THE QUESTION

How did the early church read the story of Rahab and the scarlet thread?

Asked by a THF member on June 23, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 9 numbered quotations · the 13 early Christian passages and 50 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/how-did-the-early-church-read-the-story-of-rahab-and-the-scarlet-thread

The short answer *From the text: says what the passages say*

They read it as a picture of salvation in Christ. Early writers say Rahab was saved by faith and hospitality, that the scarlet thread pointed to redemption through the Lord's blood, and that her house, where all inside were kept safe, was a figure of the one Church.

LIBRARY ONLY	This study was written only from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed at the back, with a link to read it.
HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
SHARING WITH AN AI?	Every quotation here comes from The Historic Faith's library. If you paste this study into an AI, anything it adds beyond these pages comes from that AI, not from us.

IN THIS STUDY

1	Rahab was saved by faith and hospitality	**2**
2	The scarlet thread pointed to the Lord's blood	**2**
3	Another early teacher repeats the same lesson	**2**
4	Saving blood links Passover to Christ	**3**
5	Rahab's house pictures the one Church	**3**
6	Cyprian warns against leaving that house	**4**
7	God forms a holy Church from sinners	**4**
8	Repentant sinners go in first	**5**
	What these passages don't tell us	**5**
	The Sources: 13 early Christian passages and 50 Bible verses, with links	**5**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don't republish.

POINT 1 OF 8

Rahab was saved by faith and hospitality

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement of Rome retells how Rahab hid the spies and asked that her family be kept safe. He says her faith and her welcome of the messengers are why she was saved.

1 “Due to her faith and hospitality, Rahab the harlot was saved.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 13, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 8

The scarlet thread pointed to the Lord's blood

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement says the sign of the scarlet thread showed ahead of time that redemption would come through the Lord's blood to all who believe. He calls Rahab not only a woman of faith but a prophet in what she did.

2 “In this way, they showed that redemption would flow through the blood of the Lord to all who believe and hope in God. You see, beloved, that there was not only faith but prophecy in this woman.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 13, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 3 OF 8

Another early teacher repeats the same lesson

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement of Alexandria lists Rahab among the faithful of the Old Testament, beside Abraham and Lot. He gives the same reason for her rescue: faith joined with hospitality.

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

3 “Because of hospitality and piety, Lot was saved from Sodom. Because of faith and hospitality, Rahab the prostitute was saved.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Stromata* 4.17 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 6, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 8

Saving blood links Passover to Christ

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

Justin says the Passover blood on the doorposts saved Israel in Egypt, and that the Passover was Christ. Early writers read the scarlet sign on Rahab's window in this same pattern of saving blood.

4 “And the blood of the Passover, sprinkled on each man’s doorposts and lintel, saved those who were rescued in Egypt, when the firstborn of the Egyptians were destroyed. For the Passover was Christ, who was later sacrificed, as Isaiah also said, ‘He was led like a sheep to the slaughter.’”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Justin Martyr,** *Dialogue with Trypho* (c. 130–165 AD) **Source 1, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 5 OF 8

Rahab's house pictures the one Church

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Cyprian says Rahab bore a type of the Church. Just as only those inside her house were spared, those who would escape the world's ruin must be gathered into the one house of the Church.

5 “We also see this expressed in Rahab, who also bore a type of the Church.”

later in the same passage

“In this mystery it is declared that those who will live and escape the destruction of the world must be gathered together into one house alone, that is, into the Church.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Epistles* (c. 248–258 AD) **Source 10, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

POINT 6 OF 8

Cyprian warns against leaving that house

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

In another work Cyprian returns to Rahab, in whom the Church was prefigured. He uses the command to stay inside her house to warn against splitting away from the Church.

6

> “Do you think that you can stand and live if you withdraw from the Church, building for yourself other homes and a different dwelling? For it was said to Rahab, in whom the Church was prefigured, "Your father, and your mother, and your brothers, and all the house of your father, you shall gather to you into your house; and it shall come to pass, whoever shall go abroad beyond the door of your house, his blood shall be upon his own head."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Treatises* (c. 248–258 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 11, page 6 Read it in the library ›

POINT 7 OF 8

God forms a holy Church from sinners

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

Irenaeus explains that Hosea's marriage to an unfaithful woman was a sign. From people who had strayed, God would build a Church made holy by fellowship with His Son. Rahab, a sinner taken into God's people, fits this same pattern.

7

> “For this reason, the prophet Hosea took "a wife of whoredoms," prophesying through this action "that in committing fornication the earth would fornicate from the Lord," meaning the people on the earth; and from such people, it will be God’s good pleasure to create a Church that shall be sanctified by fellowship with His Son, just as that woman was sanctified by union with the prophet.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book IV* (c. 175–202 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 5, page 6 Read it in the library ›

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

POINT 8 OF 8

Repentant sinners go in first

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

Jesus told the leaders who refused John that tax collectors and harlots who believed would enter the kingdom ahead of them. Origen likens such believers to Rahab, who welcomed the spies and was saved with her whole house.

8 “Truly I say to you, the publicans and harlots go before you into the kingdom of God.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tatian,** *Diatessaron* 33 (c. 150–180 AD) **Source 4, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

9 “But these have become like the harlot Rahab, who received the spies of Joshua, and was saved with all her house, Joshua 6:25, after this no longer playing the harlot, but coming to the feet of Jesus, and wetting them with the tears of repentance, and anointing them with the fragrance of the ointment of holy conduct, on account of whom, reproaching Simon the leper, the former people, He spoke those things which are written.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *Commentary on Matthew* 12 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 8, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages do not show other early writers reading the spies as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Clement's retelling speaks of two spies, not three.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 13 early Christian passages and 50 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–13, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 14–32, in Bible order), then 31 more verses THF links

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF's updated English unless marked "1885 English" (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). "… [continues online]" marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *13 passages from 8 writers*

Justin Martyr, *c. 130–165 AD · sources 1–3*

1 *Dialogue with Trypho* **Quote 4, page 3** "the sign of the scarlet thread, which the spies sent to Jericho… [continues online] **read ›**

2 *Other Fragments from the Lost Writings of Justin* (1885 English; on point 2) "that which took place in the running water, in which the wood and the hyssop and the scarlet were dipped, is set forth the bloody passion of Christ on the… [continues online] **read ›**

3 *Dialogue with Trypho* (1885 English; on point 7) "just as that Jesus (Joshua), called by the prophet a priest, evidently had on filthy garments because he is said to have taken a harlot for a wife, and is… [continues online] **read ›**

Tatian, *c. 150–180 AD · source 4*

4 *Diatessaron* 33 **Quote 8, page 5** "the publicans and harlots believed him. And you, not even when you saw… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · source 5*

5 *Against Heresies: Book IV* **Quote 7, page 4** "not be pure. For they will be covered with leprosy and expelled from the camp of the righteous. Likewise, Rahab the harlot, despite condemning herself as a Gentile guilty of… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · source 6*

6 *Stromata* 4.17 (1885 English) **Quote 3, page 3** "faith and hospitality, Rahab the harlot was saved… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · source 7*

7 *Against Marcion* 10 (on point 2) then even the identity of name looks suspicious in him for whom the identity of title is claimed without reason. And it follows that He must be believed to be… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · sources 8–9*

8 *Commentary on Matthew* 12 **Quote 9, page 5** "these have become like the harlot Rahab, who received the spies of Joshua, and was saved with all her house… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Commentary on Matthew* 14 (on point 7) "as the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless, Matthew 12:5, so he who… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 10–12*

10 *Epistles* (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 3** "12:46 Which also we see expressed concerning Rahab, who herself also bore a type of the Church, who received the command which said, You shall bring your father, and… [continues online] **read ›**

11 *Treatises* **Quote 6, page 4** "that you be joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *Treatises* (1885 English; on point 2) "9:4 And that the sign pertains to the passion and blood of Christ, and that whoever is found in this sign is kept safe and unharmed, is also proved… [continues online] **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don't republish.

Clement of Rome · *source 13*

13 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Quotes 1, 2, page 2** "to her faith and hospitality, Rahab the harlot was saved. When spies were sent by Joshua, the son of Nun, to Jericho, the king of the land found out they… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *19 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

14 **Genesis 38:24** After three months Judah was told, "Tamar your daughter-in-law has prostituted herself, and behold, she is with child by prostitution." And Judah said, "Bring her out, and let her be burned." **read ›**

15 **Deuteronomy 23:3** An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation he shall not enter the assembly of the Lord, even forever, (Septuagint Deuteronomy 23:4 (Deuteronomy 23:3 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

16 **Joshua 2:1** Then Jesus the son of Nun sent two young men out of Shittim to spy, saying, "Go up and look at the land and at Jericho." So the two young men went and came into Jericho; and they went into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab, and stayed there. **read ›**

17 **Joshua 2:3** So the king of Jericho sent and said to Rahab, "Bring out the men who came into your house tonight, for they have come to spy out the land." **read ›**

18 **Joshua 2:8** When the pursuers had gone out after them, and before the two men lay down to sleep, she came up to them on the roof **read ›**

19 **Joshua 2:18** Look, we are coming into part of the city, and you shall set the sign: you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down; and you shall gather your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father's house with you into your house. **read ›**

20 **Joshua 6:17** And the city shall be a devoted thing, it and all that is in it, to the Lord of hosts; only Rahab the prostitute you shall keep safe, and all that is in her house. **read ›**

21 **Joshua 6:22** And Jesus said to the two young men who had spied, "Go into the woman's house and bring her out from there, and all that she has." **read ›**

22 **Joshua 6:23** So the two young men who had spied out the city went into the woman's house and brought out Rahab the prostitute, her father, her mother, her brothers, her relatives, and all that she had; and they set her outside the camp of Israel. **read ›**

23 **Joshua 6:25** But Jesus kept alive Rahab the prostitute and all her father's household; and he settled her in Israel to this day, because she hid the spies whom Jesus sent to spy out Jericho. **read ›**

24 **1 Kings 22:38** They washed the chariot at the spring of Samaria, and the pigs and the dogs licked up the blood, and the prostitutes bathed in the blood, according to the word of the Lord that he had spoken. **read ›**

25 **Ecclesiastes 6:4** For the untimely birth came in vanity and goes in darkness, and its name will be covered in darkness. **read ›**

26 **Zechariah 3:4** And he answered and said to those who stood before him, "Take the filthy garments off him." And he said to him, "Behold, I have taken away your iniquities. And clothe him in a full-length robe, **read ›**

27 **Wisdom of Solomon 18:7** The salvation of the righteous and the destruction of the enemies were awaited by your people. **read ›**

28 **2 Maccabees 6:4** For the temple was filled with wild living and drunken partying by the Gentiles, who amused themselves with prostitutes and had intercourse with women within the sacred courts, and who also brought in things that were not fitting. **read ›**

29 **2 Maccabees 12:15** But those with Judas called upon the great Sovereign of the world, who without rams or war machines threw down Jericho in the days of Jesus, and they rushed savagely upon the wall. **read ›**

30 **2 Maccabees 12:42** and they turned to pleading, asking that the sin that had been committed might be wholly blotted out. And the noble Judas urged the multitude to keep themselves free from sin, since they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. **read ›**

31 **1 Enoch 89:36** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

32 **Hebrews 11:31** By faithfulness Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, having received the spies in peace. **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don't republish.

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *31 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Isaiah 1:18 · 35:3

Daniel 7:13

Jonah 3:10

Zechariah 3:3

Matthew 12:8 · 16:4 · 26:6

Mark 7:13

Luke 5:16 · 7:37 · 11:23 · 19:9 · 22:15

John 6:37 · 17:3

Romans 3:3 · 6:9 · 7:1 · 7:2 · 7:23 · 11:25 · 15:15 · 15:16

1 Corinthians 1:5 · 7:39 · 9:10 · 11:25

Ephesians 4:3

1 Peter 2:9

Revelation 7:3

Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “How did the early church read the story of Rahab and the scarlet thread?” on June 23, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

Library only. This study was written only from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed above, with a link to read it.

How it was made. Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.

How to cite this study. The Historic Faith, “How did the early church read the story of Rahab and the scarlet thread?” Early Church Questions, published November 9, 2026, https://thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/how-did-the-early-church-read-the-story-of-rahab-and-the-scarlet-thread. To cite one quotation, add its number and source, for example “quote 1, source 13.”

© 2026 The Historic Faith. Selection, arrangement and editing by THF; machine-compiled text and public-domain quotations are not claimed. For personal study; please don’t republish.

THEHISTORICFAITH.COM

THE END OF THIS STUDY