh 2:8-13)

8 Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof,
9 and said to the men: "I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you.
10 "For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.
11 "And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.
12 "Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token,
13 "and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death."

Reputation based on knowledge (8-9)

Knowledge from the enrichment of God (1 Cor 1:5)

5 For in him you have been enriched in every way — in all your speaking and in all your knowledge—

Knowledge from the light of God in our hearts (2 Cor 4:6)

6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Knowledge of insight to discern what is best and pure (Phil 1:9-11)

9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ — to the glory and praise of God.

Knowledge of the mystery of God (Col 2:2-3)

2 My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Knowledge that is renewed by God (Col 3:9-10)

9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Reputation based on what has been heard (10)

Hearing is being receptive to what God's says (1 Sam 3:10)

10 The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

Hearing has as its foundation the intent to practice what one has learned (Heb 5:14)

14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

To truly hear God one has to know God (1 John 4:6)

6 We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

Hearing means spiritually discerning what God says (1 Cor 2:14)

14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Not only should one hear, but also do God's word (James 1:22)

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

The goal of hearing is to gain more knowledge and depth of insight (Phil 1:9-10)

9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ,

Reputation based on faith (11)

The result of faith should be action (2 Cor. 4:13)

13 It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak,

It is not the size of faith, it is the power of the object of faith (Luke 17:5-6)

5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" 6 He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.

Even in faith, we need encouragement (Romans 1:12)

12 that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

Anything not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23)

> 23 But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

Some questions should give over to faith (Job 38:1-4)

> 38 Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm. He said: 2 "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? 3 Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. 4 "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand.

Reputation based on promise of deliverance (12-13)

Deliverance that is continual and proven (2 Cor 1:10)

> 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

Deliverance from all troubles (Ps 34:19)

> 19 A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all;

Deliverance from trials (2 Peter 2:9)

> 9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

Deliverance from the hands of enemies (1 Sam 12:10-11)

> 10 They cried out to the Lord and said, 'We have sinned; we have forsaken the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths. But now deliver us from the hands of our enemies, and we will serve you.' 11 Then the Lord sent Jerub-Baal, Barak, Jephthah and Samuel, and he delivered you from the hands of your enemies on every side, so that you lived securely.

Deliverance from evil attacks (2 Tim 4:18)

> 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Welcomed Resulting in God's Victory Josh 6:16-17

16 And the seventh time it happened, when the priests blew the trumpets, that Joshua said to the people: "Shout, for the Lord has given you the city!
17 Now the city shall be doomed by the Lord to destruction, it and all who are in it. Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

Victory through proclamation (16)

Proclaimed because deliverance will come (1 Tim 4:15-16)

> 15 Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. 16 Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Proclaimed by being obedient (Eccl 11:6)

> 6 Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well.

Proclaimed because it is our purpose (Luke 4:43)

> 43 But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."

Proclaimed because God must find us doing His will (Luke 12:42-43)

> 42 The Lord answered, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? 43 It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns.

Victory through destruction (17)

Destruction by the Almighty God (Isa 13:6)

> 6 Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty.

Destruction because of man's sinful nature (Gal 6:8)

> 8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Destruction by a just God (2 Thess 1:6-9)

> 6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power

Destruction of the ungodly (2 Peter 3:7)

> 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from J. Hampton Keathley, III

Rahab's Declaration of Faith (2:8-13)

8 Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, 9 and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. 10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. 11 And when we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. 12 Now therefore, please swear to me by the LORD, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's household, and give me a pledge of truth, 13 and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death."

First, we see Rahab's confidence and conviction in the fact of the Lord's power. Somehow she knew what had occurred at the Red Sea and afterwards and that it was the product of the sovereign power of Israel's God. It was not merely the product of Israel's genius or some quirk of nature that parted the Red Sea.

Application: This reminds us how our lives should not only be different, but there should also be that in our lives which points to God as the reason our lives are different through the things we do and say—like going to church, our concern for people and their needs, and our specific testimony giving a reason for the hope that is within us (1 Pet. 3:15-16).

Second, we see Rahab's confidence and conviction in Israel's God (Yahweh) as the one and only true God who rules over heaven and the affairs of men on earth. Her statement in verse 11, "… for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath," is more than a statement that Israel's God was a god. The idea is that He and He alone is the true God and that He is involved with the affairs of the earth and man.

Application: This reminds us of God's involvement in our lives. He is the sovereign God who holds all things together by the word of His power, who is at work in our lives. Do we live in the light of this?

Third, we see Rahab's confidence and conviction of coming judgment on her people and her desire to be delivered through aligning herself with the God of Israel (vs. 13). Note the "Now therefore …" This indicates that this request was the product of her knowledge, conviction, and faith concerning the Lord.

Fourth, we see in verses 12-13 that she was not only concerned about herself. Her concern included her family or household. This is God's number one plan for evangelism, our network of family, friends, co-workers.

Application: How concerned and involved are we in our network—praying for salvation, reaching out to know and love them, and in eventually sharing the love of Christ.

The inhabitants of the land were terror stricken. Three times in this chapter, the word "melted" is used to describe the emotional condition or the morale of the people (vss. 9, 11, 24). Mentally and emotionally, they were a defeated people. God had already given the people of Jericho into their hands. This had been the case for how long? Since they had heard about the events of the Red sea (2:9-11).

The question is, did Israel know it? With the exception of Moses, Joshua, and Caleb, the people of Israel refused to believe the promise of God, instead they allowed the negative report of the ten spies to melt their hearts because they were looking at the problems rather than at their God.

Note the irony here: the inhabitants were looking at Israel's God and were shaking in their sandals. The Israelites, who had seen the mighty works of God over and over again, were looking at their problems rather than God and were terrorized into unbelief.

Note the following passages:

25 When they returned from spying out the land, at the end of forty days, 26 they proceeded to come to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the sons of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; and they brought back word to them and to all the congregation and showed them the fruit of the land. 27 Thus they told him, and said, "We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. 28 Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there. 29 Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan" (Numbers 13:25-29).

26 "Yet you were not willing to go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; 27 and you grumbled in your tents and said, 'Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us. 28 Where can we go up? Our brethren have made our hearts melt, saying, "The people are bigger and taller than we; the cities are large and fortified to heaven. And besides, we saw the sons of the Anakim there."' 29 Then I said to you, 'Do not be shocked, nor fear them. 30 The LORD your God who goes before you will Himself fight on your behalf, just as He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, 31 and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as a man carries his son, in all the way which you have walked, until you came to this place.' 32 But for all this, you did not trust the LORD your God, …" (Deuteronomy 1:26-32).

Application: How like us this is! Regardless, whether it's the bite of a mosquito or the charge of a lion, we must learn to keep our eyes on the Lord and off the problem (see Heb. 12:1-2).

The Response of the Spies (2:14)

14 So the men said to her, "Our life for yours if you do not tell this business of ours; and it shall come about when the LORD gives us the land that we will deal kindly and faithfully with you."

Keeping quiet about their presence and refusing to inform on them would be an evidence of her faith in the Lord and good will to the people of God (cf. Matt. 25:24f).

(Adapted from URL:https://bible.org/seriespage/2-preparing-enter-land-joshua-21-24)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Rahab's faith and bravery serve as an example for the people of God yet today. The writer of Hebrews cites her faith for receiving and protecting the spies (Hebrews 11:31). Additionally, James extols Rahab's actions, calling her "righteous" (James 2:25). The Gospel of Matthew mentions her as an ancestor of King David and, ultimately, of Jesus the Messiah (Matthew 1:5-6, 16). When we examine the account of Rahab, the Israelite spies, and the destruction of Jericho, we may find our expectations turned upside down. We don't expect a woman in Jericho to offer hospitality to Israelite spies. Nor do we anticipate that a strategy involving marching, shouting, and blowing horns could destroy a city. But God often works in unexpected ways. The next time he unexpectedly taps you on the shoulder, how will you react, by looking to your weaknesses or to his strength?