

# Rahab The Harlot

## An Approved Example Of

# Situation Ethics?

Someone once wrote the following comment concerning the Bible character, **Rahab** the harlot:

**“In Joshua 2:3 Rahab told a deliberate lie to the men of Jericho sent by the king in order to protect the spies in their hiding place. In Joshua 6:22-25 Rahab is rewarded for her sin through the sparing of her life and that of her families’ and in Hebrews 11:31 she is further exalted for her action by being listed in the great faith chapter of the Bible.”**

The author of this tract disagrees with the above comment. In view of the fact that some use the lying and deception of Rahab as an approved example of situation ethics and therefore an excuse to commit sin today, this tract will seek to answer the above question.

### BIBLE FACTS ABOUT RAHAB

The Biblical information concerning Rahab the harlot is found in Joshua 2; 6:22-25; Matthew 1:5; Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25. The facts involving and surrounding her sins of lying and deception relate to Israel’s conquest of the Land of Canaan. The Jews were encamped near the city of Jericho just across the Jordan River. Soon the soles of the feet of the twelve priests bearing the ark of the covenant would touch the waters of the Jordan and God would part the river before their very eyes (Joshua 3:12-13). Thus, the Jews could pass over on dry ground and be in a closer strategic position to overtake the city.

Before the crossing of the Jordan Joshua sent two spies (“**messengers**”) to investigate the city of Jericho (Joshua 2:1). This mission proved to be successful since it was learned that: **“Truly, the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us”** (Joshua 2:24). The citizens of Jericho had heard how the God of Israel had **“dried up the water of the**

**Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side of Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed”** (Joshua 2:10). The spies learned this information from one Rahab the harlot.

When the two spies came into Jericho, “they went, and came into an harlot’s house, named Rahab, and lodged there” (Joshua 2:1). This woman had heard of the works of God and thus desired to be a citizen of the blessed nation of Israel. Determined to protect the spies from their enemy, the King, she exercised an obedient faith before Jehovah, who would soon destroy her city. Note the events which transpired:

- 1) Rahab hid the messengers under flax on her roof (Joshua 2:6).
- 2) She told the king’s men that spies came to her house, but that she did not know where they were (Joshua 2:4).
- 3) She encouraged the enemies of Joshua to go in the wrong direction in their pursuit (Joshua 2:5).
- 4) Later, she sent the Israelite men out another way, i.e., down the wall of the city on a cord (Joshua 2:16).
- 5) The spies asked her not to tell of their hiding place in the mountains and to this she consented (Joshua 2:14).
- 6) She requested that she and her family be saved from the coming destruction of the city. This was granted to her on the condition that they were all in her house at the time of the fulfillment of the judgment on the city (Joshua 2:19).

Later, when the walls of Jericho fell flat, Joshua commanded the two spies to go to Rahab’s house (identified by a scarlet line which she had placed in her window) and bring out all that were in her house. Therefore, she and her family were saved from the utter destruction of the city (Joshua 6:22-23).

### RAHAB’S VIRTUES

Before we discuss the sins of this woman, let’s note the reasons God chose to count her righteous in His sight:

1. She believed in the omnipotent God of Heaven saying, **“I know that the Lord hath given you the land”** (Joshua 2:9).
2. She was the only one in the city, except perhaps those in her house, who would befriend God’s men (Joshua 6:23).
3. She helped to fulfill the mission of the spies

by giving valuable information concerning the fearfulness of the people of Jericho (Joshua 2:9-11).

4. She was tender-hearted and benevolent toward her father, mother, brethren, sisters and all of their children (Joshua 2:12-13; 6:23).
5. She hid the messengers and later assisted them to escape from God’s enemies. This was done by lowering them down the wall of the city by a cord (Joshua 6:25; 2:15).
6. After fleeing from the city, she lived as a woman of Israel (Joshua 6:25). This is significant since this means that she lived *as an Israelite*, that is, one of God’s faithful people.
7. She married Salmon, an Israelite and became the mother of Boaz, Jesse’s grandfather. Thus, she is listed in Matthew 1:5 in the pure lineage of Christ (only four women had this honor).
8. In contrast to a dead faith, she serves as an example of an obedient faith (Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25).
9. She is an example to all Christians in that we must obey God—rather than man whenever man’s civil law is in conflict with the divine will (Acts 5:29).
10. Rahab serves as an example of hope to all dregs of society who doubt the possibility of their own reformation of character (Joshua 6:25).
11. The incident of Rahab the harlot reveals the great providence of God in saving both herself and her family. Their salvation was a direct result of her association with the messengers of Joshua (Joshua 6:23; Romans 8:28).
12. The salvation which was obtained in her house *alone* serves as a type of the **“house of God, which is the church of the living God,”** *wherein alone* is salvation (I Timothy 3:15; Acts 2:47; Colossians 1:13-14).

### RAHAB’S SINS

In spite of all the good things that may be said about Rahab it is obvious from the text that she was a harlot at the time of the secret entrance of the spies (Joshua 2:1). Some become disturbed to think that she was a prostitute and argue that she was either an innkeeper or *had been* a harlot, yet retained the reputation of a harlot. However, there is no need to try to explain away her immoral lifestyle since she obviously repented.

There is no doubt that she lied and thus intentionally deceived the king’s men as to the whereabouts of the spies. Again, in an attempt to solve the riddle of commendation by the New Testament writers, some have placed unreasonable and unbiblical demands on the Scriptures. But, we must not seek to justify Rahab’s lying