

JOSHUA BIBLE STUDIES

THEME: **CONQUERING: JOURNEYING WITH JOSHUA**

Lesson #4

UNDER-COVER AGENTS
Joshua chapter 2 – Part 1

“Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly.”
(Josh..2:1)

The United States Central Intelligence Agency has spies all over the earth and in the skies as well, keeping an eye on those who would do us harm. General Joshua also had spies and we will examine their spying mission here in Joshua chapter two.

As the book of Joshua opens Israel is back and on the verge of entering the Promised Land for the second time. But before they crossed over the border Joshua wisely sent out an advance spying team to examine the situations they would face when they entered the land.

To put this espionage venture in context we need to revisit the original spying mission that Moses sent out 40 years before. The record of that failed mission is recorded in Numbers chapter 13 and 14. They could have realized their dream 40 years earlier had it not been for 10 unbelieving spies in Moses’ day who dissuaded them. Let’s revisit that spying mission:

I. THE REVIEW OF MOSES’ SPY MISSION. Numbers 13 and 14

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses saying, ‘Send out for yourself men so that they may spy out the land of Canaan...’” Num 13:1-2

- A. Who sent them? Num. 13:1-2a
- B. Who were they? Num. 13:2b & 3; also v.6,8,16
- C. How many were sent? (12)
- D. What were they to do? Num. 13:17-20
- E. Where did they go? Num. 13:21-24
- F. How long were they gone? Num. 13:25
- G. What did they report? Num. 13:27-33
- H. What was the result? Num. 14:1-11 and 23,25, 30-34 plus 36-38.

When we come to Joshua 2, the spies that Moses sent out have died and now the children of those original spies are back where their parents were 40 years before. Have they learned anything in those 40 years? Let us see as we examine Joshua’s spying mission:

II. THE RECORD OF JOSHUA’S SPY MISSION. Joshua 2:1-3

Since that first spy mission Israel has been a nation in migration for 40 years. They are Now looking across the Jordan River at the land of Canaan, the Promised Land – the land “flowing *with milk and honey*.” (Ex. 3:8 & Josh. 5:6) They couldn’t see much of the land from their vantage point. What was it really like? They had heard about the report that the 12 spies had made 40 years before. The report was a mixed – grapes but giants!

When Israel left Egypt, the enemy was behind them. As they prepared to enter Canaan, The enemy is before them. What kind of forces and fortifications would they be facing? Joshua being a military commander, sent out a reconnaissance party. Let's consider this covert operation as follows:

A. THE PERSONS ON THE MISSION.

Joshua was a courageous yet cautious leader.

1. Their number.

It is significant that he sent only two spies. He had been one of the 12 spies sent out at the order of Moses 40 years before. Moses selected those spies because of their high positions in their tribes. Everyone of them was a prince, but royalty does not insure loyalty!

So when he came to send out these spies, he sent only 2. Perhaps he sent only two because when Moses sent out 12, only 2 brought back a favorable report and those were Caleb and himself!

2. Their names.

Notice that these 2 spies names are not given. The spies Moses sent were named in Numbers chapter 13. These two remain anonymous. There are many unknown nameless notables who serve God faithfully. Isn't it good to know that God keeps the record book of our deeds and not one good deed will go unrewarded?

B. THE PURPOSE OF THE MISSION. "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." (2:1)

There were several purposes:

1. To spy out the land before launching the attack was not to doubt God; it was wise military strategy to plan the manner and course of approach and then commit the outcome to God.

Nehemiah did the same thing. He said, "*We made our prayer unto God and set a watch set a watch.*" (Neh.4:9) Oliver Cromwell said, "Trust God and keep your powder dry!"

2. Joshua wanted to know more about the fortress of Jericho which was situated to protect any incursion from the southeast into Canaan.
3. There is another reason that spies were sent: it was providential. A woman lived in Jericho who had come to believe in the living and true God. Only God knew about her at the time of the selecting and sending of the spies and He, no doubt, had the salvation of her and her household in mind.

C. THE PROBLEMS OF THE MISSION.

Consider at least 7 problems the spies had to overcome:

1. They had to avoid capture in enemy territory that was on the alert. When the spies

arrived in Jericho, they were discovered. It is amazing how much the King of Jericho knew about them. He knew that:

- they were men;
- there were two men;
- they had entered Rahab's house;
- they were Israelites;
- they had arrived that very night;
- they had come "to spy out the land" (2:2).

From a human prospective, there is only one answer. The kings of Canaan already knew about Israel. **Read 2:9-10.** They had, no doubt, set up a tremendous security system - the original **CIA: Canaanite Intelligence Agency!** Evidently, Canaanite spies were watching every move the children of Israel made. All of this information was conveyed to the king, and when he heard where they were, he ordered their immediate capture.

2. They had to gain entrance into the fortress of Jericho.
3. They had to obtain secret information.
4. They had to remain free after being detected.
5. They had to escape from Jericho police who were alert to their presence.
6. They had to elude their pursuers after their escape from Jericho.
7. They had to cross and re-cross a flooded river – see 3:15

Quite an operation, wouldn't you say? We live in enemy territory; therefore, in order to escape the snares of the devil, we must be "*wise as serpents, harmless as doves.*"

Israel had been promised the land, but the promises of God did not free them from the Need to be watchful. We too must couple effort and precaution with the promises of God.

III. THE REPORT OF JOSHUA'S SPY MISSION.- Joshua 2:22-24

When the original 12 spies returned that Moses sent out 40 years before, the report was not unanimous. Ten of the spies were negative, two, Joshua and Caleb, were positive. Read the report in Numbers 13:25-33 and 14:1-13.

Fast-forward to 40 years later and listen to the report of the latest spying expedition:

A. THE FACTS THAT THEY REPORTED. – v.9-11

They reported what they had learned about the people:

1. The people were fearful. v.9 "*All who live in this country are melting in fear.*" Also, in v. 24, "*all the people are melting in fear.*"
2. The people's courage had failed - v.11 "*our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you.*"

B. THE FAITH THAT THEY REVEALED. – v.23,24

“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.”

Their Report was positive. Their focus was upon the Lord, not the enemies. Previously, the 10 of the 12 spies who initially explored Canaan 40 years before, were negative. They focused upon the giants, not God. Sidlow Baxter wrote:

“Ten men saw giants afrightingly tall,
Two men saw God and knew they would fall.”

CONCLUSION

We have been commissioned to be witnesses to the whole wide world. When we view our Mission as Ambassadors for the King of Kings, do we see obstacles or opportunities?

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth as follows: *“I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.”* (1 Cor 16:7-9)

He saw the opportunities in spite of the opposition. There are those who see obstacles and abandon their mission. We understand that Satan does not want *“the light of the glorious gospel of Christ”* (II Cor. 4:4) in his Kingdom of Darkness and will oppose its advancement. Therefore, like the Apostle Paul, we are not surprised that there are adversaries and, claiming Christ’s promise, *“I am with you always,”* we confidently cross our Jordans and enter our Jerichos.

We live in a world in which the majority of people do not know that God loves them and sent His Son to die for their sins. Are we willing to spend and be spent to invade the devil’s territory with the Good News? Are we letting our light shine in a spiritually dark world? Are we consciously being salt in a spiritually decaying world?

Let us be part of God’s Faith Force advancing the cause of Christ, trusting Him to overcome the obstacles and the opposition.

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*****END LESSON 4*****