

Joshua 1:16-2:11 | Sunday July 19, 2026

The book of Joshua opens at a critical moment in Israel's history where things could have gone sideways very quickly. We have seen throughout Chapter 1 the time and care God took to encourage Joshua. Moses is gone, but they still have **God's promises, God's presence, and God's Word**, and they are still **God's people**. It is time to arise and go over the Jordan to inherit the promised land. Joshua has every intention of entering the promised land. Joshua's first few decisions show how careful he is not to have another rebellion of unbelief like what happened 40 years before at Kadesh-barnea. The first step is to remind the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh of their promise to remain unified with the other tribes and join in with the conquest of the promised land.

Joshua 1:12-18 ESV

- (12) And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh Joshua said,
(13) **"Remember** the word that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God is providing you a place of rest and will give you this land.'
(14) Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land that Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but all the men of valor among you shall pass over armed before your brothers **and shall help them,**
(15) until the LORD gives rest to your brothers as He has to you, **and they also take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving them.** Then you shall return to the land of your possession and shall possess it, the land that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise."
(16) And they answered Joshua, **"All that you have commanded us we will do,** and wherever you send us we will go.
(17) Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, **so we will obey you. Only may the LORD your God be with you, as He was with Moses!**
(18) Whoever rebels against your commandment and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to death. **Only be strong and courageous."**

Last week we saw the earthly focus of these two and a half tribes and their desire to not enter into the promised land. Moses called them **"a brood of sinful men"** (Num 32:14). Both Moses and Joshua understood the danger of these tribes's request and knew if not handled correctly **fear and discouragement could spread out to the other tribes as well**. The desire not to have their inheritance be across the Jordan was wrong. Yet, the two and a half tribes respond well to Joshua and are willing to stay faithful to their promise. They are willing to join with the other tribes in a unity and fight in the promised land. Then, surprisingly, they take time to encourage Joshua. The very tribes that Joshua was unsure if they would respect His authority remind Him that success will be found in God's presence. They encourage Joshua to be strong and courageous. **Instead of discouragement spreading among the tribes, encouragement based on God's truth is shared.** We have been called to do the same thing for each other within the church.

Hebrews 10:23-25 ESV

- (23) Let us **hold fast** the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.
(24) And let us consider **how to stir up one another to love and good works,**
(25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, **but encouraging one**

another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Within the church, we are called to **hold fast, take into possession, occupy, and lay claim to** the hope that we have through Jesus Christ. We have access to God through the blood of Jesus (Heb 10:19). We can make that promise ours because God is faithful and will not change His promises. Then we are to encourage one another and help each other hold fast to this promise. We are to **stir up, provoke, and irritate** each other into love and good works. We are called to care for each other's spiritual walk and aim to help each other continue to lay hold of what Christ has for us. Notice that **we need to meet with each other in order to encourage one another**. The problem of not meeting is not solved by simply getting together. We are called to care for each other and encourage each other when we do meet. **The point is not just getting together but also stirring each other up and encouraging one another in our walks with Jesus.**

Joshua was calling on these two and a half tribes to encourage the other tribes and collectively walk in what God had for them. **Everyone was lifted as a unit as they took hold of God's promises.** The same is to happen within the body of Christ. Now, with the risk of the 2 ½ tribes alleviated, Joshua then turns his attention to the next issue that could spark another Kadesh-barnea: how to spy out the land.

Joshua 2:1 ESV

(1) And Joshua the son of Nun sent **two men secretly** from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially **Jericho**." And they went and came **into the house** of a prostitute whose name was Rahab **and lodged there**.

Joshua had been one of the 12 spies that had gone through the land 40 years ago. At that time, 10 walked in an unbelief and fear while 2 trusted God. So this time he only sends 2. Last time the report of the spies caused a panic and fear within the camp, so this time Joshua sends them secretly. **This indicates that Joshua does not tell Israel that spies have been sent out.** Joshua is taking every practical step he can to avoid discouragement and unbelief from infecting Israel. These spies are meant to provide reconnaissance on Jericho, as it is time to start conquering. Jericho was **five miles** west of the Jordan River and was strategically placed as it served as a major passageway between the **Jordan Valley and the central hill country**. Due to its good location and spring-fed water supply, it is one of the oldest cities in this part of the world.

These spies try to infiltrate the city unnoticed and go to a prostitute's house where men coming and going would not be unusual. The language emphasizes that the spies simply lodged in Rahab's house to alleviate any concerns of immorality. Yet even with this detail, there are many parts of the story that can make us uncomfortable. Throughout the years, Jewish tradition and many others have tried to make Rahab into an innkeeper and not a prostitute. Yet, the New Testament references of Rahab (Heb 11:31; James 2:25) describe her as a prostitute and take away any option to change her profession. Unfortunately, the spies plan did not work. Although they had slipped away from Israel secretly, they were quickly noticed even at Rahab's.

Joshua 2:2-3 ESV

(2) And it was told to the **king** of Jericho, "Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land."

(3) Then the king of Jericho **sent to Rahab**, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, **for they have come to search out all the land.**"

Not only were the spies noticed coming into the city, but **their exact location is known immediately**. At this time Canaan was not a unified region, and each area would have had its own king or leader. The King of Jericho sends messengers to Rahab and demands she hand over the spies. If we did not know the story, we would have every expectation for this immoral Canaanite woman to gladly turn over the spies and eagerly receive whatever reward she could get from finding them. Yet shockingly that does not happen.

Joshua 2:4-7 ESV

(4) But the woman had taken the two men **and hidden them**. And she said, “True, the men came to me, **but I did not know where they were from**.

(5) And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. I do not know where the men went. **Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them.”**

(6) **But** she had brought them up to the roof **and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof**.

(7) So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. And **the gate was shut** as soon as the pursuers had gone out.

Rahab hid the spies and concocted a great story, weaving pieces of truth with outright lies to send the soldiers in the wrong direction. She admits that the men came to her yet lies about where they were. Instead of turning the spies over, she hid them in the stalks of flax that were drying on her roof. When the Jordan River was flooded, it was also harvest time. Flax would be soaked in water and then dried in the sun so that it could be used to make cloth. **If the spies had come in any other time of the year, this hiding spot would not have existed.**

The very timing that made the Jordan River difficult to pass was the timing that helped save the spies lives. It would have been easy for Joshua to question why God led them to the Jordan River during its flood stage. **The very trial that stood before Israel became the means for God to show them His grace.**

John 1:16 Wuest Expanded New Testament

(16) for out of His fulness as a source we all received, and **grace in exchange for grace**.

God is so faithful to us and works out His purpose in our lives in so many ways, yet we can tend to entirely overlook how He is at work. **God keeps His grace fresh in our lives**. Each situation we face, He provides grace for that moment, often in ways we did not expect. Then when the next situation arises, He provides grace for that moment. **His grace is constantly being exchanged and replaced with new, fresh grace in our lives**. This entire story is filled with too many coincidences to ignore. From the timing of the flax being on the roof to the spies meeting Rahab in the first place. How many Canaanite prostitutes in Jericho desired to worship the true God? Are we expected to believe the spies just happened to meet Rahab?

Isaiah 46:8-10 ESV

(8) “Remember this and **stand firm, recall it to mind**, you transgressors,

(9) remember the former things of old; **for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me**,

(10) declaring the end from the beginning and **from ancient times things not yet done**, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and **I will accomplish all My purpose,**’

Only God knows the ancient times and the future all at once. We are called to remember this truth and stand firm in who God actually is. He is all-powerful, and all-loving, and good. He will accomplish His purpose in our lives. **We can trust a God who is this powerful and this intimate with our lives** that He even knows when it is time for the flax harvest. We are to stand firm in this truth and recall it to mind.

Verse 7 leaves us with a cliffhanger. Rahab the prostitute has hidden the spies, but the gate is shut now, and we do not know how the spies will make it out of the city. We also have not been told why Rahab just hid them. At this point everyone wants to know whether Rahab was justified in her lie or not. **Scripture clearly calls lying a sin and part of our old life** (Prov 12:22-23; Col 3:9-10). **Scripture also has the example where deception is encouraged for safety** (1 Sam 16:1-3). God tells Samuel to use a cover story to protect himself from Saul. Yet these principles are not what this story is about. **The focus is not on if Rahab the prostitute lied but on the amazing truth she is about to declare.**

Joshua 2:8-11 Legacy Standard Bible

(8) Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof

(9) and said to the men, **"I know that Yahweh** has given you the land, and **that the terror of you has fallen on us**, and that all the inhabitants of the land have **melted away before you.**

(10) For **we have heard how Yahweh dried up the water of the Red Sea** before you when you came out of Egypt and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, **to Sihon and Og**, whom you devoted to destruction.

(11) Indeed we heard it, and **our hearts melted**, and a courageous spirit no longer rose up in any man because of you; **for Yahweh your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.**

Rahab explains what has been on her heart and why she was willing to save these spies and risk her own life in the process. **She shares what she knows to be true.** This is in comparison to the lies that she did not know where the spies are from or where they went. **She knows that the Lord has given Israel the promised land, her home.** She has heard what happened in Egypt 40 years ago and believes that God really did split the Red Sea. She heard about the more recent battle in Numbers 21, where Israel defeated Sihon and Og. The people of Canaan were talking about this nation that kept wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. They had plenty of time to respond if they wanted to. **Rahab watched as her ancient, well-fortified city trembled in fear at Israel.** The Canaanites had no spirit in them, and their hearts melted. **As Rahab watched all of this, she chose to respond in faith.** She concluded that the God of Israel must be the true God in the heavens above. She trusted that He was more powerful than Baal, and she was willing to risk her life trusting in the God of Israel. Her speech shows how much work God had been doing in Rahab's heart long before the spies ever showed up. **Rahab had reached the very conclusion God desired for Israel to reach.**

Deuteronomy 4:37-40 ESV

(37) And because He loved your fathers and chose their offspring after them and **brought you out of Egypt with His own presence, by His great power,**

(38) **driving out before you nations greater and mightier than you**, to bring you in, to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is this day,

(39) **know therefore** today, and **lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.**

(40) **Therefore you shall keep His statutes** and His commandments, which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time.”

God desired for Israel to see His mighty works and to know that He was God and there was no other. They were to respond in worship and obedience.

Time and time again God revealed His amazing power and tender goodness to Israel. He desired for them to walk in fellowship with Him. **Instead of Israel proclaiming these truths, it is a pagan Canaanite prostitute declaring truthfully who God is.** Rahab responded in faith to the true God.

Hebrews 11:29-32 ESV

(29) **By faith the people crossed the Red Sea** as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned.

(30) By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

(31) **By faith Rahab the prostitute** did not perish with those who were disobedient, **because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.**

(32) And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of **David** and Samuel and the prophets—

More is said about Rahab in the faith chapter of Hebrews 11 than of David. This chapter is easily misunderstood, and often the great strength and ability of the people mentioned is emphasized. Instead, this chapter is about what faith can do, not what people can do. Faith is not a warm, cozy feeling about God. **It is hearing the truth about God and then responding to it. Rahab responded to the truth that she knew, and God kept pursuing her.** She didn't know the law and how God defined morality. Her lifestyle was definitely not cleaned up before God used her. Everyone tries to clean Rahab up because, on some level, we are uncomfortable with God using someone so sinful. **She came as a sinner just as we all do.** She heard the truth about God and responded. Rahab is commended for her faith. God not only used her to protect the spies; He made her a part of His people and had her be a part of the family line of King David, King Solomon, and Jesus.

Matthew 1:1; 5-6 ESV

(1) The book of **the genealogy of Jesus Christ**, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

(5) and Salmon the father of Boaz **by Rahab**, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, (6) and Jesse **the father of David the king.** And David was the father of **Solomon** by the wife of Uriah,

What an amazing picture of God's never-ending grace to us. Our sinfulness and dirtiness do not keep Him from reaching out to us. Instead, it proves that we are all truly saved by His amazing Grace.

1 Timothy 1:15-16 ESV

(15) The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, **that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.**

(16) But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might

display His perfect patience as an example **to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life.**
