

“THE HARLOT IN JESUS’ CLOSET”

I. Joshua 2:1-24

A. We have spent a few weeks now in the book of Joshua, looking closely at Israel's entry into the promised Land...

- 1) Israel miraculously crossed the Jordan River on dry ground...
- 2) They collected stones during the crossing and built a memorial at Gilgal.
- 3) They consecrated themselves at Gilgal... (Circumcision and Passover)...
- 4) Joshua encountered the Commander of the Army of the Lord...
- 5) The Israelites conquered Jericho, saw its walls crumble to the ground... No plunder and no prisoners were taken, only a prostitute named Rahab and her household were spared because she helped the two spies from Israel and put her faith in Yahweh... *Rahab's faith was reckoned to her as righteousness...*

B. To discover more about Rahab the Harlot, we have to leap into the future--to the NT; then we'll head back to Chapter 2 of Joshua...

- 1) Hebrews 11:30-31; James 2:23-25; Matthew 1:5-6a...
- 2) How about you--got any skeletons in your ancestral closet?

C. Joshua 2 tells the story of Rahab the Harlot and the two spies of Israel... This will be the prequel to the past several weeks of sermons...

- 1) Joshua hand picks 2 spies to scope out Jericho...
- 2) They are befriended by Rahab, a prostitute whose home is in the wall of the city. She conceals them from capture and acknowledges Yahweh as God Almighty...
- 3) The spies and Rahab make an agreement that she and her family would be spared from the pending battle if they remain in the security of her home--a home marked by a scarlet cord. Rahab's actions are evidence of genuine faith in God...
- 4) The color of the cord is not insignificant... Read Isaiah 1:18... Lyrics- *"Nothing But The Blood of Jesus."*

D. When the rains started falling in the days of Noah, the Ark was the only safe place to be! When the angel of death swept thru Egypt on the night of Passover, the only safe place to be was in the homes with the blood of the lamb on the doorposts! On that great and terrible Day we all will eventually face, the only safe place will be in a covenant relationship with Christ Jesus our Lord! Are you hidden and covered in Christ?!

E. Joshua 6:20-25 is a recap of the battle of Jericho...

- 1) Rahab and her family are indeed spared from the slaughter...
- 2) She would go on to marry Salmon of the Tribe of Judah...
- 3) Rahab would become the ancestral granny to King David but also to Jesus the Messiah... No one is beyond the redemptive hand of our merciful Lord!

II. Communion

A. Can you imagine the day that Rahab finally got to meet Jesus?! Jesus to Rahab: *"Remember that scarlet cord that hung from your window? That foreshadowed symbolically My blood that would be spilled for you, to cover your sins Rahab, to make you My own!"* How awesome would that moment have been?!

B. And so it is with the Bread and the Cup... Jesus would say to us even now: *"This Bread and this Cup symbolize My body, broken for you; My blood spilled for you, to cover your sins, to make you My own..."*

* Pray & serve Communion...

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Joshua 2:1-24 (NIV)

1 Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. "Go, look over the land," he said, "especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there. 2 The king of Jericho was told, "Look, some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land." 3 So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land." 4 But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from." 5 At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, they left. I don't know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them." 6 (But she had taken them up to the roof

and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.) **7** So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut. **8** Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof **9** and said to them, "I know that the LORD has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. **10** 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 Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. **11** When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. **12** "Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign **13** that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them—and that you will save us from death." **14** "Our lives for your lives!" the men assured her. "If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the LORD gives us the land." **15** So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. **16** She said to them, "Go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there three days until they return, and then go on your way." **17** Now the men had said to her, "This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us **18** unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house. **19** If any of them go outside your house into the street, their blood will be on their own heads; we will not be responsible. As for those who are in the house with you, their blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on them. **20** But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear." **21** "Agreed," she replied. "Let it be as you say." So she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window. **22** When they left, they went into the hills and stayed there three days, until the pursuers had searched all along the road and returned without finding them. **23** Then the two men started back. They went down out of the hills, forded the river and came to Joshua son of Nun and told him everything that had happened to them. **24** They said to Joshua, "The LORD has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us."

Joshua 6:20-25 (NIV)

20 When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city. **21** They devoted the city to the LORD and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys. **22** Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her." **23** So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother, her brothers and sisters and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel. **24** Then they burned the whole city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD's house. **25** But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho—and she lives among the Israelites to this day.

Hebrews 11:30-31 (NASB)

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. **31** By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

James 2:23-25 (NIV)

23 And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. **24** You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. **25** In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?

Matthew 1:5-6a (NIV)

5 Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, **6a** and Jesse the father of King David.

Isaiah 1:18 (NIV)

18 Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be like wool.

Some Excellent Video Clips

"Nothing But The Blood of Jesus" (Scenes from The Passion)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayJusJ_ivco

Rahab and The Scarlet Cord

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSW6ASYN7G0>

"Scarlet Cord" by Southern Raised (Bluegrass)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wvvs2tk0RPU>

The Book of Joshua and the Scarlet Cord - R.C. Sproul

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8w4eYfZe8I>

Does Healing Replace Traditional Medicine? - Mark Driscoll

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cctx8g_5bLg

Bonus Stuff

Nothing But The Blood of Jesus

By Robert Lowry, 1876

What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus. (Refrain)

Refrain

Oh! precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

For my pardon, this I see,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
For my cleansing this my plea,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus. (Refrain)

Nothing can for sin atone,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
Naught of good that I have done,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus. (Refrain)

This is all my hope and peace,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
This is all my righteousness,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus. (Refrain)

Now by this I'll overcome—
Nothing but the blood of Jesus,
Now by this I'll reach my home—
Nothing but the blood of Jesus. (Refrain)

Glory! Glory! This I sing—
Nothing but the blood of Jesus,
All my praise for this I bring—
Nothing but the blood of Jesus. (Refrain)

Rahab--The Woman God Took From the Dunghill

Book excerpt by Dr. Herbert Lockyer, *All The Women in the Bible*, Zondervan, © 1967...

Scripture References—Joshua 2:1, 3; 6:17-25; Matthew 1:5; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25.

Name Meaning—The first part of Rahab—"Ra," was the name of an Egyptian god. As an Amorite, Rahab belonged to an idolatrous people, and had a name meaning "insolence," "fierceness," or "broad," "spaciousness."

Family Connections—While Rahab's parents, brothers and sisters were alive at the time of her association with the spies Joshua sent out, we are not given any of their names ([Joshua 2:13](#)). Some of the ancient Jewish fathers who held her in high reputation reckoned that she was the wife of Joshua himself, but in the royal genealogy of Jesus, Rahab is referred to as being the wife of Salmon, one of the two spies she sheltered. In turn, she became the mother of Boaz, who married Ruth from whose son, Obed, Jesse the father of David came, through whose line Jesus was born ([Matthew 1:5](#), where the ASV reads, "Salmon begat Boaz of Rahab"—*not Rachab*). Salmon was a prince of the

house of Judah, and thus, Rahab, the one time heathen harlot, married into one of the leading families of Israel and became an ancestress of our Lord, the other foreign ancestresses being Tamar, Ruth and Bathsheba. The gratitude Salmon felt for Rahab ripened into love, and when grace erased her former life of shame he made her his wife. Jerome's comment of the inclusion of the four foreign women in Matthew's genealogy is suggestive—

"In it none of the holy women are included, only those whom the Scriptures blame, in order that He who came in behalf of sinners, Himself being born of sinners, might destroy the sins of all."

Both Jewish and Christian writers have tried to prove that Rahab was a different woman from the one whom the Bible always speaks of as a "harlot." To them it was abhorrent that such a disreputable person should be included in our Lord's genealogy and by Paul, as a woman of faith, and so her story has been distorted in order to further a scheme of salvation based upon human goodness. Although man's sense of refinement may be shocked, the fact remains that Rahab, Tamar and Bathsheba were sinful women who were purged by God, and had their share in the royal line from which Jesus sprang.

It has been suggested that the word "harlot" can be translated "innkeeper," thus making Rahab the landlady of a wayside tavern. Guesses have been made that she had been a concubine, such as Hagar and Zilpah had been, but that in Jericho she was a reputable woman identified with a respectable business. The Bible, however, makes no attempt to smooth over the unpleasant fact that Rahab had been a harlot. Endeavoring to understand her character, we have—

Her Sin

Three times over Rahab is referred to as "the harlot," and the Hebrew term *zoonah* and the Greek word *porne* have at no time meant anything else but "harlot"—a woman who yields herself indiscriminately to every man approaching her. Rahab indulged in venal wantonness as traveling merchants came her way and were housed in her illfamed abode. Evidently Rahab had her own house and lived apart from her parents and family. Although she never lost her concern for her dear ones, perhaps she was treated as a moral leper. We are told that prostitution was not regarded with the same horror then, as now, but the Bible with one voice speaks of harlotry with moral revulsion and social ostracism.

Rahab's house was built against the town wall with the roof almost level with the ramparts, and with a stairway leading up to a flat roof that appears to be a continuation of the wall. Thus, the people of Jericho knew all about the men who entered and left such a disreputable house. While her name came to be sanctified and ennobled, both Paul and James affix the label to her name, *Rahab the harlot*. She still carried the evil, distinguishing name, thus declaring the peculiar grace of the transforming power of God. How Rahab came to forsake her evil career we are not told! Like many a young girl today perhaps she found the restrictions of her respectable home too irk-some. She wanted a freer life, a life of thrill and excitement, away from the drab monotony of the home giving her birth and protection. So, high-spirited and independent she left her parents, set up her own apartment with dire consequences. Frequently women like Rahab are more often sinned against than sinners. Man's lust for the unlawful is responsible for harlotry.

Her Scheme

It was from some of the travelers Rahab entertained and sinned with, that she came to learn the facts of the Exodus of Israel, the miracle of the Red Sea, and the overthrow of Sihon and Og. So, when the two spies from Joshua sought cover in her house, she knew that sooner or later the king of Jericho would get to know of the accommodation she gave them. Here were two men, different from other men who came seeking her favors. These were men of God, not idolaters, bent on one mission, namely, the overthrow of the enemies of His people, and brilliantly she planned their protection and escape. The flax that she spread on her roof and the scarlet cord she used as a sign indicated that Rahab manufactured linen and also dyed it. If only, like Lydia, she had kept to such an honorable occupation, what a different story would have been hers.

Rahab's skillful scheme succeeded. The two Jewish spies were in desperate straits, seeing the Amorite pursuers were hot on their trail, but Rahab, although her safety and patriotism as an Amorite would be assured if she informed against the spies, decided to hide and preserve them. Seeing their hunted and dreaded look, Rahab assuredly said, "Fear not, I will not betray you nor your leader. Follow me," and taking them up to the flat roof of her house, bade the men cover themselves completely with a pile of flax lying there to dry. Shortly after, when the pursuers had tracked the two spies to Rahab's house, she met them with a plausible excuse that they were there but had left by way of the Eastern Gate. If they doubted her word, they could come in and search her house. But off the pursuers went to catch up with their prey, not knowing that the spies were being befriended by Rahab. As soon as the way was clear, under cover of night, she let the spies down from the window in the wall and, knowing the country, guided the spies in the best way to escape capture.

There are one or two features associated with this clever plan of Rahab which are worthy of notice. First of all, idolater though she had been, with a phase of immorality associated with her idolatrous life, she witnessed to a remarkable understanding of the sovereignty of the true God for she said to the spies—

I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us.... The Lord, your God he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath ([Joshua 2:9-11](#)).

Harlot though Rahab had been, intuition from above had been given her that the spies were men of God, the forerunners of His people who were to execute His will, and that to take sides with them was to take sides with God Himself.

Further, there was in Rahab's mind, no matter how faintly understood, a distinct call from God, that she was being singled out from her own idolatrous people to aid the God she had a growing conception of. Her faith of this God who worked great wonders was altogether marvelous and singular. It was such a call that made her willing to sacrifice her own nation—an act which would have been otherwise treasonable. Does not her confession of God's power and purpose, and her service for the spies indicate that she knew the race of which she was part was accursed of God for its crimes and idolatry, and that she wished to be separated from such a doomed people, and identified with the people of God? The declaration of faith given by this Canaanite woman places her in a unique position among the women of the Bible.

Her Sacrifice

When Rahab hid the spies, put those who sought them on a false trail and helped the spies to escape and melt away into the shadows of night, and lay concealed until they could reach Joshua with their report, she took her life in her own hands. We cannot but admire her courage and willingness to risk her own neck. Had those spies been discovered hiding in her house, she would have died at the hands of the king of Jericho. Yet with a calm demeanor, and without the slightest trace of inner agitation, she met the searchers and succeeded in setting them out on a false trail. By her act Rahab was actually betraying her own country, and for such treason certain death would have been hers had she been found out. To hide spies was a crime punishable with death. Seeing the faces of the spies filled with fear, Rahab assured their hearts that she was on their side, and in spite of the sacrifice involved said, "I will not betray you. Follow me!" By military law the spies were likewise liable to instant death because of the threat of war, and Rahab, willing to do all in her power to protect her nation's enemies, faced a like terrible end. How gloriously daring was her faith, and how richly rewarded she was for her willingness to sacrifice her life in a cause she knew to be of God!

Her Sign

As Rahab offered to shelter the spies and aid them in their escape, she received from them the promise that when they returned to her country, along with Joshua and his army, that she and her family would be spared alive. While her sin had possibly estranged her from her loved ones, she was concerned about their safety as well as her own. Rahab wanted the kindness she was showing the spies to be reciprocated, and they assured her that she would be dealt with "kindly and truly." The spies said, "Our life for yours if ye utter not this our business." Then the sign of the scarlet rope—their means of escape—was arranged. "According unto thy words, so be it," said Rahab as she let the spies down, and making fast the scarlet rope, she awaited her own deliverance. That red token at the window was likewise a signal to the outside world that Rahab believed in the ultimate triumph of Jehovah.

Much has been said of Rahab's deceit when confronted by the king of Jericho. She told a lie and Scripture forbids a lie or any "evil doing, that good may come of it" ([Romans 3:7, 8](#)). But under the rules of war, Rahab is not to be blamed for her protection of those righteous forces set against the forces of evil. What the Bible commends is not her deception, but the faith which was the mainspring of her conduct. The characteristic feature of the scarlet rope was that it had to be placed outside the window for Joshua and his men to see. Those inside did not see the token of security. As that scarlet line, because of its color and sign of safety, speaks of the sacrificial work of Christ ([Hebrews 9:19, 22](#)), the ground of our assurance of salvation is not experience or feelings within, but the token without. Like the Israelites, Rahab and her relatives might not have felt safe within the house, but the same promise prevailed, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" ([Exodus 12:13](#)).

Her Salvation

Jericho was the worst of the cities of the Amorites, thus God commanded Joshua to destroy both the city and the inhabitants. By divine decree, it was to be given over to a perpetual desolation. When Joshua entered the city he set about the execution of the divine command, but respected the promise made to Rahab by the spies. Under the protection of the scarlet line, Rahab and all her kindred were brought out of the house. The spies came to her house, not to indulge in sin with Rahab, but to prepare the way for Joshua to take Jericho. She saved the spies not out of

human pity, or because of expediency, but because she knew that they were servants of the Lord. In turn, she was saved. The spies she had hid brought her, and her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had out of her doomed house, and made them secure without the camp of Israel ([Joshua 6:17-25](#)). Brought out of an accursed city, and from her own sins which were as scarlet, Rahab is a fitting illustration of another miracle of divine grace, namely, the calling forth of His church out of a godless, Gentile world.

Her Status

The threefold reference to Rahab in the New Testament reveals how she became a faithful follower of the Lord. She had been taken from the dunghill and placed among the saints in the genealogy of the Saviour ([Matthew 1:5](#) where Rachab [kjv] and Rahab [ASV], are to be identified as the same person). Her remarkable faith was a sanctifying faith leading her to a pure life and honorable career. As the result of her marriage to Salmon, one of the two spies whom she had saved, who "paid back the life he owed her by a love that was honourable and true," Rahab became an ancestress in the royal line from which Jesus came as the Saviour of lost souls. "Poor Rahab, the muddy, the defiled, became the fountainhead of the River of the Water of Life which floweth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." Her name became sanctified and ennobled, and is worthy of inclusion among many saints.

Paul highly commends Rahab for her energetic faith and gives her a place on the illustrious roll of the Old Testament of those who triumphed by faith. "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she received the spies with peace" ([Hebrews 11:31](#)). What a suggestive touch that is, "with peace." There was not only faith in her heart that God would be victorious, but also an assured peace when she hid the spies that her deliverance from destruction would be taken care of. She knew the *rest* of faith. In fact, Rahab is the only woman besides Sarah who is designated as an example of faith in the great cloud of witnesses. What a manifestation of divine grace it is to find the one-time harlot ranked along with saints like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses and David!

The Apostle James adds to Paul's record about Rahab being justified by faith by saying that she was likewise justified by works ([James 2:25](#)), and there is no contradiction between these two aspects for Rahab's courageous deed was but faith in practice. Faith had wrought in her a change of heart and life, and it likewise enabled her to shield the spies as she did in the confidence God would triumph over His enemies. She exemplified her faith by her brave act, and so James quotes Rahab as exemplifying justification by *works evidentially*. As Fausset puts it—

"Paul's justification by faith alone means a faith, not *dead* but working by love ([Galatians 5:6](#)). Again, Rahab's act cannot prove justification by works as such, for she was a woman of *bad* character. But as an example of *grace*, justifying through an *operative* as opposed to mere verbal *faith*, none could be more suitable than the saved "harlot." She believed, so as to act on her belief, what her countrymen disbelieved; and this in the face of every improbability that an unwarlike force would conquer a well armed one, far more numerous. She believed with the heart ([Romans 10:9, 10](#)), confessed with the mouth, and acted on her profession at the risk of her life."

In conclusion, what are the lessons to be gathered from the harlot whom God used to fulfill His purpose? First of all, we are reminded by Rahab's change of heart and life, that "His blood can make the vilest clean," and that "His blood avails for me." Was it not a wonderful condescension on the part of the Redeemer when He became manifest in the flesh to take hold of a root so humble in type as poor, despised Rahab to magnify His abounding grace for all sinners? Rahab was well worth saving from her evil life both for her own sake and for the place she had in God's plan. Other women in Jericho saw no beauty in Rahab that they should desire her company, but through faith she became one of God's heroines, and is included among the harlots entering the kingdom of God before the self-righteous. Rahab's sins had been scarlet, but the scarlet line freeing the spies, and remaining as a token of her safety, typified the red blood of Jesus whereby the worst of sinners can be saved from sin and hell ([Matthew 21:31, 32](#)). While the door of mercy stands ajar, the vilest sinner can return and know what it is to be saved and safe.

A further lesson to be gleaned from Rahab the harlot is that of deep concern for the salvation of others. With the shadow of death and destruction over Jericho, Rahab extracted a promise from Joshua's spies not only to spare her, but also all those bound to her by human ties. While her life of sin and shame had estranged her from her family, self was not her sole consideration in her request for safety. She desired all her loved ones to share in the preservation. What a vein of gold that was in such a despised character! When the mighty change took place in Rahab's life, and she was transformed from a whore into a worshiper of Jehovah, we are not told. As she received and hid the spies, her tribute to God's omnipotence and sure triumph over His foes reveals a spiritual insight God grants to all who believe. And restored to honor and holiness, the redeemed harlot pleads for her parents, and brothers, and sisters. Do we make Rahab's prayer for the salvation of her family, the cry for our own homes? Is ours the same passionate supplication for all of our dear ones that when death strikes they may be found sheltered by the atoning blood of the Redeemer? When at evening the sun goeth down, will our loved ones be as stars in our crown?

- A brief biography of Dr. Herbert Lockyer can be found by going to:

http://bioinbrief.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=104&Itemid=107