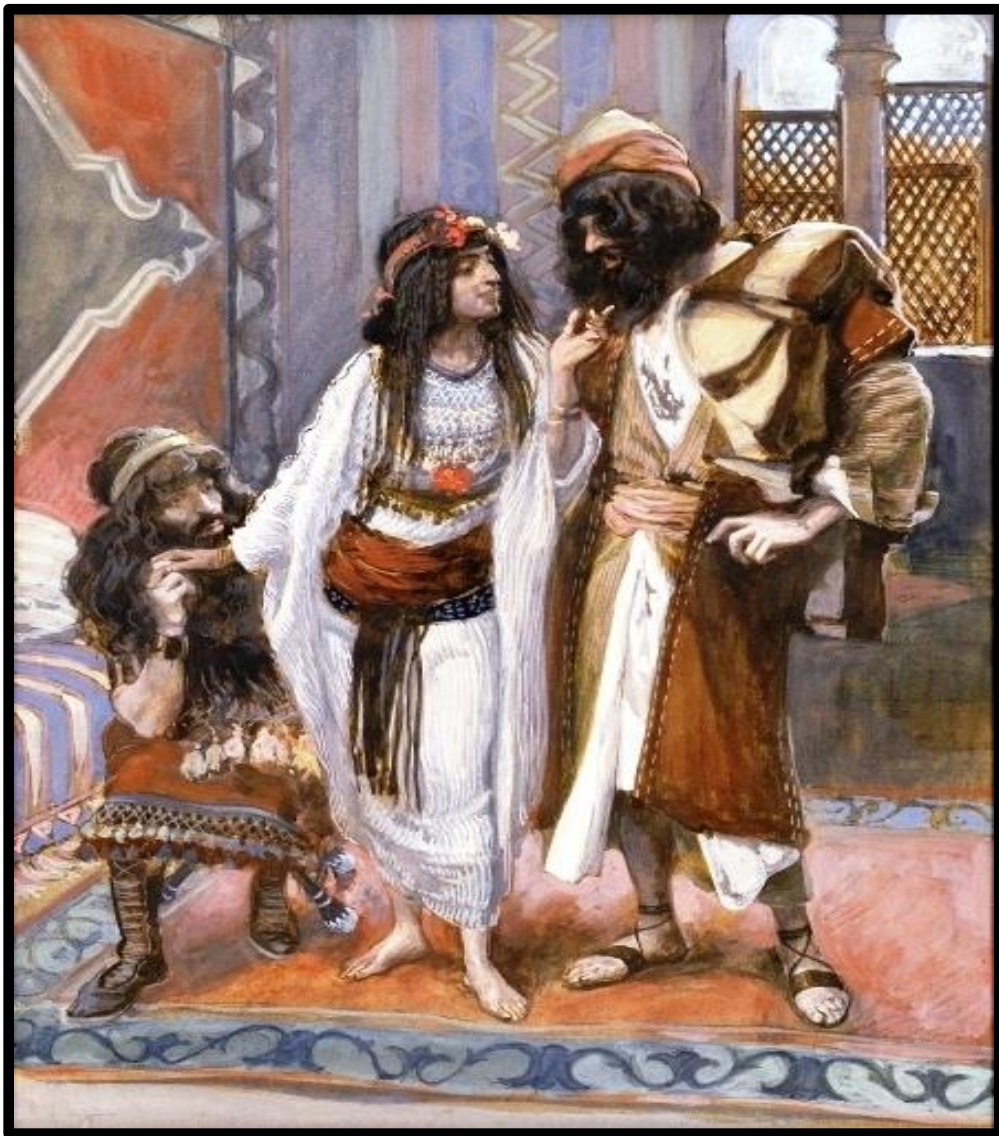


LIVING GODS WILL

Vessel of God

RAHAB



Rahab, the harlot of Jericho by James Tissot

Born: Jericho

Died: Unknown

Rahab was a Canaanite **prostitute** in Jericho.

Rahab helped **Joshua's spies escape** from the king of Jericho.

Rahab and **her family were spared** when Joshua invaded Jericho.

Rahab was the **first recorded Gentile to convert** to Yahweh.

In the book of **Joshua**, we are introduced to one of the most thought-provoking and astonishing heroines of the Old Testament. (**1406 BC**)

Rahab, the prostitute of the Canaanite city of Jericho, ultimately is noteworthy for her great faith and for her place in the lineage of **Jesus Christ**. But a closer examination of the life of this remarkable Gentile woman can lead to deeper insights into **God's** plan for His church and His dealing with individual believers in grace and mercy.

Rahab's story is found in **Joshua 2–6**. This passage describes the conquest of the fortified city of Jericho by the Israelites. In its day, Jericho was the most important Canaanite fortress city in the Jordan Valley. It was a stronghold directly in the path of the advancing Israelites, who had just crossed the Jordan River (**Joshua 3:1-17**).

Before entering the land west of the Jordan, **Joshua** sent two spies to look over the land. The **king of Jericho** heard that two Israelite spies were within his city and ordered them to be brought out to him.

Rahab, the woman with whom the spies were staying, protected them by hiding them on her roof. She told them how the citizens of Jericho had been fearful of the Israelites ever since they defeated the Egyptians via the Red Sea miracle (some 40 years prior).

She agreed to help them escape, provided that she and her family were spared in the upcoming battle. The spies agreed to her request, giving her three conditions to be met: 1) she must distinguish her house from the others by hanging a scarlet rope out of the window so the Israelites would know which home to spare; 2) her family must be inside the house during the battle; and 3) she must not later turn on the spies.

Safely escaping the city, the two spies returned to Joshua and reported that the **"whole land was melting with fear."** The Israelites crossed the Jordan into Canaan where they laid siege to the city of Jericho. The city was completely destroyed, and every man, woman, and child in it was killed.

Only **Rahab** and her family were spared. Ultimately, **Rahab** married **Salmon**, an Israelite from the tribe of Judah. Her son was **Boaz**, the husband of **Ruth**. **Joseph**, the legal father of **Jesus**, is her direct descendant.

Rahab was a young Canaanite prostitute and as such not a very likely candidate for a heroine of the faith. Jericho was one of the principal seats of idol worship, being especially devoted to **Ashtaroth**, the goddess of the moon. Here was centered all that was the vilest and most degrading in the religion of the Canaanites.

Many Bible commentators, eager to remove the stigma of the designation "**harlot**" from one included in the genealogy of Christ (**Matthew 1:5**), have described Rahab as a hostess or tavern keeper. But scriptural usage of the Hebrew word **zanah** (**Leviticus 21:7-14; Deuteronomy 23:18; Judges 11:1; 1 Kings 3:16**) and the authority of the apostles (**Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25**), establish the credibility for use of the word "**harlot**."

It is clear that **Rahab** was perceptive, intelligent and well informed. **Rahab** identified the spies for what they were, hid them, and had a plausible story ready with which to deceive the king's agents. **Rahab** didn't deny that she had entertained the men.

She says that they left at dusk when it would be difficult for anyone to be sure of clearly seeing anything. The agents did not dare to risk stopping to search **Rahab's** house because, if they did, the spies might get away. Finally, the Canaanite prostitute gives the two Israelites excellent advice. She tells them to hide in the hills for three days before attempting to cross the Jordan.

Spiritually, **Rahab** was not in an ideal circumstance to come to faith in the one true **God**, the **God** of Israel. She was a citizen of a wicked city that was under **God's** condemnation. **Rahab** was part of a corrupt, depraved, pagan culture. She had not benefited from the godly leadership of **Moses** or **Joshua**.

However, **Rahab** had one asset—she had heard from the many men she came into contact with that the Israelites were to be feared. She heard the stories of their escape from Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, the wanderings in the wilderness, and their recent victory over the Amorites.

She learned enough to reach the correct, saving conclusion: "**For the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below**" (**Joshua 2:11**). It is this change of heart, this faith—coupled with the actions prompted by faith—that saved her and her family.

It is often said that **Rahab**, while being a true historical person, also serves as a symbolic foreshadowing or "**type**" of the church and Gentile believers. **She was, in fact, the first recorded Gentile convert**. There are many ways in which **Rahab** depicts the church.

First, she was part of a pagan world system, a prostitute, who by her conversion was enabled to become a legitimate bride. In like fashion, Israel was the first chosen people of God, but they were set aside temporarily so the Gentiles could be brought into the kingdom of God, and the church is now considered the bride of Christ (**Romans 11; Ephesians 5:25-27**).

Second, **Rahab**, because she welcomed the spies, was saved because of her faith in "God in heaven above and on the earth below" (**Hebrews 11:31**). Likewise, Christians are saved through faith in **Jesus Christ**. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (**Ephesians 2:8**).

Third, although **Rahab** and Christians are saved by an act of grace through faith, true faith requires and is exemplified by action (**James 2**). **Rahab** had to put the scarlet cord out of the window. Christians must accept **Jesus Christ** as their Savior and **Lord** and then go on to live in a manner that verifies that our faith is real.

Fourth, **Rahab** could have indicated the location of her home in any number of ways. But the only way that she could be spared was to follow the directions given to her by the Israelite spies. The world tells us that there are many ways to **God** and salvation, all equally valid. But the Bible tells us, concerning **Jesus Christ**, that "salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (**Acts 4:12**).

Fifth, **Rahab's** faith enabled her to turn away from her culture, her people, and her religion and to the Lord. Commitment to a true faith in **God** may necessitate setting priorities that are contrary to those of the world, as we are exhorted to do in **Romans 12:2**.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE

Joshua 2:1 Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there.

Joshua 2:3 So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country." **4** Then the woman took the two men and hid them.

Joshua 6:17 Now the city shall be doomed by the Lord to destruction, it and all who are in it. Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.



**The prostitute Rahab
assisting Israelite spies of Johsua
by Julius Schnoor von Carolsfeld**