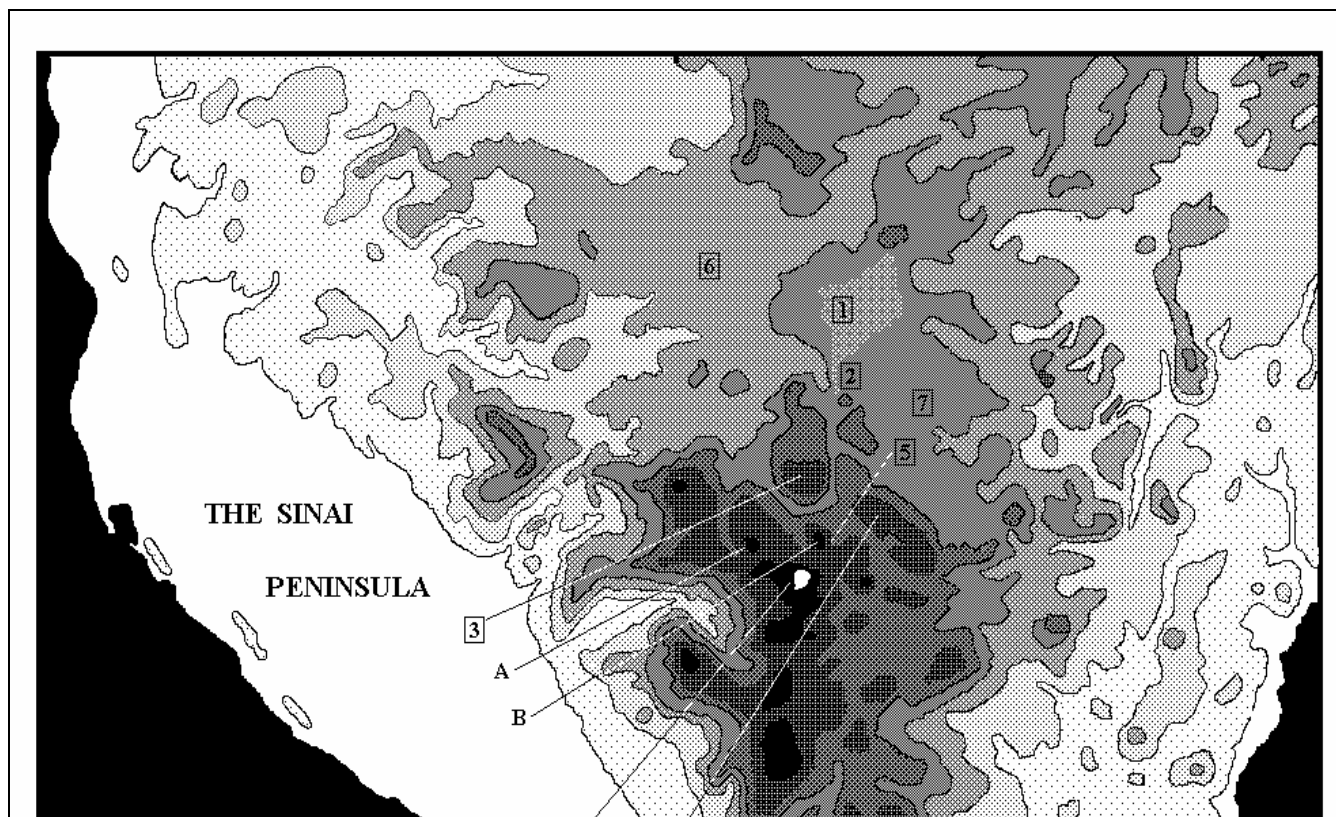


# GOD'S HOOK

a book about Biblical Faith



C. Ronald Johnson

# GOD'S HOOK

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## GOD'S ROCK

All scriptures are quoted from the King James Version - with the exception of several passages translated by the author, which are noted.

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## DEDICATION

May this work be pleasing to my Lord and  
Master, to whom I dedicate it  
and to my precious wife, Barbara  
and to my steadfast son, Benjamin -  
all of whom I owe much for their faith in  
me with resoluteness;  
and to all the unknown saints past, present,  
and future who walk by heaven's faith.

# GOD'S HOOK

It is the glory of God to conceal a thing:  
but the honor of kings to search out  
a matter. Proverbs 25:2

C. RONALD JOHNSON

A lengthy and serious 'back to the Bible' study of Christian Faith, considered by the author to be the most essential 'something' of heaven (besides the Holy Spirit) abiding in each child of God.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Church struggles to minister to its people in a topsy-turvy world. Some troubles are not our fault. Other troubles we bring upon ourselves. Regarding the latter, this book deals with a root cause of many and varied troubles among the majority of Christians.

The reader has probably been prompted to think of sin. We all know what sin does; it leads to death. However, dealing with sin is not the thrust of this book. The concern here is what we do not do in our lives that often leads to difficulty. All Christians have something inside them that people of the world do not have; yet, we consistently fail to seek its aid. This book deals with Biblical faith, but in a way different from the usual concept.

Truly we are people of Biblical faith. We could not have become children of God except by means of this faith. And we are people of the articles of faith in which we believe, reciting them and holding on to them for dear life. Albeit, the greater Object of our faith is not the truth that inspires us. The greater Object of our faith is God the Father, Christ Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit...composing the Singular God. The faith in each Christian would point to this Singular God even more than to the articles of faith that are at the center of church life.

In this book, then, the word 'faith' is not used for "what we believe". Instead it speaks of a thing placed by God in each of us to enable us to believe in Him and in what He says. It is something of heaven placed in and abiding in the earthy (though saved) Christian.

God did not leave us a book of rules at which to work the best we can. He has always been with His people. But He is not always accessible (as so many believe), for often He turns His back from us in disgust and is silent, because our hearts are more toward what He can give us than toward Him for Himself. He becomes aggravated, and instead of chastising us He mercifully leaves us alone (though never on our own). This is true of individual churches and of individual Christians. Too often it has been true of the Church in a nation and therefore of the nation as well. Even so, the Lord is never stymied. God's Plan proceeds on its on schedule.

Ah, but He has given something, not simply to be with us, but this something is in each of us. I am not speaking of His Spirit. I am speaking of the faith that is of heaven, which does not continually commune with the Christian in whom it resides, for it only attempts to move God's child as and when God wishes. Yet, it is the one thing always ready to attempt to get one's attention off of other things and onto God. In this book, Biblical faith is referred to as "heaven's faith"...as opposed to "common faith" which all people and many creatures have.

### A Concern

I am not a regular reader of James Moffat's writings, but I came across something he wrote which I will use as an example: After finishing his translation of the New Testament, Dr. Moffat compiled a little book: *Everyman's Life Of Jesus* "A Narrative in the Words of the Four Gospels". He wrote in its prolog "...to know what he (Jesus) is we must take the trouble to know something of what he was. ...it is through this definite revelation of himself in time (i.e., his life and ministry as depicted for us in the Gospels) that the timeless value of his personality can alone be fully realized."

About Jesus' right to say he is the Son of God, Moffat says that Jesus' right "...rests (only) upon a clear intelligence (on our part) of what he was and did and suffered in the flesh, and this is the aim of studying the four memoirs (i.e., the Gospels) of his life. For to take an interest in the gospels is one way of discovering our interest in Jesus." Thus, Moffat believed that to learn of Jesus is to study the gospels for Jesus' interactions with God and with people.

Similarly, to be 'instructed' of Biblical faith (i.e. not experiencing it, but learning about it) and how it works in a Christian then he must study the stories in Scripture where God interacts with His people, particularly with individuals. So then, for each Christian's personal concept of his faith, the Bible is where God wants him to spend much time in inquiry.

And so, this book represents my study on the subject. And yes, I challenge the reader about his present concepts of faith. Yet, even more I wish to challenge him to study for himself and to develop his own personal concepts amid the whole of all that the Bible presents. So please mark it down; I do not insist that the reader adopt my concepts. Mark it down; this book is not a workbook (i.e. not a means to “educate” regarding church doctrine, my doctrine, etc.)

Nor is it written for group study, but instead for the individual to read (study) in his or her home. The writing style and method is not difficult to comprehend, yet the reader will find this book and its many parts to work best within short reading sessions. If the Lord attends the reading of this book then the season of reading shall likely be lengthy and substantive.

In the process of giving a lecture, an elderly and respected gentleman caught himself speaking repetitively...whereupon he paused, laughed, and said, “Well, truth does not change from one moment to the next, does it?” The reader will find a good deal of repetition in this book. Though some parts may clarify thoughts for the reader on some subjects, other parts will not become easily reconciled with some of the reader’s present concepts. Perhaps, to large or small degree, the contents of this book will be at variance with teachings received over the years. However, that is the book’s purpose: it is to refocus the reader upon his Bible and its portrayal of faith-interactions between God and many Bible characters...and, in so doing, to encourage the reader to pay more attention to what the Bible says than to my or his present knowledge.

Questions will arise for passages unfamiliar. Yet, in covering much scripture the purpose is not to indoctrinate...rather to stir up, challenge, and encourage the reader to get more into his Bible. If a magic wand could be waved over Christianity to make Christians spend a great deal of time in God’s Wonderful Garden - His Word - then I would be searching for that wand.

## **What This Book Is Not**

This book is not a “defense of the faith”. Nor is it a defense of a particular doctrine or an attempt to form a new doctrine. It is not written from a “faith ministry” standpoint (see Appendix I for more on this). Nor is it a “key” to receiving a much-sought something from God. It is not an attack on anyone. Instead it is meant to be a tool in the Master’s Hand regarding the daily good and bad, the easy and the tough, the normal and the beyond-normal experiences that come into each Christian’s life. It is not addressed to this group or to that group. It is for those brethren who believe they have something yet to comprehend about Biblical faith and therefore they wish to be spurred into spending more time on the subject. (As used here and in scripture, ‘brethren’ is neither male nor female; ‘brethren’ indicates “sameness and oneness in Christ”.)

Therefore, in this book, challenges of some concepts, deemed mistaken by this author, are not directed toward any person, denomination, etc. Continuing through the years at various times, misconceptions have hindered my walk with the Lord, though I have been trying to ‘walk by faith’ most of my days. Naturally, therefore, my journey and journeys of others familiar to me have colored the things written here. Many of my past and present misconceptions do not wholly miss the mark of truth and neither do many of the misconceptions among the brethren (thus the longevity of our many shortsighted concepts). Many misconceptions are correct enough to aid us; even so, they do pose difficulties to the believer who wishes to ‘walk by faith’.

Such misconceptions (many that only barely miss the mark) can often make for strife and hurt in a body of believers. Therefore, the early chapters of this book deal with some of them (i.e. in my view), their intent being to knock off some of the cobwebs gathered on them so as to consider them, and then to move on with how the Bible in the Stories teaches regarding faith.

Most of the chapters of this book are devoted to Old and New Testament stories about some of God's saints, our brothers and sisters of times past. In the stories and the characters we shall observe faith in its 'actions' (or sometimes 'inactions') between God and His people.

### **One Last Note**

In this book, scripture text will appear in **bold print**. Inside a passage the appearance of [ ] indicates where the authors of the KJV made an insertion of their own for better understanding. Inside a passage the appearance of { } enclosing text in normal print is my addition for similar purposes and is connected to discussions of the passage. *Italicized* words in the discussion (and infrequently in Bible passages) are for emphasis where it was deemed needed.

When a word or a phrase is enclosed in single quotation marks, these are from scripture (whether they are in passages accompanying the discussion or are well know words and phrases of scripture found elsewhere). Words in double quotation marks also are familiar to us, but they are words, phrases, and sayings from our everyday speech.

Fundamental in this book are two methods: 1) the challenging of some concepts of faith and 2) the more important consideration of faith presented in the many Bible Stories...as these are character sketches of individuals in a relationship to God. The stories were chosen to emphasize for the reader the actions (and sometimes the inactions) of faith. If the Spirit illuminates the stories then such actions will teach much about this faith of heaven, and so the earlier stories, then, will become foundational for the following stories.

Since the stories are presented one by one, the reader may often hesitate with "Well yes, but what about such and such a teaching or doctrine?"...where "such and such" are concepts the reader presently has about faith. This is why it was deemed necessary from the beginning of the book to deal with some misconceptions (i.e. in the author's view); these chapters are not meant to dissuade the reader from his beliefs, rather to challenge him and prepare him for the many Bible Stories that follow so he can read without interrupting a story (in his mind) to say, "Well yes, but what about such and such...". Hopefully, any question and my answer have been dealt with early on and without such interruptions, then, a story can speak for itself.

To repeat: challenges are meant to challenge...not to indoctrinate.

The book is long, giving God time to work with the reader in the stories where He is trustworthy to teach what is best left for Him to teach. So, read with your Bible opened.

Through the ages an obstacle has existed in the lives of God's people that brings on us many troubles: It is that our attention is constantly directed earthward instead of heavenward. The God-given-faith in each true child of God is the only successful recourse. In reading this book, may God focus the reader's attention to heaven's faith and to His Word.

Understanding faith is not the key. Understanding the importance of faith is the key. May the reader be moved by God to 'walk' by the faith residing in him. May the reader more depend upon faith and less upon understanding faith.

### **A note about Christian Wilderness Press**

As this is written, it is in its infancy and the initial reason for its existence is to publicly offer to the brethren the writings of C. Ronald Johnson (me). Perhaps offered as well will be a number of small books by Catherine Codington Shafer, my mother-in-law, deceased. Barbara, my wife, has illustrated several of them and we shall offer more of them in the future. They include 'Bible Ballads' (Bible stories in verse) and various short stories of moral value for children which also are in verse). We plan to have a website [www.christianwildernesspress.net](http://www.christianwildernesspress.net) where



books can be reviewed and where perhaps other of my studies will be made available. Perhaps also some photographs of the beautiful country around where we live can be viewed.

Here is the intended meaning behind the words “Christian Wilderness Press”: Scripture often mentions ‘wilderness’ or ‘desert’. Besides the obvious physical wilderness, over the ages of scripture the term has developed in its usage to include “a place (or a condition) of privacy between a person and God.” The Father often called Jesus out into the ‘wilderness’; likewise ‘wilderness’ has come to mean “the place to which God calls a person or a people”. In other words “it is a place, a condition, or a circumstance into which God can maneuver a person or a people”. Whatever the case, God can work many things there (see the entire book *God’s Rock* by this author). Chastisement may be involved or not (as with the Israelites in the wildernesses of the Sinai Peninsula). But always God is working things that are important both to Him and to the person or people who are seemingly stuck such a ‘wilderness’.

In the Exodus Epoch a great teaching emerged for us of the meaning of “being called to a wilderness” or “maneuvered into a wilderness”. So as we read of Moses abiding in the wilderness or of Jesus praying in the wilderness or of Paul sojourning in the wilderness, we have a Biblically formed concept (if but slightly) of what God may have been doing with them and with the Israelites of ancient times. So over the ages a Biblically formed image comes to mind regarding the word ‘wilderness’ -- which is God working preparation amid a ‘wilderness’ for future things. Or it is a place or a thing to which or through which God will lead His people.

‘Walking by faith’, as the Apostle Paul puts it, is for all stages in a Christian’s life. Even so, in the Biblical sense ‘walking by faith’ is uniquely necessary when living through ‘a season of wilderness’. ‘A season of wilderness’ is where ‘walking by faith’ is best formed into habit. If God has worked a Christian in ‘a personal wilderness’, and if the work has been more or less completed for what is to follow, then as a matter of course the Christian has become essentially “fixed” into the ‘walk of faith’ (i.e., separated unto the Lord).

Thereafter, he or she views life as “walking through a rather narrow, confining, personal wilderness”; thus, ‘walking with God’ becomes accomplished ‘by means of faith’, which fact overshadows all else including work and ministry. I speak here of any Christian in a ministry or a service, or not, because such a walk is with God and not with ministry, with service, with family, or even with spouse. I praise God that wilderness-for-me and wilderness-for-Barbara are common one to the other, even though we seldom seem to be in the same place (i.e. focused on the Lord for His individual instruction). Yet, there is a unique commonality in the Lord that binds our union better than spouse-and-lover. And it has everything to do with ‘wilderness’.

Be aware that God’s children in Bible times did not choose ‘their wildernesses’. In Barbara’s and my case by simply following God, one day we found ourselves (allegorically speaking) in ‘strange places’...which have become familiar though no less strange. Then coincidentally (by God’s coincidence) we actually and surprisingly found ourselves living in a region of the US that physically is beautiful ‘wilderness country’. Surely our lengthy stay here adds something to our concept of Biblical ‘wilderness’; yet, we see around us people attracted to, some of them infatuated with, this wilderness region. And so if I would use ‘Wilderness Press’ as a business title then surely misunderstanding would result. The Biblical concept of ‘wilderness’ means a great deal to Jews, Muslims, and Christians; but others like ecologists and conservationists would likely take ‘Wilderness Press’ to mean something about their pursuits. So I have chosen the title ‘Christian Wilderness Press’ that it not be mistaken for something else. I trust that this brief explanation suffices until the reader is into the stories in this book.

The Biblical concept of ‘wilderness’ can be greatly expanded in a person’s understanding if he would read the book *GOD’S ROCK*, the story of Moses and the Exodus Epoch. That story has everything to do with ‘wilderness’, being one of several great themes upon which God’s Plan for the Ages is founded. Moses and Jesus (and a myriad of others in Scripture) knew and experienced the sanctifying aspect of this kind of ‘wilderness’ for God’s people.

‘But if ye believe not his {Moses’} writings, how shall  
ye believe my {Jesus’} words?’ (John 5:47)

## SUPPORT

While this book is in its initial stage of printing (i.e. not the final copy but a proof copy), it is offered to the reader at no profit to me. Go to our website (listed at the beginning of this book) for ebook and printed copies of this and other books.

As this is a proof copy, my hope is that the reader will take notes regarding any typo errors (or any other errors) and notify me by mail or email. This provides me an invaluable service, as I wish to present the final work as respectable can be. For now, use the email address: [ron-barbara@christianwildernesspress.net](mailto:ron-barbara@christianwildernesspress.net). My hope is that the reader will find this book to be a real help in his or her study of the life of Moses and the Exodus Epoch. Also I hope that he or she will be encouraged into extended stays in scripture...which, if you will, is “a garden inspired by God” where He would often visit you. Hopefully you will be their often (note the ‘their’ in this sentence as it is the kind of typo I need readers to find for me since spelling and grammar checkers seldom catch it). I am often in my Bible-garden, but the Lord does not visit me there as often as I like; however, if there are times when He does visit the garden and I am not there for my own personal reasons, then I miss out on...well, I do not know what.

This work is offered within the context of Ecclesiastes 11:1 - ‘Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.’ (KJV)

Christian Wilderness Press will be operated accordingly, usually not knowing where the bread will go...or how or when it may be found again by us. It is our hope that much of it will be found multiplied and awaiting us in heaven.

If this work seems worthy then please consider adding Barbara and me and the work of Christian Wilderness Press to your prayer sessions. Our hope is that readers of this book will see it as but part of the work at Christian Wilderness Press, for we hope to have an internet presence where more will be offered.

Any support graciously offered will be graciously received, including help in proofing the writings of Christian Wilderness Press.

The Lord bless you in your growing study of your Bible.

Sincerely, Ron and Barbara Johnson

# **GOD'S HOOK**

## **PART I**

As I begin writing this book I have lived in a small town in the Rocky Mountains of Wyoming for many years. Roughly a thousand people live in its limits and at least as many live out of town in the upper valley within a thirty-mile radius. It is mountain country and folks live here mainly for that reason...just east of the Continental Divide from Jackson Hole. About a third of the town's residents and two-thirds of folk outside of town are horse-crazy. Most Wyomingites are somewhat horse-crazy and those near the mountains particularly so.

A scattering of mules exists as well. Many outfitters and packers have mules, but horses are the mainstay. Cattle and dude ranches use many horses, but many individuals own them as well, which account for at least half the horses in the upper valley. Many folk not owning horses want to.

A spring event that had occurred for some years was packhorse racing, the event lasting two days. Mountain horses doing mountain things are more popular here than rodeo or the typical horse race.

Dear reader, maybe you are not a horse-person, but perhaps would be if given the chance. Please bear with me and imagine you are one of those crazies that love horses. You are vacationing here at a dude ranch and you have a favorite horse with which you have become friends. Every time you go near the corral he whinnies. Every time you climb the corral fence or enter, he comes up to you looking for the handout that may hide in your pocket. In fact, that is how the friendship evolved - you buying the horse's good favor.

When first arriving at the ranch it was on your mind to make friends with a horse, the one you would take on many long trips and the occasional short evening ride. Being thrown from a horse is no fun. Being thrown in the mountains hours or days from the ranch is trouble. A horse that loves you, as much as a horse can, is a good bet. Many horses, though, if they have to be saddled, would just as soon have an empty saddle as a full one.

Enough time has passed, perhaps most of the summer, and the friendship has become close. Your friend approaches and nudges you, looking first in your hand and then sticking his nose into your pockets. Finding no goodies, then petting and scratching is expected. If you ignore your friend he might lose interest and move off to join other horses to do what horses do.

Friendship with the horse had been your priority until a ranch hand clued you into the real purpose of a horse: work...to be ridden, pull a wagon, or pack a load. As focus switches from friendship to work, some education becomes necessary because try as you might this friend will do no work when you instruct him. You have to learn of bits, bridles, and reins. You can lead him by a rope, yet making him go where you want, with you on or behind him in a buggy, necessitates bit and bridle.

Picture yourself instructing a horse to go this way or that. Tell him to go to a particular place to do a specific chore. It does not work, since horses are horses and mules are mules. Bits, bridles, and reins must direct them. Now picture yourself working with your friend and then taking a break: you get off the horse and walk to a rock to rest a spell. Guess who is following you and guess what he wants. He is not interested in more work. He looks in your hands and into your pockets. Not finding a treasure, he will stand there to be petted and scratched. Soon he will go to grazing, as horses will do. I hope I have your attention because this make-believe introduces a Bible passage -

### **Psalms 32**

**8. I {i.e., God} will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye** {a better translation is 'I will fix upon thee mine eyes'}.

**9. Be ye not as the horse, [or] as the mule, [which] have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.**

Let us now deal with the last part of the passage. You have imagined yourself as master and friend of a horse. Now if you will, imagine yourself as the horse (or mule, if you prefer). Your master leads you around from place to place by a rope for various reasons, but if he desires to use you for work then he wants to be behind you. Imagine your master in a wagon and you pulling it. He sits up behind you where you cannot see him, but he can see you... 'I will fix upon thee mine eyes'.

Imagine him needing to direct you where to go, how fast to go, and so on; but all you can do is go, stop, and turn... according to bit, bridle, and reins. Oh yes, you understand "giddy up", "whoa", and "you dad-blamed horse!" The latter indicating your master is upset.

Is your relationship with your Master built on "giddy up", "whoa", and "you dad-blamed Christian"? How do you function in work for the Master, only with 'bit and bridle'? Every time He takes the bit out of your mouth, do you go 'near unto' Him for goodies or to be petted and scratched... and then go on with other horses to do what horses do?

In the Psalms passage are two types: 'bit and bridle' and 'instructed and taught'. The original word translated 'instruct' means "give understanding". 'Teach' means "gather knowledge to be taught". Many Christians think 'instruction' and 'teaching' of the Bible are to be done by humans instead of being worked by God's Spirit... and so we often think that 'guidance' is God saying "Go!" and then He uses 'bit and bridle' (open and closed doors) to "guide us".

The essence of this passage is not referring to some quick instruction and then guidance (i.e., using reins). Nor is it about teaching horse or mule simple commands and then saying "Giddy up" or "Whoa". It indicates that God would have His child to stop behaving as horse and mule and become sophisticated (as in well coached) in His higher Instruction.

The ways of the Master regarding His work (not the horse's work) are the things to be taught, if the child of God would accept them. A faithful horse knows his work. He will respond to a limited number of commands through bit and bridle. But he does not understand the ways of the Master or the Master's Intentions (though a smart horse or mule thinks he does understand). The horse or mule has not a clue why the Master does as He does. The horse or mule is not involved in the Master's motives or in His intent of work, except by way of bit and bridle.

The Christian who would put his horse-and-buggy days and ways behind him has a great opportunity. God is ready to give 'understanding' through means of His 'gathering many lessons' about His ways, which He can 'bring before' a willing student in both written form and object lesson. It is no quickie course, but a life-altering graduate school that takes much sacrifice. A beautiful fact exists here: Such 'instruction' is not dependent on abundance of human intellect; for it is God's work in the innerman of the willing one, regardless of mental capacity.

Another beautiful aspect of this passage is God's insistence that His eyes will be 'fixed' on the student throughout the learning process. When a child is learning to swim he has much comfort in knowing Dad or Mom is nearby watching and ready for instant aid. The graduate student in college is comforted in knowing the professor is watching for criticism or instruction, even should the student be working on a solitary project.

Many horses and mules are available to God. They have their place and work. God loves them very much within His individual relationships to them. But are there any of God's children desiring instruction from their Father who would be elevated above 'bit and bridle'? Though horse and mule can accomplish much work, God has other works and higher relationships. He is not working at horse-and-buggy things nearly as much as we like to believe.

In very fact, God does not need mankind much less horse or mule; even so, we have a God who dearly loves His people. He wishes to bring us in on what He is doing...that is, as much as He sees fit and as much as we will allow Him to do. Would you be 'instructed and taught' by God regarding His ways? Do you wish to be in on some of what He is doing? Would you take some deep satisfaction knowing you can intelligently function as He leads in ways higher than 'bit and bridle'?<sup>1</sup>

When 'bit and bridle' are removed from you for an extended time are you interested in the Master's intentions or are you busy looking for goodies and petting and scratching? If God's eye is elsewhere than upon you for awhile, do you attentively 'wait on the Lord' or do you go to grazing as horses and mules will do?

There is a way higher than horse and mule, a work higher than pulling a wagon as necessary as that may be. This book is about the most important tool God uses in teaching such things. The tool does not do the teaching, nor is it the subject matter to be taught, but you shall see that it is indispensable. The relationship between Teacher and student becomes settled or fixed when the student becomes *well pleasing in the eyes of his Master*. This, too, is indispensable...as a pleasing relationship develops through the function of faith. [Hebrews 11:6]

## **The Structure of this Book**

This book is presented in two distinct modes, each intended as an aid in achieving a working relationship between the believer and the faith of heaven that is in him. The first mode functions in essay form, appearing in Part I, chapters 1 through 5 along with chapters 7 and 8. These chapters deal with what faith is not...considered by this author to be errors regarding faith. The second mode takes up nearly the rest of the book, presenting Bible stories which together weave a fabric of God's teachings in regards to heaven's faith (i.e. Biblical faith). When reading the stories, the reader may question with "Well yes, but what about such and such?" Ah, but a pause amid a story for an answer cannot occur. Therefore, the essay chapters are presented early on with information so that the reader need not become overly distracted when reading the stories...which stories are character sketches of individuals great and small. Intermixed with these chapters are two more chapters, giving accounts from my life - modern witnesses of heaven's faith. For something of a taste of what follows in this book, the rest of this chapter contains an example of essay and of story.

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<sup>1</sup> Even Moses felt as a lost mule in the wilderness for forty years until God had prepared him to be able to handle his high assignment in Egypt - the Exodus Epoch.

Bible passages are used extensively in Part I and Part II because a major task of this writing is to entice the reader into using and relying on his Bible. Many passages are quoted in the text, while many more are given as references. Biblical texts are sometimes lengthy and in such cases only the pertinent verses are quoted; so it is imperative that the reader have his Bible open as he proceeds. Check the references and read along in your Bible as we go through the stories.

Some criticisms of the Church are scattered throughout. I am a little part of God's Church, born and raised in it, having received God's salvation at age nine. My hope is that the criticisms appearing according to the topic at hand will be taken as something to consider. Being rather practical in my makeup, it seems to me that a problem cannot be directly addressed while its fundamental aspects in our lives are ignored or glossed over. Criticisms are presented for consideration and not as truth.

In churches across the land, much effort is expended in trying to keep peace among the brethren...with good reason, for we live in a rebellious age. So, when a person comes along who has a concern (correct or mistaken) that is not shared by others, so often he is labeled "a wave maker". However, if his concern is God inspired then I suggest that he is not "making waves", instead he is pointing toward approaching waves that can damage the flock and may well sink the boat. In my attempts to underscore some things that I consider as problems, please do not mistake bluntness to be condemnation. I have observed or experienced much of what I criticize and I continue in discovering my own foolishness. With heaven's faith as our rallying point, the hope of this book is that the reader and I will consider problems together.

### **Now Abides Faith, Hope, and Agape**

Some Christians consider Biblical faith, hope, and love as Christian attributes; ah, but they are not. They are spiritual things (heaven being their source) and so they are not aspects of the human character. They come from God. They are not earned, acquired, or developed by a person in himself. God gives them, grows them, develops them, and uses them for His Purposes. They do not become ours. Indeed, they remain His. They are not for our use; they are for His use. I trust that these and other truths will become apparent as the light of scripture is sought amid the stories. Biblical faith is the theme of this book; yet, hope and love (agape) must be mentioned, in that the three make up an Eternal Trio.

'New life' becomes the Christian's possession (the new spiritual aspect of his being). Albeit the Eternal Trio are God's tools placed in His child for a work within the child and for the child...and later for possible collaboration with Him in some of His other doings. The Eternal Trio are for His use and are not for our use.

### **Heaven's Agape**

#### **1John 2**



**15. Love {i.e., agape} not the world, neither the things [that are] in the world. If any man love {agape} the world, the love {agape} of the Father is not in him. 16. For all that [is] in the world...is not of {i.e., does not come forth from} the Father, but is of {i.e. comes forth from} the world.**

### **1John 3**

**16. Hereby perceive we the love {agape} [of God], because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down [our] lives {i.e., souls} for the brethren. 17. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels [of compassion] from him, how dwelleth the love {agape} of God in him? <sup>2</sup>**

“Love is the Theme” is the title of a great old hymn. Indeed, love seems to be in vogue across the country. However, which “love” is meant depends on who is propagating their brand of love. Each word translated above as ‘love’ is ‘agape’ in the Greek. Note in the passage that not all Christians have God’s agape. Across our land and round the world many people have witnessed a lack of agape in Christian circles. Thank goodness, there is yet a goodly portion.

### **1John 2**

**5. But whoso keepeth his {i.e., Christ's} word, in him verily is the love {agape} of God perfected {i.e. completed}: hereby know we that we are in him. 6. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.**

Here we see that agape can be ‘perfected’ in a Christian (the Greek more accurately means ‘completed’...a finished work accomplished in the believer to God’s satisfaction). Agape is not naturally found in Christians (3:17), but can be installed and developed by God (2:5).

## **Heaven’s Hope**

### **Colossians 1**

**27. ...Christ in you, the hope of glory.**

### **1Corinthians 9:10**

**10. ...he that ploweth should plow in hope...he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.**

Many Christians usually confuse ‘hope’ with ‘faith’. These passages teach that ‘hope’ is something that enables a person (who sees or participates in a particular beginning, but does not see or participate its ending) to wait on the Lord for His Ending of the thing.

Example: If a person has been regenerated (an experienced fact), then a later glory (the end result) lies within heaven’s hope (i.e., the hope to live with God). This hope was placed in the person upon newbirth. Another example: The plowman sees or participates only in the breaking of the ground; the thresher sees or participates in the harvest; yet neither worker sees bread on the table for his family. Yet, each will experience bread on the table due to his portion of work (which for each was his beginning). Moreover, throughout the process he has seen bread on the table by means of his ‘hope’ in the work.

Heaven’s hope sees for the Christian a beginning of something in God. In a unique way, this beginning holds within it a promised end. The fact of the Christ, in His very nature,

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<sup>2</sup> Note that words in {} are inserted by the author and words within [] have been inserted by the translators of the King James Version. Note that words within ‘ ‘ are from scripture, usually from the text just considered. Words within “ “ are general sayings by modern folk. Words italicized are for emphasis to catch the reader’s attention.

promises a glorious end. The fact of plowing a field for seed carries (in the characteristics of the ground, the seed, and the essential elements of God's nature) the promise of eventual food on the table for a man's family.

Often the word "hope" is used as "I hope to get such-and-such," which is the equivalent of "I wish to get such-and-such." Contrary to some of the grammatical usages of this word in modern times, heaven's hope is not "wishing". Biblical hope is a beginning that carries within it a promised end. And this hope functions only within what God has done, is doing, and will do through the ages for His people. And (as importantly) what He will do in the singular life of each believer. If natural man sows in natural hope, how much more does heaven's hope...planted in the Christian's breast...look toward the Lord's promised glory?

### **Romans 15**

#### **13. Now the God of hope fill you...that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.**

Heaven's hope is entirely of God. And a Christian might (with God's enabling) 'abound' in it. Agape and hope, being of God, require His work in the innerman so that these (His tools) might become effectual in a believer.

Heaven's faith and heaven's hope are God-given at newbirth. But agape may never dwell in a Christian in his natural lifetime. This is often detrimental to the Church. Ah, but is it not wonderful that we belong to God's family within what Christ did and not in what we do? "Thank you Lord!" The Church exists in His Grace, with no requirement that we have agape.

Every new believer, seconds old, has the faith and the hope of heaven in his innerman along with his new spirit. From the beginning, then, each Christian has two of the three Eternal Tools God would use in the new and ongoing life...and hope immediately gives rise to deep inner yearnings...to which faith then testifies of the truth of the yearnings. The new believer knows little about the thing to which hope points, yet its marvelous pointing continues unabated. Thus, we see salvation's beginning within which abides a wondrous hope for its ending.

### **The Eternal Trio**

#### **1Corinthians 13**

**8. Charity {i.e., agape} never faileth: but whether [there be] prophecies, they shall fail; whether [there be] tongues, they shall cease; whether [there be] knowledge, it shall vanish away. 9. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.**

**10. But when that which is perfect {i.e., completed by God} is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.**

**11. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.**

**13. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these [is] charity {heaven's agape}.**

This well-known passage tells that, of all the spiritual things used by God toward His people, only faith, hope, and agape shall survive at the completion of all things. Too many of us assume that we have these and that all is well and so we concentrate on other things. I am afraid not all is well. Of all that, first should be these three, that is, if we desire to 'seek and find' that which will endure beyond the ages, that is, if we desire to go beyond 'bit and bridle'.

I believe God's Word instructs that first things should be sought first and that somehow all else will follow. Heaven's faith is one of the first things. Of the three eternal things, only faith and hope are placed in the innerman of a new Christian. All three are of, and issue out of, God. They are not of this world system and do not exist naturally in any person.

Agape is a fruit of the Spirit; therefore, the Spirit may place and develop agape in a believer, if the Spirit so chooses and is allowed to do His work. [Galatians 5:22] On the other hand, hope is installed at inception of salvation and must grow by God's hand. Faith also is installed at inception and grows by God...and is sufficient for its entire work concerning all that God would allow to come to a believer, even if faith is 'small as a mustard seed'.

Other than the new spirit (and God's Spirit), faith is most necessary in a developing Christian. The development of hope, agape, and almost everything else looks to faith in their attempts to grow toward completion. True, God labors in the innerman, but also in the Christian's exterior environment, for He uses many tools. But as He works, it is faith that is the one thing that causes within a person the proper response to God...much like the response of a sunflower tracking the sun, its face fully into the sun's soft warm rays.

## **Common Faith**

The word faith brings to mind many notions: high ideals of faith in country, in parents, in friends, in children. Naturally, faith has its small things, too: a farmer has faith in his skills, in the seeds he plants, in the land. A doctor has faith in his training, in surgical techniques, in the body's ability to heal. A housewife has faith in the tools of her work and in her skill to use them. A husband has faith in his easy chair when after work he settles heavily into it. A child has faith in big brother, as brother lovingly tosses him upward. Big brother has faith in his ability to catch little brother. Without thinking of it, both have faith in gravity.

A preacher has faith in the truth he preaches from the Bible. The congregation has faith in the preacher's sermon. The church member has faith that church attendance is pleasing to God. A Sunday school teacher has faith in the lesson she teaches. Church members believe their presence in the neighborhood is a good influence. And they believe that the church building will not collapse on Sunday morning.

Every moment faith is absolutely necessary. In everyday life it is essential so we can safely drive a car, depend on police protection, count on the monthly payroll. Why turn on the TV? It might not come on. Why look for the newspaper? It might not be there. Why go to church? God may not observe our attendance; indeed, He might not even be up there...if there is an up there. Life without faith is unthinkable.

But what if the easy chair creaks and collapses? What if the washing machine buzzes and begins to smoke? What if the surgeon's technique kills three patients in a row? What if the church building down the street collapsed? Would your faith in such matters begin to waver, or fail altogether?

An important point: The faith common to humanity weakens or strengthens (in any particular matter) as it operates within a person's knowledge and experience. Moreover, the weakness or strength of this kind of faith determines how much the person believes about a matter or a thing. Practically speaking, the process depends much on experience and typically it is automatic regarding most things in a person's life. No person, much less a society, can function without the kind of faith common to mankind.

Ah, but a higher faith exists. Hebrews 11 is a basic passage of Biblical faith and it is usually considered the most important passage on faith, with good reason. Yet, since faith is taught throughout the Bible, a dreadful mistake is to dwell on one passage. Hebrews 11 is a summary of Bible teaching on the subject and so references will be made to it, but a summary is not a full description much less an in-depth teaching. Indeed, a summary assumes that the reader has studied earlier detailed information. The Writer of Hebrews also made this assumption. Limiting study about Biblical faith to a selection of familiar passages results in misconceptions; then the things we want from God, and our calculations of how to get them, affect everything.

The above mentioned everyday facts about the faith that is common to humanity are familiar to us. Below read a very different story. It will not fit the experiences of most readers; yet, its result will strike a familiar chord in every true Christian, as each has the same faith.

## Rahab the Harlot

### Hebrews 11

**30. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. 31. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.**

The Writer of Hebrews and the Apostle James use the story of Rahab as an inspiration regarding faith and justification. [James 2:25] In scripture, women are seldom mentioned in Hebrew family lineages and so her appearance in Jesus' lineage constitutes an eternal dignity. [Matthew 1:5] I trust that the reader will see the place of honor given her in God's history, and especially see the reason for it.

Rahab's story begins in Joshua 2:1. Two spies were dispatched by Joshua to spy out the city of Jericho and the surrounding land. Their first night in Jericho was spent in the abode of Rahab, a harlot. Why it was her place that was chosen we do not know except that it worked for their good. Before they could fall asleep, Jericho's king had heard that two Israelites were in Rahab's abode, having come to check out the city. Over the preceding winter months, Israel's multitude had encamped in the Jordan valley across the river from Jericho. Recently, however, they had crossed through the river on dry ground, which had been witnessed by many local folk. War was expected and most of the land's inhabitants were inside the very crowded walled city.

Jericho's king sent to inspect Rahab's quarters. Suspecting as much, she had hidden the spies on the roof of her apartment under stalks of flax. Her apartment was built into Jericho's great wall on or near the top (15). Here is explained her actions -

### Joshua 2

**9. And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD {i.e., Yahweh} hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. 10. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that [were] on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.**

**11. And as soon as we had heard [these things], our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he [is] God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.**

**12. Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a**

**true token: 13. And [that] ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.**

Many gods were revered in that land, having differing characteristics and powers. Ah, but Rahab and her people had never seen or heard of a god like this Yahweh, God of the Hebrews. For forty years they had heard tales of powerful and terrible things about these mysterious people, terrible things occurring first in Egypt and then amid Sinai's wildernesses. But in the last year, tales had been arriving from east of the river. The Amorites under the two kings, Sihon and Og, had been powerful in that region until just months ago when the Israelites defeated them and took their land. Such an easy victory was a shocker!

## Her Choice

Rahab had already made her choice. Before the spies even agreed to her wishes she had committed herself to her course. She could die by the Israelite army as the city fell or if caught aiding the enemy die as a traitor at the hands of her own people. She chose protection from the Mighty God of the Israelites. In verse 9 she spoke familiarly of Yahweh, 'I know the Lord has given you the land.' She uses 'Lord' (Yahweh) in the first person.

Perhaps (and I believe most probably), as dread of the Israelites and their God spread across the land and as people came streaming into the city, many discussions arose about this powerful God of the enemy encamped down by the river. Rahab and her family became the only ones to 'believe'...whereas all others in the city 'believed not'. [Hebrews 11:31] The passage is speaking of Biblical faith. Why did such a woman 'believe'? It meant becoming a deserter to her people when she lied to the king's messengers. What could motivate a harlot? <sup>3</sup> There must have been a reason for Rahab to have quickly 'believed'. And in whom did she 'believe'?

Granted, Rahab chose to live rather than die, but what she chose and why she chose it became more than mere survival. She saw something that the others of her people could not see, and she saw it before her agreement with the spies. And she 'believed' (i.e., 'faithed') that the spies would honor such an agreement, betting her life upon it. We know this because even when the multitude of Israelites marched for days around the city she had put out a scarlet cord which might give her away as a traitor. Moreover, in those frightening days she had gathered her family and all their possessions into her apartment. Would anyone notice? Faith indicated, "Fear not, the agreement will be fulfilled." Either it took some doing to convince her family or the unique 'belief' in Rahab also existed in them. Often such was recorded in the New Testament when so-and-so and all of his (or her) house 'believed'.

Within faith, Joshua received the duty and authority transferred to him from Moses [Joshua 1:1-9] and within faith, the Israelites had crossed the Jordan to make war on Canaan. The season of year was spring and the river was full to overflowing its banks. The Lord had parted the waters and they had passed through on dry ground. And recently Rahab and the spies had acted out their parts...all of it by faith, a faith issued forth out of heaven.

Jericho's walls fell by God's power even as He responded to the people's obedience in faith to what may have seemed a ridiculous seven-day scenario of marching. Two themes appear here: the power of God and heaven's faith in the people. But look further at Rahab.

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<sup>3</sup> Perhaps women were harlots for economic reasons; even so harlotry was significant in religious life in certain temple sects, such that harlotry did not have the stigma in that society as in ours. (I wrote this footnote quite some years ago. It is amazing how quick our society has changed and continues changing. Even if one would watch news channels all day long he could not keep up with it. Thank you Lord that You are in charge.)

## Joshua 6

**16. And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city. 17. And the city shall be accursed, [even] it, and all that [are] therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that [are] with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.**

**20. So the people shouted when [the priests] blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.**

**21. And they {i.e., the Israelite army} utterly destroyed all that [was] in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.**

**22. But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye swore unto her.**

**23. And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel.**

**25. And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel [even] unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.**

## James 2

**25. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent [them] out another way?**

The verse in James teaches that an abstract concept of faith, one that does not manifest itself in works, is a 'dead' faith. Surely Rahab's faith and that of her family demonstrate what the New Testament writers preached to New Testament Christians. The faith Rahab and her family is a supreme example for God's people, and so it was passed down by God to the New Testament writers and by them to us. And so we see how Joshua and the Israelites honored Rahab.

So, how did God honor Rahab besides mentioning her in His history? Consider the story from Rahab's point of view. The rumor mill had been churning. Then it intensified greatly when Israel crossed through the river on dry ground. Attack was immanent. People were streaming into the walled city. The men of war that would protect the city expected the worse. Suddenly a knock on Rahab's door! And she opened to find two Israelites standing before her.

Something had been happening in Rahab. As a harlot, she may have worked for one of the temples. If so, she was a very religious woman. Consider the rumors for so many years about these very weird people, two of whom stood before. Consider the terrible things that had happened to all of the people that tried to stop them. Israel was a nation on the move. But mostly marvel at the miracles Yahweh had worked for them. All of it must have been bearing in on the Canaanites...and God's Spirit must have been bearing in on Rahab...though likely she had not a clue to that which had been going on in her.

At her door stands two of the enemy. I will not speculate on her reaction, but she took them in while recognizing who they were. We know this because others recognized who they were. The king heard that Israelites were in Rahab's house. She hides them, lies for them, and

lowers them to the ground from her window that is on the upper part of the wall. Rahab has made a deal with the two Israelites. Immediately on reporting to Joshua, the spies report their agreement with the harlot. Do you see this as a binding covenant? The spies had made it as a binding covenant and Joshua had accepted it as such. So had Rahab and her family; they gathered themselves and all that they had...and waited.

Where did Rahab and her family gather? In her house or apartment on or near the top of the wall. The spies know the location. The scarlet cord hangs outside the window. These folk wait with bated breath. Faith is the key. Fear, doubt, and other emotions are thick enough to taste in the small apartment, but they stay fast throughout the many days of Israel's march around the city. Through their window they can observe the crazy Israelites marching.

In the seventh day the climax is approaching and Joshua's mind is focused upon the attack. Will he remember a harlot? Probably not. If not, God will remind him or perhaps the spies will. Whatever the case, the covenant with Rahab will come to mind. The priests must blow the trumpets once more. Will the walls come down as God had promised? Trumpets are blasting. Israelites arranged by their tribes are shouting. Imagine the excitement and the commotion in their ranks as the wall begins crumbling. It terribly falls. Think of each Israelite warrior rushing to kill every living thing his sword can reach.

Rahab and her family are to survive this? Under such conditions, how many Israelites can remember to save a harlot in a particular abode? Who pays attention to a scarlet cord?

The spies have been sent on a mission. Will they arrive in time? What will they find? They know she is in the little apartment because the scarlet cord has been hanging there for days. If somehow all is well with them, the spies must get them out through a mass of Israelites killing every living thing.

The rubble, the dust, the bodies, the blood! Rahab and her family literally had to wade through it. Her people, many she knew! Some kinfolk that had refused to 'believe'...maybe priests for whom she had worked. What a mess, what an ordeal, what a Victorious Salvation amidst Calamity! The little group is brought through! Yahweh, God of Israel, is at work!

So what else might God do? The wall. The wall came crashing down by His hand. Rahab's house had been an integral part of that wall. Perhaps her window had looked out over the down-sloping terrain between Jericho and the camps of Israel below. Those fields had raised winter grain. In these spring days the Israelites had harvested enough to feed themselves. We know this because the Manna had ceased at the beginning of Passover Week and the 'unleavened bread' had been made with grain from those fields. From afar, Rahab may have observed the Passover festivities. Perhaps even then her heart had been changing...and those Israelites down there had been changing from enemies to saviors.

Do you see it? If the entire wall had fallen, the spies would have had nothing to save. Can you imagine the emotions of Rahab and her family as the wall collapsed? They had to be terror-stricken! But wait, their portion of the wall holds! If not, Rahab and her family would have been crushed. God crumbled the entire wall except the portion containing Rahab's abode.

This is no insignificant thing. If the wall crashing down at the Hand of God is marvelous, then how marvelous is the stability of that small portion of the wall and the saving of Rahab and all she had? Indeed, God honored her faith! He still does. And why not? For He had placed that faith in her for this very purpose. How marvelously able is our God to arrange faith in His people! How marvelously able is our God to save!

Did God respect Rahab the person? No. Did He respect the faith He had placed in her? Yes. Did He respect the decision she had allowed her faith to make for her? Yes. Heaven's faith is marvelously able when allowed its proper work by him in whom it resides.

Imagine dear reader: The battle and the excitement are past and a small boy's eye is attracted to the one portion of wall yet standing. What is fluttering in that window? Why, it is a scarlet chord! "What is that?" he asks. The question goes around the camps. The answer comes back in the form of the harlot's story. Great is our God in the testimonies He has left us regarding His wondrous power to save!

## **Women of Faith**

By James' definition, Rahab's faith was the real thing. He informs also that she was declared 'justified'. Rahab appears in a distinguished list in Matthew 1:5, a lineage down to Jesus. Note that Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, the wife of Uriah (God is honoring Uriah more than his wife), and Mary are the only women in the list. Not even Sarah, Abraham's wife, appears. Scripture indicates that the five were outstanding in the faith that God had placed in them...as well as faithful in the faith-action required of them. They were chosen to be honored and to be studied by God's people as illustrations of what constitutes faith.

Some of the women responded in faith without a background of knowledge or experience. Preached often in the Church is, "Faith grows by its use. The more used, the larger and stronger it grows." Yet, the stories of these women suggest another conclusion. Rahab had just received her faith and was required to rely on it for a life-and-death situation. It was true of her family as well. The mustard-seed faith placed in each by God was put to an extreme test. It passed victoriously. If you are God's child, you have the faith of heaven.

Also in Matthew's list we see that God chose Rahab as the mother of Boaz who became a Bible-type of Jesus, in that he illustrated the 'elder brother' relationship of God for His people. Similar honors go to the other women on the list. The first, Tamar, is more misunderstood than Rahab. Her lying and sexual act with her father-in-law, Judah, is generally seen as worse than Rahab's harlotry, lying, and treason. Prayerful study, looking to the Spirit for guidance, is of great benefit, for God put Tamar in the List of Honor with very good reason.

Mary, Jesus' mother, was not even a young bride when Gabriel visited her. Her faith 'to believe' during the marvels and dangers she encountered is truly amazing. Later in this Part I, Ruth's story appears. Near the end of Part II, Mary's story appears. Study the Biblical accounts of these women and God will teach much about faith. For 'little faith' even as 'a mustard seed' can be involved in great things by the hand of God.

## **A Big Difference**

Rahab's story has been given here to emphasize an interesting comparison: All of the people of Jericho possessed the common faith of mankind, yet they did not 'believe' in Israel's God as had Rahab and her father's house. What was different about 'justified' Rahab? Highlighting such a distinction is a primary function of the theme of this book. Look for this kind of difference manifested in the lives of all of the characters studied in the stories.

The faith Rahab displayed was distinct from common human faith. It was peculiar. Ah, but her faith was the same as is in each true Christian. Nonbelievers have no clue regarding this faith and its purpose. Sadly, many Christians also do not ascertain the distinction. Each child of God has in him two faiths: a faith of this world and a faith of the world above.



Heaven's faith (its nature, pure simplicity, how it influences every believer, and its distinction from common faith) is the theme of GOD'S HOOK.