

Preparing To See The King

Joe Slater

Persian king Ahasuerus banished his queen and sought a new one (see the book of Esther). I hope none of us would approve of what he did or how he did it. How degrading to demand that Vashti flaunt her beauty before the king's drunken nobles! Then he selected his new wife based almost entirely on her physical attractiveness. But why would we expect anything else? The king was a pagan and behaved in typical pagan fashion. Despite all of this, God worked through those events to deliver His people.

Hadassah (Esther), a young Jewish girl, went through a solid year of beauty preparations before her interview with the king (Esther 2:12). Please don't think ill of her! She didn't make the rules. She made the best of a less-than-ideal situation.

We serve a King infinitely superior to Ahasuerus. Esther diligently prepared to see her king. Let us take a cue from her by preparing to see King Jesus!

This has nothing to do with physical attractiveness or lack thereof! Nor am I concerned here with wearing a coat and tie to the assembly. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to inspire the apostles to emphasize inner spiritual beauty. *"Rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quite spirit"* (1 Peter 3:4). In contrast to flashy, costly garments, Paul urges being clothed *"with good works"* (1 Timothy 2:10).

Revelation 7:13-14 pictures faithful Christians as dressed in robes they had washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. They had gone through fiery trials without yielding. They were inwardly beautiful!

Does inner beauty qualify you to meet your King? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Outside Looking In

Separation anxiety quickly rises to the surface when doors are closed and access is denied. Such images are remarkably vivid in our memories. A child pounding on the bathroom door demanding access to a parent who really needs a little alone time. A family pet earnestly scratching at the back door demanding access to the rest of the family and leaving behind the tell-tale marks of his or her frustration over slow human response time.

Greater still is the tragedy of doors closed without hope of future access. When the Flood came upon the world of the ungodly, God closed the door to the Ark, effectively sealing in Noah and his family (Genesis 7:16). No other access was available for late arrivals for the door had been closed.

Not only is Jesus the only way to the Father (John 14:6), He is also the door through which His sheep find access to spiritual nourishment and protection (10:9). However, access is limited to those who know Him and follow His voice (10:3-4, 14-16).

One day the door will be closed forever. In His Parable of the Ten Virgins, Jesus emphasizes our need to be prepared for His coming at all times. Five of the virgins were not prepared and, arriving late to the marriage feast, found the door shut. Though they begged, saying, "Lord, lord, open up for us" (Matthews 25:11), they were denied access.

No late arrivals will be allowed into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Christ's coming *"will be just like the days of Noah"* (Matthew 24:37). People will be carrying on business as usual — unconcerned about things spiritual or the approaching of judgment — when Christ will come swiftly and unexpectedly, like a thief in the night (Matthew 24:39; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3). There will be no physical door upon which to knock; no appeals for a deadline extension will be accepted. All that will remain is judgment and eternal destiny. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:9-10). But, sadly, it will be too late; the door will have been forever closed. So, *"today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts"* lest you be forever on the outside looking in (Hebrews 3:15).

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FIRE HAZARD!

As we find ourselves in the midst of a long rainless drought, the fire hazard is very high! The past week of triple digit temperatures along with hot South winds have turned the outdoors into a tinder box, ripe for a raging wildfire. Notices and burn bans have been issued, warning of the possibility of a fiery catastrophe.

Just as the fire departments and forestry services warn us, the Bible warns of a spiritual fire hazard. The scriptures teach that when a person is without God, much like a land without rain, one is in danger of a flaming future. Here are just a few examples of the Bible's fire warnings:

- Fiery vengeance on those who refuse to obey God
2 Thessalonians 1:8
- Many people will find a fiery end of the road
Matthew 7:13
- Evil & sinful people will go into the lake of fire —
Revelation 21:8
- A fiery end for false teachers - 2 Peter 2:1-4
- The unfruitful branch is cut off & burned
John 15:5-6
- After death, the ungodly will be tormented in
flame - Luke 16:24
- The flames of hell will never go out
Mark 9:43-44

The good news is that a fiery future can be easily avoided through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, the Christian walks through a life of service and sacrifice to find God's love, forgiveness, and everlasting salvation in paradise with Jesus Christ our Lord.

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)