

Rahab

Women of Faith and Courage · Women of the Bible

A Canaanite prostitute living in Jericho when Joshua's spies entered to survey the land, Rahab demonstrated remarkable faith in Israel's God despite her pagan upbringing and sinful profession. Having heard of the LORD's mighty works—the parting of the Red Sea and victories over Amorite kings—she acknowledged that "the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." When the king of Jericho sought the Israelite spies, she hid them on her roof under stalks of flax, sending their pursuers on a false trail. In exchange for her protection, she requested safety for herself and her family when Israel attacked, receiving the scarlet cord to hang from her window as a sign of covenant protection.

When Jericho's walls fell, Joshua commanded the spies to bring out Rahab and all her household, and "she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day." She married Salmon of the tribe of Judah, bore Boaz, and thus entered the Messianic line—one of only four women mentioned in Matthew's genealogy of Christ.

The author of Hebrews celebrates her faith (11:31), while James cites her works as evidence of living faith (2:25), demonstrating that saving faith produces obedient action.

Note: Rahab's scarlet cord has prompted typological interpretation as symbolizing Christ's blood providing salvation. Her inclusion in Christ's genealogy alongside Tamar, Ruth, and Bathsheba emphasizes God's grace to Gentiles and sinners. The transformation from 'Rahab the harlot' to ancestress of David and Christ illustrates the gospel's power to redeem the most unlikely candidates. Her faith, though imperfect (she lied to protect the spies), proved genuine through costly action—risking her life to align with Israel's God against her own people.

Key Verses

Joshua 2:9

And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD 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.

Joshua 2:11

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.

Joshua 6:25

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.

Matthew 1:5

And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

Hebrews 11:31

By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.