



# Light from the Word

## The Faith of Joshua and Rahab

*“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.”<sup>1</sup>*

As a young man, Joshua demonstrated his God-given gifts of energy and leadership as he served as Moses' minister during the Israelites' travels through the Sinai wilderness. However, he soon learned the necessity of cooperation with others having different gifts as he led the Israelites in their first battle: *“So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”<sup>2</sup>* This lesson was instrumental in Joshua's future success and applies today regarding our need for the God-given gifts of the entire church body.

As the people reached the border of the Promised Land, they were about five miles away from the walled city of Jericho on the other side of the river Jordan. Joshua, being chosen by God as the new leader in Moses's stead, was given a beautiful exhortation from God, *“There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them.”<sup>3</sup>* Secondly, He gives Joshua the conditions for this success: *“Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.”<sup>4</sup>* Though his tasks may have seemed overwhelming at this point, Joshua showed no signs of wavering from his duty. Joshua believed and followed God as He prepared the way before him.

Joshua's first action was to send two spies into the city of Jericho. A harlot named Rahab received the two men into her house, located upon one of the walls surrounding Jericho. Rahab had a simple and firm faith based on the spoken accounts of God leading His people from Egypt to the land of Canaan:

*“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. 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. 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.”<sup>5</sup>* She pleaded with the spies that she and her family be spared when the Israelites overtook the city. They agreed, provided Rahab and her family remained in her house. With this agreement in place, the spies were let down from her house by a scarlet line, which was left hanging from the window to identify her house<sup>6</sup>. The Hebrew word (tiqva?h) translated as ‘line’ in this scripture is more commonly translated as ‘hope’ and ‘expectation’ in the Bible. Rahab put her hope and expectation not only in that slender cord and in the word of the men she had helped, but also in the unshakable belief that the *“LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath”*.

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In the events that followed, Joshua experiences three notable miracles. In the first, the river Jordan at flood stage divides to allow the passage of the entire host of Israel. As in the battle against Amalek, this was an exercise in faith for all the people. The waters did not divide until the priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant literally walked into the flooded river. As a result, the waters backed up near the city of Adam and spread toward Zaretan allowing the remaining water to run out into the Dead Sea—a distance of about 25 miles! As the priests stood still in the dry river bed, the remainder of the people obediently stepped in and everyone crossed over the river. Then as the priests came across and climbed up the opposite bank, the waters began to flow again and overflowed the banks as before.<sup>7</sup>

Joshua's next experience is a visit by an angel who, with drawn sword, presented himself as captain of the Lord's host. Joshua could have justifiably considered himself as captain, but instead acknowledged the true Captain and submitted to the messenger of God. The conquest of Jericho was not to be accomplished by the army of Israel under his expert military leadership, but the victory over the great walled

city was truly the Lord's doing: *"For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us. In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever."*<sup>8</sup>

Having received specific instructions on how to attack Jericho from God's angel, Joshua immediately put them into action. As the seventh day's march around the city ended, *"... 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."*<sup>9</sup> Archeological excavations bear out the biblical record: Jericho was surrounded by two concentric thirty-foot high walls that were substantial enough to support houses upon them. However, both of these walls had collapsed, having fallen outwards away from the city. Buried in the rubble were full grain bins and ovens with bread ready to bake, evidencing a sudden destruction of the entire city. Burnt and charred remains were everywhere, confirming the scripture, *"they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein"*.

Rahab staked her life on divine promises, so she with her family

*"perished not with them that believed not"* when the walls all around her came crashing down. Rahab proved her faith by her works: *"Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?"*<sup>10</sup> She cast her lot with God's people and later married Salmon, an Israelite, and as a result Rahab appears in the lineage of both David and Jesus Christ.<sup>11</sup> May we take this same victorious path of faith exemplified by both Joshua and Rahab: *"choose you this day whom ye will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"*. The destruction of Jericho was an event far surpassing any human capability, and the lesson remains today that *"... the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds"*<sup>12</sup>—no matter how formidable they may appear to us.

Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 11:30-31

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 17:10-13

<sup>3</sup> Joshua 1:5-6

<sup>4</sup> Joshua 1:7

<sup>5</sup> Joshua 2:9-11

<sup>6</sup> Joshua 2:21

<sup>7</sup> Joshua 3:15-17

<sup>8</sup> Psalms 44:6-8

<sup>9</sup> Joshua 6:20

<sup>10</sup> James 2:25

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 1:5

<sup>12</sup> 2 Corinthians 10:4