

Handout: Joshua Lesson 4

Repeats: the Hebrew expression “until this day” is used ten times in Joshua 4:9; 5:9; 7:26; 8:28-29; 9:27; 10:27; 13:13; 14:14; 15:63 and 16:10. This expression indicates that there was evidence that supported the biblical narrative that was still present in the lifetime of the inspired writer as does the testimony in 6:25 that Rahab was “still living” in Israel at the time the Book of Joshua was written. Ai is mentioned 27 times in chapters 7-8.

Archaeologist John Garstang excavated Jericho in 1930-36 and found evidence supporting the biblical account:

1. Jericho was heavily fortified (Josh 2:5, 7, 15; 6:5, 20).
2. The discovery of multiple large storage jars that had been filled with grain supported the Bible’s account that the attack occurred just after the spring harvest (Josh 2:1; 3:15; 5:16).
3. The evidence of intact food jars supports the biblical account that the inhabitants did not flee with their food supplies and the Israelites did not confiscate them (Josh 6:1).
4. The evidence of food destroyed in the siege supports the biblical account that the siege was short since a shortage of foodstuffs would have suggested a long siege (Josh 6:15).
5. The walls fell outward as they would in an earthquake (Josh 6:17, 18).
6. The city was not plundered of its riches (Josh 6:17, 18).
7. The city was destroyed by fire (Josh 6:24).

Comparison of Rahab and Achan

Rahab	Achan
Amorite woman of Jericho	Israelite man of Judah
Pagan prostitute (only above slaves in the social order)	Prominent member of the covenant from the tribe of Judah
Her faith in Yahweh and her work of mercy on behalf of the Israelite spies led to her salvation and secured the salvation of her family	His lack of faith and his violation of the ban of herem led to his destruction and the destruction of his family
Rahab cooperates in God’s plan and helps to bring Israel success	Achan works contrary to God’s plan and almost brings disaster to Israel
Rahab is remembered for her work of faith	Achan is remembered for his treachery
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The contrasting stories of these two people provides the framework for understanding the religious meaning of the conquest of the Promised Land and the religious mission of the New Covenant church in fulfilling the Great Commission (Mt 28:19-20). The biblical account of these two stories provides clues that the narratives of Rahab and Achan should be read together:

1. These are the only episodes in the Book of Joshua that features spies (Josh 21 and 7:2).
2. Rahab is the quintessential sinful Canaanite. Her very occupation epitomizes the Israelite view of Canaanite immorality. On the other hand, Achan, according to his pedigree, is the quintessential Israelite. In a reversal of fortune determined by their free-will choices, each becomes the other: an Israelite destined for life finds death and a Canaanite destined for death finds life.
3. Rahab’s confession of faith in Joshua 2:9-13, which provides her entrance into the covenant community of Israel, is seen in contrast to Achan’s confession of sin in Joshua 7:20-21, resulting in his death sentence.
4. Rahab is remembered as the heroine because of Jericho, and she is named as an ancestress of both King David and Jesus (Mt 1:5).
5. The Book of Joshua records that Rahab “is still living even today” in the community of Israel (Josh 6:25). Achan is remembered for having betrayed both God and his people and the Book of Joshua records that his grave “is still there today” where he is remembered as a traitor (Josh 7:26).