



# History

## The Least of These

**A**FTER THE KING'S MEN HAD LEFT, Rahab waited until she knew they would be outside the city walls, then slipped back up to the roof of her house and the two secreted spies.

As she removed the stalks of flax that covered them, Rahab—uncharacteristic of her—was filled with apprehension over her situation. Would they believe her? Would these two strangers—aliens in her land, yet holding in their power the very fate of her people—believe what she was about to tell them? Would they trust her—and would they believe that she would trust them?

When they were uncovered, Rahab handed the men a small flask of water. She let them satisfy their thirst before she began. "I want to tell you something that may cost me my life. That, and the fact that I have protected yours from my own people, should guarantee your trust.

"Every person in this city, from the king

down to the urchin who cleans the latrines, has heard about your people and their long journey out of Egypt. We have heard what you suffered there for hundreds of years, and we've heard how your God miraculously freed you from that bondage.

"We've all heard the stories of fantastic events in the desert—of the earth swallowing thousands of people, of food falling from the sky and food massing on the ground, of water spilling from a rock. Many have laughed at the tales; the desert is a great breeding ground for lies.

"We've also heard stories of your victories against those who might have blocked your way, of how you have utterly wiped out entire nations by the sword.

"And we've all trembled with fear at their telling.

"Every person in this city fears you. Every fighting man has quaked at the thought of going up against you in battle—for he

knows going in that he will lose."

In the darkening twilight on the roof of her house, Rahab leaned closer to the two men and said with a forced whisper, "Every person in this land *fears* your God—but I *believe in Him*. Everyone else is afraid of what He will do to them, but I am afraid of living another day *without Him*."

### Provision Made

THE TWO ISRAELITES EXCHANGED GLANCES, mystified by the words of this stranger.

"Yes, I know what you're thinking," Rahab continued. "You're right. I'm just another heathen—and on top of that, a common harlot. I have no assurance that I am even *permitted* to worship your God; He may not even have me! But I do know this: At every telling of the stories of how your God has worked His will on your behalf I became more convinced that He was, truly,

the one God above all other gods. This city is filled with waxwork and plaster gods who aren't worth the sweat it took to make them. But *your* God, who was made by no man, is truly the Lord. He is God!

"So I put it to you: Will He have me?"

"There are others in our company," one of the men began, "who have joined us from other nations, other cultures. They've left their old gods to walk in the ways of the one true God."

"They joined us," his companion continued, "and they've been welcomed into our community. In fact the Lord Himself told Moses: 'Do not oppress an alien; you yourselves know how it feels to be aliens, because you were aliens in Egypt.' So provision has been made."

"Those who obey His holy Law are accepted into His people."

Rahab suddenly moved away from the men, sinking back into the curtain of night. "Oh, it could never be. What would such a God want with me? Even my own people turn away from me."

"Tell us which came first," one of the men said, stepping toward her, "your belief in the Lord—or your hope that He would save you?"

Simply, like an innocent girl, Rahab said quietly, "The belief."

"We all have pasts we'd like to hide," he said. "We all have something to be ashamed of. But the Lord welcomes us anyway. He's more interested in our tomorrow than our yesterday."

"You've already taken the most important step. You are already one of us."

"Then," Rahab said, "we have a covenant between us."

"Now therefore, please swear to me by the Lord, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's household, and give me a pledge of truth, and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death." So the men said to her, "Our life for yours if you do not tell this business of ours; and it shall come about when the Lord gives us the land that we will deal kindly and faithfully with you." Then she let them down by a rope through

the window, for her house was on the city wall, so that she was living on the wall. The men said to her, "We shall be free from this oath to you which you have made us swear, unless, when we come into the land, you tie this cord of scarlet thread in the window through which you let us down, and gather to yourself into the house your father and your mother and your brothers and all your father's household."

Joshua 2:12-15,17-18

## A New God

**RAHAB, LEFT ALONE, SANK BACK** into her swarming doubts. What would become of her? She was a woman of the streets, a lowly harlot viewed with contempt by her own people—how in the world could she be accepted into a new community already aware of her past? Was she stepping into a miserable new life—even one of subjection or slavery? She had no guarantee from the men beyond the taking of the city; after that, who could say what would become of her and her family?

And what of her new God. Yes, she believed in Him, had even been worshipping Him secretly behind closed doors, but she still knew little of His personality, His ways. What would He do with her? Would she be confined to a lower strata of His society because of her publicly sordid past? At least here in Jericho she could continue her business; what would become of her with Israel?

As the inhabitants of her city awaited their fate with dread, feeling the weight of the approaching horde descend upon their fortified walls, Rahab resigned herself to a safe, yet miserable life in the company of a new people.

*And may the Lord have mercy on me,* she thought.

So the young men who were spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and her mother and her brothers and all she had; they also brought out all her relatives and placed them outside the camp of Israel. They burned the city with fire, and all that was in it. Only the silver and gold, and articles of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. However, Rahab

the harlot and her father's household and all she had, Joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of Israel to this day, for she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

Joshua 6:23-25

## Declared Righteous

"**AND SO, MY LITTLE LOVE,**" Rahab said to Obed, "the Lord not only granted me safety with His people, but He brought blessings beyond all measure into my life. By His grace I met a wonderful, forgiving man and I became his wife. Salmon and I had many children together—including *your* father."

"Daddy!" Obed grinned excitedly.

"Yes, your daddy Boaz," Rahab smiled. "Then the Lord brought your mommy, Ruth, into your daddy's life—and you must ask your mommy to tell you more about her own life, and the marvelous way our God brought *her* here to Bethlehem." Rahab playfully swatted Obed's behind. "Now it's time for you to run inside and help your mother with the meal. Go on."

Rahab let her gaze follow the lad as he bounded into the house, and her heart swelled with thanksgiving over the many joys the Lord God had brought into her long life. She closed her eyes and drifted back to that dusty city and the days when she had plied her disreputable trade. She remembered the misery of living without God, and she thanked Him for taking her in—even her. And she thought, *Yes, I may now die in peace, after this full life.*

But Rahab passed from this life to the next not knowing the full extent of the Lord's grace. In this life she never knew—nor did she dare to dream—that she, a lowly woman of the street, would play a part in the very lineage of the long-awaited Messiah. dsj

Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of David the king...

...Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.

Matthew 1:5-6a,16