



## Session 4 | The Two Spies and Rahab | Joshua 2:1-11

If there was anyone familiar with spying it was Joshua. Forty years earlier he had been one. Not long after escaping slavery in Egypt Moses was ready to take the *children of Israel* into the Promised Land as God had directed. The Lord instructed Moses to send in men (one from each tribe) to *search the land of Canaan* (Numbers 13:1,2). The mission ended in failure when the majority of the twelve spies returned with a fearful and negative report. The people panicked and demanded they return to Egypt. Because of their lack of trust in God, He delayed their entry into the land forty years. Only two of the twelve spies in Numbers 13 gave a good report and encouraged the people to move forward. One was Caleb, and the other was Joshua.

Verse 1—

More literally, **Joshua had sent out**. We are probably reading a flashback, and this account may have happened days or weeks earlier. The **two men** went out **to spy secretly**, from their encampment in **Shittim**. The book of Numbers describes the exact location of their camp (Numbers 33:48,49). There are several significant features about this location. First, it was near Jericho with a direct line of sight, making it easier for the spies to gather information. Second, it was near a water source. Third, it encompassed *Beth-Jesimoth (house of desolation)*, and *Abel-Shittim (meadow of the acacias)*. Archeologists now believe the Israelite's base of operation was from the ruins of the city of Sodom. After the destruction of Sodom, the place was left desolate for 700 years. The only plant that could thrive in the alkaline soil was the Acacia tree. Because of the desolation, no one was living there; it had been unoccupied for 350 years because of the violent destruction of Sodom. Fourth, because the ruined city was elevated, it afforded them a 360-degree view of the entire region. Fifth, archeologists have recently found a single freestanding structure dating to the exact time of the Joshua account. The building as no more than 15x15 feet, had huge ceiling beams, storage, wood furniture, painted pottery, a huge water jar, and jewelry, and it was sitting on top of the massive pile of ruins. Was this *the house of desolation*? Was this where Moses set up his base of operations and later Joshua? Did Moses, before his death, complete the book of Deuteronomy from this building? We have to speculate but it sure adds intrigue to the account in Joshua chapter 2.

The word **secretly** in Hebrew is *heresh* and it is translated elsewhere as *craftsmen*. The word literally means *earthenware vessels*, so it is possible (although we can only speculate) the two spies entered Jericho disguised as *sellers of pots and utensils* in order not to draw any attention to themselves. And this may be why Joshua chose to only send in two men, rather than twelve as seen in the book of Numbers. The mission of the two spies was to find the weak points in the city's defenses, and then escape undetected. This may explain why they **came into a harlot's house**. It might be expected of *traveling salesmen*, and would provide a perfect cover. However, it could be possible that Joshua's plan to send them out secretly could mean that he kept it a secret even from the Israelites themselves (in fact, upon their return, they only report to Joshua and make no direct contact with the people, as Moses's 12 spies had done in the book of Numbers).

But then again, why are they discovered so quickly?

Verses 2,3—

**And it was told the king of Jericho...** Were the people of Jericho aware of the massive Israelite camp on the other side of the Jordan? No doubt. Therefore, they must have been on high alert for any strangers. Word was out these two men **entered into Rahab's house**.

Verses 4-7—

It is **Rahab's** quick thinking and courage that saves the day. She doesn't deny they *had been there*, but she deflects furthering questioning by saying they had already fled. What is it that prompted **Rahab** to turn on her own people?

Verses 8-11—

It appears the LORD had gained a reputation in Jericho and Rahab is able to recall two events where God delivered the Israelites. And it was because these events (Exodus 14; Numbers 21:21-22:1) that Rahab and her family believed in the God of Israel. **For the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and earth beneath.**

Throughout the book of Joshua thus far we have seen a call to be strong and courageous. The two spies and Rahab are certainly exhibiting strength and courage in the midst of their trials. But not everyone can be strong and courageous, sometimes hearts melt and fear sets in. In that case, the apostle Paul gives us these words of exhortation in Romans 15:1:

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak not to please ourselves." Do you know someone who is weak in their faith; someone who needs someone stronger to come along side? Perhaps that one is you today? Who can you help encourage and prop up? What if you are the weak one, and you have no one to strengthen you? Then you can be sure of this, you have a friend in Jesus!

What a Friend We Have in Jesus.

