

“Playing the Harlot” – The Prostitute, The Murderer, and The Coward (Part One)

Rahab, *the harlot, prostitute, whore* (Joshua 2)

“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.” Joshua 2:1

Introducing Rahab ... *the harlot*. How would you like to be known by a word that spoke to the worst of your character or occupation even if it was the truth? That is how the writer of the book of Joshua chose to introduce this famous woman. In fact, her profession preceded the giving of her name. That certainly gets our attention. Rahab’s “occupation” is all we know about her before the history-altering events of biblical proportions in this chapter.

Before we go there let’s remind ourselves (not that we really need to) what a prostitute or harlot is. Hint: the definition has not changed in these three thousand plus years.

Harlot, prostitute, whore: *“a person who has sex with someone in exchange for money”*

Other definitions include people who turn to something or someone for increased pleasure, gratification, or some immoral purpose. The common threads are immorality and pleasure even when you know it is wrong. They are said to be *prostituting* themselves to get what they want.

The Holy Spirit did not give me this series to “tickle ears.” He gives me hard truths to teach and remind people what God

expects from His people. The truth of the matter is that God is calling out those people and churches who call themselves Christian, but continually engage in "playing the harlot". That is not new.

Eighteen times in the Old Testament, God used the phrase *played or playing the harlot or whore*. It was not the pagans to whom God spoke these strong words; it was His own people, the Israelites. What did He mean and how were they doing so?

"The Lord said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: "Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot. And I said, after she had done all these things, 'Return to Me.' But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear but went and played the harlot also." Jeremiah 3: 6-8

"But you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your fame, and poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by who would have it. You took some of your garments and adorned multicolored high places for yourself and played the harlot on them. Such things should not happen, nor be. You have also taken your beautiful jewelry from My gold and My silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself male images and played the harlot with them...Moreover you took your sons and your daughters, whom you bore to Me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. Were your acts of harlotry a small matter, that you have slain My children and offered them up to them by causing them to pass through the fire? And in all your abominations and acts of harlotry you did not remember the days of your youth..." Ezekiel 16: 15-22

God punished this harlotry by allowing His chosen people to be overrun – the nation divided in two and then both destroyed – all because of the *harlotry/prostitution* of His people.

How Christians and the Church “Play the Harlot” today

- Sacrificing or using your bodies for sinful pleasures (payment).
- Having what we could call “emotional sex” with other gods of this world like money, politics sports, alcohol and drugs to the extent you become sinfully entangled or addicted. They become your god. These are also idolatry and adultery.
- Going after (pursuing) leaders, teachers, or doctrines for the purpose of tickling your ears or making you feel better despite your sinful disobedience or living in sin.
- Embracing or willingly allowing yourself to be deceived or taken advantage of by false teacher and doctrines that are contrary to the will of God and teachings in His Word.

Rahab’s Redemption Story. We know Rahab was a prostitute, and we learn in verse fifteen, she lived in a “house” atop one of the walls of Jericho (v15). We are not told *why* the two spies went to the house of an unclean person. Perhaps it seemed the best place to hide since two strangers entering the house of a prostitute would not seem unusual to observers. But the spies were seen and reported to the king. When the king’s men came looking for the spies, Rahab told them they had been there and left. She gave the king’s men misinformation that caused them to search in the wrong direction. She hid the spies in the branches on the roof.

Why did she do this? She knew she could be killed for betraying her city/people.

From Harlot (Prostitute) to Woman of Faith in God (vs 8-11)

Word travelled fast. The people of Jericho knew God had delivered the Israelites from Egypt and His miraculous acts along the way in doing so. Rahab believed He was the one true God and testified to that. This faith saved her and led to her legacy, spoken of throughout the NT. Perhaps the most amazing thing is this: Through marriage to a Jew, Rahab became part of the greatest lineage in history. Following is how she was remembered in

The Lineage of Jesus

"Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse."
Matthew 1:5 (That made Rahab the great, great grandmother of David).

The Hall of Faith

"It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies."
Hebrews 11:31

Faith in God Demonstrated by Works

"You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?" James 2:23-24

If God can forgive a prostitute like Rahab and use her for His glory in such a spectacular way, He can do the same for us in one of two ways:

- Salvation through faith as He did for Rahab and does for all who repent, believe, and receive Christ as Savior.
- If you are a backsliden Christian, as God described unfaithful Israel, He is inviting you, as He did them, to "return to Me." He is always ready to forgive and

forget the sins of a broken and repentant heart. Begin
on your knees and come back to Him today.

For Christ's sake,

Walter