

52 pages

A PECULIAR PEOPLE

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A Peculiar People

JOY THOMAS

PART ONE

Called to be
His People



THE INITIATIVE IS OF GOD

God has revealed His heart's desire to man in every book of the Bible. It is clear that God's desire has always been to have a people whom He could call His own — a people raised up in His own image and after His own likeness (*Genesis 1:26*). God longs to have a people who would be known as His very own.

God demonstrated His desire for a people who would be His own, by calling the Israelites out of their bondage in Egypt so that they may walk in His ways. He called them out of Egypt that they may become a nation 'above all other nations'. He chose and separated the Israelites that they may be a people unto Him; He brought them out of Egypt so that He may school them in His ways and purposes; and that they may be a people unlike any other people inhabiting the earth - a 'peculiar' people unto God. Their destiny was to be a people who are His very own.



Glimpsing into the history of Israel, one notices that in the beginning Israel was not really a nation as such, but rather a group of large families that moved and lived together. Initially, the families of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob formed the greater part of the nation of Israel. God Almighty was their King and He was the dominant influence of their lives. God spoke to the early fathers and virtually filled and controlled every aspect of their lives. After Jacob, however, the families began to pay less attention to God, for they had multiplied and were greatly blessed. Soon they came under the yoke of the Egyptian kings. For nearly 400 years the Israelites remained slaves to the Pharaohs. They laboured and groaned as slaves and cried out to the Lord in their misery. The Lord heard their cries of affliction and delivered the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. He told them that He would take them to the land that had been promised to their father Abraham.

It is important to observe that it was the Lord Himself who took the initiative to call the Israelites out of Egypt. It was none other than the Lord Himself who called them out of Egypt to become a separated people unto God. But the children of Israel didn't appreciate and understand the purposes of God for them. They continually rebelled and murmured against God and His provisions for them. They were displeased and dissatisfied with all that God did for them. Time and time again, God in His mercy rose up prophets and judges to instruct the people in what they should do, but the children of Israel were not desirous of walking in His ways.

WE ARE CALLED TO SERVE HIM ALONE

In the days of Samuel, the prophet, God spoke to the Israelite nation through this man of God and told them what He expected of them. Samuel proclaimed God's counsel to the people.

"And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only. (1 Samuel 7:3-4)

God wanted His people to put away the strange gods (idols) from their lives. He wanted them to prepare themselves to serve Him alone. God promised to deliver the children of Israel out of the hand of their arch enemies, the Philistines, if they would only return unto Him and serve Him only.

Even in this hour God promises to deliver us from our enemies. He will surely honour His promises and give us the promised victory, if we follow Him wholeheartedly.

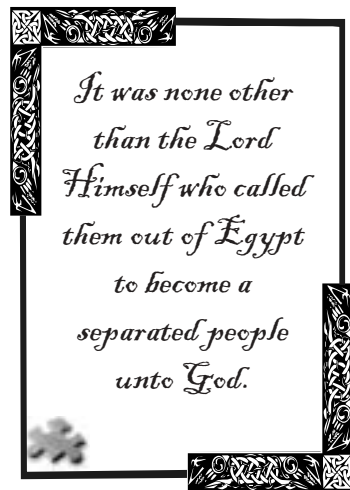
When the children of Israel had put away the idols, Baalim and Ashtaroth and when they began to serve the Lord wholly, then He answered their prayers and fulfilled His promises to them.



“So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites. (1 Sam 7:13-14)

God had promised that He would subdue the Philistines and He didn't even allow them to come near the Israeli coasts. The Philistines represent the evil forces and satanic influences that come against God's people, it also represents the carnal flesh that war against the Spirit of God. The Israelites were victorious over the Philistines. And there was peace between

the Israelites and the Amorites. God brought His people to a place of rest and peace.



It was none other than the Lord Himself who called them out of Egypt to become a separated people unto God.

Amorites were one of the tribes in Canaan that Joshua and the children of Israel had conquered and possessed according to the promises of God. The Philistines, on the other hand, were not from Canaan. The Amorites continued to live in Canaan in small pockets of land even after Canaan had been conquered by the Israelites. The land of Canaan represents our bodies, for our bodies are the lands

that we are to possess, in the words of Apostle Paul “the enmity that is in the flesh”. We are to throw out every enemy, be they Jebusites or Amorites or Perisites that possess this land or body of ours. In our lives, Philistines represent the enemy elements that always attack from outside, such as circumstances and situations or even people who are opposed to our life in the Lord. These are which come from outside. However, Amorites present a picture of our flesh, which is within, that war against our spiritual man. The children of Israel defeated the Philistines but they lived at peace with the Amorites, the very enemy that possessed their own lands. The Scripture says, “There was peace between Israel and Amorites”!

We often overcome the enemy who attacks us from outside (through our circumstance, families etc.) but we fail to achieve victory over the enemy who attacks us from within, that is through the flesh. The personal lives of many believers show that they are not bothered about the desires of their flesh. It is truly a battle of a spiritual nature. The Apostle Paul makes this clear in the book of Romans. “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” (Romans 8:13). Beloved, if we are truly led by the Spirit of God, we will conquer the flesh. We will certainly put to death the works of the flesh – and annihilate the so called ‘Amorites’.

The Israelites, in Samuel's time were victorious against the Philistines but they felt that their enemies, the Amorites, didn't present any problem. This is the exact state of many

believers. They fail to realize that their flesh contains a dreadful enemy. They are not prepared to wage a battle against their self, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. They are content to live at peace with these enemies. When we sin, it is no use blaming Satan. We should blame ourselves for not conquering the enemy who occupies our flesh.

ACCEPTING HIM AS THE KING

The counsel that Samuel brought to God's people (in Chapter 7) was to turn to the Lord with all their heart so that the Lord could rid them of their enemies. But the people were not inclined to follow their God. In the very next chapter of the book of Samuel we see the condition of their hearts.

"And his (Samuel's) sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment. Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." (1 Samuel 8:3-5)

Shortly after overcoming the Philistines, the Israelites turned away from God and went after the things of the world. They asked Samuel to give them a king. The idea of having a human king who would rule over them was not from God. It came from the people's desires for independence. God didn't plan to give His people a king at that point of time. But the people clamored for a king.

Why did the Israelites desire to have an earthly king?

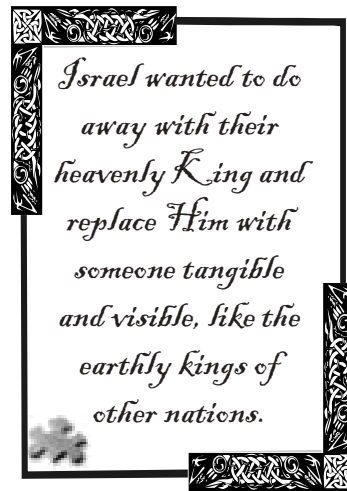
In *Judges 21:25* it is written that, in those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes. From time to time God had brought forth 'judges' to rule Israelites and deliver them from their enemies. But there had never been an earthly king. God was the King of the children of Israel. However, the people turned away from their true King and did what they thought was right, according to their own understanding. They did not want God to be their king. They felt they were quite capable of taking care of themselves. When the people of God began to walk in their own ways and strayed away from the ways of God, several enemies came upon them. When times of affliction came they would cry out to Jehovah, but when they were delivered by the mighty hand of God they remembered not their Saviour. How reminiscent of our times!

In the closing days of *Judges*, there was a great famine in the land (*Ruth 1:1*). The enemy, in the form of a famine, attacked the children of Israel. There was no word from the Lord at that time. But then God raised up Samuel to help and encourage the people to live according to His ways. The Lord God spoke through the prophet and told the Israelites to discard their strange gods and serve Him alone. The people obeyed and followed the Lord; thus they were victorious in their battles. Things began to go well for the children of God. "And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life" (*1 Samuel 7:15*).

One day, however, the elders of Israel asked Samuel the



prophet to make them a king. Instead of looking upon God and seeking His will, they began to look at the neighbouring nations. They even wanted to imitate them. They envied other nations who had kings to rule over them. So they asked Samuel to give them a king like all the surrounding nations had. They said, "...make us a king like unto all the nations". (1 Samuel 8:5). They wanted to do away with their heavenly King and replace Him with someone tangible and visible, like the earthly kings of other nations. They failed to seek the will of their God. Instead, they looked at their neighbouring countries so that they could imitate them and copy their ways. What a terrible, backward, unfaithful, step the Israelites had taken!



Israel wanted to do away with their heavenly King and replace Him with someone tangible and visible, like the earthly kings of other nations.

The Israelites were not only envious of the kings in the neighbouring kingdoms, but they also envied their kingly splendor and tradition. They could not understand why they could not have a king who would exhibit the riches of their culture, and proudly parade their superiority amidst much color, fanfare and pageantry, as did other nations.

In the times in which we live, many believers also manifest this problem in their lives. They see what worldly people are

doing and they long to do what they do. They harbour and nourish a complaining spirit; they envy their neighbours; they compare themselves to the ungodly; they long to imitate their superficial ways and they itch to adopt their colorful customs.

When Samuel heard the complaints of the Israelites and their request for a king, he was greatly disturbed in the spirit. With grief and sorrow within, He took the matter to the Lord.

"But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." (1 Samuel 8:6-7).

O how this must have grieved the Lord! The very people whom He had delivered out of Egypt by His might and power were now ready to reject Him! The Lord God of Israel ministered to Samuel and told him to listen to the people for in asking for a king they hadn't rejected Samuel but they had in fact, rejected the heavenly King who had ruled and reigned over His people all these years after they had come out of Egypt. The Israelites had turned away from their true heavenly King. They had rejected God's counsel and drawn away from His purposes. This is the attitude that is so prevalent this day in the Christian realm. In trying to do what others do, we reject God's rule upon our lives.

"And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king. And he said, This will be the manner

of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.”
(1 Samuel 8:10-20)

THE DESIRE TO BE LIKE OTHERS

God told Samuel to listen to the complaints of the people, but He also asked Samuel to protest. God told him to tell the people what the earthly king would do and what kind of a king he would be. Samuel faithfully told the people that their earthly king would use their land and possessions and even their sons and daughters for his own ends. But the children of Israel still chose to serve an earthly king. They preferred

to be the subjects of an earthly king, despite the manner of king he would be! They were willing to suffer the loss of their sheep, their harvest, their lands and their children to have an earthly king.

How blind one can be! How sightless one can be towards the interests of God! How insensitive one can get to the interests of Christ!

Despite what God had done for them as a nation, the Israelites did not want God to be their King! The natural man may yet think that there was nothing wrong in the Israelites asking for a king if they so wished. They may think that the earthly and the heavenly kings could function simultaneously; that both could exist side by side. But the spiritual man knows that by asking for an earthly king he is rejecting the rule of the King of kings in his life. Beloved, as Jesus said, one cannot serve two masters.

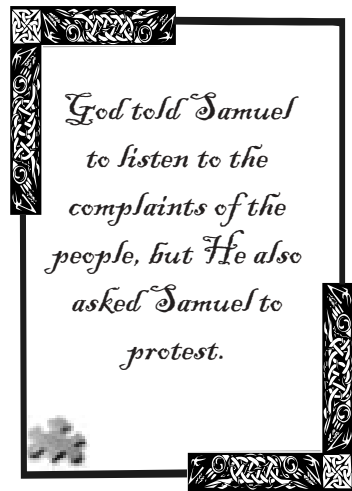
God had brought His people out of Egypt that they may be a nation unto Him. God's desire and plan for His people was that they should become a nation, unlike the other nations. He had called them out of Egypt with a high calling. However, the people clamoured for a king they would be able to see! They chose not to walk in the liberty that God had given them. God does not call His people to be anything but the very best. Yet so often, we choose the second best and walk in our own ways!

It is interesting to note the reasons people gave for



choosing to have a king rule over them. There are three reasons given in verse 20. Firstly, that they may be like other nations; secondly, that they may have a king to be a judge in their midst; and thirdly, that the king may lead them and fight their battles.

The Israelites desired more than ever to be like the nations surrounding them. They wanted to identify with their neighbours and follow their practices. They were envious of



them; they wanted to identify with the people around them even if it meant rejecting God's wish for them to be a nation. They never wanted to be what God wanted them to be! Instead, they chose to be like their unredeemed neighbors. They failed to see that God does not compare His people to others. The Scriptures do not show that God wants His people to be like other people. There is not a single word in the Bible to support the desire

of some believers to identify with the world. God had called the Israelites out of Egypt and He told them, "You shall be a people unto Me and I shall be a God unto you". Beloved, God hasn't called us to be like other people. He hasn't called us to imitate what man has built in his own wisdom.

The second reason given by the Israelites to reject God as their King was that they may have a king to judge over them. They preferred to have a mortal king judge them instead of God, who is ever so just and righteous! They wanted a physical, visible king to judge and decide their fate. In their day-to-day disputes and problems, they wanted the help of an earthly king! They didn't want to live by the inherent, righteous laws laid down by God, but instead wanted to place their trust in the hands of a man! Are God's judgments not righteous? Yes, they are, but the people wanted to be able to justify their misdeeds before mortal men! Were they not looking for shortcuts to true righteousness and justice? O, how corrupt and self seeking are the ways of man, beloved?

The most preposterous reason put forward by the Israelites for rejecting God was that they may have a king to lead them into battle. They wanted a man as king to lead them into battle although the Lord had been with them and had fought all their enemies. They forgot that the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, to deliver them out of the hands of the enemies of Israel.

"And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe." (1 Samuel 12:11).

After asking the prophet Samuel to give them a king, did the Israelites get a king who would rule over them? Yes, God gave Israel a king in Saul.

"And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed

sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.” (1 Samuel 11:15)

They were willing to give their young men to be horsemen provided they had king. They could say in testimony that they sought for a king and God gave them a king. But they got a king after rejecting the rule of the King of kings in their lives. As the Psalmist says, “And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.” (*Psalms 106:15*).

What a terrible price to pay for the liberty to walk in one’s own ways!

The whole idea of having an earthly king was born of the mind of man. God had led the children of Israel out of Egypt, all through the wilderness, and across the river Jordan. He never wanted them to walk according to their own thoughts. But the Israelites chose to go against the desires of God so that they could be like other nations. The modern-day believer likewise, so often chooses to turn a deaf ear to the counsels of God. The example of the Israelites provides us an accurate picture of the attitude of the average believer.

WE ARE CALLED OUT

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:” (1 Peter 2:9).

The New Covenant quite clearly shows that God has chosen us and called us to be a separated and a peculiar people.

When we are born again in Christ, the Word of God says that we become a peculiar people unto God. We are a chosen generation – a people called out by God from darkness into His likeness.

The word ‘peculiar’ means uncommon, different from anything else. Every born again child of God is called to be a peculiar person unto God. We are not to be like other people of this world. We are called to be a special people for God. This is just like the calling that rested upon the children of Israel in the Old Covenant.

In the book of Deuteronomy, we read, “For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.” (*Deuteronomy 14:2*).

The Scriptures point out very clearly that God calls His people to be a holy people, a chosen people, a peculiar people unto Himself, different to other nations. The Israelites had forgotten that God had commanded them to be a peculiar people unto Himself unlike other people.

In the book of Exodus, the Lord says, “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine”. (*Exodus 19:4, 5*).



God repeatedly tells His people that they are His 'called out' ones. The word church or '*ecclesia*' (Greek) means 'called out' ones. God has called us out of the rest of the world. He has called us to be a nation (or people above all other nations (or peoples)). Instead of comparing ourselves to other people we are to remind ourselves that God has called us to be a holy people, a people set apart unto Him, a chosen generation (group of people) and a peculiar (unique) people.

God's children these days forget His calling upon their lives. Many are living in ways similar to that of the people of the world. They are content to live in a world of materialism and commercialism. They adopt styles that are similar to that of the people of the world. They are no different from the independent, self-centered, egoistic people we meet in the streets every day. They take an active part in their rat-races, their pleasure-loving ways, their desire for knowledge and hunger for doing what they think is right.

Often believers go to the Lord, as did the Israelites, and ask for a king like those in other nations. They bring their own, personal needs and interests before the Lord as if to say, "Lord, I too would like to have what others have; Lord, please answer my prayers" or "Lord, other believers are doing it this way. I would like to go their way, Lord. Enable me to be like them, Lord."

The spirit of emulation and comparison is becoming an epidemic in the Christian world. It is growing at a furious rate, as epidemic fevers often do. One hears of men of God

wanting to build houses, establish projects and raise buildings because that is the craze in the society. In the process of doing these things and endeavoring to copy worldly people, they are drawn to many unscriptural activities and fail to honour God's principles. Thus they cease to be special, peculiar and unique unto the Lord. They forsake the rule of God in their lives and try to be like others who do not even know the Lord. They are dominated by society. They look to people to meet their needs instead of looking unto God. It is sad to see how many believers are living like the people of the world, forgetting the calling of God upon their lives. They are prepared to suffer so that their earthly needs are met – a house, a car or such other comforts – but they are not prepared to suffer for the sake of the Lord. They are prepared to stagnate in their spiritual life provided they have some tangible outward evidence of the blessings of God.

OUR CALLING IS IN CHRIST JESUS

Beloved, God does not want us to imitate others. He wants us to be like Him. By asking for things that the world wants we reject God; and the Lord will be prompted to say, "...they have rejected Me that I shouldn't reign over them" (1 *Samuel* 8:7).

Many believers acquire houses, cars and other earthly things to match the possessions of worldly people. They try to live up to the standards set by the society. And then they testify saying, "We were without house, but God provided



us a house for His glory!" Beloved, they deceive themselves and reject the rule of God in their lives. The Lord doesn't want us to follow other people's patterns and ways. The Lord does not want us to walk in other people's shoes. The common call one hears amongst believers is to do as others are doing. They forget the call of God and instead they hearken to the voice of the society and the world.

Beloved, remember that our calling rests in Christ Jesus. The Israelites, who provide us an accurate picture of believers in this day, made a grave mistake of seeking to establish an earthly king, so that they could be like other nations. If we are serious about the calling upon our lives, we have no option but to follow the rule of our King. We have no other standard to adopt and imitate. We have no culture other than the pattern given in God's Word. We are, and will always be, a peculiar people, a holy people unto God. We must know and remember our calling and walk in His ways. Turn away from anything that is not of and from the Lord, beloved. Respond to your calling by being a separated people unto God.

§

PART TWO

Called to be His Bride



A PEOPLE WHO SHOW FORTH HIS GLORY

In the book of Esther we see a wonderful typology of God's purpose for His children. King Ahasuerus can be pictured in the likes of Almighty God because he was a great king who ruled over many nations.

"Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus (this is Ahasuerus which reigned from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces): That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace, in the third (year) of his reign he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants. When he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred and four score days." (Esther 1:1-4).

King Ahasuerus held a feast to show forth all his glory and excellence. He wanted to show his glory and his riches to the subjects of his kingdom. When the Lord God called the Israelites out of Egypt, He said. "You shall be My people and

I shall be a God in your midst. All other people shall see My excellence and My riches in you." God's desire hasn't changed, beloved. He has the very same desire in the New Covenant age.

In *Ephesians* 3:8 we read that God wants to reveal His many-sided wisdom to the people, and to the powers and the principalities through His chosen ones. Beloved, God's desire to show forth His glory unto the universe is an unchanging one.

In *Ephesians* Chapter 1 it is clear that God has chosen His people before the foundation of the world, so that He may dwell in their midst, so that through His people He may show forth His excellence, His glory, His majestic riches and His wonderful ways. We are called to testify of Him.

THE PRIVILEGE OF KNOWING HIM

King Ahasuerus had a queen whose name was Vashti (*Esther* 1:9). Queen Vashti had the privilege of knowing the king. She lived in the King's palace along with the king. Vashti provides us on one hand a picture of the Israelites who had the privilege of knowing God as their Lord. She also typifies on the other hand, the modern day church that has the privilege of knowing the Lord.

Vashti didn't appreciate the great privilege she had as the queen of the land. She neglected her great calling. She was not really living according to the King's desires and will. We



read, in *Esther* 1:9, that queen Vashti, had a great feast for the women of the palace. Although the king had prepared a feast for all the people (verse 5), yet Vashti decided to have a separate feast (verse 9) for the women. She wanted to walk in her own ways and do her own things. Queen Vashti didn't do what was expected of her as the queen; she neglected her calling to be the queen; she made her calling to be of scant importance.

"On the seventh day of the feast when the heart of the king was merry he asked his chamberlains to fetch the queen to show the people and princes her beauty, for she was fair to look on. But queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlain~ therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him." (*Esther* 1:11, 12).

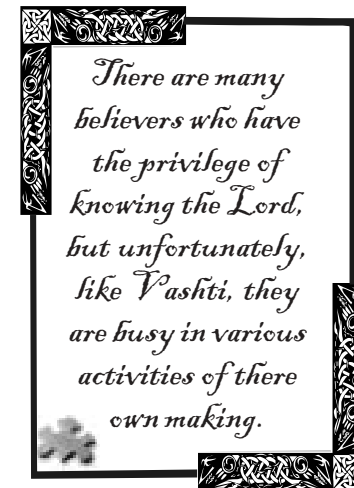
The king desired that the beauty of his queen be shown to the people; he was eager that princes and the people see him in all his glory. The queen was a part of his glory. But queen Vashti refused to come before the king at the feast. She disobeyed his orders and didn't celebrate the king's praise and glory before other people. She failed to respond to this calling upon her life. Here Vashti provides a picture of Israelites disobeying the commandments of God and walking in their own ways. Vashti also provides a picture of a believer who desires not to walk in the ways of God, but prefers, instead, to walk in his own ways. In the Scriptures, the church is always depicted as a woman. Vashti, therefore, gives us two fitting pictures for comparison. Even in this day, the King of kings desires that the glorious beauty of His church be seen by one and all. She is to worship Him and know Him as her Lord. Every believer needs to praise the King amidst all the people.

Psalm 45 depicts the great beauty of the children of God. The Lord desires to show forth His glory and His, beauty and majesty through His people.

"Hearken O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear, forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle work; the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever." (*Psalms* 45:10, 11, 14, and 17).

The Apostle Paul writes that a believer in Christ is called forth "to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved" (*Ephesians* 1:6). He adds that we should "be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ" (*Ephesians* 1:12). We are to show forth the glory and praise of our King.

There are many believers who have the privilege of knowing the Lord, but unfortunately, like Vashti, they are busy in various activities of there own making. They have



forgotten the calling of God upon their lives. They have disregarded the commands of their King. They are not able to appreciate His high calling upon their lives, which is to bring forth His beauty, His excellence and His glory before all the people of this earth. Beloved, we are to be an obedient people, showing forth His praise.

A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY

Vashti, along with her chambermaids, lived in the king's palace in great comfort. She was happy and quite content with what she had. She had never imagined that the king would ever reject her. She enjoyed doing what she thought was right. She even had her own banquets and feasts. She was respected as a queen and she felt quite comfortable in the position she held. She was given many gifts and blessings. However, when the king told her to come forth before the people in all her beauty, she failed to respond to that calling. And so the king rejected her. We may say that whilst she lived in the palace, she had a false sense of comfort and security. She couldn't appreciate the king's desire to reveal his excellence and glory to his people through her. She had treated the king's command in a lighthearted manner and so she had to pay the penalty.

In the days of Jesus, the Jews, and especially the scribes and Pharisees, felt secure because they were of the seed of Abraham (*Romans 11:1*). The natural Jews lived under a false sense of security. The Apostle Paul argues brilliantly in *Romans* Chapters 2 and 3, that the Jews did not have any special privilege. God was no respecter of persons (*Romans 2:11*); no one could be justified by the deeds of the law (*Romans 3:20*).

Jesus told the Jews that He knew whose children they were for they were pretenders and hypocrites. They were not the true sons of Abraham, they were the children of them who killed the prophets (*Matthew 23:31*).

The Jews thought they were the children of God but they didn't walk according to God's commandments and expectations. Hence, the children of natural Israel were rejected by God. They felt secure and comfortable by virtue of their heritage, but it proved to be a false sense of comfort. Many believers, today, have a false sense of security. They are content to be part of God's kingdom; they feel secure in God's house; they feel they cannot be removed from their place in Christ. They feel secure because of their past experiences, but they don't see the need of having a living relationship with the Lord. They are quite content to be involved in church activities; they derive satisfaction from attending all the church events. They attend Bible studies regularly; they occupy their regular seat on Sundays; they tithe habitually; they even help needy souls occasionally. Yes, they are satisfied that they are able to maintain spiritual status-quo! However, the reality is that they have become complacent, self-satisfied and conceited. Every believer needs to examine himself carefully to guard against any attitude of self-satisfaction. Do you have a false sense of comfort and security in Christ Jesus?

Beloved, our security lies not in our activities, the songs of praise we sing or even the quality of our worship. Nor does our security rest in what we have experienced in the past (e.g. baptism). Our security lies in being counted in that



bridal company; it lies in having a living and ongoing relationship with the King of kings. We should be having a throbbing, dynamic, vital relationship with Lord every day of our life.

Jesus said, “He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he is it that loveth Me (*John* 14:12), and again He said, “And why call ye Me Lord, Lord and do not the things which I say” (*Luke* 6:46).

Let us not take what the Lord has said lightly. Let us not be like those who have been hearing God’s Word and God’s calling upon their lives for several years, but have not yet been able to realize their place in Christ Jesus and in His Church. It is our responsibility to respond to God’s call. We are to reveal the excellence and glory of Him who has called us unto Himself. We are to respond to the command of our King in each and every situation and in all circumstances. Let us not become complacent this day, beloved, but let us heed His calling.

LET US APPRECIATE OUR HIGH CALLING

Esther 1:19 tells us what king Ahasuerus did when the queen failed to respond to his summons.

“If it pleases the king let there be a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes that it be not altered, that Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another who is better than she.”

The Scripture say that just because queen Vashti did not respond to the king’s calling, nor appreciate his will for her, the place of her privilege was given to another queen—one who would be better (more obedient) than her. Vashti forfeited her place (in the palace), her position (as one who was living with the king) and her possessions (her royal estate) due to her disobedience. She had lived under a false sense of security and hence the Queen’s robe and estates were removed from her and given to someone who would be worthy of those privileges.

God has called us into a high calling in Christ Jesus. The Israelites and the Jews in not accepting Jesus, didn’t meet God’s desire. The Apostle Paul writes in Romans Chapter 11 that God rejected the Pharisees and Jews and instead called the Gentiles to be a people unto God. Similarly, Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:10, “Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God : which hadn’t o tamed mercy but row have obtained mercy.” The Scripture says that we were not a people (unto God) but now we have been called to be a people unto God. In a spiritual sense, we have been called to take the place of Vashti in the Kingdom of God.

After giving the example of natural Israel in Romans 11, Paul writes,

“And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the



root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee." (Romans 11:17-21).

Paul makes the point that if God had cast aside and removed Israel (a chosen people), we the Gentiles who were grafted into that vine of Israel could surely be removed and

Paul always guarded himself against the danger of becoming complacent and presumptuous. How much more should we be alert against just such a danger?

cast aside by God with greater ease. Jesus said, "Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." (Matthew 21:43). So beloved, there is no scope for us to be complacent about our position and place in the Lord. We have no reason, to possess feelings of security. We must check our lives again and again. We should examine our lives daily and see whether or not we are walking

according to the King's will for us.

The apostle Paul, despite being a true disciple of Jesus, was continuously engaged in judging his own life. In 1 Corinthians 9:26, he writes that he wouldn't like to be one who is beating the air with his hands in futility. He wanted to

examine himself in every detail, so that he wouldn't be the one to lose the race.

The Amplified Bible explains verse 27 thus, "But (like a boxer) I buffet my body – handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships – and subdue it for fear that after proclaiming to others the Gospel and other things pertaining to it, I myself should become unfit – not stand the test and be unapproved – and rejected (as a counterfeit)."

Paul always guarded himself against the danger of becoming complacent and presumptuous. How much more should we be alert against just such a danger? Let us be careful that we don't become like Vashti. May the Lord help us to have a greater appreciation of His calling upon our lives. And may we ever be mindful of the danger of taking our calling for granted.

There are many Christians who are caught up in various religious activities such as conferences, crusades and conventions. They are like Vashti – they are people who are engaged in activities of their own making. Although they are occupied in the activities of the church, yet they fail to respond to God's high calling to show forth His glory and excellence and manifold wisdom.

There are others who listen to God's Word, but they are unable to appreciate what God is telling them in this hour. Often, they hear His word clearly, but they fail to obey God. Hence there is no change in their style of life. They continue to live exactly as they had been doing for many years! They

don't appreciate what God tells them because they live under a false sense of security. Further, they fail to scrutinize their lives.

When Paul preached at the Aeropagus upon Mars Hill (*Acts 17:22*), people reacted to his preaching in three different ways. One group of people scoffed and laughed at him (*Acts 17:32*). They rejected his message outright. Another group said that they would like to hear Paul speaking again. They needed to hear the same message, again and again. Amongst us also there are some who always want to have the same message preached to them repeatedly, be it about restoration, the Body of Christ or end-time truths. The messages are frequently repeated to them, but they fail to obey; and thus their lives don't undergo any change. Then there was a third group. They agreed with what Paul said and believed. The King James' Version says, "Howbeit some believed." (*Acts 17:34*). They harboured no doubts. They were prepared to follow Paul and believe in Jesus. They appreciated the calling of the Lord upon their lives and responded to that call in obedience.

Beloved, we are privileged to know the King. Let us not be content with the blessings we have. Let us not take our calling for granted. Let us rather believe that we are called to express our faith in Christ and His kingdom.

THE KING IS SEARCHING FOR A BRIDE FOR HIS SON

The king told Vashti that she had the privilege of living with the king for a season: she was fortunate that her name

was linked with the king's name for some time. However, now that she had been rejected, she needed to remove her jewels and give them to the new queen, for the king wanted to show forth his exceeding great beauty through his wife.

God is searching for the right kind of bride for His Son these days. Those who were once a privileged people (the Jews), do not qualify to be the bride for His Son, for they desired to walk in their own ways. Many are called but few are chosen. God's Spirit is still looking for an appropriate bridal company for His Son. He is searching all the earth for a bridal people that would stand in the very likeness of the Bridegroom, in character, in holiness and in purity.

Beloved, the Spirit of God is really looking for an appropriate Bride these days just as Eliezer of God looked out for a bride (*Genesis 24*) for Isaac in the last days of Abraham. Some scoff at this; others may doubt this; but there will be some who will appreciate and understand the move of God in this hour.

Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians and told them that they hadn't really appreciated God's high calling in their lives. In II Corinthians 11:1-2 we read, "*I wish you would bear with me while I indulge in a little (so-called) foolishness. Do bear with me. For I am zealous for you with a godly eagerness and a divine jealousy, for I have betrothed you to one Husband, to present you a chaste virgin to Christ.*"

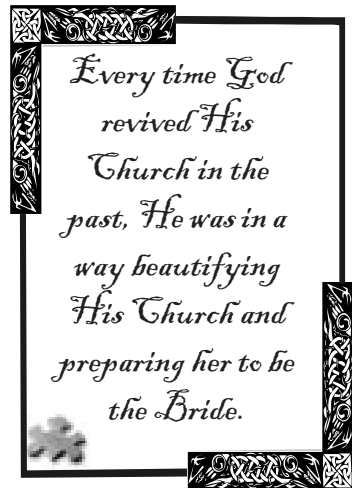
The Corinthians had been blessed with the gifts of the



Holy Spirit and hence they were a rich people, spiritually. Yet they didn't appreciate the calling of God to be a virgin bride unto the Bridegroom. Paul says that he had espoused the Corinthians to one Husband, Jesus Christ, so that he (Paul) might present them as a pure virgin in marriage to Jesus Christ". It is as if the "engagement" was over and a promise had been made for marriage.

Paul implores the Corinthians not to misunderstand him. He pleaded with them to put up with his foolishness for he had laboured among them. He asked them not to merely give tithes and offerings, but to bring them to Christ, their husband-to-be, in the light of their relationship with Christ.

God has always wanted His Church to be a beautiful Bride



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for His Son. Every time God revived His Church in the past, He was in a way beautifying His Church and preparing her to be the Bride. But the Church became occupied with denominational activities instead of wholeheartedly obeying God. And so God could not beautify His Church in the way He wanted to. Even to this day, the beauty of the Church has not been brought forth wholly.

Which father would like to see his grown-up son roaming about in questionable places with unchaste women? So also, the heart of the Father would be grieved to see His Son in the company of a woman who is not pure and chaste. In the book of James Chapter 4, verse 4 we read, "*You (are like) unfaithful wives (having illicit love affairs with the world) breaking your marriage vow to God. Do you not know that being the world's friend is being God's enemy? So, whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God.*" (Amplified Bible). The Living Bible puts it this way, "*You are like unfaithful wives who love their husband's enemy*".

Remember that the Church is normally depicted as a woman and a bride in the Bible. If we are friendly with the world then we could well be likened to unfaithful wives who love their husband's enemy. This is the condition of the Church today. She is friendly with world, the enemy of God, the Father.

What happens in the world under such conditions of disloyalty and infidelity? The husband would surely divorce his wife if she flirts with others or is a friend to his enemy. He would throw her out of his house. No father would willingly agree to give his son to such a woman. But when it comes to our life with God, believers say, "Lord, even if we behave in a friendly way towards the world, which is your enemy, we want to continue to be regarded as your own sweet virgin bride!" Oh, how believers deceive themselves. But God is not fooled, beloved. The Word of God says that God is looking

for a people who have fully and wholeheartedly separated themselves unto Him.

Let us not imagine that God will accept any type of bride for His Son. He wants a bride-people who are separated unto God; He wants a Church with a virgin heart; He desires to have people who are totally sincere and who say, "Lord, we are wholly Thine." Let our prayer therefore be, "Lord, we want to really press on unto the fullness of Thy purposes for us. We recognize and acknowledge Your high calling upon our lives. We revere everything that You have spoken to us through Christ, Your Son in redemption."

Paul wept as he wrote to the Corinthian church because the people were always busy in various activities and works. He wept for the people because they had begun to look to the things and ways of the world. History records that at the end of the first century the Corinthian church was still a backward, backsliding church. And eventually it just fell away and disintegrated. Did this happen because Paul didn't have a revelation about the Body of Christ? No, of course not! The church that doesn't appreciate God's calling on life and does not give in to His workings will surely fall away from His purpose

Beloved, God is looking for souls who are thirsting for the reality of the Son in their lives. The Holy Spirit of God is searching for people who may be included in His bridal company. Let us turn from our ways and give ourselves wholeheartedly to God's calling upon our lives. Let us walk in the relationship of a bride-to-be, obeying God and holding

on to His precious Word. Beloved, if we be like queen Vashti and fail to hear and appreciate God's call, then our 'royal estate' shall be given unto another – even one who is better than we are.

THE PREPARATION OF THE BRIDE

"Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purification accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of women;)" (Esther 2:12).

This verse portrays the purifying of one who is to rule and reign along side the King. The bride is required to purify herself before she comes to the king. She has to prepare herself before she is clothed with the glory of God.

Many believers have an understanding that the Bridegroom will come 'any moment'. Hence, they do not pay much attention to getting ready for Him. However, it is necessary that the bride prepare herself thoroughly, beloved. It is through the process of 'purifying' that the bride of Christ will be prepared. She shall be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints (Revelations 19:8). She shall not come before the king without fulfilling the purifying periods.

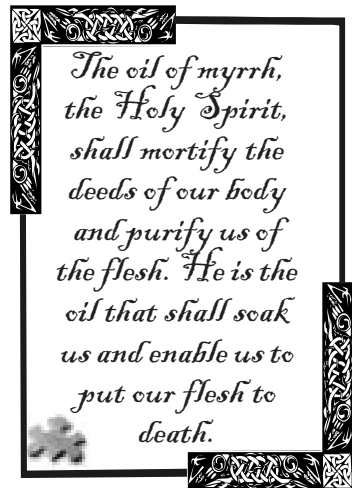
"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting



holiness in the fear of God” 2 Cor 7:1

It is interesting to note that the work of purification that Esther had to go through was divided into two halves—six months with the oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odors. The number six represents man in Biblical numerology. For six months the flesh was to be purified and then for another six months human spirit was to be cleansed. This means that we are to be purified first of the Adamic nature and then of the spirit of the first man.

The oil of myrrh refers to the death of the flesh. When the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified He was embalmed with the oil of myrrh and spices, as was customary in those days. Oil represents the Holy Spirit. The oil of myrrh shall be used to cleanse us of every impurity and filth. We are to be soaked in



The oil of myrrh, the Holy Spirit, shall mortify the deeds of our body and purify us of the flesh. He is the oil that shall soak us and enable us to put our flesh to death.

the spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit. This is the way that we will be prepared to put on fine linen garments. Our lives are to be fully immersed and soaked in the wonderful life-giving oil of myrrh that we may be fully cleansed and purified. Thus, the purifying of our lives is spread over a period of time. In *Romans 8: 13 and 14*, the Apostle Paul writes,

“For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

The oil of myrrh, the Holy Spirit, shall mortify the deeds of our body and purify us of the flesh. He is the oil that shall soak us and enable us to put our flesh to death. This is the work of preparation that God’s Spirit is doing in His people, so that they may become a fitting and proper bride for His Son. And as many as are led by the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the flesh—they and they alone shall qualify to be the Sons of God.

Beloved, this is the preparation God wants us to do in our lives. He wants us to die to the flesh, to die to our self and to die to the ‘deeds of the flesh’. God wants to soak us in the oil of myrrh. God’s people have been living to themselves for too long. They have only been meeting their self-interests. Even when the children of God are engaged and occupied in missionary work or evangelical work, the self has been glorifying itself before God. But the Bible says that no flesh shall glorify itself before God (*1 Corinthians 1:29*). Let us give ourselves to God’s purifying Spirit. Let us show God that we appreciate His calling upon our lives by submitting to His cleansing. “Whoever has this hope purifies himself” . (*1 John 3:3*).

WE ARE TO BE LIVING SACRIFICES

The second half of the purification process of the bride was carried out with sweet odours. The bride had to prepare herself for six months with sweet odors'. In the Old Testament times, when God accepted an offering made by the priest at the altar, a sweet smell arose to His nostrils. A sacrifice that has been accepted by God provides a sweet odour to His nostrils. It is sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God (*Philippians* 4:18, *Leviticus* 26:31). The last six months of the bride were spent in preparing herself to please the king in a manner that would be acceptable to Him. *Romans* 12:1 call us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable worship or service.

Our lives are to be a worship unto God. This is another form of preparation. The surrender of our bodies should be considered a reasonable service unto God and not an exceptional and unique act. Worship is not just a matter of singing hymns, clapping hands and raising one's hands; we are to offer our *lives* as a living sacrifice. There is a purifying that shall take place as we offer our lives upon God's altar.

In *Romans* 12:2 apostle Paul adds that we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we can prove what is acceptable to God. We are a peculiar people and our calling is strange and peculiar to the world. Beloved, conform not to the ways of the world. Let us be renewed in

our understanding, knowing the perfect will of God in our lives.

"By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name." (*Hebrews* 13:15).

There is another sacrifice that is a sweet odour to God. The sacrifice of our praise and worship to the Lord will purify us and give us the strength to bear up with the purifying work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

God wants to purify the bride. In God's calendar we are living in the sunset of the sixth day. Every day is as a thousand years. The psalmist says, "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday" (*Psalms* 90:4). For the bride of Christ, the sixth month of purification is going to come to an end very shortly. God wants to purify us before the advent of the seventh day. He wants to raise up the 'new man' (the spiritual man) in His own likenesses and after His own image (*Genesis* 1:25) that He may rest on the seventh day.

Let us be serious about our calling at this time. We are called to offer our bodies as living sacrifices and to sacrifice our praise and worship unto the Lord, even though we may not be doing full time ministry. We have to offer ourselves to the purifying Spirit of God that we may be prepared as a bridal company. There is no place in our lives to make excuses. God requires and demands that all of the self be surrendered



and laid at God's feet – a hundred percent, not just partially.

ESTHER'S CHOICE

“Then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house.” (Esther 2:13)

The women could take anything they wanted before they went to the king. Esther could also have picked up anything she thought would please the king.

“Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her.” (Esther 2:15).

Esther decided to take that thing which would please the king the most. Hence, she went to the king's chamberlain who was well acquainted with the king, and listened to what he had to say. Although she had a choice and could have exercised her own desires, yet she chose not to do anything of her own. The king's chamberlain here is a 'type' of the Holy Spirit, our Helper.

In this verse we are exhorted to do those things that would most please our King. What is important is not to satisfy our own desires but to please the Lord. When we have a choice before us, we should first do whatever would please our Master and King. To make the correct choice we need to be

transformed by the renewing of our minds. Only after our renewal will we be able to take a right decision according to the will of God. God is pleased only when His will is carried out.

Paul said that if any man uses wood, hay or straw, (that is, the things of the world and the choice of man) to build upon the foundations laid by Christ, then that building would fall and come to naught (1 *Corinthians* 3:12). The work and effort done by man can never have any lasting value because it would not please the King. The Apostle Paul tells the Corinthian church to take heed how they build for they can either build their house with man's resources or they could build their house with foundation stones provided by God. There is a choice that needs to be exercised in the things we do. We are to choose to do that which would please God.

Some people think that since the Son of Man has set them free, they are free to do whatever they like! They argue that at one time they were undoubtedly under the law, but now they have been set free from bondage, and hence they are free as birds to do exactly as they wish. Beloved, such as they, deceive themselves. They live under a misconception. Our Savior has freed us from the bondage of sin that we may become servants of God (*Romans* 6:22). We have been delivered from the law that we may serve the Lord in newness of Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter (*Romans* 7:6).

Beloved, we are to exercise our freedom, liberty and free



will to determine what would please the King and not to indulge in our self-centered desires. As the proverb says, "Be not wise in thine own eyes." (*Proverbs 3:7*). Let us instead be like Esther who consulted the King's chamberlain (that is, the Holy Spirit). Esther, of her own free will, chose to consult the king's chamberlain. She depended upon the counsel of one who knew the king intimately.

Many believers are like pieces of driftwood that float aimlessly in the river according to the direction of the prevailing current. They are not clear about what God is calling them to do. If one realizes that if one is not in God's appointed place then it is imperative that one should sit at His feet and ask for God's grace to know the place of His choosing. The Holy Spirit will lead us to the place of His desire—a place that shall please the King. Jesus said, "But when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you unto all truth." (*John 16:13*).

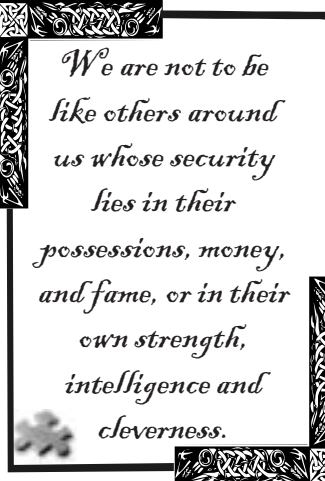
The Holy Ghost is preparing the Esther's of today. Reject not the counsel of the Holy Ghost. Beloved, let us not run our lives according to our own carnal desires. Let us go to the Chamberlain of God. He shall counsel and advice us. Let us not attempt to be like many other Christians who live according to the dictates of their own will. We are a peculiar people and we must rely on the Spirit of God for guidance in every situation of our life.

Our friends, neighbours and acquaintances may want to give us their own advice in the practical situations of our life.

When we tell them what the Word of God says, they may scoff at us and give us their own interpretations. But we need to step away from human reasoning, from vain justifications and from the advice of well-meaning relatives and friends. Let the Holy Spirit minister to us. Beware of popular statements that sound convincing. Let people not psyche us into taking an easy course. Rather, let us please the King, beloved. Let God be true and every man a liar. The righteous will not beg, but they will eat in peace.

THE PECULIAR CALLING OF THE ESTHER COMPANY

Not only are we a peculiar people, but we also have a peculiar calling in the eyes of the world for we are called to please the King. Let us appreciate our high calling unto God and not be like Vashti who lost her calling.



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"And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her. So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight

more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. (Esther 2:15c, 16, 17).

Esther was privileged to become the queen. God gave her grace that was needed. She didn't receive the grace of God in vain. She gave herself to the preparation of her life and chose to do whatever would be pleasing to the King. She appreciated her calling and looked to the king's chamberlain for counsel.

Esther repeatedly reminds us of the Church – the bride of Christ. The quality of the glorious Church of God is that she will not do things in her own way but according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Chamberlain of God will prepare this Bride. Our security lies in being the anointed Body of Christ, the Esther Company.

Let us not ape other people, other churches or other nations. The Lord says that we are a holy nation; we are a peculiar people unto the Lord. He has chosen us. He is well able to keep us. We are a 'called out' people; a people separated unto God. Paul says, "Do not fashion yourselves according to the people of this world." (*Romans 12:2*).

Many Christians in this day and age, are looking to their neighbors as did the Israelites in the days of Samuel. They don't appreciate what Jesus said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" (*Matthew 6:33*); and "Therefore I say unto

you, take no thought for your own life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." (*Matthew 6:25*).

The Lord shall provide bread of life to those who hunger for His Kingdom. Who among us has seen the seed of the righteous beg? In the eyes of the world, this is foolishness. That is why the Lord says that 'ye are a peculiar people'. We are not to be like others around us whose security lies in their possessions, money, and fame, or in their own strength, intelligence and cleverness.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:17).

Let us purify ourselves in this hour and choose to do what is pleasing to the King. The sixth day is coming to an end, and the seventh day is fast approaching, when the bride shall sit down with the Bridegroom in all her beauty and glory.

He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit is saying.

§



Books By Joy Thomas

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The Three Appearances Of Christ

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