

## **I. The Death of Moses and Transfer of Leadership**

- In one of the most moving stories of the Hebrew Scriptures, The Lord takes Moses to Mt. Nebo and shows him the land that was promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses has already been told that he will not enter into the Promised Land (Numbers 20:12), but God reminds him again here.
- Moses dies and is buried by the Lord Himself in an unknown location. What an awesome respect and honor bestowed on Moses!
- Moses is 120 when he dies, but we are told that eyes were not dim or his strength weakened by his extreme age.
- The people of Israel, who opposed Moses so much during his period of leadership, still hold him in high regard, mourning him for 30 days.
- Joshua is given charge of the people and assured by the Lord that the Lord will be with Joshua just as He was with Moses. Joshua will overcome Israel's enemies and conquer Canaan.
- The Lord God commands Joshua to be strong and courageous, and most importantly: obey the laws that Moses taught to them.

## **II. Rahab and the Spies**

- Joshua sends two men into the land, specifically to the city of Jericho (possibly one of the oldest cities on earth).
- The spies enter the city and, it appears, immediately arrive in the house of Rahab, a harlot, and lodge there. The narrative tells us that she lives on/in the city wall (this presents a confusing problem later in Joshua)
- Why do you think the spies chose to lodge there?
- The spies are obviously not well-trained in covert ops and secrecy, as it appears the king is aware of their presence fairly quickly. He is aware of their exact location. He sends word to Rahab to turn the men over.
- Rahab responds with two statements she knows to be false:
  1. The men did come here, but I had no idea where they were from, a lie based upon v. 2:9-11.
  2. The men are no longer here (directs the king's men to chase them), a lie based upon v. 2:6
- Rahab speaks to the two men hiding out on the roof and acknowledges many things:
  - ✓ She speaks of the Lord as if she recognizes the God of Israel in the same way they do.
  - ✓ She reveals the fear the inhabitants of Jericho are experiencing.
  - ✓ She tells them that the news of the exodus events have preceded them.
  - ✓ She and the others in Jericho are aware of Israel's victories over the forces of Sihon and Og (Numbers 21).
  - ✓ She and the others in Jericho know they will fall in the battle against the Israelites.
- In light of this knowledge, Rahab brokers a deal with the two spies. In return for her not revealing their presence and continued silence, her family will be spared in the upcoming conquest. The men agree.
- She aids in their escape (city gate is closed and certainly being watched) by lowering them down through the window via a rope. She advises them to hide in the hills for three days until the king's men are not pursuing them any longer, and then return to their people.
- The men place one last condition on the deal, instructing Rahab to hang a scarlet thread on this same window and ensure her whole family is gathered into the same dwelling. If they leave, they take their lives in their own hands. She appears to tie the thread in place right away (not waiting three days)
- The spies do indeed follow her direction and conceal themselves for three days until the king's forces abandon the search for them. Upon their return, they tell Joshua all that has happened. Did they actually do any scouting work, or do they base their report on the word of Rahab? Whatever they say, Joshua speaks with high confidence about their success in the upcoming battle (2:24).
- Joshua 6:25 indicates that after the conquest, she acclimated into Israelite society.
- Rahab is mentioned three times in the New Testament:
  1. Matthew 1:5: Most scholars agree that the Rahab mentioned in Matthew's Gospel is the Rahab of Joshua. This makes her a Gentile ancestor of Christ, the great-great grandmother of King David. The timeframe makes sense, with the conquest of Canaan taking between 5-7 years and Ruth 1:1 indicates that Ruth's story takes

place in the time of the judges (Rahab is Boaz's mother). This means that Boaz was half-Gentile, he married a full Gentile, so Obed was only one-quarter Hebrew?

2. Hebrews 11:31: Rahab is described by the Hebrew writer as protecting the Israelite spies out of trust, or faith, in God. She is the last person whose acts of faith are expanded on (Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel are mentioned by name in 11:32, but individual acts are not ascribed). She is listed just after Moses and the faith of Israel at the Sea and Jericho. Interestingly enough, one would expect Joshua's name to be placed here, but instead we have the praise of a woman who made her living through sin.
3. James 2:25: Rahab is said to be justified by her works (protecting the spies) in the same discussion where James describes Abraham's righteous acts driven by faith.

### III. Across the Water, Take II

- It is early in the morning on the day after the spies supply Joshua with their promising report. The people march to the banks of the Jordan and camp there three days.
- The officers go through the camp and advise the people that when the Ark of the Covenant begins to move, they are to follow at a set distance, no closer than 2,000 cubits (3,500 feet). Joshua directs the people to sanctify themselves for what is about to happen.
- Joshua orders the priests to take up the Ark. The people are told what is about to happen and that they need to set apart 12 men, one from each tribe (in anticipation of the ceremony in 4:2, 3).
- The priests carrying the Ark are to step into the shallows of the river and stand still. When they do so, the waters of the Jordan, flowing south to the Dead Sea, are pushed back and heaped up upstream of the priests. Israel walks across the riverbed on dry land. The priests remain in place until the whole nation crosses.
- A memorial is to be built, one made of twelve stones gathered out of the riverbed by each of the men set apart in 3:12. They will be stacked in the midst of the river as a reminder of this day. When this effort was complete, the priests carrying the Ark walked back out of the river, and the Jordan flowed again.
- When the news of this new miracle reached the ears of the kings about to face Israel, it broke their spirit.
- After this crossing, before embarking on the conquest of Canaan, Joshua is directed to circumcise all the men born in the wilderness.
- Passover is celebrated 4 days after they cross the Jordan. The giving of manna from the Lord ceases.
- An angel, the commander of the army of the Lord, appears to Joshua just outside of Jericho. Joshua bows before it and is told to remove his sandals-he is on holy ground.