

# Walk Through The Bible

*The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul;  
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;  
8The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;  
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;  
9The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;  
The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.  
10More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold;  
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.  
11Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.  
(Psalm 19:7-11. NKJV)*

*25But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.  
(James 1:25. NKJV)*

## **Rahab And Jericho**

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**Joshua 2-6**

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### **Introduction:**

Open your Bibles this morning to Joshua chapter 2. I had originally hoped to preach on the first 6 chapters of Joshua in order to bring out all of the important typology that we find there but time does not permit us to bite off that much of this text today so I am releasing parts of that throughout the week as FAQ's. If you want to receive that content be sure to provide your e-mail address in the worship register. We will limit ourselves this morning to a discussion of the redemption of Rahab and the destruction of Jericho. This story takes place after the death of Moses. God has saved the people out of Egypt by his grace, he has given those saved people the law and he has set before them the land and the blessings and he has given them their great commission. He has told them that as they walk forward in obedience, paying attention to his written Word they will increasingly share in the blessings of God. He told Joshua in chapter 1:

<sup>8</sup>This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (Joshua 1:8. NKJV)

The death of Moses marks the end of an era and the end of a significant part of the salvation process among the people of God. Moses was the means by which God redeemed the people out of Egypt, he was the means by which they received the law and became a people but he was not to be the means by which they inherited the land and the promised blessing. From this we are reminded that God uses human agents for pieces and parts of his purpose but allows them to fall short and to be replaced so as to reserve for himself the glory due his name. God does not share glory. As Paul said: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth”, so here we see that God will not do all his work through any one human means. So the baton is handed to Joshua and once again spies are sent out into the land. The leadership of Joshua picks up where the leadership of Moses fell short, one way or the other, delay or no delay, the promise of God marches forward.

Thus we arrive at the story of the conquest of Canaan and this story is one of the most controversial sections in the Bible. It is full of God’s wrath and it makes many people very uncomfortable. Yet as we shall see, it is not only a story of God’s wrath, indeed I would say it is not even PRIMARILY a story of God’s wrath, it is first, foremost and always a story of God’s glory working its way out in demonstrations of mercy and of holiness. Let me read to you from God’s Word beginning at chapter 2:1

<sup>1</sup>Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from <sup>f</sup>Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho.”

So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there. <sup>2</sup>And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, “Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country.”

<sup>3</sup>So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, “Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country.”

<sup>4</sup>Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So she said, “Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they *were* from. <sup>5</sup>And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them.” <sup>6</sup>(But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.) <sup>7</sup>Then the men pursued them by the road to the Jordan, to the fords. And as soon as those who pursued them had gone out, they shut the gate.

<sup>8</sup>Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, <sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>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. <sup>12</sup>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, <sup>13</sup>and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.”

<sup>14</sup>So the men answered her, “Our lives for yours, if none of you tell this business of ours. And it shall be, when the LORD has given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you.”

<sup>15</sup>Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house *was* on the city wall; she dwelt on the wall. <sup>16</sup>And she said to them, “Get to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you. Hide there three days, until the pursuers have returned. Afterward you may go your way.”

<sup>17</sup>So the men said to her: “We *will be* blameless of this oath of yours which you have made us swear, <sup>18</sup>unless, *when* we come into the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father’s household to your own home. <sup>19</sup>So it shall be *that* whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood *shall be* on his own head, and we *will be* guiltless. And whoever is with you in the house, his blood *shall be* on our head if a hand is laid on him. <sup>20</sup>And if you tell this business of ours, then we will be free from your oath which you made us swear.”

<sup>21</sup>Then she said, “According to your words, so *be* it.” And she sent them away, and they departed. And she bound the scarlet cord in the window. (Joshua 2:1-21. NKJV)

## **Rahab As A Pattern Of Saving Faith:**

The story of Rahab is held up as a pattern of saving faith in multiple places in the New Testament. She is mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 and she is mentioned in the Faith Hall Of Fame in Hebrews 11 and she is mentioned in James 2. The story of Rahab’s salvation reminds us that even while working out his purposes of wrath, God is merciful and always provides a way of escape. Rahab’s story reminds us that God’s desire to save is never about ethnicity or nationality. It was not as though God was pro-Hebrew and anti-Canaanite, the desire of God to save is far broader than that and has been from the beginning. Rahab’s story is a picture of God’s gentleness and mercy side by side without apology with a display of his holiness and wrath. We see that breadth in God as we read this story and we also learn something about the way of faith. Rahab’s salvation is meant to anticipate and light up the way of saving faith in advance of the day of wrath; let me show you:

1. Rahab turned her back on her former allegiances

We see that in verses 3-4. When the King of Jericho sent orders to Rahab, Rahab rejected those orders and cast her lot in with purposes of God. She turned her back on Jericho and her face towards God’s mercy. From that we learn that there is no salvation if there is not also a rejection of sin. Salvation is both a turn away from sin and towards the Saviour.

2. Rahab believed in the promises of God

We see that clearly in verse 8, she says: “I know that the Lord has given you the land”. Salvation in the Old Testament and new is by grace THROUGH FAITH. The pattern does not change. Genesis 15:6:

<sup>6</sup>And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. (Genesis 15:6. NKJV)

Abraham was saved by FAITH and so was Rahab and so is everyone who has ever been or ever will be saved. Her faith however, was by no means content-less; she was believing based on some facts that she had heard of.

### 3. Rahab believed in the saving work of God

She says herself that she has heard of the facts concerning the saving work of God in verse 10:

<sup>10</sup>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. (Joshua 2:10. NKJV)

Again the pattern of saving faith is preserved consistently throughout the Bible.

<sup>17</sup>So **faith comes from hearing**, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17. ESV)

There is a content to saving faith, people have to hear and believe the good news report of God’s saving acts – whether deliverance through the Red Sea or deliverance through the blood of the cross – people have to hear that and place faith in that in order to be saved.

### 4. Rahab demonstrated her faith in acts of kindness towards God’s people

Real faith always manifests itself in evidencing fruit. Rahab showed that she had thrown in her lot with God by risking her life to serve God’s people. This is very similar to what Jesus said identified the sheep as God’s saved people in Matthew 25:

‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.’ (Matthew 25:40. NKJV)

Real faith shows itself in sacrificial care for God's people. You cannot love God and hate or even neglect God's people; this care is received as evidence of saving faith in the Old Testament just as it is in the New.

For the Christian the story of Rahab is a reminder that our God is fundamentally The God Who Redeems. He is constantly on the look out for tender hearts and humble souls upon which to tell a story of his mercy and redeeming grace. This is the part of the story we naturally love, but it is not the whole of God's glory and so we turn our attention now to Joshua 6:1:

### **The Conquest And Destruction Of Jericho:**

Let's read verses 1-5:

<sup>1</sup>Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in. <sup>2</sup>And the LORD said to Joshua: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, *and* the mighty men of valor. <sup>3</sup>You shall march around the city, all *you* men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days. <sup>4</sup>And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. <sup>5</sup>It shall come to pass, when they make a long *blast* with the ram's horn, *and* when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him." (Joshua 6:1-5. NKJV)

That is an unusual game plan. March around the city for 6 days quietly and then on the 7<sup>th</sup> day do it 7 times and then blow your little horns and all will go well. Scholars love to speculate about the significance of 7 – some say that it was a reflection of the Creation cycle, meaning that this is a work of new creation and that it will precede a new Sabbath rest with God, some say it reflects the 7 days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and that it means God is saying that it takes a protracted process to get the sin out of the people of God. Likely both meanings are in view but the primary meaning is that God's plans often make no sense to us and the reason for that is that God wants us to walk by faith and he means to reserve all glory for himself. No one after the battle was likely to come up to Joshua and say: "That was a smoking awesome battle plan. Way to go General!" No! Everyone knew, the battle belongs to the Lord and God's people should just walk in faith. That is the main point.

The battle unfolded just as God said and we pick up the story on the 7<sup>th</sup> day in verse 15:

<sup>15</sup>But it came to pass on the seventh day that they rose early, about the dawning of the day, and marched around the city seven times in the same manner. On that day only they marched around the city seven times. <sup>16</sup>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!”<sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. ...

<sup>21</sup>And they utterly destroyed all that *was* in the city, **both man and woman, young and old**, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword. (Joshua 6:17-21. NKJV)

From this story we may extract at least two very important and timeless principles, the first one we already mentioned:

1. The battle belongs to the Lord, but God’s people have to march and swing the sword.
2. God acts in history for his glory in acts both of wrath and redemption.

The Bible reminds us of the danger of camping out in one half of God’s person:

<sup>22</sup>Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God (Romans 11:22. NKJV)

We need that verse in the Bible because most of us are inclined to see only one or the other. There are lots of folks who are inclined to see only God’s goodness. They tell us that God loves us no matter what and that as long as we love him and do our best, it’s all grace. They tell us that hell can’t be forever because God is love and love wins. They tell us that these stories in the Old Testament tell us nothing about God but only about how the Jews grew in their understanding of God. But if that’s true than the Bible is a lie. The Bible says that God told the Israelites to destroy Jericho, it doesn’t say that they destroyed Jericho because of their flawed understanding of God. This is where we part ways with the Mennonites and the Brethren in Christ. I am sure that there are many wonderful Christians in those denominations but because they prefer the love of God to his wrath they write these stories off as merely accurate records of poor understandings. That won’t do. That is a very bad hermeneutic and it opens the door for us to throw out any doctrine of the Bible we want to because we can just say: “Well that was just the Apostle Paul’s flawed understanding of God. God isn’t actually opposed to homosexuality you see, Paul just didn’t understand God clearly enough at this point.” That is Pandora’s box, it is arrogant exegesis and I will have none of it. It is not for me to censure God. This is who God is my friends, take it or leave it. Note well his goodness and his severity because both are God. He

works out all things for his glory and his glory is served in the condemnation of unrepentant people just as it is served in the gracious redemption of harlots and sinners like Rahab and like you and me. In some he displays his justice and in others his mercy and in all of it he is RIGHT and he is LOVELY and worthy of our praise.

Let us be very clear and confident in declaring that God is glorified in the condemnation of the wicked. He shows himself Holy and he shows himself JUST. God did not condemn the Canaanites on a whim; he condemns the Canaanites because they were persistently wicked.

Deuteronomy 9:4 says:

<sup>4</sup>“Do not think in your heart, after the LORD your God has cast them out before you, saying, ‘Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land’; but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD is driving them out from before you. (Deuteronomy 9:4. NKJV)

History tells us that the ancient Canaanites practiced child sacrifice and ritual prostitution and they persisted long in those acts. God was JUST in his condemnation of those people. But he did not hate them on some sort of racial basis, he was prepared to love them and he did – he redeemed out of these people a prostitute who repented and cast herself upon his mercy. God is ever ready to turn from his fearsome wrath. He desires no one to perish and he is always simultaneously and perfectly HOLY and MERCIFUL. You cannot love the story of Rahab if you do not also bow before the story of Jericho. They both tell the story of God’s majesty and his glory and you cannot have one without the other.

### **Conclusion: The Two Sides Of Passover**

To be faithful readers of God’s Word we have to admit that God is glorified both in the display of his mercy and in the display of his justice but as human beings we are allowed to be confused about how those things hold together in one God. How can the God who seeks out a humble prostitute in order to save her and rescue her be the same God who commands that every man, woman and child in the city be put to the sword? How can justice and mercy fit inside one God? The Lord knows that we struggle with this and this story is crafted; these historical events unfold so as to help us perceive and settle under this tension. Let me show you, look back in your Bibles to 5:10-12:

<sup>10</sup>Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho. <sup>11</sup>And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day. <sup>12</sup>Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year. (Joshua 5:10-12. NKJV)

Most scholars see this whole drama at Jericho taking place within the festival of Passover; I mentioned that when I talked about the symbolism of the 7 days. There are 7 days of unleavened bread as part of Passover. What we are seeing here is God developing and adding to their understanding of his saving work. Passover had previously been a symbol only of how he had chosen them. It was a symbol of God's electing grace. Do you remember the original story? God got the Egyptians to let the people of Israel free from their captivity with 10 great plagues, the last one being the death of the first born. God told the Hebrews to put the blood of a lamb upon their door posts so that the angel of the Lord would PASS OVER their houses and not visit God's wrath upon them. They were saved and they were set free. Now God is teaching them a new dimension of Passover. Passover is not just about electing some to salvation, it is also about passing others over into condemnation.

Think about it. Why does God seek out Rahab and her family but not other Canaanites? Was she less wicked than they? No, in fact she seems to be TYPICAL of them in their wickedness. She was a prostitute. Election is a by necessity a two side doctrine my friends. God looks upon the mass of fallen, rebellious, God hating humanity and he has a choice to make: he can leave them all in their rebellion and so condemn them all to his wrath. He could save them all or he could save some and leave some to experience their just deserts. The Bible says that he decided to save some. He elects to stir up faith and to grant grace in some and he PASSES OVER others and leaves them to experience that which they have wilfully chosen. That is what he did at Jericho. He looked at that wicked city and he said rightly: "They all deserve condemnation. They are baby killers and perverts. They have rejected even the most obvious aspect of my design. They do not value life and they do not fear God. I will not share eternity with such as these." He is right to say so. But he is a God of mercy so he elects to display his mercy in an undeserved vessel. He chooses a prostitute and he stirs her to faith. The others he leaves in their sin. He does not FORCE THEM TO SIN – he cannot be blamed for their sin, he did not create them for hell, he created them for Eden but they chose hell he just chose not to overpower their chosen course. He passed them over to experience the destiny they chose for themselves. This was the



part of Passover that his people needed to learn. They needed to understand that God is merciful, but he is also a consuming fire.

I am very glad that we are dealing with this content after having dealt with the Final Judgment in Revelation 20. It breaks my heart to hear people say that God was angry in the Old Testament but he is happy now in the New Testament. How little we must read our Bibles to think such nonsensical things. How little we must know God. God does not change my friends. He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow and he is still working out his purposes of wrath and redemption for his own glory. The only wise course of action is the one chosen by Rahab: Cast yourself upon the mercy of God in advance of his coming wrath. Trust in his promises and believe on his acts of saving mercy on your behalf. Look unto Jesus and be saved! Flee the wrath to come!

Perhaps you will say: “But how can I know if I am elect unto salvation, like Rahab, or passed over into wrath like the Canaanites?” The Bible does not invite us to look into that mystery. It tells us that whosoever will may come. It tells us that God desires no one to perish. It says that God stands in the way of no one who truly repents and humbles themselves and it tells us that the offer of forgiveness and mercy is to be declared to ALL THE WORLD! I don’t know how those things fit together, I really don’t. I just know that every saved person I know tells the same story. They were lost in their sins and their heart did not truly seek God. And then God found them. He found them in a dark hole and he began to woo them and to win them and to work grace into them and like a Good Shepherd he picked them up and carried them home and fed them. Every truly saved person I know tells some version of that story. God sought me! He found me! He opened my eyes to see things I had never seen, he unstopped my ears to hear his Word as though for the first time and he softened my heart to receive the Gospel. He saved me! To God be the glory! Every saved person I know tells a Rahab story. So how do you know that you aren’t here today, hearing this because God has begun to woo you to himself? How do you know that you aren’t hear today being stirred because God means to claim you for himself as brand plucked from the fire ahead of the wrath to come? How do you know? You don’t know, I don’t know, only God knows. So let’s deal in what we know. The Bible says:

<sup>17</sup>And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. (Revelation 22:17. NKJV)

Whosoever will may come. Leave here like Rahab. Humble yourself and claim the prostitute's place in this story. Be as Rahab and cast yourself upon the mercy of God and so flee the wrath that is to come. That is the Gospel; Old Testament and New. Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand. Jody will you come and lead us?