

Prepared As A Bride Adorned by Sarah Foulkes Moore

"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Revelation 19:6, 7).

Veiled like Eastern women and hidden among all nations is the Bride of Christ. In Scripture, the Bride is veiled in lovely types and shadows. The first is that of Eve, made from the being of Adam himself. So also is the mystical Bride of Christ, "...members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Ephesians 5:30).

And as Eve was taken out of Adam's body while he slept, so today, while the Church slumbers, the Bride of Christ is being taken out of His body, which is the Church. In the Book of Esther is found the perfect portrait of the Bride who has made herself ready.

The Book of Esther is concerned almost entirely with a royal court and court life, but is a veiled type of the heavenly. It depicts in minutest detail the presentation of Esther, the royal bride to Ahasuerus, the mighty sovereign, who ruled from India to Ethiopia.

Esther Chosen

The powerful Ahasuerus, King of Persia, made a royal feast to which he invited all the nobles of the land. His queen was the lovely Vashti. At the end of them, feast the King desired to display her beauty before the hosts of his realm. But Vashti refused to come at the King's command. Then her estate was set aside and her crown was given to another, the chosen and chaste Esther.

Vashti is a type of the Church. What happened to Vashti is happening to the Church today. Ahasuerus is a type of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords who prepared the gospel feast and invited His whole realm to His banqueting table. Now at the end of the gospel feast, the Lord has sent a summons to the Church to present herself before Him, for judgment must first begin at the House of God. But like Vashti, she is busy with her own feast, programs, forms and ceremonies, and is deaf to the royal summons.

To Him That Overcometh

The Lord's final message to the seven Churches, seven times repeated in Revelation Two and Three is: "To Him That Overcometh!" But the Church as a whole has refused to overcome the world, self, and the devil. The Church we see today has not divorced herself from these rival suitors. Flirting with the world and toying with the devil's enticements, she is not as a chaste virgin wedded to Christ through time and eternity. Hence, her royal estate as the Bride of Christ is taken from her and given to those who will overcome as individuals. And it is they who inherit the promises given to Overcomers and will sit with Christ as His Bride on His throne and rule with Him.... (Revelation 3:21).

In the purposes of God, the Church of Christ is intended to be glorious and triumphant. Priceless honors and mighty thrones are promised as rewards to overcoming. But to all this, the nominal Church has turned a deaf ear. The visible Church today is suffering overwhelming defeat. But Scripture throughout reveals the Crucified, Risen, Ascended, and Coming Again Lord Jesus presenting to Himself a Bride "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (Song of Solomon 6:10). When Vashti failed, Esther took her place. But while Esther was brought to the palace and chosen to rule and reign with the King, she was not presented to him at once. Esther is a true type of the Bride who is not ready without preparation to be presented to the Lord Jesus at His Coming.

The days of our preparation are the days of our overcoming self and sin. The days of our preparation begin not when we are saved but when we hear His summons to overcome, and count the cost. The King's chamberlain provided Esther with all she needed to make her preparation. And as Esther is a type of the queenly Bride of the Heavenly King, the chamberlain is a type of the Spirit, ministering to the Bride's overcoming necessities. It is the Spirit's ministry, working through the grace of our Lord and Saviour, to conform a believer's life and heart to the will of God. It is the work of the Spirit to bring us out of the old creation and into the new. The spirit works as we yield to His workings,

and all He asks is our cooperation.

(Read Genesis 24.)

The Bitter And The Sweet

The Book of Esther unveils not only the Bride's need of preparation, but also the process that accompanies it. Twelve months were required. Nothing could be glossed over. No detail could be slurred. There were six full months of bitter with oil of myrrh and six months of sweet odors. Myrrh typifies the fellowship of the Bride in the sufferings of the Bridegroom. All suffering is not for Christ's sake. Much of our suffering is the result of the flesh lusting against the Spirit. It is the carnality in us that is at enmity with God. But there is a real suffering for Christ's sake that identifies us with Christ in His death and resurrection. Christ died of a broken heart. His Bride also will have a broken heart.

She finds herself subject to mortifying trials, placed in peculiar environments, misunderstood, scorned, and slandered. Nevertheless, like Esther, she will be placed by the King in "the best place in the house of the women". And despite all reason and all seeming, the Lord has each of us now in the best place to perfect that which concerns us in dying out to self and the world and living in full obedience and entire consecration to His blessed, holy will.

In His sight, the place of heartbreaks, scalding tears, mysterious tribulations, is the best place we can be to obtain the breaking and humbling needed to bring us to entire self-renunciation and full abandonment to God. Salvation comes by faith. But the fullness of the Holy Ghost life comes to us by tribulation alone. The Bride is going through her tribulation now. But after the bitter, the sweet! As she, by His grace, yields to this deeper death to self, she comes into a place of prayer and communion with her Crucified Bridegroom that is continuous. The Bride enters into spiritual comprehension of the love of Christ that passeth all understanding, so that at last she can say, "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine" (Song of Solomon 6:3).

Seven Maids

"Other things" apart from the bitter and sweet were given Esther for her purification. These unmentioned things, we may assume, are our own distinctive needs of overcoming. Some of us need checks of the Spirit to discipline us; some need urgings and prompting of the Spirit to embolden; others have a special need of spiritual wisdom, or the need of the understanding counsel and uplift of a spiritual friend. Everything in its time and order is provided for by the Lord, and He stops short of nothing until we are wholly subdued in His hand and conformed perfectly to His will. The King's provision for Esther called for seven maids to care for her. It was the skilled labor of these maids that finally accomplished Esther's preparation for her royal presentation to the King. So we must submit ourselves to the spiritual processes of crucifixion as the work of these seven maids continues, in preparing us to be presented in the courts of Heaven "...prepared, as a Bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2).

These seven maids are in the employ of the Lord. They may be in the disguise of difficulties in the home, office, or shop. Or as a neighbor, or a church-worker, or as a loved one, but they are in the employ of God to work in us that submission and tenderness that is just like the lovely Jesus. The days of preparation finally ended and Esther was called into the presence of the King. So complete had been the work of the "bitter" and the "sweet" and "other things" that when she stood before Ahasuerus, she appeared unto all that looked upon her as "glorious ... without spot".

We Must Prepare

What does it mean to be "accounted worthy" to stand before the Son of Man? It means the perfection of spiritual character attained in an overcoming life. It means devotion like that of Paul to the Lord Jesus. It means a moment-by-moment walk like that of Enoch who is God's model for us.

In this hour, portent with signs of His imminent returning, by our attitude, by our actions, or reactions, by our obedience or disobedience to the plain commands of the Lord, we are now either preparing ourselves like Esther to sit with the King on His Throne, or like Vashti, by our very neglect and failure to make ourselves ready, we are in danger of having our spiritual estate taken from us. Decisions and choices are being made now in our relation to Christ as the Bridegroom of our soul, which are determining our position, our reward, or our loss throughout eternity. The Blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son purchases us a place in the Kingdom, but the rewards given and the crowns worn in the Kingdom are only for those who overcome and who go all the way with Him. Beloved, read Christ's message to His Overcomers in Revelation 2 and 3!

And take need to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the son of man" (Luke 21:34-36).

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