

Rahab and Jericho

Our readings for today bring us to consider the preparatory work that was necessary before Israel could come against Jericho to destroy it, and take up their inheritance. The judgments of God were to come upon those who “believed not” (Heb. 11:31), yet Rahab and her house would be saved. We also are living in days immediately before the destruction of another city: the Apocalyptic Babylon the Great. But whereas the harlot Rahab was spared, the latter day harlot mother church will be destroyed at the hands of the Lord (Rev. 18-19).

Before the armies of Israel could take up their inheritance, they needed to have a view of the land: hence Joshua sent out two spies to “search out the country” (Josh. 2:2). Even so, we must have a clear vision of our future inheritance: “without a vision, the people perish” (Prov. 29:18). Indeed, Messiah himself had such a joyous vision ever before his mind, and we are told to look at him from that aspect: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who **for the joy that was set before him** endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). The joy of the Lord was his strength (cp. Neh. 8:10), and that vision enabled him to overcome.

These two spies, we read, “went, and came into an harlot’s house named Rahab, and lodged there” (Josh. 2:1). But though she was a harlot, this woman had heard of the power of Israel’s God, and chose to submit herself to it:

“... she said unto the men, I know that Yahweh 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 Yahweh dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt 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 Yahweh your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath” (Josh. 2:9-11).

These spies that she received are referred to by James as being “messengers”:

“... was not Rahab justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?” (Jas. 2:25).

Rahab, one of the lowest kind of women – an harlot – nevertheless developed a faith, which she manifested in works, and thus provided a wonderful example for us to follow: “by faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace” (Heb. 11:31). And in doing so, she illustrated the saying of Messiah to the disbelieving Jews “that publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you” (Mat. 21:31).

Rahab described how that “your terror is fallen upon us,” and it was this terror, it would appear, that induced her to submit to Israel’s God. Even so, we are faced with a coming day of judgment, which we need to warn folk about: “knowing the terror of the Lord, we

persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:11). There is an interesting link of ideas in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians:

"... ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thes. 1:9-10).

Even so Rahab turned from the idols of Jericho, to serve Israel's God – and was thus delivered from the coming wrath and judgments of God.

Again, we read in the Proverbs:

"the wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand" (Prov. 12:7).

This is literally what happened in the case of Rahab – her entire house remained standing, whilst the walls of Jericho fell down flat. Naturally speaking, we would balk at the idea of a harlot being "the righteous," but she provides a wonderful example of how God is able to justify the ungodly (Rom. 4:5) and save those who turn from their sins to trust in Him.

The record in Joshua continues to describe how the ark was to lead the way, as the people were to encircle Jericho:

"... they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of Yahweh your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it" (Josh. 3:3).

Even so, the Lord Jesus Christ leads the way for his brethren to follow:

"... I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jno. 14:6).

But the promise was, that not only would Israel be guided in the way: they would also be granted the victory in their warfare:

"Hereby shall ye know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out before you the Canaanites etc." (Josh. 3:10)

This was to be accomplished by the Angelic presence:

"... I will be an enemy to thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off" (Exo. 23:22-23).

And just the Angel would go before them, "into the place which I have prepared" (vs 20), even so the Lord similarly went before: "I go to prepare a place for you ..." (Jno. 14:2).

When Israel miraculously passed through the river Jordan, (which was parted for the purpose like the Red Sea), they were to set up certain stones as a memorial of what was taking place:

“... Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priest’s feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night” (Josh. 3:3).

These stones were to remain as “a sign among you ... and these stones shall be **a memorial** unto the children of Israel **for ever**” (Josh. 3:7).

But there was also a second set of stones which were set up in the midst of the river Jordan:

“and Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there unto this day” (Josh. 4:9).

There must be a significance behind this treatment of these stones, and perhaps we are given a clue as to what that might be in the words of John the Baptiser, also at the river Jordan. Just as Israel passed through the waters, even so John caused the repentant people to pass through the waters of Baptism at that same place. But there were those who came to his baptism who were not repentant. So, John warned them about the coming wrath:

“... when he saw many of the Pharisees and Saducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Mat. 3:7-8).

The stones taken out from the waters of Jericho were a memorial for ever. Hence John continued:

“think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able **of these stones** to raise up children unto Abraham” (Mat. 3:9).

The 12 stones that were taken out of the Jordan evidently speak of the stones dredged out of the mire of humanity, and brought into the promised inheritance – like the 12 tribes of Israel. Of these representative stones, God could raise up children unto Abraham. That is, by their repentance and emergence from the baptismal waters, God could bring them into the Israelitish hope – like Rahab. But the stones which remained in the Jordan may be applicable to those who never made it into the inheritance, who remained positioned where they were, overflowed in the Jordan.

We saw earlier that Israel's success was a consequence of the Angelic presence. Joshua himself was taught this in a most interesting encounter as recorded in Joshua chapter 5:

"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as the captain of the host of Yahweh am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant" (Josh. 5:13-14).

Notice that here, Joshua was making ready for the coming conflict with Jericho, and he was interrupted by the presence of the Angel. Whose side was the swordsman of Yahweh on? Actually, a better question is not whose side he is on, but whose side we are on! That seems to be acknowledged by Joshua, for as soon as he learned of the Angel's Divine identity, he prostrated himself before him, and asked for guidance and direction.

In these events, we have meeting together of two captains. Joshua was the captain of Yahweh's Host upon earth, and the Angel was a captain of a heavenly host. Both were needed to provide the inheritance to Israel – both human and Divine. And these principles come together in the Lord Jesus Christ. Returning to Hebrews 12, we read:

"let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith ..." (Heb. 12:2).

Here, the word for "author" actually means a princely captain, rather than a person who writes books. It is used earlier in this Epistle, alluding back to Israel of old:

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons into glory, to make **the captain of their salvation** perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10).

Again, we see that just as the Angel was the captain of Yahweh's host who would lead Israel into their glorious inheritance, even so Jesus is the captain of his brethren's salvation, and will lead them into glory. In him, we have the human and Divine, a princely leader who will bring us into our inheritance.

In the example of Rahab, we see an outstanding example of faith. She knew that Israel's God was going to destroy Jericho – and she trusted in His Power to deliver her from the wrath to come. She was, as it were, one of those stones brought out of the waters of Jericho, into the promised inheritance. Her changed character was such that she became a mother in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ. And in the example of Joshua, we see one who humbled himself before his God, and did what was commanded of him, in order to lead his brethren into glory. The lessons are there for us – let us heed and learn from them!

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