

JOSHUA—WEEK 2

IT'S ALL SUPERNATURAL



F. Michael Slay

A DEEP Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Joshua, Week 2 — It's All Supernatural
The Cover Picture is by Jean Fouquet (1420–1477)
On display in Paris at the Bibliotheque nationale de France.

Rahab announces her faith and cuts a deal with the spies to save her family. Then she helps the spies escape. They report everything back to Joshua, who then gives a curious instruction to the people for how to cross the Jordan. That's designed to set them up to watch the coming miracle.

This will strengthen their faith, which will give them courage.

We're pleased to provide *the DEEP* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity in the Lord.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. To subscribe to the daily DEEP email, visit our website at www.ailbe.org and click the sign-up button at the bottom.

There, you will also discover many other resources, including many email newsletters, such as our worldview study *ReVision*, our devotional newsletter *Crosfigell*, and *the DEEP*.

We are a spiritual fellowship patterned after the Celtic Revival. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

T. M. Moore, Principal
tmmoore@ailbe.org

Thank you.

All the individual weekly study guides are available for download here:

<https://www.ailbe.org/resources/itemlist/category/91-deep-studies>

Joshua, Week 2 — It's All Supernatural
Copyright 2022 F. Michael Slay
The Fellowship of Ailbe
www.ailbe.org

Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. ESV stands for the English Standard Version. © Copyright 2001 by Crossway. Used by permission. All rights reserved. NIV stands for The Holy Bible, New International Version®. © Copyright 1973 by International Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved. KJV stands for the King James Version.

1 Joshua 2:8–14

Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, and said to the men: “I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. For 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 the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father’s house, and give me a true token, and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.”

So the men answered her, “Our lives for yours, if none of you tell this business of ours. And it shall be, when the LORD has given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you.”

This isn’t about Israel; it’s about the LORD. Rahab knows *that the LORD has given you the land*. Rahab even says, *“the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.”*

But it’s even stronger than that; Rahab’s statement loses something in the translation. She doesn’t say, “the LORD,” she says God’s name—Yahweh (יהוה)¹. That’s much more personal than it looks in English.

Rahab’s faith isn’t some distant, abstract thing. She talks like she knows Him.

And on top of all that, it’s a perfect “mission accomplished” for the spies. It’s funny that even though the only place they went in Jericho was a brothel, they still came away with a treasure trove of information about their prospects for conquering the land. Imagine their conversation with Joshua when they returned.

Joshua: “Welcome back. What did you learn?”

Spies: *“We’re golden. They told us that they have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for Israel when we came out of Egypt, and what we did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan. They also told us that as soon as they heard these things, their hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone. One woman even professed faith in the LORD as God in heaven above and on earth beneath.”*

Joshua: “Wow, you gathered an amazing amount of intel. Where’d you go?”

Spies: “Uh ...”

¹Out of respect for His name, and for the third commandment, translators print God’s holy name as “the LORD.” That’s the right thing to do, but always be mindful that when you see “the LORD” in all caps (or small caps) the Hebrew is actually His name. This is most significant when it’s spoken in a conversation.

2 Joshua 2:15–21

Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall; she dwelt on the wall. And she said to them, “Get to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you. Hide there three days, until the pursuers have returned. Afterward you may go your way.”

So the men said to her: “We will be blameless of this oath of yours which you have made us swear, unless, when we come into the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father’s household to your own home. So it shall be that whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we will be guiltless. And whoever is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him. And if you tell this business of ours, then we will be free from your oath which you made us swear.”

Then she said, “According to your words, so be it.” And she sent them away, and they departed. And she bound the scarlet cord in the window.

Rahab clearly believes in miracles, but she’s not relying on one here. She has a plan to get the spies home safely. She had already launched that plan when she sent the Jericho posse on a wild goose chase.

This is not a lack of faith on Rahab’s part. Believing in miracles isn’t the same as controlling them, or even being able to predict them. There are some cases in the Bible of people controlling miracles, such as the apostles all through Acts, but Rahab doesn’t know about those gifts, much less have them.

She’s functioning like a normal believer.

There are two opposite errors that people make regarding miracles. Some folks don’t believe in them at all. Others think there are people in this age that have apostolic level gifts. The truth is in between.

Miracles happen. I’ve seen plenty.

Prayer is effective. Never hesitate to pray for something just because the situation feels hopeless. Also, if you feel an especially strong tug to pray for someone or something, definitely follow that leading. This is an important part of a Christian’s relationship with the Holy Spirit. Those prayers are as glorious as anything can get. They honor God while growing us.

And treasure those prayers. I’d even recommend making some notes. I wouldn’t want to forget a moment like that. It’s also good to have the clearest possible record of God’s response. Seeing the hand of God is a life-changing experience and recalling the prayer context enhances perception.

But it’s a mistake to assume that prayers like that come with a guarantee. God’s plans can be complex. His response to prayer is glorious and informative even when it doesn’t fit our desires.

Especially when it doesn’t fit our desires.

3 Joshua 2:22–24

They departed and went to the mountain, and stayed there three days until the pursuers returned. The pursuers sought them all along the way, but did not find them. So the two men returned, descended from the mountain, and crossed over; and they came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all that had befallen them. And they said to Joshua, “Truly the LORD has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us.”

Jericho is in the Jordan valley. The Jordan River lies about five miles to the east. To the immediate west is a mountain range known today as the Central Mountains. The spies head for the hills instead of heading east, as the posse expects. Thus, they avoid any contact.

Rahab’s plan works. The posse assumes that the spies had a head start, so they race toward the Jordan River and look for them *all along the way*. Since the spies could have easily walked the five miles in just over an hour, the posse is quickly discouraged. Even on horseback, their chances of catching them weren’t great to begin with.

After three days the posse gives up and heads home. The spies are then free to find their way back.

And they bring great news, which they deliver straight away to Joshua. *“Truly the LORD has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us.”*

It’s interesting that their conclusion—*the LORD has delivered all the land*—isn’t a deduction from what they heard; it’s a quote. Rahab said, in Joshua 2:9b, *“I know that the LORD has given you the land.”*

This seems almost too easy. The two spies went on a mission that is normally considered very high risk. Joshua presumably sent two of his bravest, shrewdest men on this mission. Yet the way it played out, almost anyone could have done it. The only thing these guys did that could be considered shrewd was to decide to go to a prostitute’s house.

The level of blessing is obvious. God is in this.

This surprising turn of events might be more important than what the spies heard from Rahab. While we will eventually see that Rahab wasn’t lying and wasn’t wrong—the LORD has delivered the land into Israel’s hands—the spies don’t know that for sure just yet.

Conversely, the LORD’s blessing of the spies’ mission is an absolute fact, not merely the words of one resident of Jericho. It’s a powerful sign that they’re on the right path.

Confirming signs are an important part of discerning God’s will. When embarking on a new task, always look for whatever doors are opening or closing.

But this must be bathed in prayer. A clear prayer context is essential to interpreting God’s response.

You can’t interpret His response if He’s not responding to something specific.

4 Joshua 3:1–6

Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and they set out from Acacia Grove and came to the Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they crossed over. So it was, after three days, that the officers went through the camp; and they commanded the people, saying, “When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed that way before.”

And Joshua said to the people, “Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.” Then Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, “Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over before the people.”

So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people.

Why do the Israelites need to trail the ark by two thousand cubits? What’s so special about that distance? And what does Joshua mean by sanctify yourselves?

Two thousand cubits is about a thousand yards, a bit more than a half a mile. There’s no specific reason for that distance, and the text won’t mention this separation again. It’s just a respectable distance. They’ll get closer later anyway; they’ll all walk past the ark in the middle of the river.

The standard for sanctification was set by Moses, just before delivering the Ten Commandments.

the LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. ... So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people; and they washed their garments. And he said to the people, “Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman.” — Exodus 19:10–11, 14–15 (ESV)

But these preparations seem completely unrelated to the tasks of crossing a river and going to war. That’s the point. If regular military leaders heard this, they would wonder if Joshua has lost his mind. Washing your garments just before wading (or even swimming) across the Jordan river is nuts.

But Joshua hasn’t lost it. There’s nothing “traditional” about this. It’s all supernatural.

When God’s glory is the prime objective, everything’s different.

So, how can we make God’s glory the prime objective in our lives? Our situation is nothing like Joshua’s.

Prioritizing God’s glory generally doesn’t involve doing something nutty like washing up just *before* getting dirty. Rather, we are called to do practical things that are righteous or charitable. Do nothing to bring shame to the Lord. For example, pay your taxes perfectly honorably. That must be above reproach.

5 Joshua 3:7–13

And the LORD said to Joshua, “This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. You shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, saying, ‘When you have come to the edge of the water of the Jordan, you shall stand in the Jordan.’ ”

So Joshua said to the children of Israel, “Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God.” And Joshua said, “By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites: Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan. Now therefore, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man from every tribe. And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, the waters that come down from upstream, and they shall stand as a heap.”

Notice the tradeoff in who gets glorified here. It seems to begin being about Joshua’s glory. God says, *“This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.”*

But when Joshua executes the LORD’s plan, he doesn’t mention himself at all. Instead, he says, *“By this you shall know that the living God is among you.”* God gets all the glory. And Joshua says, *“God is among you,”* not, *“God is with me.”*

Part of this is because Joshua is thinking outward and not focusing of advancing his own reputation. Kudos for that.

But this is also practical. Joshua is using the coming miracle to maximum effect. He’s telling his troops how to interpret what they see.

“By this you shall know that ... He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites.”

The LORD told Joshua to *be strong and courageous*. Now he’s passing that on.

Faith is the root of courage throughout scripture. Joshua has it. Rahab has it. Soon all Israel will have it.

Great saints are also known for their courage. There must be a link between faith and courage. But what?

Well, courage is defined as the strength to persevere in the face of danger. Danger is the presence of the “chance” of future harm.

Ah ha! That’s the connection. Believers know that “chance” doesn’t rule the future.

God does.

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Do we think and speak of God too "personally"?
2. When have you learned something from a "disappointing" answer to prayer?
3. When has a blessing been so surprising that you knew something was up?
4. What is most changed by prioritizing God's glory?
5. How does your faith affect your fear?

Items for prayer: