

Every so often we come to these little epiphanies in our Christianity where we think we have God all figured out and we think we know what we are supposed to do and what it will all mean for our lives, and then God goes and throws a monkey wrench into the whole scheme of things. He just does something that does not seem to fit into the religious construct that we have created for Him.

Tonight's story does just that. It is a monkey wrench and it causes you to kind of just shake your head in bewilderment not really sure what to think of it all. But it is a story that speaks to both the power of faith and the majestic mercy and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and just confirms that He is God and we are not—thank goodness for that reality.

Hebrews 11:31

By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

When we left off last week, the Israelites, under the command and leadership of Joshua, entered the Promised Land and conquered the fortress city of Jericho. It was an unbelievable display of the supernatural invading the natural as God's people got to participate in a crazy miracle that was based on a battle strategy that really made no sense to anyone but God.

Tonight's story kind of flashes back, just a bit, to when the Israelites were still on the East side of the Jordan River, just days before they crossed through the river, and it deals with another amazing woman of faith, a prostitute whose name

is Rahab. In God's eyes, this prostitute was so amazing and her faith so significant that she not only ends up in the Hall of Faith but she actually plays a key role in both Jewish and Gentile prophetic history. Her story can be found beginning in Joshua 2.

Joshua 2:1-24

And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." And they went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there. And it was told to the king of Jericho, "Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land." Then the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land."

But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said, "True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them." But she had brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof. So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. And the gate was shut as soon as the pursuers had gone out.

Before the men 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, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you.

For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.

Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death." And the men said to her, "Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the Lord gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you."

Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was built into the city wall, so that she lived in the wall. And she said to them, "Go into the hills, or the pursuers will encounter you, and hide there three days until the pursuers have returned. Then afterward you may go your way."

The men said to her, "We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours that you have made us swear. Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father's household. Then if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless. But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head.

But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless with respect to your oath that you have made us swear." And she said, "According to your words, so be it." Then she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

They departed and went into the hills and remained there three days until the pursuers returned, and the pursuers searched all along the way and found nothing. Then the two men returned. They came down from the hills and passed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they told him all that had happened to them. And they said to Joshua, "Truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us."

It is interesting that the first place these men go to is a house of prostitution. Come one, they were sent on a mission from God to explore the land and scope out the enemy territory. I guess their time in the desert was a bit lonely and they just busted out the good times in the big city.

Actually, going to Rahab's house would not have been too out of line as it is generally understood that Rahab's house was like an inn for travelers that just provided a little more fringe benefits than one might usually get at the local Motel 6. The point being is that it was more than just a little one room bungalow which will be an important little fact later on.

Being a place that provided sexual services, it is more than likely that her house would have been located on the lower wall of the city and not the upper wall. If you remember, the city was constructed such that there was a large retaining wall

at its base which protected the lower city and then further up a second retaining wall which protected the upper mound, and in between the two would have been residences as illustrated in this drawing.

It is more than likely that the lower wall protected more of the common dwellers—the poor folk—where as the upper wall protected the elite and wealthy. After all, the lower part of the city would not be the best location during a time of war, which is why you would likely find a prostitutes' house in the lower part of the city.

We are told that Rahab's house was built into the wall and it would have been far easier for the spies to have been lowered out of a window from the first wall than from the second. The stone base upon which the first wall was built was 12-15 feet high and the first wall was another 20-26 feet above the base. This would have been a pretty intense 30-40 foot drop for the spies to scale.

The base of the upper wall was about 46 feet above the ground level outside of the base retaining wall. So the drop from the upper level would have been closer to 60-70 feet. In addition, since the upper wall was at the top of the mound it probably did not even provide direct vertical access to the ground level outside of the city. A person would have had to descend from the upper wall, make their way through the lower city and then try and exit from the lower wall. The point being is that I believe Rahab probably lived in the slums next to the lower wall.

Excavations at the Jericho tell have also revealed something pretty amazing. If we look at this overhead view of the mound, the walls were all destroyed except for a small portion on the North side of the city. In this one place, a portion of the wall remained intact and in this picture you can see the rooms that were attached

to the wall. There is a big chance that this is actually the ancient home of Rahab and her house of prostitution. Since we know that her entire household was saved from the destruction, her house, which was built into the lower wall, must have been intact. If the walls around her house had collapsed, it is likely that those within would not have survived such a fall.

In this next picture you can see a part of the surviving structure from within the city wall and it gives you a feel for how large the wall stood above the embankment upon which the city was built.

I love the way that over time archeology always catches up with what the Bible so clearly states. Another little archeological side note, **Joshua 6:24** says that the Israelites burned the city and everything in it. Excavations of the tell reveal that the fallen mud bricks were all burned. As they dug through the ruins they found a layer of burned ash and debris. One of the archeologists, Kenyon, described the destruction:

The destruction was complete. Walls and floors were blackened or reddened by fire, and every room was filled with fallen bricks, timbers, and household utensils; in most rooms the fallen debris was heavily burnt, but the collapse of the walls of the eastern rooms seems to have taken place before they were affected by the fire (Kenyon 1981: 370).

I encourage you to be like Rahab and consider the evidence regarding the veracity of God's Word and believe. All the archeological evidence supports the

miracle. Don't doubt God; but realize that He is the God in the heavens above and on the earth and no one can thwart His purposes. He does as He wills.

So let's talk a little about Rahab, this woman of ill-repute. It is not very likely that when she was a little girl Rahab wanted nothing more than to be a prostitute. The journey into prostitution then, like now, was a path that originated out of need and desperation. We don't know anything about her story, but I am fairly sure that it was riddled with pain, disappointment, disillusionment, and rejection. There is also a very good chance that she was neglected, abused, or incurred some other major trauma in her life.

For whatever reason, the only way she was able to make a living was through selling her body. It is important to understand a little bit about this because we see something really unique in this story and that is that Rahab surprisingly had a soft heart for the Lord. A soft heart would be something highly unusual for a prostitute. In fact, it would not be a stretch to say that most prostitutes must harden their hearts to even engage in their profession.

Women of prostitution most often find their profession through the path of pain and they simply cannot be attached emotionally to their customers. They must merely provide a service and then move on no matter how attached the man might become. Customers were a source of income, nothing more.

In addition, they had to harden their hearts to survive the way they were stigmatized by their community as immoral women corrupting the virtues of society. They were called whores and were looked upon as a social evil preying on "men's weaknesses." This was not an easy profession to be in and it took one tough woman to endure her trade.

But of all the people in this city, and it is likely that there were thousands, this one tough and hardened woman considered the evidence before her and believed. She had never herself experienced God; she just heard the stories. But her hard heart had melted. She said:

Joshua 2:10-11

For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.

I love that statement: “for the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.” It was clear to all in Jericho that their moon god or any of their other gods were impotent compared to the power of the Lord. But only to Rahab was it apparent that the God of Israel reigns supreme.

The others in the city were obviously very afraid, but every one of them chose to put their faith in their walls and in their provision—what to them had been tried and true and had protected them in the past. They did not really consider the evidence, at least not like Rahab did. It scared them but not enough to acknowledge that the Lord God is God. They did not soften their hearts and turn to the Lord. Instead, they just hoped and prayed that the walls and their food supply would last.

Their behavior is actually quite consistent with the promises that God had previously made to Moses regarding the inhabitants of the Land:

Exodus 23:27-28

I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you.

Exodus 15:13-16

You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode. The peoples have heard; they tremble; pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed; trembling seizes the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them; because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone, till your people, O Lord, pass by, till the people pass by whom you have purchased.

They were as still as a stone. They were literally frozen by their fear; but sadly it was not the fear of the Lord which derives from faith but it was the fear of the Lord that derives from impending doom.

Did you notice that Rahab took her first step of faith before she even knew if the spies were going to grant her any favor? There was something in her that believed that this God of gods, this Lord of lords was a merciful God and would be

merciful even to a pagan idolatrous prostitute. I am not really sure why she came to that conclusion, but she must have believed that a God who is that fantastic to His own people must also be a God who would extend mercy to the outcast, the rejected, the defiled, and the condemned. She figured correctly!

In addition, her faith was “active.” Before she asked the spies for refuge she gave them refuge. She knew that their coming to the city would not have escaped notice and she was wily enough to know that the King would come looking for them. So she took them up to the roof and, with the same kind of mercy that she sought, she extended mercy to those who most certainly would have been killed if they would have been caught.

Sure enough the king sent his messengers to her house to inquire about the spies and what does this woman of faith do? She bold-faced lies to the king. Without knowing whether or not the spies would grant her favor, she committed an act of treason and risked not only her life but I am sure the lives of her entire household; yet, still she lied. If they would have searched her place and found the spies, I am sure she would have been immediately executed.

Think about it. This is unbelievable. This woman’s faith was expressed in a lie. Not the kind of “active” faith that we are used to seeing in the Bible now is it? Yet this woman gets honored in the Hall of Faith. Now don’t get me wrong; I am not saying that God approved of her lying; He just approved of her faith even if she did something that is clearly spoken against in the Word of God. After all, thou shall not lie is one of the big 10.

So it was not about the lie, it was about her faith. It was not about the sin, it was about her faith. Do you get it? Are you starting to see? This should start to

open your spiritual eyes to the depth of God's mercy and grace. This should start to settle the disturbance in your heart in terms of the issue of your own sin.

God makes it clear in *Psalm 103, Romans 5:1-3; John 3:16; Colossians 2:8-14; 1 Peter 2:9-10; Hebrews 2:10-11; Hebrews 10:11-17* and in many other places that He does not deal with us on the basis of sin but on the basis of our faith. This prostitute, this traitor, this liar, this idolater is our hero. Rahab believed the truth about God and she acted on that belief with only stories and rumors to back her faith; as such, Rahab is hailed as a great woman of faith.

Rahab was remarkable in many other ways as well. She was not just a self-serving traitor; rather, she was concerned for the lives of her entire family. We have no indication that her family was moved toward belief by what they had heard about God. But she believed that God would be merciful not only to her but also to them.

She asked the spies to deal kindly with her father's house and save her father, mother, brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them. Get this; we do not even know if she was in good standing with the family. It is more than likely that her profession was a family embarrassment. I mean who is proud of having a prostitute for a daughter or a sister or an aunt. But her faith produced life not just for herself but for others. Her faith was like a lifeline to those who were sentenced to death.

I like the fact that she made them swear by the Lord. First of all, she did not say, "Swear by your Lord" but by "the" Lord. This tells me that she had already chosen to identify herself with "the" Lord who is God above the heavens and the

earth. She was not just waxing rhetoric to get their favor; she actually believed. He is the Lord, her Lord, and their Lord; He is the Lord over all.

Secondly, she knew that their promise would have to be kept and they could not play lose with the Lord who is God. This means that in addition to knowing that He was a merciful God, she also somehow understood that the God of the universe must also be a God of justice. She knew that if they would back out on their promise that they would be in deep doo-doo.

Rahab bet her life on what she could deduce about the Lord's character and nature. This is remarkable. Who does that? Who believes so ardently with so little? After all, think about how much struggle it was for Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Moses, and the first wave of the Israelites to believe. They all had personal encounters with the Lord; she just had stories and rumors.

Yet, Rahab knew that they would have to keep their word so she asked them for a sure sign and they swore an oath: "Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the Lord gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you." She had her ticket to paradise. Now she just had to convince her family of the coming judgment, what she had done, and the promise that she received.

She was told by the spies to tie a scarlet cord in the window and that the scarlet cord would seal the deal. When they somehow breached the walls and conquered the city all who were in her house would be protected whereas anyone outside of her door would be utterly destroyed, family member or not. They had to be in the house with the scarlet cord hanging out the window.

Now I know that after this intense and detailed study in Hebrews that the fact that it was a **scarlet** chord or that they had to be **in the house** did not escape your keen eye for detail and Old Testament typology. I know that you know that every little detail is important.

The scarlet cord or thread is used throughout the Levitical law and is closely tied to the sacrifices for sins (*Leviticus 14:4, 6 51; Numbers 19:6*); thus, the Hebrews would have seen this as symbolic of the blood of the Passover and for us an emblem of salvation by the blood of Christ. Pretty cool typology. I love the way the New Testament is woven all the way through the Old.

Now I want to make a very important point about the cord. Rahab and her family were saved by faith and not by the cord; the cord was the evidence of Rahab's faith. Placing the cord in her window was the "active" part of her faith; it evidenced that she trusted in the promises that were made and was willing to wait on the Lord for deliverance.

You see faith in God grants us salvation and faith in His covenant (His promise of eternal life if we merely trust ourselves to Jesus) gives us assurance (*Hebrews 11:1*); but I want you to clearly understand that the token or symbols of the covenant can neither give salvation nor grant assurance—they can merely evidence our faith.

For example, the Jews depended upon circumcision to save them, but they ignored the true meaning of circumcision; thus, it became nothing more than an impotent religious-rite. Today, there are people who depend upon all sorts of things for their salvation: baptism, taking communion, commitment to the church, speaking in tongues, and so on; believing that these are essential for

salvation. They also take comfort and assurance in all manner of religious tokens: crosses, rosaries, charms, medallions and even the Bibles they tote around.

But it is all for naught. Salvation comes only by the grace of God (as a result of the blood of Jesus Christ which was poured out for our sin on the cross) through faith, and that is it (***Ephesians 2:8***). Nothing else is required. All else can merely be an evidence of our faith, but it does not hold or contain the substance of our faith.

Rahab had faith in the Lord and in the promises He had made through His servants the spies; and she proved her faith by letting them escape out her window and by hanging the scarlet rope from the very same window. In addition, those in her family could only be saved if they were in her house which was protected by the scarlet cord. In other words, their salvation also depended upon their faith. They needed to also believe and choose to be in the house of faith. Rahab's faith was not enough to save them.

When Rahab came and told her family what she had done, she put herself at great risk. She did not know if one of them would have told the King's servants and put finger on her. She extended them the offer for salvation, but they had to individually choose to believe in that promise of salvation. They had to each choose to abandon their walls and their provisions and put their faith in the God of gods and the Lord of Lords. They did and, like Rahab, they were also saved by their faith.

Joshua 6:20-25

As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city. Then they devoted all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys, with the edge of the sword.

But to the two men who had spied out the land, Joshua said, "Go into the prostitute's house and bring out from there the woman and all who belong to her, as you swore to her." So the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her. And they brought all her relatives and put them outside the camp of Israel.

And they burned the city with fire, and everything in it. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. But Rahab the prostitute and her father's household and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. And she has lived in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

What a fantastic story; this woman had so many strikes against her. She was a Gentile. She was a prostitute. She was part of a pagan culture that was steeped in demonic idol worship. She disobeyed and dishonored the authority of her king. She lied. Yet, Rahab was not chastised by God for sinning. Rather, she was praised for her faith. She was hailed for uniting the truth that she knew about God with

active belief. When she chose to protect the spies, she became a hero of faith regardless of the means she utilized.

Whenever I read this story, I am reminded that the rules of the “*religion*” of Christianity are turned upside down by a life of faith. If history were rewritten according to the dictates of the “*religion*” of Christianity, can you imagine how this story would be told? It would not matter if Rahab believed God! She was a filthy prostitute and an idol worshiper. She lied, disobeyed the king, and dishonored her God-given authority. She was un-submissive and subversive by recruiting others to follow in her sedition.

She should not have been honored despite all her good intentions. After all, sin is sin. She should have been rebuked and given a list of what she must do to repent and get right with God and then maybe we might accept her. All I can say is thank God we are judged by our faith and not by the dictates of the “*religion*” of Christianity.

Even James talks about Rahab when he discusses what it means to have a faith that is evidenced by the things we do. In the entire chapter where James deals with this issue of “active” faith, he only mentions two people in the entire narrative: Abraham (our father of faith) and Rahab. James had so many other towers of faith to choose from, including Job, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, David, Solomon, Daniel, and Nehemiah. Yet, he chose to make an example of Rahab the gentile prostitute. In referencing Rahab, James says:

James 2:25-26

Rahab the prostitute is another example of this. She was made right with God by her actions—when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road. Just as the body is dead without a spirit, so also faith is dead without good deeds.

Does it seem a little strange that this woman gets so much attention in the Bible? Well, it is not the end of her story. Joshua makes no further mention of Rahab; but the faith of this prostitute is well preserved in some pretty fantastic ways.

Come to find out, Rahab makes her home with the Israelites. She gives up prostitution and marries a wealthy man named Salmon and has a child named Boaz. Boaz became the husband of Ruth, another highly regarded woman of faith who also was a gentile and former idolater. Most of you know the story. Boaz marries this woman from the hated Moabite nation, a foreigner, who had chosen to follow the God of the Jews. It is a beautiful love story which speaks of the way that God would redeem us gentiles and bring us into His family and lavish us with His love. Boaz is another Old Testament type of our redeemer, Jesus and Ruth is a type of the Gentile church.

Ruth and Boaz had a child named Obed who was the father of Jesse who was the father of King David (***Ruth 4:18-22***); thus, Rahab is part of Jesus' lineage. In fact, Rahab is one of only four women who are mentioned in the family tree of Jesus (***Matthew 1:5***). Keep in mind, the fact that women are mentioned in an ancient Jewish lineage is alone shocking enough as that just did not happen; but

when you add to it that two of the women mentioned are gentiles, it is simply unbelievable. Rahab actually stands as a type of the Gentile church pointing forward to the day that God would grant mercy to the Gentiles.

The moral of the story: never underestimate the power and importance of faith. What you choose to do, no matter how small, believing on the character and nature of the Lord Jesus could set forth a destiny that will be memorialized through the ages. In addition, I think this story just reinforces the truth that your choices of faith, no matter how small, matter to God and you will be rewarded whether in this life or the next.

Follow in Rahab's footsteps and believe. Don't wait for God to always first prove Himself to you (which He will), but like Rahab choose to believe because of what you have heard and what you have seen Him do in the lives of others in this body. That would be extraordinary and would be greatly honored by God for few have demonstrated that kind of faith.

As we said last week, don't trust in your walls and in your provision; instead, be a man or a woman of faith in the small things and who knows what will happen in the grand scheme of things for he who is faithful in little will be faithful in much (**Luke 16:10**).

Let's Pray.

Chart 1

The Walls of Jericho



Chart 2

Jericho

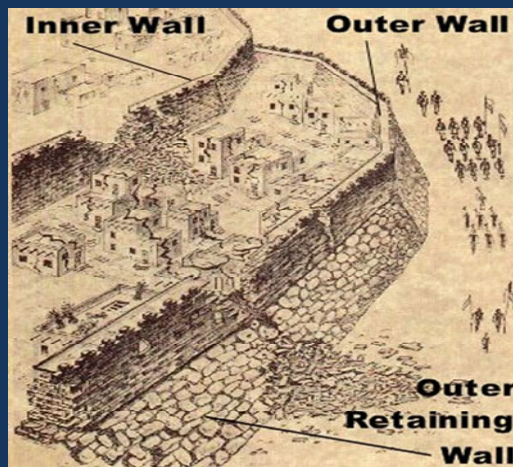


Chart 3

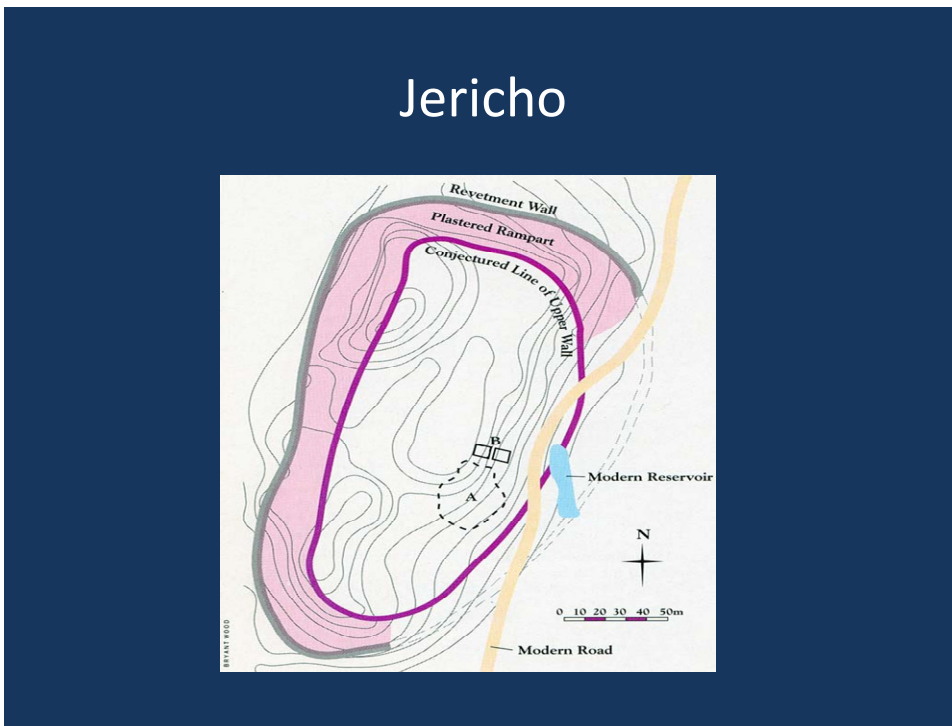


Chart 4

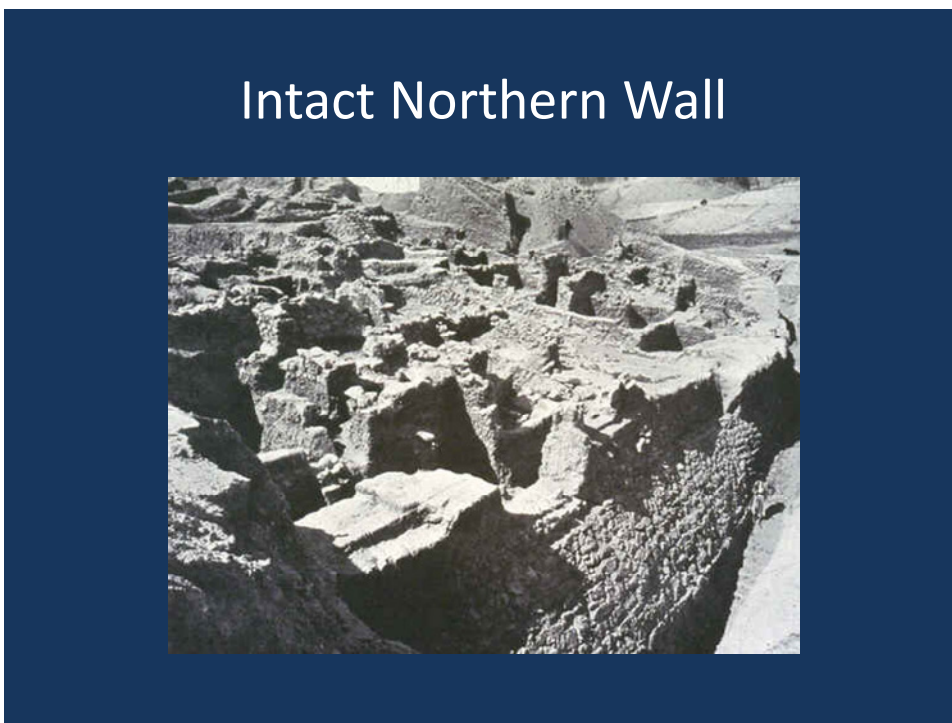


Chart 5

Interior Standing Wall

