

# Coach House Church BEACONS

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## A PROMISE AND A PLAN

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Have you ever been to visit one of the old castles or fortresses around the country such as Conway Castle? Even though there is evidence of decay, you can still marvel at how they were constructed, the fact that parts of the building still stand, solid and secure. These buildings were built to last, to withstand attacks and to be a symbol of strength and power of the King or Lord of the castle.

There's a fortress in the bible, the city of Jericho. It was also known as the city of palms which conjures up a picture of an affluent well irrigated land. Jericho was the first city that Joshua and the Israelites came across when they entered their promised land – the first place they were to conquer which was in sharp contrast to the lifestyle they had been used to. They had spent 40 years travelling the desert, as nomadic people, existing in tents but they now looked upon this solid, secure, fortified city. Now, there was a long gap between the initial promise given to Abraham and its realisation for Joshua and the people. For the Israelites, the journey and the waiting time was lengthy until God finally fulfilled his promise to them- leading them into the land of Canaan.

Sometimes we have to wait for what God has in store for us. This is the difficult part as we often want things to happen straight away and we wonder why God doesn't hurry up.

**Psalm 27:14 says Wait patiently for the Lord. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the Lord.**

By waiting, we are acknowledging that God knows best. He sees the bigger picture for our lives. The long term view of what needs to happen for our good.

So, that's great. You are a stone's throw from the end of the journey. The end is in sight and you will be able to settle and rest as an established nation of God's people. However, there was a slight problem to overcome... Jericho was already inhabited and those people hadn't intended on handing over the keys to a gang of strangers.

Furthermore, God had specific instructions for them to follow, none of which sounded anything like the assault and capture of promised territory.

Joshua 6:3 describes the battle plan – seven priests with trumpets in front of the Ark of the Covenant (the place where God's presence was) with an armed guard in front and at the rear. They created some noise blowing on the Ram's horns.

Just imagine the reaction of the citizens of Jericho as they watched this spectacle for 6 days running. After all, those in Jericho had heard reports of the Israelites and their God

**Joshua 2:9 says everyone's hearts melted in fear as they heard of the miracle of crossing the Red Sea and they knew their God had saved them.**

While many feared the Israelites and their God, I imagine that as nothing significant happened on days one to six, they grew more relieved and would have thought of the Israelites as less of a threat.

Many people will know the next part of the story from their Sunday School days, or maybe you had a picture bible when you were young. On day seven, they marched around seven times. You can almost hear people laughing at them. However, the priests sounded the trumpet blast and the war cry went up. Joshua 3:20 reports ...and the walls came crashing down...and they took the city. This mighty fortress was decimated because with God nothing is impossible.

This story is backed up with archaeological evidence.

In the early 1900s, archaeologists uncovered the remains of the ancient city of Jericho and found out some interesting facts about it: the walls were arranged as an inner ring and an outer ring with a steep embankment between. The walls were 13 feet high and 10 feet thick. The site was almost entirely derelict and the layout of the fallen stones indicated that there had been a catastrophic collapse like an earthquake had struck.

Another thing the archaeologists found were huge Jars of grain that hadn't been hidden away which would have been the usual practice if they were under threat of attack – grain was a valuable commodity. This indicates that there was no perceived threat and that the devastation was quick. No time to move it to safety.

This is a story about the impossible, the miraculous, the dramatic. It tells us that nothing is a barrier to God. No-one can ever say 'but God can't do that for me'. 'The problems in my life are never going to change, can't be resolved, they are just too big'. Or even 'I can't change now. I'm stuck in my ways'.

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2 Corinthians 5:17 talks about us being a new creation through the power of Jesus. The Holy Spirit comes into our lives and we have a fresh start. While you are living and breathing it's never too late to reconnect with God and start afresh. Even the mighty Jericho could not stand against God's plan.

Within the remains, one area of the North wall that was found intact exposed a house built into the city wall. The bible notes this house as belonging to Rahab. Some time before these events, Joshua had sent two spies to suss out Jericho and when they were almost captured a lady called Rahab hid them. In Joshua 2:8 Rahab speaks to the spies: I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us...and goes onto say: for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

She also asks for protection from the Israelite invasion and they arrange for her to hang a scarlet rope from her window. Throughout the events, she was courageous and didn't waver in her belief or convictions and is later successfully rescued.

**Joshua 6:25 explains ..Rahab was spared with all her family and those who belonged to her because she hid the men – and at the time of writing – she lives among the Israelites to this day.**

The character of Rahab provides us with hope.. First of all, she wasn't part of the Israelites but she was protected, rescued and saved and this tells us that God isn't exclusively for the Israelites.

John 3:16 says For God so loved the world – that is every nation - that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Secondly, Rahab was an innkeeper and a prostitute. Her moral standing was low yet, she recognised the God of Israel. Her past did not define her future as she asked to be saved and protected.

1 Samuel 16:7 Man looks at the outward appearance but that God looks at the heart. No-one is beyond the grace of God. God's grace is his free gift to us and all we have to do is trust as Rahab did. She gets a mention in the NT as well in James 2:25 who notes she was righteous in God's eyes because of her actions. God doesn't turn anyone away, even Rahab with a shady history!

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**Her past did not define her future as she asked to be saved and protected.**

The other amazing thing about Rahab is that she is part of Jesus' family tree. Would you believe it? She had a son Boaz, who in turn married Ruth. Their grandson was King David whose descendent was Joseph of Nazareth- Rahab, the great great

grandmother of King David, the highly revered King of Israel and in the birth line of Jesus the Messiah.

The scarlet cord that Rahab hung down from her window is a symbol of salvation. She trusted and was saved along with all her family. She stepped into God's great plan whether she knew it or not. As a result of her courageous actions, that red cord threads itself through her history until it reaches Jesus. Jesus blood sacrifice made it possible for everyone to be part of God's perfect plan- to receive a new start no matter what our past looks like, to accept God's forgiveness and to receive the peace of God through the Holy Spirit so that whatever we come up against we can trust that it is never too difficult for God to deal with.



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