

Dr. David Howard, Joshua - Ruth, Session 6, Joshua 2, Rahab and the Spies Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 6, Joshua 2, Rahab and the Spies, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. David Howard's lecture analyzes Joshua 2, focusing on Rahab's story. **He examines Rahab's actions**, highlighting her faith demonstrated through both deeds and words, particularly her declaration affirming Yahweh as the one true God. **The ethical dilemma** of Rahab's deception is discussed, with various interpretations presented. **Her inclusion** in Jesus's genealogy in Matthew 1 is noted, emphasizing God's inclusivity. Finally, **the lecture connects Rahab's story** to the broader themes of God's mercy and the potential for redemption.

2. 12 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 6 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Historical Books → Joshua-Ruth).



**Howard_Josh_Ruth
_Session06.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 6, Joshua 2, Rahab and the Spies

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Howard_Josh_Ruth_EN_Session06_Josh2A.pdf":

Briefing Document: Joshua 2 - Rahab and the Spies

Overview: This session focuses on Joshua chapter 2, a narrative aside in the broader story of the Israelites entering Canaan. It details the story of two Israelite spies sent to Jericho and their encounter with Rahab, a Canaanite prostitute. Dr. Howard uses this story to explore themes of faith, action, and the nature of God. He emphasizes Rahab's transformation from a seemingly unlikely character into a "great hero of the faith" through her words and actions.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. The Narrative Context:

- Joshua 2 is presented as a "parenthetical side" between God's initial instructions to Joshua in chapter 1 and the crossing of the Jordan in chapter 3. It provides a crucial background to the Israelite's eventual conquest of Jericho.
- The spies' mission is to survey the land, particularly Jericho, but the focus in this chapter remains solely on Jericho. Dr. Howard notes with humor that the spies don't seem particularly good at their job as they are immediately discovered.

1. Rahab's Character and Motivation:

- Rahab is introduced as a Canaanite prostitute, using the common Hebrew word for a woman who "sells herself for money." Howard emphasizes she becomes a "great hero of faith," moving past her circumstances.
- The spies seek lodging at her house likely not for illicit reasons, but because it's a place where they could remain "incognito" as Jericho is on a trade route, providing a place to gather information.

1. Rahab's Actions and Ethical Dilemmas:

- Rahab hides the spies from the King of Jericho's messengers, offering them hospitality. She actively deceives the pursuers. Dr. Howard highlights this action as a display of "faith in action."
- Her lying to protect the spies raises a significant ethical question. Dr. Howard outlines three common approaches to such situations when two scriptural absolutes (never lie, but protect life) conflict:
- **Lesser of Two Evils:** Choose the lesser sin to protect life.
- **Non-Conflicting Absolutes:** God will provide a way out without needing to sin. This is Dr. Howard's view.
- **Sin Boldly, Confess Boldly:** Commit the lesser sin but then confess and receive God's grace.
- He points out that many evangelical Christians hold different views on this and it is not a measure of orthodoxy. He uses the example of modern day persecution and also Bible smuggling as analogous to this ethical dilemma.

1. Rahab's Faith in the New Testament:

- Rahab is mentioned in Hebrews 11:31, the "hall of fame" for faith heroes, where she is commended for welcoming the spies. The wording does not explicitly condone her lie, instead emphasizing her "friendly welcome"
- James 2:25 emphasizes Rahab's justification by works: "she received the messengers and sent them out by another way." James focuses on her actions rather than explicitly endorsing the lie.

1. Rahab's Declaration of Faith (Joshua 2:9-11):

- Rahab acknowledges that the Lord (Yahweh), the God of Israel, has given the land to the Israelites. She shows her knowledge of their past experiences with the Red Sea and victories over the Amorite kings (Sihon and Og) which causes the Canaanites to be afraid and "melt away."
- She declares that "the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath". This statement is particularly important as it shows she acknowledges the supremacy of Yahweh over the Canaanite gods, specifically the high god Baal. This rejection of her native religion is a demonstration of her faith through her words.

- Howard connects the use of the phrase "heavens above and the earth beneath" to its use in the Ten Commandments and Deuteronomy where it emphasizes the "incomparability of Israel's God." She's implicitly saying that Baal is not the God, that Yahweh is the only God.
- The speaker posits that Rahab's statement may be a literal quote or the author of Joshua's way of ensuring the reader understands the step of faith Rahab takes, either way it is indicative of her faith.

1. **Rahab's Salvation and Significance:**

- Rahab asks the spies to promise safety for her and her family, which is affirmed with a "sure sign." She sends them out of Jericho via a rope through her window, which is later marked with a scarlet cord when the Israelites come to conquer the city.
- The speaker believes attempts to typologically connect the scarlet cord with Christ are likely inaccurate as the color words are different in the original Hebrew.
- She becomes part of the Israelite narrative, thus contributing to the larger story of salvation. Dr. Howard compares her situation to Nineveh in Jonah, where repentance leads to deliverance, and suggests that the Canaanites could have avoided destruction had they responded to God like Rahab.

1. **Rahab in the Genealogy of Jesus:**

- Rahab is mentioned in Matthew 1:5 as part of the genealogy of Jesus. She's one of five women listed. Four of the five women were foreigners including Tamar, Ruth, and Bathsheba and are thus Gentiles. This demonstrates that God is not exclusive to Israel. All five of these women are considered moral outcasts or had some moral issues, illustrating God's inclusion of all people, even those society might judge.
- Dr. Howard uses this to conclude his argument that God is an inclusive God, and that this story of Rahab shows how God accepts both Gentiles, and those seen as immoral in society.

Key Quotes:

- "Rahab emerges from this chapter as a great hero of the faith, I would say. Not only what she does, but also the things that she says."
- "By faith, Rahab, the prostitute, did not perish with those who had been disobedient because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies." (Hebrews 11:31, quoted in the lecture)
- "In the same way, was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way." (James 2:25, quoted in the lecture)
- "For the Lord, for Yahweh, your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath." (Joshua 2:11, quoted and emphasized as a critical expression of faith)
- "Know therefore today and lay it on your heart that Yahweh is God in the heavens above and the earth beneath. There is no other." (Deuteronomy 4:39, quoted to establish the significance of Rahab's words)
- "Here is a great example of a Gentile woman, Rahab, along with these other three, who are included in the genealogy of the Savior of the world."

Conclusion:

Joshua 2, through the story of Rahab, offers more than just a historical narrative. It provides a profound lesson in faith, highlighting the power of recognizing God's authority, acting on that faith, and embracing God's grace regardless of one's past or background. Rahab's story is a reminder that faith is not just belief but action, it leads to salvation, and it is open to all, regardless of societal status or origin.

4. Study Guide: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 6, Joshua 2, Rahab and the Spies

Joshua 2: Rahab and the Spies Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. Why did the Israelite spies go to Rahab's house, and what evidence supports this?
2. How does Rahab demonstrate her faith through her actions, according to the lecture?
3. Explain the three major views regarding Rahab's lie to the king's messengers.
4. How does the book of Hebrews describe Rahab's actions?
5. According to the book of James, how was Rahab justified?
6. What is the significance of Rahab's statement, "For the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath?"
7. How does the lecturer explain the irony of the spies in Numbers compared to the Canaanites in Joshua 2?
8. What does the lecture suggest about the Canaanite religion and its high god, Baal?
9. What possible explanations are given for Rahab's knowledge of God's nature?
10. What does the lecturer say about the inclusion of Rahab in Jesus's genealogy, and who else is included?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The spies likely went to Rahab's house because it was located on a trade route and would have been a place where they could remain unnoticed and potentially gather information. The speaker notes that the Hebrew words describing the spies' entry are more related to "lodging" than sexual activity.
2. Rahab demonstrates her faith through actions by welcoming the spies, hiding them from the king's messengers, deceiving the pursuers, and ultimately helping them escape. These actions are highlighted in the lecture as evidence of her faith in practice.

3. The three major views on Rahab's lie are: a) to choose the lesser of two evils (lying to save a life); b) that God provides a way out of conflicting absolutes; and c) to "sin boldly" and then receive forgiveness.
4. The book of Hebrews states that Rahab, "by faith...did not perish with those who had been disobedient because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies," highlighting her welcoming of the spies rather than her lie.
5. According to James, Rahab was justified by her works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way, focusing on her actions as evidence of her justification.
6. Rahab's statement is significant because it echoes similar declarations in the Pentateuch about the uniqueness of the Israelite God, and it shows her rejection of Canaanite gods, and affirms that Yahweh is the true God of heaven and earth.
7. The irony is that while the Israelite spies in Numbers were terrified of the Canaanites and considered themselves like grasshoppers, Rahab's testimony in Joshua 2 reveals that the Canaanites were terrified of the Israelites, a perspective that the Israelites lacked.
8. Canaanite religion centered around the god Baal, the god of the storm, who was believed to provide rain and fertility. The lecture explains how the Canaanite religion contrasted with the Israelite faith in Yahweh.
9. One explanation is that Rahab had heard stories of the Israelites' God through trade and interactions with travelers. Another is that the author of Joshua paraphrased her words to better align them with the Pentateuch.
10. The inclusion of Rahab, a Gentile prostitute, in Jesus's genealogy demonstrates God's inclusive nature and challenges the idea that God only favors the Israelites. Other included women of questionable status are Tamar, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of Rahab's actions in Joshua 2, considering both her apparent deception and her demonstrated faith. How might the varying interpretations of her lie inform our understanding of biblical ethics?
2. Compare and contrast the perspective of the Israelite spies in Numbers with Rahab's perspective in Joshua 2. What does this contrast reveal about the importance of trust in God and the power of perspective in the biblical narrative?
3. Analyze the religious context of Rahab's statement about Yahweh as God of heaven and earth. How does this statement challenge Canaanite religious beliefs, and what does it signify about her faith?
4. Explore the role of Rahab within the larger scope of salvation history, paying particular attention to her inclusion in the genealogy of Jesus. How does her story challenge conventional notions of who is included in God's plan?
5. Examine the themes of inclusion and divine grace as illustrated in the story of Rahab and the other women included in Jesus's genealogy. How do their stories reflect a broader message about God's character?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Canaanite:** A member of a people who inhabited the land of Canaan prior to the Israelite conquest; worshipped gods such as Baal.
- **Jericho:** An ancient Canaanite city strategically located in the Jordan Valley; the first city conquered by the Israelites.
- **Rahab:** A Canaanite prostitute living in Jericho who hid the Israelite spies; her actions led to her salvation and inclusion in the lineage of Jesus.
- **Shittim:** The Israelite camp before they crossed the Jordan River.
- **Baal:** The high god in the Canaanite pantheon, often associated with storms and fertility.
- **Pentateuch:** The first five books of the Hebrew Bible, traditionally attributed to Moses.
- **Ugarit:** An ancient city in Syria, where tablets providing insight into Canaanite religion were discovered.
- **Justification:** The act of being declared righteous, in this context referring to both justification by faith and by works.
- **Incomparability of God:** The idea that the God of Israel is unique and unequaled by other gods.
- **Pantheon:** A group of gods and goddesses recognized by a specific culture or religion.
- **Exodus:** The event in which the Israelites left slavery in Egypt and the beginning of their journey to the promised land.
- **Manna:** The bread-like substance God provided to the Israelites during their 40 years in the desert.

5. FAQs on Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 6, Joshua 2, Rahab and the Spies, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Joshua 2 and the Story of Rahab

- **Why did the Israelite spies go to Rahab's house?** While some suggest the spies sought illicit pleasures, the text implies they were likely seeking lodging in a place where they could blend in and gather information. Rahab's house, located on a trade route and being a place where diverse people might frequent, provided a suitable cover for their mission. The text itself does not explicitly state they were seeking any sort of sexual activity.
- **What ethical dilemma arises from Rahab's actions?** Rahab lied to the authorities about hiding the spies in order to protect them. This poses an ethical question: Is it permissible to lie in order to save lives? There are three main views in Christian thought on this issue: (1) choose the lesser of two evils and lie, (2) God will provide a way to avoid lying and doing evil, and (3) sin boldly, but then confess and receive grace. The text focuses on Rahab's faith in action, not on a specific judgement of the lie.
- **How does the New Testament portray Rahab's actions?** The New Testament, in Hebrews 11, highlights Rahab's faith in welcoming the spies, not specifically focusing on the lie she told. In James 2, her actions are described as justification by works, emphasizing the fact that she hid the spies and helped them escape. Thus both texts focus on her faith in action rather than specifically evaluating the morality of her lie.
- **How does Rahab demonstrate her faith, both in action and in words?** Rahab's faith is demonstrated in her actions by welcoming, hiding, and helping the spies escape. Her faith in words is demonstrated by her confession that the Lord (Yahweh) is God of the heavens above and the earth beneath. This statement rejects the Canaanite pantheon, including their chief god Baal, and acknowledges the supremacy of the God of Israel.

- **Why is Rahab's confession in verse 11 so significant?** Rahab's words in verse 11, specifically that the Lord is God in the heavens above and the earth beneath, echoes a powerful theological concept found elsewhere in the Pentateuch (Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5, and Deuteronomy 4). These instances emphasize the incomparability of the God of Israel, and when Rahab uses the same language, she's aligning herself with that understanding and rejecting the dominant polytheistic beliefs of her culture.
- **How might Rahab have known to use such specific language about the Lord being God of heaven and earth?** It is likely she had heard of the acts of God among the Israelites already through common trade routes and news that would have traveled and this also could be how she knew of the Egyptians at the red sea and the Amorite kings. Another possibility is that the author of the Book of Joshua paraphrased Rahab's words to bring them more into alignment with the language and themes found earlier in the Pentateuch to highlight the significance of her faith.
- **How does the story of Rahab challenge traditional interpretations of God's interaction with Israel and other nations?** Rahab, a Canaanite and a prostitute, becomes a hero of faith and is included in the genealogy of Jesus. This challenges the idea that God was exclusively concerned with Israel in the Old Testament and that salvation is limited to certain groups of people. It also shows that repentance can lead to deliverance. Her story shows that God is inclusive and that his salvation is available to anyone who believes, regardless of their background or past.
- **What is the significance of Rahab's inclusion in the lineage of Jesus?** The inclusion of Rahab in the genealogy of Jesus, along with other women who were foreigners with questionable backgrounds, emphasizes God's inclusive nature and his mercy and grace that extends to people from all walks of life and past experiences. It highlights God's ability to use unexpected people in his plan of salvation and subverts societal notions of who God might favor.