

Joshua 07-02-09b

Let's pick up our study now. We're looking at the book of Joshua and the nation of Israel, large and en masse, is about to cross the Jordan and go into the land. Joshua is commissioning the spies.

And I've taken just a moment to address the opinion that is often expressed by those who are familiar with archaeology in the Middle East, that the events that we're about to study never took place, that it's a mythology written by later generations of Israel to give themselves a history that they could be proud of. This is really, if you think about it, very demeaning. I would almost put it in the category of anti-Semitic, that these people just came from nowhere and were bedraggled and had little to be proud of.

And so their later scholars invented a history for them that made them a proud people. In terms of political correctness would be not unlike going to those who are studying black African history from the centuries before the slave trade brought many of them to this continent. And there is some interesting history in Africa prior to the 1500s and 1600s and 1700s when the slave trade really took off.

And there was a lot that went on. But to say, oh, that's just the later blacks trying to invent a history for themselves. Those things never really took place.

They just made it all up because they actually were slaves and needed something to be proud of and that's why they're making up all of this old history. You'd get assassinated if you tried to float some kind of an idea like that. But it is regularly perpetrated against Israel, claiming that the Old Testament history is just a fantasy made up by a people who migrated slowly over time and gradually assumed some sort of minimal identity.

They never really conquered anything. They never really accomplished anything. They never really had an empire.

There was no David. There was no Solomon. It's all kind of a King Arthur legend.

Well, this is unparalleled in the history of the world. Did England have to make up King Arthur because they didn't have any history of their own? Did the Romans have to make up Julius Caesar because they didn't really have any conquest? The idea is absurd, but as I say, it's just taken as a scholarly bread and butter to do this kind of thing. Well, listen to this.

In recent years, an archaeological reassessment of the Canaanites has been underway and the new discoveries paint a portrait of Canaan and Canaanite culture entirely different from the one that dominates the Bible. In the book of Numbers, God instructs Moses to send ten spies to scout out Canaan and bring back a report about the land. When the spies return from their mission, only two, Joshua and Caleb, think the Israelites

had any chance of conquering Canaan.

The others describe huge cities, prosperous, thriving, and girded for battle. We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey, the spies report. How be it the people that dwell in the land are fierce, and the cities are fortified, and very great.

In Moses' last speech to the people of Israel before he dies, he reinforces this very same image of Canaan. Here, O Israel, thou art to pass over the Jordan this day, to go in, to dispossess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fortified up to heaven. As a side note, if you look at that passage and Moses says, thou art to pass over the Jordan this day, did Israel pass over the same day that Moses died? This day, yom, means something other than the literal 24-hour period, but I digress.

Among the earliest archaeologists working in Palestine, there was great interest in excavating the Canaanite cities listed in the biblical itineraries of Joshua's military campaigns. But the archaeologists who uncovered cities like Tel Beit Mirsim, Jericho, and Shechem were surprised to find that they all lacked fortification. Most other cities of the Late Bronze Age, running between the 15th and the 13th century BCE, were the same.

The reasons for this were never fully explored. Most other cities of the Late Bronze Age, when? Between the 15th and 13th centuries BCE. This is after the time of the conquest.

And by the way, there is still a couple hundred year error in these dates where they are actually looking is the 13th to the 11th centuries instead of 15 to 13. They just won't admit it. A lot of them know it, but there has been too much archaeological literature for them to backtrack.

At any rate, the reasons for this were never fully explored. In 1997, however, Ze'ev Herzog, an archaeologist working at Tel Aviv University, who specializes in the period, published a comprehensive study reviewing the archaeological evidence from excavated Canaanite cities of this period. Now listen to what he found.

He found not just a lack of fortifications, but what he described as a, quote, degeneration of every urban parameter in these cities, including a lack of residential structures, little or no concern for drainage, and no real street network. In fact, most of the settlements consisted primarily of a single large building, which Herzog postulated, they don't know what the building was, he postulated that it served as a palace fort for the local ruler. Herzog contended that during the time the Israelites would have been fighting their way into Canaan, which of course is several hundred years archaeologically after they actually came in, most of the Canaanite cities had no fortifications and an urban center that probably consisted mainly of the seat of the ruler and a few members of his court.

He interpreted this layout as illustrating the overall weakness of political, economic, and

social life in the Canaanite cities of the period. The leaders, listen to this, the leaders weren't powerful enough to stimulate a thriving urban dynamic. Have you ever read the book of Judges? There was no frequent vision, there was no prophetic leadership, there was no monarchic leadership.

What does it say? Every man did what was right in his own eyes. Weak political structure, weak economic structures, weak social life. Why? The Israelites have flown it, flowed, flowed, not flown, flowed into the land and have occupied it and have conquered it and taken it over, but now what? What model do they have for urban development? The engineers of Egypt are a generation ago.

Daddy knew the engineers that were telling us how to build the cities back in Egypt. We may have a dim childhood recollection of stamping straw into mud to make brick, but we don't know nothing about drainage and building cities and walls and we're on the land and we've taken it, but where are they going to get this information? They followed God's command to destroy what had been there before and how do you build something new? It's going to take time. So this is exactly what you would expect if the Bible is true, if all of the Bible is true.

You can't throw out the date of the exodus and the date of the conquest of the land and then say, well, the exodus really happened three or four hundred years after the fact and when we go to those layers, there's nothing there for them to defeat. Well, it's sort of a circular argument, if you see what I mean. Having contended that there must have been a social rift between the elite and the rest of the population, and you remember that this is often depicted in the book of Judges.

There will be one guy who is the ruler and everybody else is in slavery. Remember Ehud? There you go. There are a couple of major exceptions to this picture of decline and we'll talk about that another time.

We're talking about Megiddo and Hazor, which maintained their fortifications and again, if you read the Bible, you'll find that it's a different story in those cities. I want to read you something else, but I promise you it's something that has to do with the present day. Listen to this.

They've gone in and looked at Jerusalem. There was a guy named Reich, Ronnie Reich, an Israeli archaeologist who has been doing archaeological digs in the City of David portion of Jerusalem, the Old City, the ancient Jebusite City, the ancient, ancient City of Salem. If you're familiar with Warren's Shaft, we talked about that a little bit in 1 Samuel, about whether or not this is what David's nephew used to take the city and so forth.

To cut a long story short, the archaeologists used to believe that all of the improvements in Jerusalem had been done in David's day and after. When the Israelites took it over, they are the ones that dug the tunnels and did the improvements in the drainage and

getting the pool and the rest of it. Of course, much later you have Hezekiah's tunnel.

But what they're deciding now is, you know what, we're looking at these structures and these tunnels and these sophisticated access points for water and one thing and another, and we think that this was done well before David's time. And what they're doing is they're saying these were the Canaanites. The Canaanites were the ones that were the sophisticated building engineering types and the Israelites were not.

So, Reich's dig, for example, turned up an underground tunnel that circumvented the shaft, Warren's shaft altogether, and led directly to a pool near the spring. The spring, which until then most had assumed to be outside the city wall and unfortified, was in fact surrounded by a formidable system of towers. Soldiers standing guard on one of the towers could easily have picked off anyone trying to infiltrate the city.

Artifacts found in or near these towers indicated they dated from well before King David's time. This would mean that the Canaanites and not the Israelites had built the city's water system. It goes on to talk about some of this other, but Reich's crediting the Canaanites for building such a system, a conclusion that appeared a short time before in the front page of the leading Israeli newspaper, was not popular, especially amongst some of the Israelis who were financing these digs in an effort to reconnect with their roots.

King David built this city and so on, and there was a group called Elad, E-L-A-D, who had financed Reich and his dig, and he came and said, well, actually this isn't the Israelite work at all, this is Canaanite. Well, that didn't go over too big. But, of course, it delighted some others, and this is my point now.

Elad put up over two million dollars to help finance the dig, in the hope of, quote, illuminating the links in the chain between the people of Israel and King David. Reich's findings seemed instead a reminder that King David too was a link in a chain that began long before the Israelites ever arrived here of conquerors who had left their mark on Jerusalem. And the pottery dating found in small crevices in these towers around the thing dated from the 18th and 17th centuries BCE, a time archaeologists call the Middle Bronze Age.

Now, 18th century BC, whose time is that, biblically speaking? Avram. Is there any mention of Jerusalem in Abraham's time? Who is running Jerusalem when Abram shares bread and wine with him? However, oh no, that can't be Shem, that can't be the patriarch of the Hebrews, it's Canaanites. And so, what these people, a few weeks after Reich announced his discovery that the Canaanites had built a key part of Jerusalem's water system, Palestinian archaeologists in Nablus called a press conference to announce the discovery of Canaanite homes dating to around 3000 BCE in a neighborhood in the western part of Nablus, one of the West Bank's largest cities.

And Jalal Kazoo, head of the archaeological department at Nablus An-Najah University, said the discovery's major significance was that it would help the Palestinians write their own version of the region's past. In the past, research has stopped whenever Israeli archaeologists reached anything dating to the Israelite era in the region, he told a small group of reporters. Now listen to this, this is the punchline.

For several years now, a group of Palestinian intellectuals, politicians and scholars have been promoting the idea that the Palestinians are the true descendants of the earliest inhabitants of Canaan. Ergo, prior claim to the land type of thing. In August 1996, Palestinians from around the West Bank gathered in the town of Sebastia, listen now, Palestinians from around the West Bank gathered in Sebastia to recreate the legend of Baal, the Canaanite god of the heavens and fertility, and his struggle for domination over brother Mut, god of the underworld.

Teenagers dressed in flowing white robes pulled light wooden chariots through narrow alleyways until they reached a stone stage that had been specially set up in the center of town. There, a narrator told the story of Baal's tribulations. When he got to the part in the text warning against the Habiru, or the Hebrew tribes, who were then on the move in Canaan, his whole face seemed to contort in an effort to radiate the significance of the point to his audience.

Kind of the way my face is radiating the significance of the resurrection of Baal worship in Palestine right now. He recited the tragedies that had befallen the warriors of the various Canaanite peoples, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Jebusites, the Perizzites, all smitten by Joshua's rampaging army. As the story reached its climax, with Baal dying and then rising to life again, torch-bearing youth formed a knot around the Palestinian minister of culture and danced with him in the center of the square.

Can you believe that? Well, if you think there's not an agenda in archaeology, that people do not come to it with preconceptions that are going to color, and this has happened on the biblical side as well. There are people who have come to archaeological digs, such as Jericho, looking for what they believe should be there in the light of the biblical record. And, of course, we are far more sympathetic with them because we think they're right, but it is valid to expect someone who is going to do a study of physical data to be objective and to let the data speak for itself, in the same way that when we come to the biblical text, we should come to it without trying to force our theological presuppositions into it.

The text, like the physical universe around us, should be left to speak for itself. Conclusions should be drawn from what we observe. We do not start with conclusions and attempt to get what we observe to fit those conclusions.

And you can see, it's a lot easier to spot and to see the negative aspect of it when it is Palestinians going into archaeology and believing that the ancient town of Salem was

built by Canaanites. And they go on to talk about how, well, we believe that our Arab ancestors from 3000 BC came and set up this town well before the time of Abram. Well, A, the Arabs are descended from Abram.

B, the guy who built Salem was Shem. So, go on now, you people that are trying to say otherwise. Anyway, I just wanted to give you that.

I thought that was an interesting little tidbit that bears on our study in the book of Joshua. So, back to reality. Back to the truth.

Back to what actually happened. Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, especially Jericho. So they went and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab and lodged there.

And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country. So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country. Then the woman took the two men and hid them.

So she said, Yes, the men came to see me, but I did not know where they were from. And it happened, as the gate was being shut when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know.

Pursue them quickly, and you may overtake them. But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof. Then the men pursued them by the road to the Jordan, to the fords.

And as soon as those who pursued them had gone out, they shut the gate. This is another case where you can see the Bible saying a thing that is literally, from the standpoint of someone who wants to be excessively literal, not true. It says they pursued them.

They are not pursuing anything. They thought they were pursuing them. But the Bible does not say they thought they were pursuing them.

It says the men pursued them by the road to the Jordan. Well, they did not pursue anybody. They are laying up in the flax.

Hey, what does the Bible say? The men pursued them. In this case, it is an obvious error to make that sort of a conclusion, but think about similar language in other places where it is not so easy to demonstrate unless you study the context, and you can see why we have five or six hundred different denominations in the United States alone. People who do not develop a good system of hermeneutics.

I was showing Elizabeth. We were looking for a folder so she could turn in some

paperwork this morning. And so last night, she said, do we have a spare binder I can use? And I went out and I found one, and it was surrounding my hermeneutics notes from back in 1985 when I first started seminary.

And I was showing Elizabeth some of the fundamental. She said, what is hermeneutics? I said, well, it is the art and the science of biblical interpretation. And there were some great things in there by my professor, Don Hargrove, who also happens to be the guy that did our wedding.

And it explains how important it is to have a solid approach when you come to interpret the Scripture. And so I will occasionally point these things out to you as, this is an egregiously obvious example that nobody was pursuing anybody on the road to the Jordan. They just thought they were.

But you can see how easy it would be for someone who took this out of context to make something out of it that it never said. As soon as those who pursued them had gone out, they shut the gate. Now before they 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, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are faint-hearted because of you.

For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted. Neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

Now therefore I beg you, swear to me by the Lord, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death. So the men answered her, Our lives for yours. If none of you tell this business of ours, it shall be when the Lord has given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you.

Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall. She dwelt on the wall. And she said to them, Get to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you.

Hide there three days, until the pursuers have returned. Afterward you may go your way. The men said to her, We will be blameless of this oath of yours which you have made us swear, unless when we come to the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window, through which you let us down, and unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father's household to your own home.

So it shall be that whoever goes outside of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we will be guiltless. And whoever is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him. And if you tell this business of ours, then we will be free from your oath which you made us swear.

She said, According to your words, so be it. She sent them away, and they departed, and she bound the scarlet cord in the window. She didn't even wait till hearing tell of them approaching.

You remember how much is going to happen before Jericho falls. She wasted no time. She's got that as her window decoration before they even leave.

They departed, they went to the mountain, they stayed three days, so the pursuers returned. Pursuers pursued them all along the way, but did not find them. Interestingly enough, since they were never there.

So the two men returned, descended from the mountain, crossed over, and they came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all that had befallen them. And they said to Joshua, Truly the Lord has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us. You hardly even need to exegete or spend any time in explanation when you read a story like that.

It is so great to see the contrast between this spy mission and the one that Joshua himself participated in forty years earlier. One of the first things you notice is that unlike the other situation, the men of Israel, twelve of them went in and moved about, carried a bunch of graves on a pole between them, marched up and down in the land, and nobody took any notice. Why? Well, look at the situation that Rahab describes forty years later.

Forty years later, what does she say? We have heard what the Lord did for you at the Red Sea four decades ago. We have heard what you did to the two kings of the Amorites. Our hearts melted, and there is no courage remaining in us.

Not only that, but as soon as these two guys show up in Jericho, the first place they go, the king knows it right away. Now remember, when we hear the word king, we think fairytale king, king of England, guy on a throne, big court, lots of nobles and vast domains stretching out there. Who is the king in this story? He is the mayor of Jericho.

Remember, this is sort of a feudal system, this is a city-state type of thing, and Jericho is not that big a town. Now, it's big, it's sizable, but it is a key. It's the beachhead crossing the Jordan.

What town is this right next to? Where did Jesus set the story of the Good Samaritan? On the road to what? Jericho. Who is passing by the man in the ditch? Priest and Levite, men who have to serve. By the time of the Lord Jesus, Jericho is the burbs.

Jericho is the place that people commute to and from to go to Jerusalem. It's just right next door. It's an easy walk from one to the other.

So, what a significant place to begin the conquest of the land, of all of the places up and down that they might have chosen, this is where they're coming. It's Jericho. God tells them where to cross.

And the king, the mayor, if you will, of Jericho, he's the mayor, and every town has its own police force, its own militia, if you will, and that's the constabulary, that's the local security force. It's a militia. That's what he's the king of.

So, he hears, because it's a relatively small town, these guys can't come in without somebody seeing it, and they run, you know, two blocks down and say, hey, mayor, there's some strangers in town. We think we saw them go into Rahab's house. They are dressed like these Israelites we've been hearing about that have been up and down and some of our people have seen on the other side of the Jordan.

They've got that funny-looking appearance that is associated with this nomadic bunch that's been wandering around, and we've been wondering, and we've heard all these stories about conquests and supernatural things taking place, and now a couple of them have come over here. It's the first time we've seen them. You need to do something.

So he says, all right, and he gets a little group together, gets his SWAT team together, and says, go get these guys. Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house. They have come to search out all the country.

We've got to stop them, or who knows what will happen. And Rahab makes a decision at that point, and this is an amazing decision. And keep in mind, always keep in mind that this is reflecting and it reminds me of a... I was reading up on television technology.

We've got all these new kinds of TVs, and you've got plasmas, you've got LCDs, you've got the old-fashioned CRT, cathode ray tube televisions. You've got rear projection and front projection, all these different kinds of television technology in the modern day. What's better, LCD or plasma? I've been making myself smart on that.

But one of the things I noticed when I was reading up is they were talking about front projection television, which is basically a projector. It's like an LCD projector, just like we've used that you can hook up to a computer and flash your computer screen up on a wall for a conference or up on a screen. Well, they do this with television now, and of course it's got more pixels and it's fancier.

But here's my point. How do they do that? They get a really bright projector bulb shining through something to put this image up on the screen or on the wall, and it's a little tiny screen like you would see in a PDA or a cell phone. Very, very small screen, but it's transparent.

And you shine a light through it, and it projects a great distance in a much larger sense. And this is what you're really interested in. Nobody's in there trying to peer inside the projector and see what's going on on the little tiny screen.

You look at what's on the big wall. Well, this is my little mental image of what's going on here in Joshua with the conquest of the land. This is the reality.

This is where the colors are changing and the images are formed. But from our standpoint as church-age believers, the light that shines through this is putting a big picture on the wall for us, and it's the spiritual conflict. We're going to draw spiritual conclusions.

We're going to make spiritual applications for our conflict as we conquer our land. And all of these details and all of these situations, as they would say, speak to our situation. This is our training material.

These are our example problems. This is our prototype. So, I ask myself this question.

In what sense do I, as a believer, hoping to cross into God's promised land and fight those spiritual battles that are going to result in inheritance and fulfilling God's plan and purpose, how does this reflect on the wall for me? What does this show me as the light shines through these early episodes? We've already talked about what the application is for those Israelites who are going to leave their families and their stake in order to go and fight. Well, now, what about chapter 2? What about spying out the land? Think about this. What is the nature of modern Christian ministry? How do people figure out what is and isn't ministry? If you've been through the Experiencing God program, as I have, you know how some people define it and figure it out.

What does the Experiencing God program teach? Look around, see where God is at work, and join Him in His work. So, I ask myself, is this the model in the book of Joshua? Did Joshua say to the two spies, go into the land and see where God is at work, and that's where we'll go. I don't find that model here.

How does Joshua proceed, given the mission, given the consecration, go in, lead this people across this Jordan, and give them the land that I swore to give them? How does he do it? Step one is reconnaissance. Go look and see what the situation is. You will get information back that will help you determine how to proceed.

The reason I went all the way through and read down to the end of this, you know, we normally take it in a little bit smaller chunks. Why did I read down to the end? Look at the end of this. What is the ultimate report to Joshua? What's the summary of the reconnaissance? Verse 24, Truly the Lord has delivered all the land into our hands.

The inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us. They do not have the will to resist. They are not prepared.

They are not ready. They are whipped, and we haven't even got there yet. Isn't this what we are told in the New Testament regarding our spiritual conflict? We are mopping up a defeated enemy.

The Lord Jesus Christ has already won our spiritual battles on the cross. Now this sounds great, and we've heard it before, and we say, oh yeah, victory in Jesus, let's sing the song. But what does it mean in practical terms? We have to live our lives.

We've got businesses. We have school. We have family.

We have interactions in social life. We have tasks to accomplish, responsibilities to fulfill, a life to live before God. What does it mean in practical terms that the battle is already won, the enemy is already defeated? What does it mean? To really put flesh and bone on that principle, look at this story.

Look at this episode. Joshua has to figure out, okay, so I lead the people into the land, and we take it. Alright, the first thing he does is he narrows the focus down to one issue, one city, one Jericho.

And he says, now I'm going to get as much information as I can. I know that God has promised us victory. I know that God has promised us the land.

I know that He didn't bring us out of Egypt and take us through the 40 years and promise me and Caleb that we would go in if He isn't going to do it. I know all of that. But now what? And there is a procedure.

There are reasonable, thoughtful, wise steps that Joshua takes. Okay, how do I implement this? And it's kind of the same question we ask. How do I do this spiritual victory thing? How do I fight this unseen conflict? Well, the first requirement is get the information.

So, what's our spiritual battle that we're going to fight? How do we recon a spiritual battlefield? How do we recon a spiritual objective? Well, we might be trying to figure out where am I going to go to school? Where am I going to live? What am I going to do in my business? What am I going to do in my profession? What am I going to do in my relationship here or there or the other? If a decision doesn't immediately suggest itself based on the Word of God, but something simple like, well, this thing is full of sin and evil and nefarious people, and here's a bunch of believers and so on. I mean, that's a pretty obvious choice. But most of the time, our choices are not that simple, are they? There's not one bright and shining golden thing with the fingerprints of God all over it, and everything else has got horns and a forked tongue and tail.

Usually, we have several options, and we say, I'm not really sure which way I should go here. I know people right now that are facing all kinds of decisions. I'm facing decisions, and so are you.

So this is really a great example for us. So step number one, gather information. Even though Joshua's got the broad outline of what he's supposed to do, he narrows it down.

He says, well, let me find out about this one town. Let me get some information about this one town. I'm going to send these two guys in and get some specific information.

And the more information I get, the easier it's going to be to formulate a plan and make decisions that are going to be in keeping with God's charge and God's mission. Anytime we face a decision, and it doesn't seem clear what the will of God might be, and we want to please God, and we want to accomplish His will and purpose, if an obvious choice doesn't sort of manifest itself, get more information. Do a reconnaissance.

And it may involve some risk. It may involve some exertion. It may involve some time.

These men are at risk. These men's lives are in danger. But notice, God provides.

He sends them to the right place. How did they know to go to Rahab's? I think it was just divine guidance that put them there. And they happen to find the one lady in the town.

If you try to do this in the light of God's Word and in the light of God's will, God will look out for you. That's what you get from this story, don't you? God's looking out for the spies. How many people are there in the city-state of Jericho, and they end up with the one lady who's positive to God and who's willing to shelter them and hang the cord in the window and become a part of their nation because she believes in the God of Israel.

They mysteriously, magically, mystically wind up connected with this one lady. How did that happen? God did that. It's specific.

It is provision. It is guidance from God. If we do our part to be wise and to gather information, God will get us the information we need.

They know not only that they're going to be successful in attacking this town because the people are already defeated in their minds, but they also know who not to attack, who not to kill. When you get to the room in the wall that's got the cord in the window, don't kill anyone in there. The blood will be on the hands of anyone who screws that up.

They know exactly who to kill and they know exactly who not to kill. They didn't know the day before that there was a believer in there, that there was someone God wanted to preserve, someone who would become a part of the nation of Israel, someone who is going to be in the line of the greatest king Israel will ever have, and the Messiah is sitting in that town. They didn't know that going in.

Joshua didn't know that. God didn't say, oh, by the way, Joshua, you've got to be sure and check out some of the population because some of those people are going to be important in your later history. What did Joshua do? He sent men in to get more

information so that he could proceed wisely.

Any time you and I as believers have decisions to make, and they're important decisions and we want to make them correctly, don't go off half-cocked. Don't say, God has given us the victory. Charge in.

Be wise. Be careful. Take time.

We avail ourselves of the things that God provides. So, these men go in and get this information, and God guides them and preserves them and protects them, and there is a mutual blessing. When we as believers seek God's will diligently, do our reconnaissance into decisions that we're going to make and ways that we're going to try to win our spiritual battles, we will find that blessing issues forth from our lives and we will be a means of blessing to others.

These men are blessed in being preserved and they are a blessing to Rahab and her family. When God is in it, everyone benefits. When God is in it, God is glorified and everyone is thankful to Him.

Rahab and her family are thankful to the God of Israel because He is this awesome, fear-inspiring God, and yet Rahab discovers that He is a God of mercy and a God of grace and He makes provision for her because she is looking for Him and giving Him the respect that is His due. What a great revelation of the character of God to this Canaanite woman. Not only is He a fearsome, destroying God, but He is a merciful, compassionate, and all-seeing God who can see her in the midst of that entire city and preserve her, guide these men to her.

It's just as much a miracle from her point of view. Of all of the places these men could have gone, they came to her and became the means of her provision. And that will be the hallmark.

That will be the characteristic kind of blessing that God will bring into our lives when we make a diligent effort to please Him as we discharge our calling and our opportunities in taking this spiritual battle to the enemy. Well, there are many more things that we can look at here, but we'll close by noting Rahab says in verse 11, There's two kinds of melting heart. There's the melting heart in fear that's going to run away and be destroyed.

Rahab doesn't say that the hearts of all of the other people here melted. She says, Our hearts melted. But her heart has melted in a different way, hasn't it? The light of God can shine, the glory of God can shine on people, and things can melt.

We can melt in a constructive way. We can melt in a submissive way. We can melt in humility and in acknowledgement and in receiving God's grace.

Or we can melt in the sense of fear and anguish and coming under the judgment of God. Everyone's heart melts, but look at the difference in the result. When Rahab's heart melts, she is looking for God and is looking for a relationship with God through the people of God.

The rest of Jericho had that same opportunity, but they melted in a different way. It's a reminder that the gospel, the truth of God's word, will have an effect, but people decide what that effect is going to be. It isn't really even up to us.

It's up to each individual what their response will be to the revelation of God's glory. It can be salvation, or it can be judgment. But God's glory never leaves anyone unchanged.

Something is going to take place. Well, we'll pick up here in the middle of Joshua 2 next time. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you that we can count on it to be historically accurate, that there is a harmony in the testimony of the physical universe and your written word. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will encourage us and strengthen us with the things that we have learned tonight so that we can live in a way that is pleasing in your sight and finding to our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We ask it in his name. Amen.