

Coach House Church BEACONS

THE SCARLET CORD

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Have you ever felt under threat? The answer to this question is probably yes, to some degree there is threat all around us. Right now I know that there are many people worrying about the Indian variant of the Corona-virus that is currently surging through Bolton. Thankfully we live in reasonably peaceful times right now and not many of us can remember a time when a foreign army was poised to invade our country laying waste to everything before it. If this has happened to you then it is probably the most frightening situation that you could face. This was the situation facing one particular lady in today's story.

The lady in question was Rahab and you can find her story in the second chapter of the book of Joshua. Joshua had taken over the leadership of the Israelite nation following the death of Moses. Moses led the people through the desert for 40 years but had done something earlier in his life which prevented him from entering the promised land. The Israelite nation had left Egypt at God's command and were heading to the land of Canaan, which God had said was theirs to settle. Now that Moses was dead the people could enter in and start to settle under the leadership of Joshua. The people crossed the Jordan river and made camp at Acacia Grove in preparation for the battles they would have ahead.

Entering and taking the promised land was not going to be easy, battles would have to be fought and there would be some personal losses involved but God had promised to be with the Israelites in this endeavour.

So, back to Rahab. The bible generally describes Rahab as a prostitute, whether this was in the way that we understand it today is uncertain, however what we do know is that she was someone who was not held in high regard by others in the place where she lived. That place was Jericho and Jericho was directly on the route Joshua's army was taking. Rahab had every reason to worry, news had

reached the city that Joshua intended to totally destroy the city and all its inhabitants.

Now Rahab could have taken comfort the fact that Jericho had thick walls and was well defended. When threats appear we all have a tendency to fall back on man made defences or systems but for some reason Rahab could see that this wouldn't be enough. She said "The Lord your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below". Despite the fact that Rahab was an outsider God still had a plan. Because Rahab had recognised who God was, because she knew that He was her only hope, He sent help. Two Israelites arrived at her house. They were there to check out Jericho ahead of the attack but they recognised that Rahab needed to be saved. During the time they were there Rahab had to protect the spies from the authorities. She knew that this was something she could do to serve God despite the risk to herself.

The spies, acting in the will of God, offered Rahab a way out. She needed to tie a scarlet cord to her window. This would mark out the point that Israelite soldiers would not attack but bring out the occupants. This would not just be Rahab but members of her family as well, as long as they were in Rahab's house. Remember when God rescued Lot from Sodom, He brought out his entire family, and again when Noah was rescued from the flood it included his entire family.

So, what is the significance of the scarlet cord. Well it's this, scarlet is the colour of blood.

As Christians we know that in order for us to be forgiven blood had to be shed. In the Old testament there were examples of blood being shed to cover the sins of the people. God killed an animal to make clothes for Adam and Eve, God provided a ram for Abraham to kill in place of Isaac. Just before leaving Egypt, only 40 years prior to today's story, the Israelites had had to kill a lamb and paint its blood on their door-posts. This was the sign that Angel of Death was to pass over that house, and of course all those in it, and let them live.

The shedding of blood is a constant theme throughout the bible and culminates in the blood that Jesus shed when he died on the cross at Calvary. This was the only blood that could have been shed to cover our sins once for all time. Only someone who had never sinned could possibly be capable of doing this. This theme of shedding blood is often referred to as a scarlet cord and the story of Rahab encapsulates this in a simple form.

Now we are no different to Rahab. To highlight this there are two things that we should consider.

First, whilst we might not be prostitutes in the commonly used sense of the word, we are all prostitutes before God. By this I mean that we have all, at some time, taken parts of our lives given to us by God for His use and used them for the good of the world. The prophet Hosea explains this in more detail, look it up when you have the chance.

This state is best described as "being found in sin". It means that we cannot enter the promised land, or in this case, Heaven. Rahab had no part in the promised land, like her fellow citizens they were all destined for destruction.

Second, there is a danger coming. Whether we like it or not Jesus will one day return, or, our lives will come to an end. At that point it will be too late to tie a scarlet cord to your window. You will be destroyed by Joshua's army as it advances.

So how can we be like Rahab? By confessing Jesus as Lord and Saviour we are metaphorically tying a scarlet cord to our hearts, painting the door-posts of our lives with blood – the blood of Jesus.

In the story Rahab, she, and her whole family, were saved. She gave up her sinful ways and married a man called Salmon. Salmon was the father of Boaz, another important man in the Old Testament who married Ruth. This made Salmon the Great Great Grandfather of King David, whose family line eventually led to Jesus.

Rahab became a part of Jesus family in a very literal sense just by recognising who God is, and obeying a simple instruction. We too need to recognise who God is and tie that scarlet cord to our hearts. When we do this the bible tells us there is great rejoicing in Heaven because, like Rahab, we are also welcomed into Jesus family.



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