

APPEARANCE

“Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.” (John 7:24)

As you know, we Americans place a great deal of importance on appearance. Someone said that within three minutes we form a lasting impressions of people we meet. That’s at least one reason why appearance is so important to us. We associate a good appearance with jobs, romance and popularity. This helps to explain why we are willing to pay only 50 cents for a bar of soap, but \$50 for a jar of cosmetics. Evidently it is more important to us to be beautiful than clean. Our obsession with appearance has propelled the cosmetic industry into a multi-billion dollar business. More money is spent advertising cosmetics than telephones, airlines, or beer. The BBC charges that Americans spend \$20 billion a year on cosmetics. Our desire to look good doesn’t even end when we die. As you know, morticians make a living gobbing cosmetics on dead people to make them look “good”.

If our “problem” is too serious to be handled by superficial painting and plastering, we can always have cosmetic surgery. This also is a multi-billion dollar business. In 2001, for example, American women spent \$668,100,000 on breast enhancement surgery alone. This, as you know, is only one of many popular cosmetic surgeries. Unfortunately, breast augmentation has its down side and is often blamed for a variety of ailments ranging from peripheral neuropathy to rheumatological disease. This makes the lawyers happy but adds millions more to the already high cost of “appearance”. 2003 prices put a full face lift at \$6,542, a nose job at \$4641:and a single botox procedure at \$399, etc., etc., etc. The total bill for cosmetic surgeries in 2003 was a staggering \$9.4 billion.

Clothing too is a top priority to enhance our appearance. Each year we spend billions on clothes that will soon be sold at a yard

sale for a few cents or donated to charity. One local charity confided to me that they are so over run with used clothing that they sometimes take our precious garments directly to the dump. One sad victim of this obsession was 47 year old Elizabeth Roach. She was making \$175,000 a year as a consultant in Chicago. On an impulse she payed \$7,000 for a belt buckle from Nieman Marcus which she later pawned for a mere \$200. Ultimately Elizabeth went \$500,000 into debt buying clothes and jewelry and wound up trying to pay the bills by embezzled nearly \$250,000 from her employer. Unfortunately she is not the only person obsessed with expensive clothing. As ridiculous as it sounds, I am told that designer clothes are even "in" for infants. Some parents are paying \$200 for tennis shoes to put on a child that cannot even walk, let alone play tennis.

According to Lombard Street Research our annual expenditure for clothing, watches, jewelry, etc. in 1935 was only \$.2 billion. In 2004, however, it had sky rocketed to \$57.2 billion. Perhaps it is time that we remember the sobering words of 1 Samuel 16:7: **"The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."** What our fellow men think of us has absolutely nothing to do with our salvation. The important question to ponder, is what does God think of us? The Scriptures teach that someday we will all "appear" before the judgement seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10), that's the "appearance" we should be most concerned about. Unfortunately, however, many never consider how they "appear" to God.

You may not be good about keeping appointments on earth, but there are two appointments you will keep whether you want to or not. You have one appointment with death, and a second one with Judgement (Heb. 9:27). Have you given any thought to how you will "appear" before God on Judgement Day? It needs to be understood that on that Day that God will not be limited to our outward appearance, nor to a mere three minutes of time. The primary focus of God, as you know, is on our heart and not on our outward appearance. Paul warned about taking

pride “in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart.” (2 Cor. 5:12). In the light of eternity it is ridiculous to forget the way our heart appears to God.

So today, as you sit down at the “vanity” or stand before the mirror, please pause to consider how you “appear” to God. Certainly your heart is more important to God than your hair. Remember! Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart!