

Where Is the Beast? (Part 9)

Prostitution in the Bible

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There is yet another mark of the Great Harlot's identity that we must explore, if only briefly, and that is going to be found beginning in Revelation 17: 6.

Revelation 17:6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

This is something that is kind of repulsive to us, to think that Israel could be involved in something like this. But Israel, to its great shame, has a history of killing those sent by God to get *them* to change from their whorish ways.

I'm going to take you back into the book of Jeremiah. We're going to begin there. I'm not going to be expounding these verses at all, but just showing you that they exist and showing you that Israel's history of doing something like this is long.

Jeremiah 2:29-30 Wherefore will you plead with me? You all have transgressed against me, says the LORD. In vain have I smitten your children: they received no corrections: your own sword has devoured your prophets like a destroying lion.

It's gory to think of that. Turn to Luke 13: 34, where Jesus stated the following:

Luke 13:34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which kills the prophets, and stones them that are sent unto you: how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen does gather her brood under her wings, and you would not!

Matthew 21:33-39 Hear another parable: There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, and let us seize on

his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

The Bible is replete with examples of the persecution of God's people. There are yet more. Another one is in the book of Hebrews, chapter 11.

Hebrews 11:35-37 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins: being destitute, afflicted, tormented.

Where do you think all this persecution that Paul mentions here took place? It took place in Israel. The apostle Paul was drawing on Israel's history to put those 3 or 4 verses of examples together.

It's very easy for us to look at the histories of Israel covering the last 200 years, and say, "Well, Israelites today would never do such a thing!" We wouldn't think such a thing would occur in Israel with the advent of Christianity. But brethren, human nature never changes, and all that it needs is the right set of circumstances and once again persecutions and martyrdom will occur.

The even in Acts 7:54 took place *after* the beginning of the Christian Church. Notice that the circumstances *here* are just right.

Acts 7:55-57 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord.

Notice that "stopped their ears." Do you think that it's still possible for Israelites to "stop their ears" when the circumstances get just right?

Acts 7:58-60 And cast him out of the city and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Acts 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem: and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Acts 9:1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest.

My Bible has in its margin, for the word "slaughter," "*murder*." Threats and murder. Persecution will happen once again in Israel. Perhaps you might think that this sorry performance was stopped at the end of the first century. Not so.

Many of you are familiar, or at least familiar with the title of a book called "Fox's Book of Martyrs." Some of you may have even read it. I did at one time, about 30 or 40 years ago. It's a book that focuses on the persecution, including martyrdom, that raged against Evangelical groups.

I have another book in my library titled "Martyrs Mirror." I'm showing it here to the congregation. It's almost as large as Strong's Concordance. "Martyrs Mirror" is a comprehensive history of 1600 years of persecution, including martyrdom, perpetrated against *Anabaptists* groups. Not Evangelical, but Anabaptists. The Evangelical was different in most respects from the Anabaptists.

Anabaptists is a name attached by the world at large against any Christian group that opposes infant and child baptism. Ana, meaning "against"—against infant and child baptism. The Anabaptists did not call themselves Anabaptists. The *world* called these people Anabaptists.

You might wonder why Anabaptists refused to baptize infants and children. It was because the biblical requirements for baptism are repentance and faith, and no infant or child can meet those requirements. One must be an adult of considerable living experience in order to seriously consider baptism.

The most prominent Anabaptists groups in the Western world today are probably the Amish, the Mennonites, and the Hutterites. There are many others though that are smaller, but all of these groups have been fairly active, even up to the beginning of the 20th Century.

By definition, the term "Evangelical" and the term "Anabaptists" can, and did, include groups like the Baptists, and most importantly, the Church of God. We are, by their definition, Anabaptists.

Martyrs Mirror begins its story of the martyrdom of the apostles, because they were, by definition, Anabaptists. Religious persecution periodically raged in Holland, France, and England—all Israelitish countries—for long periods of time during the Middle Ages. Those persecutions only waned after the Protestant Reformation was underway for over a century, and was then joined by the Catholics' *Counter Reformation*.

Anybody who knows any American history should be able to understand that very many of the early settlers of this country came *because of* religious persecutions in Northwest Europe. The Puritans and the Pilgrims are the prime example. They first fled England, and then left for

Holland. They then left Holland and came to the United States.

Now to think that the Israelitish people are somehow above perpetrating religious persecution is not historically accurate. The Bible shows that it clearly has happened before, and it will happen again. Just in the last ten years the entire nation witnessed the Branch Davidian group massacre in Waco, Texas. And interestingly, the Branch Davidians were Sabbath keepers.

Jeremiah 30:4-7 And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus says the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace: Ask you now, and see whether a man does travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.

There is before us a period of time so great in its awfulness, that despite what we might think about what has happened in the past—we are aware of those things—it is going to be *worse* than any time-period that man has ever experienced in the history of mankind.

Persecution of true Christians *will* occur again. How do I know that? Why can I be so positive? It's because of the book of Revelation.

Revelation 13:11-15 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exercises all the power of the first beast before him, and causes the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he does great wonders so that he makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceives them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast: saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

Just like the persecutions from the time of Christ on, it's going to be against the Evangelicals and the Anabaptists. An awful lot of people who are not part of the Church of God are going to get caught in it, and the Church of God is going to get caught in it.

Revelation 6:9-11 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud

voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them: and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

God's word does not lie. Though God does not go into all of the gory details, He does let us know that persecutions are going to occur, and because of the history of the past, and because we know what is coming on Israel as a result of the day of "Jacob's trial," it is going to happen in Israel too. Israelites will kill their fellow-Israelites because of what they believe, and because of what they practice.

Now that is the end of that subject, but just a little bit of a summary here as we bridge over into yet another aspect.

Virtually the entire Bible, including Revelation, is devoted to Israel and to the Church. The Harlot is not a Gentile nation or church, because neither one had a covenant relationship with God. The elegant clothing, the jewelry and precious metals illustrate Israel's wealth, and therefore its power among nations. The Harlot is depicted as *ONE people*, as God sees her, but led by the Joseph tribes. The Beast has many diverse people in a loose confederation, and the Woman is pictured as a huge manufacturing and merchandising power, and martyrs' blood was, and will be on the Harlot's hand.

Before we leave the identity of the Harlot Woman of Revelation 17 and 18, I want to take one final look at how the Bible describes prostitution, or harlotry (if you prefer that). I'm doing this so that we might see more specifically how an entire nation can be guilty of harlotry. I want us to look into what is at the very base, motivating it, what it appears to promise, and what it actually delivers, and then by comparing these by what *nations* do, the harlotry, I think, will be clearer. Always remember though that at the base of Israel's harlotry is Israel's special relationship with God through the Old Covenant agreement.

There are very few prostitutes actually named in the Bible. Delilah is certainly the most prominent. There is Gomer, who is Hosea's wife, and is directly called "a wife of whoredom." As we begin I want you to just see this so that you will understand a bit more about the book of Hosea. God put this man through hell, because it was God who told him to marry a harlot. Hosea's life then became a parallel of God's relationship with Israel.

Hosea 1:2 The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto you a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land has committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD.

Hosea's wife Gomer is a wife of whoredom. Another possible prostitute named in the Bible is Tamar, who was Judah's daughter-in-law. She may only have been playing a harlot in order to get Judah's attention. There is also Rahab. There are inferences about her, but I think the final

verdict is still out on Rahab as well. Whether she and Tamar were prostitutes is moot, because the Bible treats both of them with sympathetic dignity, because if they were harlots, it appears that they overcame its pull. But such is not the case with prostitutes in general. The Bible views prostitutes *as dangerous*, and to be stringently avoided.

On this list of prostitutes is the most prominent prostitute in the entire Bible, and that is Israel. Now by looking at biblical prostitutes we're going to understand what is driving much of the Israelitish culture. There is no doubt though that the fountain of Israel's despicable behavior is what Paul mentions in Hebrews 3:12.

Hebrews 3:12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

"An evil heart of unbelief" is the fountain source of Israel's behavior. Despite the fact that God voluntarily revealed much about Himself to Israel, Israel simply doesn't believe what God says. We are seeing this acted out before our very eyes in the United States in the media in all these cases that involve the Bible, as it is being banned, bit by bit, all across the land in places that are offensive to others who don't look upon the Bible with any sort of belief like you and I do.

If those people really *believed* that the Bible is God's word, they would be *afraid* to do something like that, because it would be for them blasphemy against God, and something that is just that far from being the unpardonable sin, to ban the very word of God.

The "evil heart of unbelief" is the fountain, but it's quite general. At the beginning here we're going to explore one particular step in the process of sin beyond the "evil heart of unbelief."

I also want us to understand that I am not dealing with women living in cultures who have been forced into prostitution. That does occur. Such a circumstance is far more understandable, and these women are truly victims and it calls for our mercy for those who are trapped in this sort of circumstance. What we are exploring are those women who were free to pursue other courses of life and *deliberately* choose to prostitute themselves, whether in service at a pagan temple as part of the worship of that god, or in order to make a living. Israel deliberately chose to prostitute herself.

A prostitute is a person who is *usually* a woman. Pay attention to that. She is described in dictionaries as one who provides sexual activity in exchange for material security. Prostitution can also be defined as debasing one's self for personal gain. Additionally, it is defined as the misuse of one's gifts, talents, and skills. We are getting very close to members of Church of God with these last two definitions; that is, into areas where prostitution by us can be entered into.

Because of this, in its broadest sense, prostitution is not confined to either sexual activity, or to women alone. The selling of sex by a woman is only the best-known form. A prostitute is anybody who, as we would say today, sells herself/himself out, or makes compromises for personal gain; makes compromises with principles, with law, for personal gain.

The gain, brethren, does not have to be in the form of money. It can be power. It can be status. It can be recognition. However, biblically, the description of prostitution and examples

are confined to the illicit sexual activities of women, because of Israel being symbolized as a woman. That is going to be the focus of what is said in the Bible.

A woman prostitute is distinguished from an adulterer because of the lack of discrimination in choosing her partners. "Anybody will do." This lack of discrimination is important because it reveals a mind-set, an attitude toward what we might call today, "an air-head." I don't care how intelligent they are, the people who get involved in prostitution are air-heads. There is a serious ignoring of the harsh realities of her sin. What it reveals is a stubborn addiction to gambling on sin's outcome. The prostitute justifies the sin on the basis of her immediate needs.

All sin follows a pattern. The actual act is the next to last step in a process that sometimes doesn't involve a great deal of time to complete once it starts.

We're going to begin with some scriptures that Martin used a couple weeks ago.

James 1:13-15 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts he any man: But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.

Here, simply stated, is the process of sin. (1) Temptation triggers desire. (2) Desire stirs the yearning for gratification. (3) The failure to consider the end—(this is where the "air-head" part comes in, the gambling)—and discipline one's self brings forth the sinful act. (4) The sinful act brings forth death. Now repeated frequently enough, the process becomes habitual.

The Bible pinpoints the force of sin in yet another way.

Matthew 15:18-20 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defiles not a man.

This series of verses is just another way of saying that sin is within the very nature of mankind. It is in the very nature of mankind to sin. That's just another way of putting it. This is not a justification for sin, because the nature can be disciplined far better than mankind exhibits, and if sin is going to be stopped, this is where it must be stopped. It must be stopped right there.

The carnal mind is at war against God, and it is not subject to the law of God because of sheer unbelieving stubbornness. It will not permit itself to be completely submissive. This answers why God says in the Old Testament that He's going to have to give us a *new* heart. That deceitful heart cannot be changed! But that's where sin comes from. Sin comes from that heart that cannot be changed.

The Bible uses the word "heart" to represent all of the intangibles of human personality. Today we might say it's the heart that makes us "tick." It is the spirit that motivates us, that drives us

to conduct ourselves the way we do. The Bible shows that the prostitute has a specific spirit, or heart, that is driving her.

Let's go back to Hosea again. We can begin to understand why God said that Gomer had a spirit of prostitution.

Hosea 4:12 My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declares unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms has caused them to err, ...[That spirit is in the heart. It is part of the intangibles that drive us.] ...and they have gone a whoring from under their God.

Hosea 5:4 They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, . . . [Now He expands it out to include the whole nation.] . . . and they have not known the LORD.

"Spirit" is the word the Bible uses in a context like this to indicate an immaterial force or power. It's an attitude, a leaning, an inclination. It's a position. It's an outlook, a propensity, a proclivity to move, to act, or conduct one's self in a certain manner or direction.

The spirit is one of those intangibles that make up human nature, and its direction of conduct is clearly to be disloyal and unfaithful to a commitment to God sealed in the Old Covenant when she [Israel] vowed by saying, "All the Eternal has said, we will do." She didn't have the spirit to follow through with what she vowed to do. Her spirit was driving her into whoredom.

Let me remind you again that what we're looking at here is something the entire nation is guilty of—both men and women. We're only looking at the streetwalker type of prostitution because the Bible gives a clear picture of what drives them. We can then transfer this picture to the whole nation and also to ourselves individually because we have been part and parcel of the same system, and its drive still lingers in us. This is what makes it so hard to overcome this spirit of whoredom that is driving us. When I say ourselves "individually," please understand that I'm not accusing anybody of being a streetwalker.

Remember again that two of the definitions of prostitution are (1) to abase one's self for personal gain and (2) to abuse one's gifts, talents, and skill for the same.

I have read occasionally in biographies of famous personalities that the author writes that the personality (especially an artist) is felt to have prostituted his gifts in order to become wealthy. One of the personalities that I remember reading this about was Picasso, the painter. I don't know whether you have ever seen any of Picasso's paintings, but to this man's eyes, they are weird! What his biographer said was that Picasso was capable of doing really beautiful work, but early in his life he discovered things that would sell, and what would sell was these weird pictures. He spent his life doing these weird pictures because it made money for him, and he became a wealthy man.

Picasso prostituted himself by neglecting his gift to use it to draw things, to paint things that were truly beautiful the way God created them. He stands, in my mind, as sort of an icon for this, because what his biographer said was so clearly visible to me. In principle though, all of us

are capable of doing this to some degree or another.

Amos 3:1-2 Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

God's punishment of Israel is directly linked, in this case, to the fact that they had a relationship. They knew one another, and He expected then more and better from them. But Israel prostituted herself for what she considered personal gain. Among the greatest of all gifts that she was given is the knowledge of God given in order to produce both abundance and skill in living.

Now are we going to claim that we have not debased ourselves by indiscriminately expecting the personal gain of the immediate gratification of an unlawful desire, ignoring and shoving aside the gift of our knowledge of God? All of us, brethren, have done this. All of us, because once we have knowledge of the truth, and our ignorance of God and His way and His law is removed, if we didn't prostitute ourselves, there would be no sin in our lives. But the sad truth is that we don't discipline, we don't control ourselves, and instead we indulge ourselves, and sin occurs.

God gives us a clear picture of how He perceives a prostitute's characteristics and what is driving her. As we read these I want you to transfer what He says to Israel, because Israel is the worst prostitute in the history of mankind.

Let's go back to the book of Proverbs, chapter 6. I'm not going to spend a great deal of time in going into these things in detail. Proverbs 6 begins a fairly long section that is devoted to prostitution. I want to start here because of a comment that is made.

Proverbs 6:20 My son, keep your father's commandment: and forsake not the law of your mother.

I think we understand that the father here is God. His commandments are His law, and the mother here is the Church. The subject is going to be prostitution.

Proverbs 6:21 Bind them continually upon your heart, and tie them about your neck.

The first concern is not about our body. It's not even about the act itself. It's about the protection of the heart, because it is the wellspring of conduct. If the heart is protected there is a much better chance that we are not going to prostitute ourselves. A much higher likelihood is that we will go on from there and avoid the trap that is set for us by the prostitute.

Let's jump all the way to chapter 7 and verse 10. I'll just read through this in one jump.

Proverbs 7:10-21 And behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart. (She is loud and stubborn: her feet abide not in her house: Now is she without, now in the streets, and lies in wait at every corner.) So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, I have peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows. Therefore came I forth to meet you, diligently to seek your face, and I have found you. [Boy! The temptation that she is laying down here!] I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves. For the good man is not at home, he is gone a long journey: He has taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed. With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him.

If we would spend time carefully studying this, we would find that she is described as "deviously sly." If you get a bunch of commentaries out and look at these things, and look at the way they define these words, this is what you would find. You would find this is the way temptation is. It is "deviously sly." It knows how to play on our feelings. She is described as "deviously sly." She is cunning. She feigns love. She knows how to pull a man's strings, as we would say today. She is purposefully seductive. That's part of her attraction. She is somewhat immodest in the way that she dresses.

The *King James* says that she is "loud." That's a very poor translation. Rather it means that she is turbulent. Now we're looking on the inside of her, at what her mind is really like. She is turbulent, flighty, confused, inconstant, unstable. She lacks dignity and gravity.

In the *King James* it says that she is stubborn. Rather though, she is defiant, brazen, deliberately obstinate and headstrong. She is impudent, contemptuous, presumptuous, and disrespectful. All of these characteristics appear in one form or another between verses 10 and 21. It's there to show you how seductive temptation to sin is. It doesn't have to be a woman that is the alluring trap. It can be all kinds of things besides a woman that might attract a man into sin.

Now apart from these in Israel, there is in the biblical record one woman who epitomizes the harlot, and in so doing helps us to zero in on what it is that is driving most harlots. The woman is Delilah. It will take us only two verses in the book of Judges 16: 4-5.

Judges 16:4-5 And it came to pass afterward, that he [Samson] loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah, And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lies, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give you every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver.

You can go through the whole story and see how cunning she is. She was undoubtedly attractive, seductive to him. But what was driving her? It was money. She saw a way for personal gain.

Again, what it is that allures the prostitute into this is not necessarily money, but it does serve a purpose. We can see this very clearly. Harlotry has at its base deceit, treachery entered into, executed or performed for personal gain. Not every case of harlotry follows exactly the same pattern as Delilah's, but one thing never changes, and that is the desire for personal gain.

We commit harlotry, or prostitution, because we feel we are going to get something out of it that is going to be satisfying to us, gratifying to us, but there has to be the temptation that precedes it. Delilah is the temptation. She is working her enticement because of *greed* for personal gain. So the driving force of unbelief, combined with self-indulgence, primarily expressed through greed, is what drives things.

The term "greed" may sound harsh considering the circumstances that some women get themselves into before choosing to prostitute themselves, but brethren, what we have got to learn is that nobody has to sin. This kind of prostitute that we are talking about consciously, deliberately *chooses* to go into this for reasons of personal gain. Greed is defined as expressing excessive desire, especially for food, drink, or wealth.

There is almost an endless stream of justifications we give ourselves and others for sinning, but the bottom line in so doing is most frequently that we are simply unwilling to pay the price it costs to discipline ourselves to do what is right. We convince ourselves that if we don't, we won't get anything, that we're going to lose all around.

I want you to recall the Great Harlot's boast in Revelation 18:7. She says, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." That is the statement of one who would compromise rather than suffer the loss of what one feels is due one. Greed is a synonym for lust or covetousness. However, it is especially applicable here because of Israel's well-known desire for wealth and comfort.

I want you to notice again how Hosea expresses this in Hosea 2:5.

Hosea 2:5 For their mother has played the harlot: she that conceived them has done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.

That says a mouthful there! The desire for personal gain drives people into prostitution, and Israel wanted so bad to have this personal gain, that in verse 7 God prophesies:

Hosea 2:7 And she shall follow after her lovers, ... [*chase them* is what it means] ...but [in the end] she shall not overtake them [but she's going to continue chasing]: and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband;

for then was it better with me than now.

Hosea 2:12 And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees whereof she has said, These are my rewards that my *lovers* have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.

Hosea 2:8 For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.

Just remember this little formula. Temptation comes into all of our lives, and following it is the desire for gratification. Here is the critical spot, you see. If we want gratification, rather than paying the price, we will prostitute the truth in order to have gratification. That is the issue in this. We don't sell ourselves out to a man. We sell ourselves out to an idol, and that idol is ourselves and the gratification of our desires. We have prostituted the wonderful knowledge, the gifts that have been given to us in the revelation of God to us.

Instead of Israel trusting God to provide for her, she used the Babylonish system of trade, negotiation, and agreement. In this case, that's what she was doing. She was chasing after the Gentile nations.

I want to go back to a chapter that we have been in many, many times.

Ezekiel 23:5 And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians her neighbours.

Ezekiel 23:11-12 And when her sister Aholibah saw this she was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she, and in her whoredoms more than her sister in her whoredoms. She doted upon the Assyrians her neighbours, captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men.

Israel did it. Judah did it.

Ezekiel 23:16 And as soon as she saw them with her eyes [the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes], she doted upon them, and sent messengers unto them into Chaldea.

Ezekiel 23:20 For she doted upon their paramours, whose flesh is as the flesh of asses, and whose issue is like the issue of horses.

All this is indicating that Israel *vigorously* pursued these relationships with Gentile nations because she thought she saw a way to benefit herself, to gratify herself through a relationship with them.

Those who prostitute themselves get tangled in a web of greed and deceit that blinds them to the realities essential to a clear understanding of what is really happening. The end is death. That is what it says in Proverbs 7 at the end of that chapter. The young man gets an arrow

through the liver.

Now like Gomer in Hosea, Israel prostituted herself before her lover-idols who seemed to promise much without demanding as much as God seemed to be requiring, and she is pretty much pictured literally throwing herself at what she thinks is an easy gain, a quick profit without having to work hard at producing it herself.

You will find in II Kings 17: 5-20, that when Israel went into captivity it was for this very reason—her prostitution: the debasing of herself and God through the adoption of and practices of the way of the heathen, thus rejecting the way, providence, and sovereignty of God for something far inferior, corrupting, and shameful.

Leviticus 20:1-5 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Again you shall say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that gives any of his seed unto Molech, he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he has given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name. And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man, when he gives of his seed unto Molech, and kill him not: Then I will set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people.

This is, I believe, the first place in the Bible that idol worship is directly associated with harlotry. God makes a very clear distinction, a contrast, between His way and the heathen's way. Right in this same section (we won't read the whole thing) He calls "occultism" harlotry.

We're going to go the book of Isaiah, chapter 23, where there is a prophecy that is rather vague. I will do my best to explain it to you.

Isaiah 23:15-18 And it shall come to pass in that day that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as an harlot. Take a harp, go about the city, you harlot that has been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that you may be remembered. [This is what the harlot does to attract.] And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years, that the LORD will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her *hire* [her harlotry], and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth. And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the LORD; it shall not be treasured nor laid up, for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.

As I mentioned, this prophecy is vague in the *King James Version*, but I think if you read it in a more modern translation it will make more sense.

Tyre was the New York City of its day, and God is prophesying of its defeat. However, it is going to survive, but it will be brought into line with God's purpose for Israel. What He is doing here is calling the commercial merchandising system of the heathen city Tyre *harlotry*. He is calling the way business is conducted *harlotry*.

The tragic aspect of this is that Israel has pretty much adopted the heathen's attitudes and ways of doing business. Just like Israel adopted the heathen's religion, Israel also adopted heathen business practices. Israel has a proclivity to take an idea or a concept from others, refine it and make it better than it was by the originators of it.

God gave Jacob many gifts. He gave Jacob the gift for making money, but unfortunately, when it comes to the commercial aspect of business today, it is not God's way. It is the heathen's way. If you look into any of the history of banking, you will find that almost all of those biographies of the history of banking will tell you that it came right out of Babylon. It's not hidden. The American business system is harlotry.

Nahum 3:1-4 Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery: the prey departs not: The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots. [He's talking about an army.] The horsemen lift up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses: and there is none end of their corpses: they stumble upon their corpses: Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well-favoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that sells nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts.

This is a prophecy against Nineveh, not Israel, but it gives us insight into the way that God perceives things, and He is calling their military power and its use against others harlotry. God says "You shall not kill." God says, "You shall not steal." We steal in business, and we kill in war. That's harlotry. It's faithlessness with the commandments of God, which are the terms of the covenant. It's becoming very clear what harlotry is. It's unfaithfulness to the law of God. It is unfaithfulness to God Himself, because we don't submit to Him.

We just read some of the verses in Ezekiel 23:5-7. It's not again clearly stated there, but political alliances, rather than trusting in God, are also called by God *harlotry*.

Let's go back again to Isaiah, chapter 1. This is a really interesting one to me.

Isaiah 1:21-23 How is the faithful city [Jerusalem] become an harlot? It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Your silver is become dross, your wine mixed with water: Your princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loves gifts [bribes], and follows after rewards [bribes]: they *judge* not the

fatherless, neither does the cause of the widow come unto them.

He's talking about the elders that sit at the gate. He's talking about local judges. He's talking about district judges. He's talking about supreme court judges.

Isaiah 1:24-26 Therefore says the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of my adversaries, and avenge me of my enemies: And I will turn my hand upon you, and purely purge away your dross, and take away all your tin: And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning: afterward you shall be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.

Now what is harlotry there? It's the judges of the land and the way they judge. There is no fairness. There is no equity. You can't get fair judges who judge righteously. The court system in the United States and in other nations has become this way, and God is associating it with harlotry.

I think that we will end there, even though there are many more scriptures that impact on this. Idolatry is the one sin that is most frequently associated with harlotry, but it reaches out in principle to the breaking of every one of the Ten Commandments.

Harlotry, from the biblical point of view, is faithlessness. It is a breaking of our vow to God to be faithful in submitting to Him in the keeping of His law, His way of righteousness.

I hope you have a good remaining portion of this Sabbath.