

Joshua 2

Aim of Lesson

To highlight the faith of Rahab.

Background study

Deuteronomy 2:25; 11:25; Matthew 1:5-6; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:24-25. Look up information about ancient Jericho - the dimensions of its walls and the style of its houses. Illustrations will be helpful.

Suggested outline of lesson

Joshua, having been assured of God's favour and of the people's confidence in him, immediately prepared to invade Canaan. Explain to the children that although God had promised them this land, it was already inhabited, and the inhabitants, who were wicked and idolatrous, had to be conquered. The Israelites would require courage and determination, and Joshua set them the example.

They had encamped at a place called Shittim, just east of the Jordan. The river had to be crossed, and Joshua realized that the fortress of Jericho would need to be taken before the land could be penetrated further. He needed to investigate the city and its people, so he sent two spies to reconnoitre. This was a dangerous mission, for their discovery would probably have meant death.

Jericho was enclosed by a very high and very thick wall. The only way into the city was through guarded gates. During the day the gates remained open. Shepherds took out their flocks to graze, and merchants brought in goods from other countries. People passed in and out all day. In the evening the gates were shut, and no one was allowed in or out during the hours of darkness.

Joshua had heard about the huge wall and the strong gates of Jericho, but he wanted to know more about the people. Were they preparing an army to meet him, and were they afraid? The spies seem to have entered the city without difficulty, although they had been seen and recognized. The people of Jericho were apprehensive and suspicious of strangers. News had reached them of the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, forty years before, and of the Israelites' more recent campaigns against their enemies. They knew that these people were now camped across the valley and that an attack was imminent. The spies soon discovered that the people of Jericho were afraid.

As night fell the presence of the two men on the streets would have been regarded with suspicion, so they looked for somewhere to hide. Tell the children that Rahab kept a lodging-house and they chose to seek refuge there. The woman accepted them kindly and encouraged them to hide from the authorities. The spies had been observed entering her house and, when the news reached the king, he despatched soldiers to look for them. Recreate the tense atmosphere as the spies hurried to hide and Rahab covered them with the dried stalks of flax. Suddenly there was a loud banging on the door. The spies lay rigid, holding their breath, as Rahab bravely confronted the soldiers and convinced them that the two men had already left the city. When the danger was past - danger for her as much as for the spies - she talked earnestly with the two men of Israel. She had taken their part against her own people, believing that the God of Israel was the true and living God.

Rahab is one of the most outstanding examples of faith recorded in the Bible. Although an idol-worshipper, an immoral woman, and an enemy of Israel, she had been so moved by the reports she had heard that she was prepared to embrace the Israelites' faith and way of life, and trust in their God.

Because Rahab had saved their lives, the spies promised to rescue her and her family during the forthcoming invasion, provided she displayed the cord in her window and gathered all her family into the house with her. The situation was too dangerous for the spies to remain in the city any longer. Wisely they followed Rahab's advice to leave immediately, with her assistance, and to lie low in the hills for three days until the search was called off.

Contrast the report of these two spies with the earlier report of Joshua and Caleb's faithless companions at Kadesh. Morale in the Israelite camp was now high, and they were ready for the campaign to begin.

Relevance to the children's lives

Rahab believed what she had heard about the miracles God had done, although she had not seen them for herself. We read about miracles in the Bible. Do we believe them with the same kind of faith and trust that Rahab had?

Worksheets

These should be self-explanatory.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, we know and believe that you led your people with great power. Help us to put our trust in you and bravely do what is right in your sight. Amen.

Memory verse

Rahab said: "The Lord your God is he who is God in heaven above and on earth beneath" (Joshua 2:11).