
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2023

Deep Dive: Choosing Faith

Following God where you've never been before.

Choosing Faith

- From the plagues in Egypt to the border of the Promised Land, the “generation of failure” had experienced an unparalleled revelation of “I AM WHO I AM”—YHWH, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob” (Exodus 3.14-15).

- Their problem: they did not learn or gain understanding from the revelation given to them: they forgot what he had done, the wonders he had shown them;¹ they gave no thought to YHWH's miracles;² their hearts were not loyal to Him, they were not faithful to His covenant.³

¹ Psalm 78.11 ² Psalm 106.7 ³ Psalm 78.37

*The opposite
of failure is
not success;
it is obedience.*

- Tragically, they became the prototype of successive generations over hundreds of years to the generation of Jesus. He characterized his generation of hearers with the description written seven hundred years earlier by the prophet, Isaiah:

*“Though seeing, they do not see;
though hearing, they do not hear or understand.”¹*

Matthew 13.13

¹ Matthew 13.14-15; Isaiah 6.9-10

- In quoting Isaiah's prophecy, Jesus revealed what would have happened (but didn't happen!) if the Israelites had paid attention to the revelation they received—

*'Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts
and turn, and I would heal them.'*

- Jesus, quoting Isaiah, used four terms of “revelatory perception”—
 - (1) “see” (*eido*): to be aware
 - (2) “hear” (*akouo*): to take in to mental acceptance
 - (3) “understand” (*syniemi*): to comprehend thoroughly;
to perceive clearly;
to judge as sensible;
to be spiritually intelligent
 - (4) “turn” (*epistrepho*): to turn towards, be converted

- These components are, as the writer of *Hebrews* described, the actions of faith in response to the Word of God.

For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.

Hebrews 4.2

- The failed generation experienced the revelation but never embraced it; they ate the manna and drank the water, but never perceived the nature of the One who supernaturally provided for them. They followed the Ark with their feet, but their hearts never trusted YHWH's leadership and plans for them. They experienced the Word but never surrendered to it or obeyed it. Their story stands in Scripture as a stern warning to us (see 1 Corinthians 10.1-12).

An Incredible Contrast

- The Promised Land of Canaan was populated by people who engaged in gross idolatry; among their routine acts of “worship” were: indulging in open sexual activity, and the burning alive of their children in sacrifices to their gods. As emphasized both in Deuteronomy and by the Apostle Paul, these were, in reality, acts of interaction with demons (Deuteronomy 32.17; 1 Corinthians 10.20).

- All of these idolatrous nations heard what the God of Israel had done for them at the Red Sea, the conquest of the Amorite kingdoms of Sihon and Og, and the supernatural crossing of the Jordan River. The common reaction was paralyzing fear – an emotional mindset consistent with an absence of “revelation understanding.”

(See Judges 6.22; Matthew 28.5; Luke 1.12-13; 29-30; John 14.27; 1 John 4.18)

- Among all of the Canaanites, there is one exception— an extraordinary exception and one that stands in total contrast to the failed generation of Israelites and their first-hand revelation experience. That exception: Rahab the prostitute.

“The Prostitute”

- From the first reference ¹ to the last, ² Scripture consistently presents Rahab as “the prostitute.” While we are not told any other details about her life, such as how she came to be a prostitute or whether she was part of the prostitution that characterized the idol worship of Canaanite gods, this singular description is one that Scripture never excludes when referencing Rahab.

¹ Joshua 2.1 ² James 2.25

Faith Comes By Hearing

- Despite her lifestyle, that according to the Law, demanded her death, the Bible presents Rahab as a woman of faith—

By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were unbelieving.

Hebrews 11.31

- In fact, Rahab and Sarah are the only women to be included by name in the record of faith.

- Like everyone else in Canaan, Rahab had heard of the supernatural actions of the God of Israel. It was the *way* that she heard it that was in contrast to the rest of Canaan and even to the Israelites who experienced firsthand revelation.

Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof and said to them, “I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. 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 Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

Joshua 2.8-11

- Rahab had heard the same accounts as everyone else, perhaps from those to whom she had provided sexual pleasure. But the way she heard reveals that she was hearing with the kind of “revelatory perception” described by Jesus. By the time that she encountered the spies, she had become convinced that their God was *the* God, “for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.”

- This is an extraordinary statement for she used the covenant name, YHWH, that God himself had used in his revelation to Moses. Rahab didn't just hear; she heard with her heart and by the time that she encountered the spies, "faith had come by hearing" and she, by her admission to the spies and according to Hebrews, was a believer who then acted in faith and was declared as righteous for doing so because faith always reveals itself in its actions (see James 2.25-26).

Last but not least . . .

- Rahab the prostitute married Salmon, a leader of the tribe Judah. They had a son who they named Boaz. Boaz was a righteous man who married a Moabite woman named Ruth. They had a son, Obed, who also had a son, Jesse, who had a son known as “a man after God’s own heart,” King David, with whom God made an everlasting covenant, fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Rahab chose faith, received grace greater than sin, and became an integral part of God’s story and redemptive purposes!