



Joshua – Taking Possession – Fact Sheet 2

Joshua 2: People Like You and Me:

Following the encouraging ‘members meeting’ where everyone (even the reluctant two and a half tribes) declared to Joshua, ‘whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go’ (1:16), the Joshua narrative would make perfect sense if it flowed straight into chapter 3, ‘early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out...’ (3:1). So why chapter 2? What is the writer; and moreover the Lord teaching us in chapter 2? What is the focus of the chapter, the central theme? Looking at the overall structure and breakdown might help us:

- Vs1 – The commission by Joshua
- Vs2-7 – Protection of the spies
- Vs8-13 – Rahab’s confession of faith
- Vs14-21 – Protection of Rahab
- Vs24 – The report to Joshua

If we were to read this chapter in self-preservation mode, we might be focussed on how the spies might escape after verse 7. If we read it in ‘project/task’ mode, our focus might be on the information the spies bring back to Joshua. But although important, these aspects are not *central*. The writer wants us to focus on a much more significant truth in our Kingdom progress and purpose; *that He is calling out a people to Himself*, thus our central focus is on Rahab, a pagan, a Canaanite, yet more, a harlot, with dubious personal history; yet one who was seeking out and who was being sought out by an awesome loving God. But what about ‘Rahab’s lie’ to the Jericho police? Shouldn’t we be debating the ethics of that? Maybe, but to ‘snag’ our clothes on the nail of Rahab’s lie in chapter 2, might mean we are in danger of missing the truth of Rahab’s confession. But surely the excitement of the narrative is about the spies escaping? Well if that was the focus, the writer interrupts the tension of that in verse 7, with something he feels is more important, again, Rahab’s confession.

So having established our focus; and the reason for chapter 2 (to remind God’s people that He is calling out a people to Himself so we should not be so ‘task driven’ or worried about ‘self-preservation’) , we see from this chapter:

First: Rahab was Seeking the Lord: 1-7:

Although Rahab was a Canaanite herself, living amongst a people with wicked and godless practices (Leviticus 18:24-25), she was attracted to God's people. Yet immersed in her local culture, surrounded by child sacrifice and idolatry; what hope was there for her? Within the providence of God, much hope. Joshua may well have sent the spies for his purposes; yet the Lord had another mission for the spies, Rahab's purposes (vs1). For the two Israelites, mixing with a pagan; and a pagan harlot at that, would be unthinkable. Jesus Himself suffered the same criticism (Luke 15:1-2). The King of Jericho heard about the spies; Rahab was placing herself in great danger, yet she was seeking a greater King. Following questioning, Rahab is able to deflect the King's men (vs3-5); with the spies hiding on the roof (vs6) the city gates were then shut (vs7); and so:

Second: Rahab starts to gain an Understanding of the Lord: 8-11:

Rahab has a burning desire to know and understand more of the God of Heaven, so she 'went up on the roof' (vs8). She had heard of the promises of God and so could declare to the spies, 'I know that the Lord has given this land to you' (vs9). She had heard of His awesome power at the Red sea (vs10) and ultimately acknowledged His majesty as the 'God of Heaven above and on the earth below' (vs11). Rahab's understanding was growing, amazingly a Canaanite harlot with an Israelite confession (Deut 4:39). Yet Rahab's enquiry does not stop there; knowing *about* God or even what He has *done* is not enough. Knowing how powerful, or awesome, or majestic He is, alone, is not suffice – and it's not enough for Rahab. She senses that in spite of this awesome God, His power and His pending judgement on Jericho; that there was mercy there too. Genuine faith never rests content with being convinced of the *reality* of God – but presses on to take *refuge* in God; and so:

Third: Rahab Trusts in the Lord: 12-13:

Rahab wants to know that there is a place of safety from God's pending judgment. Yet it is not something for her alone; this place is wide and big enough for all of those she cares for (vs12-13). She has heard of the pending judgment and needs to know that she will be safe in the 'shadow of the rock'; as the hymn says:

*“Safe in the Shadow of the Lord, Beneath His hand and pow'r,
I trust in Him, I trust in Him, My fortress and my tower”*

Rahab is not disappointed; and so she is assured of:

Fourth: The Grace of God: 14-24:

The Spies assure Rahab that she and all who are in that 'place of safety', at the time of the Lord's judgement will be spared (vs14). Yet they must be found in that place (vs18-19). The Lord has provided a place of safety for all who would trust in Him and run there (John 3:16); there is no other place; elsewhere, one will only find judgement and wrath (vs19). In the midst of the righteous judgement of a holy God, there is a place of forgiveness. After escaping back to Joshua safely, the spies, 'told him everything that had happened to them' (vs23); including the remarkable account of a pagan, Canaanite harlot, who was seeking the awesome God of Israel. God's people must never be so focussed on the 'task' that they forget that God is calling out a people to Himself. What is incredible is that in spite of her poor start, her surroundings and personal shame, the God of heaven had a plan for Rahab that went way beyond anything she could have possibly imagined. Not only being 'grafted into' the people of God; but ending up in the direct family line of Jesus Himself (Matthew 1).

Questions:

Many people today are sick of the practices and hopelessness around them – how might we seek them out and encourage them?

What is our default mode in our day to day Christian walk? Self-preservation, how I am going to get on, how the Lord is going to 'get me out of this'? Or project/task mode – busy, busy, busy – maybe all for God – but missing the opportunities to share with the people He is calling out and wants to reach?

Would you find it easy to relate to someone like Rahab with her background?

How often do you pray for your family or those you know who have not yet come to God's designated 'place of safety' (the Cross)? – Does it bother you enough to pray and plead daily for them?

Perhaps there is someone you know who is showing some interest in the Lord who is the awesome 'God of Heaven and on the earth below' – how might you begin to help them in their understanding?

"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your Word"

Psalm 119:18