

Rahab, the Lady of Peace

12/03/2023

Scripture 1: (Jos. 2:1-24 ESV)

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.

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

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."

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. 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." 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.

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. Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how the LORD 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. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death."

And the men said to her, "Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the LORD gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you."

Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was built into the city wall, so that she lived in the wall. And she said to them, "Go into the hills, or the pursuers will encounter you, and hide there three days until the pursuers have returned. Then afterward you may go your way."

The men said to her, "We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours that you have made us swear. Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father's household. Then if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless. But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head. But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless with respect to your oath that you have made us swear."

And she said, "According to your words, so be it." Then she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window. They departed and went into the hills and remained there three days until the pursuers returned, and the pursuers searched all along the way and found nothing. Then the two men returned. They came down from the hills and passed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they told him all that had happened to them.

And they said to Joshua, "Truly the LORD has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us."

Scripture 2: (Jos. 6:17-25 ESV)

And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it. But all silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron, are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD."

So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city. Then they devoted all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys, with the edge of the sword. But to the two men who had spied out the land, Joshua said, "Go into the prostitute's house and bring out from there the woman and all who belong to her, as you swore to her."

So the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her. And they brought all her relatives and put them outside the camp of Israel. And they burned the city with fire, and everything in it. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. But Rahab the prostitute and her father's household and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. And she has lived in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

Scripture 3: (Matt. 1:1-16 ESV)

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

Sermon:

As we consider these notable women ancestors of Jesus this Advent season, I expect that we may continue to be surprised by their expressions of faithfulness: of their personal trust in the LORD; and the great impact which they had upon redemptive history, because they are not always considered the “Star” within their own story.

Eve is often relegated to the position of “scapegoat”: receiving all the blame for our Fall despite the Apostle Paul laying that responsibility squarely upon Adam's shoulders (Romans 5, 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Timothy 2). Adam was so responsible that I cannot help but imagine that after they were exiled from God's Garden, he probably became a bitter man; at least somewhat. Work had become toil. The means of survival for his family had become uncertain. His first two sons, in whom he may have (probably) shared Eve's hope that one of them would triumph over the serpent, were either killed or lost to the future. Regardless, Eve carried on and bore Adam yet another son, Seth, from whose descendants Jesus would be born. Through it all, Eve remained in the background of the story, even though her participation and contribution was not only necessary but critical to our ultimate redemption.

Rahab is another such woman, often left in the background. She was a critical player in the story of Israel's establishment, yet she is left to languish in the shadows. She is either remembered negatively because of her profession as a prostitute in Jericho, or she gets erased from the story entirely by Mahalia Jackson's catchy tune, “Joshua fit the battle of Jericho, an de walls came a tumblin' down. Hallelujah!”¹, because there is no verse about her. Yet without her contributions to the story, Israel's conquest of Canaan would have surely gone very differently. To set the scene:

- The first time Israel sent spies into the land, when Moses brought them to Canaan after leaving Mt Sinai, ten of the twelve spies gave a disheartening report which caused Israel to refuse to trust the LORD and thus that generation was condemned to wander in the wilderness for the next forty years and expire.
- Then, when Moses brought Israel to Canaan again and transferred the mantle of leadership to Joshua, the son of Nun and one of the two optimistic spies from the first visit (the other being Caleb, from the tribe of Judah and whose nephew, Othniel, was the first Judge), spies were again sent to scout out the land. So it is very reasonable to assume that Israel's hope and confidence for their campaign depended greatly upon the spies' report. Surely Joshua understood that they needed a good report this time, otherwise the people's trust in the LORD might again waver or even be shattered completely.

Now turning to Rahab, although her story takes place in the midst of an invasion, in the midst of war, in the midst of a violent conflict, we shall see how she was an exemplary woman, with a spiritual hope for peace.

Before crossing the Jordan river to take possession of the Promised Land, the Israelites again did some reconnaissance of Canaan. *“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.”*

What a way for a woman to be first introduced, right? Before her name is even given, her profession as a prostitute is set before us, front and center, thereby defining her. Our modern culture today would have us think that her “primary identity” was as a prostitute, before or without considering her identity as an independent woman, a daughter, a sister, or even as a citizen of Jericho. The post-modern interpreter would not be surprised by her actions in this story, because they would say that a prostitute, by nature of her profession, was a “faithless” woman who would be expected to only seek her own best advantage, because otherwise she was

1 <https://youtu.be/rBQmLiBWD4g?si=69uMqRyQsuONivOa>; <https://hymnary.org/hymn/SOZ1981/page/133>

entirely dependent upon the sufferance of the men who “visited” her. Yet we know that Rahab was much more than just her profession. That is why we need to remember that in the ancient world, prostitution was an ordinary thing, and a legitimate profession for some women; although it was probably not one of first choice.

At that time, prostitution was the only way for a woman to be independent and exert control and authority over her own life, apart from her family of origin. Most women involved in the trade were only in it because it had become for some reason necessary; for most women it may have been their only choice for survival. Prostitution was respected as an institution, but it was not a respectable job. Still, through the benefits and income that she received from her occupation, Rahab had her own home and was self sufficient. Regardless of the circumstances that led her into that life, she was a self-made woman. Until this point, her hope and her trust must have been in herself and her own efforts, requiring the confidence of Adam. Her apparent present success in life {success being minimally defined as continued survival} was facilitated, judging by her portrayal in our story, through her quick wit and firm determination. Therefore, what happens next in our story may be a surprise.

“And it was told to the king of Jericho, “Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land.”

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.”” The king knew what was up. He knew that his reign was in trouble, and he was right to be concerned, nervous, and worried even because the LORD's judgment and wrath was bearing down upon him quickly. So, having been warned of the dangerous enemy within his gates, he asked Rahab to betray the spies, to give them up and save their city. Perhaps he offered her a reward? Perhaps even greater personal security? Or perhaps he expected her to obey him merely because he was the king. {In spite of all this, what the king asked of Rahab was another offense, a cultural offense: the violation of the laws of hospitality, a guest was to be defended as well (if not better than) one's own family (see the story of Lot in Sodom). The king's demand that Rahab violate this cultural requirement (which also violates the Biblical principal of “love your neighbor”) may have given an added impetus for her betrayal of Jericho.}

However, instead of obeying him, she betrayed the king, her people, and her city in a hope for something greater and better: peace. *“But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them.”* Rahab was a professional business woman, so she must have known how to calculate risk. She could see that her fortunes and future would only be improved through the right investment. Yet against all reason and expectation, Israel's star was on the rise, while Jericho's light was waning. So she chose to invest in Israel, in the hope of peace for herself and for her family: for their protection and their safety; in the face of the LORD's and Israel's inevitable triumph. Thus she told the king's men, *“True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. 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.”* when in reality, *“...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.”*

Rahab committed herself to Israel. She chose to switch her allegiance from Jericho to Israel; from Jericho's king to the LORD. Whether or not she truly understood it, her loyalty now fully belonged to the Lord YHVH, the Sovereign whom she chose to obey and in whom she was placing her trust. We can see here the beginning of faith, of *pisteuo* building up within her.

Since our youth have all been studying the Ten Commandments recently, we need to stop and ask the question: Did Rahab do wrong by lying to the king's messengers; by lying to her king? Was she not “bearing false witness”? Did she break God's holy Law by protecting the spies, or was there actually something greater going on in our story? Through her defense of the Israelite spies, Rahab joined the Hebrew midwives, Shiprah and

Puah (Exodus 1:15-22), in civil disobedience, and like them Rahab would be similarly blessed (with a family and with children), even if she could not know it yet.

Back in Egypt before Moses was born, the midwives stood up to Pharaoh and did not tell him the truth because they were defending the newborn Hebrew boys. They lied to the king of Egypt because they were obeying a higher authority: the greater moral authority of the LORD. Although a wrong deed, done for good reasons, remains wrong, in this activity they did not do wrong.

- Pharaoh had commanded them to murder Hebrew boys just as they were being born.
- Pharaoh commanded them to violate God's Holy Law for his own sinful purposes, wants, and desires: for the hoped preservation of his kingdom and his reign; but their obedience to God, by lying in defense of life, served a higher kingdom and a King greater than Pharaoh.
- Through his own sinful disobedience and his attempt to compel further and greater sin in others, Pharaoh lost the right to be obeyed and he lost the honor and privilege of receiving the truth.
- While God's people are compelled and commanded to always be truthful, especially when it concerns a matter of justice and righteousness (Q#144), we cannot be compelled to speak truthfully if it will lead to greater injury and/or death; to injustice or unrighteousness. The Westminster Larger Catechism (Q#145) says that we must not be “rewarding the wicked according to the work of the righteous.” Therefore,
 - The American Christians who sheltered runaway slaves along the “Underground Railroad” could do so in good conscience because they were protecting others against slavery's horror and wickedness.
 - Likewise, the German Christians who hid Jews from the Nazis could deny their hidden presence in good conscience because they were serving the cause of justice and defending the lives of the defenseless.

Therefore, like the midwives and with a clear conscience, Rahab lied and disobeyed an earthly king's command of, “*Bring out the men who have come to [her]...*”, because by doing so she was keeping the heavenly King's command, “Thou shalt not murder”, in its' positive corollary, “Thou shalt preserve and defend life.” (WLC #135). These women exemplified the same principal which informed the Apostles when they told the Jewish Sanhedrin, “*We must obey God rather than men.*” (Acts 5:29 ESV) after they were commanded to stop preaching Jesus Christ crucified. So,

- Our fidelity and obedience to God is more important than fidelity to sinful men commanding wickedness because only the first preserves peace with God, while the second perpetuates our rebellion of sin.

Through her act of disobedience, by lying to the king, Rahab abandoned any hope of peace with her king or with Jericho. Her hope was now in gaining peace with the LORD God.

If her deception was discovered, she faced the certain consequence of death because she committed treason against Jericho and its king. Yet her act of treason was different from that of Adam and Eve, because her supposed treason was actually an act of faithfulness; an act of unity; and an act for peace. Adam and Eve committed their sinful act of treason against the LORD because of their lack of faith and trust in him, whereas Rahab chose to trust and hope in the God of Israel: a God whom she did not know, because she believed in all that He had done for Israel (John 10:37-38).

When she hid the Israelite spies, she told them her “Why”, *“I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how the LORD 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. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.”*. She believed in God and trusted Him because:

- News had reached Jericho that Israel had a divine right to the land of Canaan, as a gift from their God.
- News had reached Jericho about how the LORD parted the Red Sea and how He destroyed Pharaoh's army when the waters returned.
- News had reached Jericho about how Israel had defeated and destroyed Sihon, the king of the Amorites in Heshbon, when he attacked Israel after denying them safe passage through his territory (Numbers 21).
- News had reached Jericho about how Israel had defeated and destroyed Og, the king of Bashan, when he attacked Israel (Numbers 21:33-35).

From the perspective of Jericho (and all of Israel's other future foes), the Israelites were coming from out of the wilderness into Canaan like a horde of locusts. They were an invading army, unstoppable, unchecked, and had not slowed by anyone that had previously risen against them. Israel and her God were an unstoppable force; bringing inevitable divine wrath with them and leaving total destruction in their wake, as their enemies were all devoted to destruction, *anathematized* in the LORD's name.

Even though Jericho had walls that were high and thick; even though it should not have felt any great threat from a disorganized mob like the Israelites; the people of Jericho were afraid for their future. Rahab understood that there was no hope for Jericho, its walls, or its king to stand before the coming judgment of Israel's God. Knowing that this judgment was just, understanding that they were at enmity with the God of Israel, Rahab chose the path to peace; peace with God. She preferred {friendship with God} to *“friendship with the world”* (James 4:4) and chose to place her faith and confidence in Israel's God as she hoped for peace.

After preserving the lives of the Israelite spies against the violent wrath of Jericho's king, Rahab asked them for a sign and a promise that her faith was not misplaced and that she would not be betrayed by her new people. *“Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.”*.

Please notice that the story does not say that the spies asked her for her aid, she volunteered it. The story does not say that the spies offered to make her a deal to save her life and the life of her family, she had already committed to help them before she asked for their reciprocation. Rahab appears to initiate everything in this story, but the question is why?

One might say that she did all of this, entirely of her own free will: her own free choice apart from the work of God. One might cynically think of this as just another shrewd investment, diversifying her assets and limiting her personal risk; that her choice to support Israel and Israel's God was the most rational, reasoned, and intellectual choice, but that is improbable. The Israelites were a people without land, without resources, and without a trained army but what they possessed was a large number of faithful men willing to go into battle through their faith in God alone. But most importantly, Israel had the LORD on their side.

It is clear from the reasons that Rahab gave for her to trust in Israel, that the Spirit of God was at work in her and among all her people. The Holy Spirit was causing their hearts to melt and increasing their fear of the LORD and adding an extraordinary fear of God's chosen people because, as Paul wrote *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"* (Rom. 8:31 ESV) and meanwhile, Rahab was being given faith in the LORD.

So, Rahab was not trying to make a deal with God. She was not offering, "God, if You save me and my family, then I will save Your people's spies." Instead she was reaching out to Him in desperation, reaching towards a faint light; the smallest glimmer of hope from the dark pit of hopelessness. She prayed hopefully, "God, I have helped Your people, please help me and mine." She was asking for mercy, a mercy and grace that she knew she did not deserve, yet it was one she hoped for. She asked God for much more in return than she had done for Him. She asked for her whole family to be saved and spared: her father and mother, brothers and sisters, with their entire households. She boldly went before the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:14-16) and she asked for God's abundant mercy because she hoped for peace with the LORD, because otherwise she knew that she was utterly lost.

Responding to her kindness, her goodwill towards them, and to her faithfulness towards Israel's God, the spies replied, *"Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the LORD gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you."* The spies made her a promise. They promised mercy for her and her family because of her kindness, but it was conditioned upon her continued faithfulness, *"If you do not tell...then...we will deal kindly and faithfully with you."*

If this agreement sounds somewhat familiar, it is because they actually made a covenant together. Even if they did not use all of the formal expressions, it was still a binding agreement and like every other covenant treaty, there was an obligation of continuing fidelity (on both sides) to preserve their newly established relationship of peace. We experience the same requirement now, as Christians.

Jesus has already rescued us from enslavement to this world's king, Satan, and we are presently waiting for the fulfillment, the totality of our deliverance, which will be completed upon His return. When He comes in wrath with judgment against the world's sin, our hope and prayer is to enjoy His peace in the midst of that chaos, but that hope is also conditional, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."* (Jn. 14:15-17 ESV). Fortunately for us, Jesus is faithful even when we are not because none of us love Him or keep His commandments as we should. That is the blessing of His covenant with us. He is willing to forgive our transgressions whenever we repent, but before we can ever repent we first have to want to be faithful to Him as well. We have to want to satisfy our conditional faithfulness, and we will only want to do that if God the Holy Spirit is working within our hearts, drawing us nearer to Him, and causing us to desire Him.

It is clear that Rahab was having that sanctifying work going on within her. The LORD was drawing her near to Himself and He was also drawing her into His Chosen people. Rahab and the Israelites made a covenant together and Rahab asked them for a sign of their covenant, to ensure her deliverance. Then they commanded her, *"...you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father's household. Then if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless."*

That sounds like a reasonable set of instructions and there does not seem to be anything special about them; but there actually is.

Despite being a very simple, practical, and a rather innocuous way of identifying her home to the attacking Israelites, it was also a means of initiation into God's chosen people; by her (and her family's) self-identification with Israel. It was a public profession of her faith.

It was an echo of the Egyptian passover and symbolic of their new allegiance to the LORD. “*The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ... Tell all the congregation of Israel that ... every man shall take ... a lamb for a household. ... Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ... It is the LORD's Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.*” (Exod. 12:1-13 ESV). The scarlet cord in her window was like the blood of the Passover lamb upon the door posts, the blood of Christ which covers us.

- The LORD withheld the judgment of His wrath from their homes in Egypt wherever He saw the blood, passing them over and leaving them in peace.
- So too Israel, when they saw the scarlet cord, they would pass over her household and leave them in peace, while all the rest of Jericho was destroyed in the LORD's judgment.

“*Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was built into the city wall, so that she lived in the wall. ... And she said, "According to your words, so be it." Then she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.*” By tying and binding the scarlet cord, Rahab became united into the LORD's *koinonia* and:

- For the hope of peace, Rahab protected the lives of the Israelite spies against the intended violence of Jericho's king.
- For the hope of peace, Rahab switched her allegiance to Israel and to the LORD from Jericho and its king.
- For the hope of peace, for herself and for her whole family, Rahab chose to have peace and fellowship with the LORD and earned the enmity of the world.

Meanwhile, beyond Jericho's walls “*Then the two men returned. They came down from the hills and passed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they told him all that had happened to them.*

And they said to Joshua, "Truly the LORD has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us." Through the report of these spies, Israel's hope and confidence in the LORD's victorious help was reassured and their conquest of Canaan could now commence in earnest.

But why can we speak about peace, especially God's peace, from out of a story of invasion and conquest? War is not peace. I am sure that you think this is an unusual Bible story for the Advent season, because everything concerning the *Haram*: the Israelite conquest of Canaan and the dedication of most everything to destruction in the LORD's name; is difficult and disconcerting, at the best of times.

How do we reconcile this violent history with the loving, God of peace that we believe is revealed upon every page of sacred Scripture?

- First, we must remember what the Biblical definition of peace, *shalom* is; because it is not the same as the oft lampooned desire of pageant queens, “world peace”.

- *Shalom* is wholeness and unity.
 - Established order, the freedom from chaos, is a consequence of peace, but it is not peace.
 - The absence of conflict or strife is also a consequence of peace, not peace itself.
- *Shalom* is only truly found in the wholeness of relationship that comes through our union with the LORD: as the billboards promise, “Know Jesus, Know Peace” (K-N-O-W) followed by the warning, “No Jesus, No Peace” (N-O).
- Second, we must remember who and what we are.
 - We are dust. We are creatures fashioned by the LORD's hand according to His will, made from out of the dirt of the earth.
 - We are the descendants and heirs of Adam, willing participants in his rebellion against the Most High God.
 - Apart from Jesus Christ, we stand in firm opposition to God.
 - We are all separatists and traitors against His Sovereignty and His Kingdom.
 - The day on which Adam bit into the forbidden fruit, was “a date which will live in infamy” (FDR 12, 8, 1941).
 - Adam's act was an unfortunate “Declaration of Independence” from the LORD.
 - It was a declaration of war, of spiritual defiance against His Sovereignty.
- Third, this broken relationship could only be restored or repaired through reconciliation.
 - However, reconciliation could only happen once our rebellion ceased because rebellions only ever end in one of two ways: in a permanent separation and the disillusion of relationship, or through conquest and a forced restoration of unity; there is no other option apart from continuing and perpetual warfare.

The nations and peoples of Canaan were humans in active rebellion against the Sovereign LORD: through their idolatry, their wickedness, their disobedience, and their failure (through sinful inability) to acknowledge His as the rightful King of Creation. Their sin was great in the eyes of God and the time of their iniquity was now complete (Gen 15:16). The Israelite conquest was a two-fold fulfillment because through it, God was giving Israel the land which He had promised to Abraham and through Israel, and God was enacting His judgment against the sinfulness of men (Gen 2:17; Rom 6:23). Yet the purpose of His judgment, as always, is to restore wholeness, to end our rebellion, and establish peace, *shalom*, upon the earth.

God's wrath is not evil, it is righteous and just. The Canaanites were not innocent. Apart from Jesus Christ there are no innocent or good people. The Apostle Paul reminds us, “*For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."*

"Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips."

"Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."

"Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known."

"There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Rom. 3:9-18 ESV).

The Canaanites had this coming, but it was still less than they deserved. Whenever we experience the judgment of God in this present life, we all get far less than we deserve, because He is merciful and gracious. We should be thanking Him for His restraint, instead of falsely accusing Him and maligning His character by denying His justice and goodness. Eventually, under King David's son, Solomon, Israel finally became a land of *shalom* in the midst of a sinful world (1 Chronicles 22:9--19). Israel became a garden of peace in the midst of an untamed wilderness; but once more, because of human sin, the peace was shattered and the sinful wilderness overgrew God's garden.

When Jesus was born to Mary and Joseph, when God the Son became Incarnate, the LORD God Himself invaded the territory which Satan has claimed ever since Adam's betrayal. God the Son invaded Satan's realm to restore peace and unity, to rescue us captives from our bondage to sin and the wage of death. Jesus came to establish a kingdom of peace in the midst of a world that is at war against its rightful Sovereign. *"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters."* (Lk. 11:21-23 ESV)

Like the Israelite invasion of Canaan, the Incarnation was God bringing the war to Satan in a battle which the LORD would win, in His time and in His own Sovereign way.

- Jesus firmly declared, *"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."* (Matt. 10:34-39 ESV).
- Jesus came because rebellion was masquerading as peace on earth. There was a sense of wholeness and unity because all humanity, Jews and Gentiles alike, were united together in one body of sin. They were all united in rebellion against the LORD.
- Jesus came to shatter this union, to dissolve this false sense of peace, and separate His Chosen people out from the world.
- Jesus came calling us to betray the *"ruler of this world"* (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11) and return our allegiance to the God who offers the only hope for peace: peace united into Him, peace through union in Christ as God's Chosen people: Israel, the Church, the Bride of Christ.
- Jesus is the *"Prince of Peace"* (Isa 9:6) because *shalom* is what shall remain once our rebellion is ended, and all of His enemies are placed beneath His feet (1 Cor 15:23-28).

But back in ancient Canaan, Joshua "...fit' the battle of Jericho...". The city was shut up before them (6:1). It was settled for a prolonged siege. But when Jericho closed and barred its' gates and its people sheltered behind the rock walls in which they trusted, Rahab hung her scarlet cord from the window.

Then over the next seven days the Israelites marched around Jericho, following behind the LORD's priests and the Ark of God. The priests blew their trumpets for six days, but on the seventh day once they had completed their circuit, Joshua commanded the people of God to *"Shout, for the LORD has given you the city."* (Jos. 6:16 ESV). Then, when the trumpets sounded and all of God's people shouted, *"...the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city."* Thus the walls of Jericho *"...came a tumblin' down."* and all of Jericho was devoted to destruction before the LORD and the offense of their sin was removed.

But before the people's shout, Joshua also commanded the people, *"And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. ... So the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her. And they brought all her relatives and put them outside the camp of Israel. And they burned the city with fire, and everything in it. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. But Rahab the prostitute and her father's household and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. .*

- Rahab was faithful to her promise. She kept the secret of the Israelites from Jericho's king.
- Rahab was faithful to Israel and to Israel's God. She trusted them and she trusted in the LORD to protect her and her family, therefore her salvation was proved. Her faith was proven and she was justified before the people through her silence, her assistance, and by the profession of her scarlet cord (Hebrews 11:30-31; James 2:24-3:1).

Rahab was brought into God's people, Israel, because of her faith in the LORD, even if she did not yet know Him well. She was no longer a Canaanite, she was now an Israelite. *"And she has lived in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho."* Rahab was a wild olive shoot grafted into the LORD's cultivated tree (Rom 11:17-24) and thus once incorporated, she was no different from any other natural born Israelite. Now that she was grafted into Israel, Rahab was married and she bore a son in the line of Jesus, *"...Salmon the father of Boaz **by Rahab**..."*.

Rahab the former prostitute (a new creation [2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15] and a changed person), was redeemed by God and was justified by her faith; she was now a wife, and a mother, and an ancestor of Jesus Christ, the Messiah to come. Now she and her whole family enjoyed the peace of God: reconciled and restored to the true wholeness which is found only in our union with Christ.

So by faith, Rahab trusted in the hope of peace; a peace which she had never before found, but one that she knew she needed. So truly, this story is one about peace, two different kinds of peace. Through her faith, Rahab gained peace with God, and through the Canaanite conquest, God's people were foreshadowing a conflict (the greater conflict yet to come), when God will once again invade the *kosmos* claimed by the Devil, bringing judgment, justice, and wrath with Him as our ancient, conquered foe will be bound, chained, and finally cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:10) utterly defeated.

True peace, is only found through faith in Christ Jesus, because He alone has reconciled His people to our Father in heaven. He has suffered the just penalty for our disobedience and He shares His righteousness, His obedience with us (2 Cor 5:21). If you are united with Him, then your rebellion is ended. God has forgiven you all of your transgressions and granted you a full pardon. If you would will this peace to last, then you must *"keep [His] commandments"* because otherwise you will not *"Know Peace"*.

Christians, here is the good news and our reminder to continue trusting in this hope of peace. We are all sinners, redeemed by God's grace alone through Jesus Christ, therefore we do "Know Peace", but every time we sin (because unfortunately, we all still do), we forget the peace we have. We forget it until the Holy Spirit reminds us and we repent of our sin, boldly asking God for forgiveness, and then we are restored to His peace once again. We all will still stumble and we will all keep falling into rebellion once more (because the deeply ingrained habits of sin are so difficult to break, when the flesh still wants to incline the heart towards them [Rom 7:20]), but we can trust that Jesus Christ will always rescue us, and deliver us from ourselves, and give us His peace.

Finally, whenever we wonder about the many conflicts that are recorded for us in the Bible, and we begin to question if the God whom we worship is a tyrant, a bully, or just wickedly evil, we must remember that His purpose, His goal, and His will is for peace. The imposition of His justice, like His loving discipline is always intended to restore peace. Therefore, we must trust to the same hope of peace as Rahab. Our hope is in the peace that only the LORD, Jesus Christ, brings.

Isaiah 40 gives us a picture of the peace which God brings and the means by which He brings it. *"Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain."* (Isa. 40:4 ESV). The mountains and valleys are not peace, they are a sign of the absence of peace which is why the voice in the wilderness cried this out, to prepare us for the coming of the LORD's peace.

The mountains of strife shall be torn down while the valleys of conflict will be filled in. No more ups or downs, and no more deviations from the Way of Christ. The rough shall become smooth as all becomes made whole, and good, and new through the power of God, for the glory of God because then, the Prince of Peace shall reign over the earth forever more with His Bride, sanctified by His blood graciously shed for us.

AMEN