

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS

There is a phrase we find in some of the Christmas carols relating to a passage highlighted in the prophecy of Haggai, **Haggai 2:6** For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; **7** And I will shake all nations [*Is. 13: 6* Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. **7** Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: **8** And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. **9** Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. **10** For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. **11** And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. **12** I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. **13** Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger ... Haggai 2: **20** And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, **21** Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; **22** And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen] [*i.e. stage one*], and the desire of all nations shall come [*i.e. stage two*]: and I will fill this house with glory [*kabowd, honour, splendour, majesty*] [*i.e. stage three*], saith the LORD of hosts. **8** The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. **9** The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace [*shalom, completeness, fulfilment, security, contentment ... especially connected to the covenant relationship God has promised*], saith the LORD of hosts.

What a tremendous passage of Scripture! And in the centre the Lord of hosts is directing every stage of His plan for the purpose of His own glory. ... “The desire of all nations” ... We find this great title in a number of our hymns and carols, for example ...

- [*Christian Hymns*] Hymn 206. “Hark! The herald angels sing”, (“Come, Desire of nations, come, Fix in us Thy humble home”).
- Hymn 203. “Earth was waiting, spent and restless” (“Surely, Lord, the day is near; the Desire of all the nations, it is time He should appear”).
- Hymn 321. “Ten thousand times ten thousand”, (“Bring near Thy great salvation, Thou Lamb for sinners slain; Fill up the roll of Thine elect, Then take Thy power, and reign; Appear, Desire of nations, Thine exiles long for home; Show in the heaven Thy promised sign; Thou Prince and Saviour, come.”)
- Hymn 196. “Angels from the realms of glory”, (“Though an Infant now we view Him, He shall fill His Father’s throne, Gather all the nations to Him; Every knee shall then bow down.”)

Let's briefly consider the One to Whom "The desire of all nations" refers ... our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour, the eternal Son of God.

The first revelation of His glory given to 'outsiders' was to the shepherds when they became the first invited guests to the newly-born Jesus as He lay in the cradle, **Lk. 2:11** unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. **12** And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. ... **15** And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, *which the Lord hath made known unto us.*

Such is the electing grace of God, - *which the Lord hath made known unto us.* That is how we have become saved ... through the grace that opened our hearts to the claims of the Gospel. ... It is a privilege to be invited to meet the Saviour. It is a privilege to be introduced to Him by the Holy Spirit and to acknowledge Him as the Son of God, our Saviour. While some people accept the privilege, sadly others are either too busy or not interested ... or intend 'getting round to it' some time, perhaps. ... But for the born-again Christian, to realise that Jesus Christ came into this world and left Heaven *for me*, and was laid in a cradle ... Jesus did that *for me!* ... "One day when Heaven was filled with His praises, One day when sin was as black as could be, Jesus came forth to be born of a virgin" ... *for you and for me.*

And He began by inviting the simplest of people, - the kind others would never have considered, and yet He sent His angel messengers to these shepherds out on the Judean hillside. ... And it is also important to note His first visitors were indeed His own people, from the nation of Israel, - **Is. 9:6** *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,* - because it was to *that* nation in particular God sent His only-begotten and beloved Son, for He had previously and specifically directed the angel to instruct Joseph, **Mt. 1:21** *thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins*

Then, the second and further introduction of Jesus happened just a few days later when Joseph and Mary carried our Saviour the few miles across the countryside, past Rachel's tomb, from Bethlehem into Jerusalem ... They would have made their way on foot, ... up the hill of Mount Zion, carrying their little eight-day-old Baby, and bringing Him into the temple for the very first time. They handed Him over to one of the old priests ... a man called

Simeon, who had been carrying out his priestly duties for many years. He was convinced though, that before he would die he would have the joy and privilege of welcoming Israel's long-awaited Messiah.

Previously, the angels had brought the message to the shepherds. In the case of Simeon, however, God the Holy Spirit personally honoured the faithfulness of the old man and revealed to him [Lk. 2:26](#) that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ... The Lord honours those who honour Him and He always keeps His word because the Holy Spirit brought Simeon into the temple on the right day at exactly the right time when Jesus would be there. ... Simeon was on temple duty to receive Jesus! ... God's timing is impeccable ... it is always perfect! He always works out His purposes beautifully ... And when He has an appointment to keep, He never misses it, and He makes sure nothing interferes with it either.

... Do you remember when you started to think about all these things? They might have consisted of fleeting thoughts at the beginning, but then they started to become more frequent until they took a hold of you. Maybe you never intended becoming a Christian, when you did, - but God had intended it. ... It was something you might have thought about doing later in life, or at some other time, but when God was making His plans, He made sure you would be at the right place ... just as He did with Simeon.

And Simeon took the little Baby in his arms and he [28](#) blessed God, and said, [29](#) Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: [30](#) For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, [31](#) Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; [32](#) A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. You see, Simeon was quoting from Isaiah, and he also would have had this ancient prophecy of Haggai very much on his mind ... that the Messiah would, - during his lifetime, - come and one day be the *Desire of all nations*.

Then thirdly, sometime later, when Mary and Joseph had settled in Bethlehem and were now living in a *house* (Mt. 2:11) with their little Son, - who by now would have been anything up to two years old (Mt. 2:16), another set of visitors came.

These visitors had travelled from a great distance. Their journey had taken a considerable length of time and effort and expense. They were dressed differently to the local Bethlehem people, they spoke differently, and they had a very sophisticated background. They were 'well-off', influential, and

knowledgeable ... not at all like the shepherds who met Jesus at His birth. And yet these wise men, - magi, - from the east came looking for Jesus, and kept on looking until they found Him, **Mt. 2:9** When they had heard the king [*Herod*], they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. **10** When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. **11** And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. ... Jesus, the Desire of all nations.

Then, another occasion, - the fourth, - that shows this same picture of Jesus being the Desire of the nations was on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. Jesus had been crucified, buried, rose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven ... It was the day when the Holy Spirit came, **Acts 2:5** And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven ... **9** Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, **10** Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, **11** Cretes and Arabians ... **37** Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? **38** Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. **39** For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. ... **41** Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. ... Jesus, the Desire of all nations.

And from that day in Jerusalem the Gospel went on to travel throughout Judea, into Samaria, across to the islands, north-west to Asia Minor, and westwards into Europe and across to north Africa. The Gospel was also taken eastwards to India. This was the commencement of the fulfilment of what the Lord Jesus had prophesied, **Mt. 24:14** this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations ... On the basis of what He promised I believe it is coming near to the end of that process for the Gospel *has* reached just about every corner of this world ... and then shall the end come. ... That is what Jesus said! ... Jesus, the Desire of all nations. ... The Gospel will be preached in every corner and souls will be saved from every nation (cf. Rev. 5 **9** And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation)

And then fifthly and finally, we look ahead ... to a glorious time yet in the future ... - **Is. 2:2** And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. **3** And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths [... *the Desire of all nations* ...]: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. **4** And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. **5** O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.

You see, there is the ultimate fulfilment of God's plan. There is the prophecy Haggai foretells. First of all God is going to bring judgement upon the nations, **Haggai 2:7** And I will shake all nations, ... *that* will be a terrible and a frightening time for all unbelievers. God, - as it were, - will make to tremble (*ra'ash*) the nations. Nothing they have ever done to themselves in war and conflict will compare with what God will do to them. ... However, after He has 'shaken' the nations, there will come the most momentous event, - and the most glorious event, - *ever* ... and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. ...

Jesus came to Bethlehem at His first coming, - *that* was momentous ... for the shepherds, for Simeon and Anna, for the wise men ... But as far as the vast majority of the people of Israel at that time were concerned, ... on that occasion **Jn. 1:10** He was in the world ... and the world knew him not. **11** He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But the *next* time He comes, how different it will be for **Is. 2:2** the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established ... and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. ... On that great and wonderful day, our Saviour and Lord, King Jesus will occupy the throne of Jerusalem as was promised to King David, **II Sam. 7:16** *thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.* ... That is when He will become the Desire of all nations.

Aren't you glad to know this same Jesus as your Saviour, for when He comes you will be by His side? Aren't you glad you are saved and He found you when you were wandering? Just as Simeon was waiting and watching I trust you are also waiting and watching for His second coming. The shepherds saw the sign brought to them by the angels on the hillside, and the wise men saw the star that led them the whole way from the east ... They knew Jesus was coming soon. And as we study and read God's word, we know it too. God

always keeps His Word, and His Word is the Bible ... and that is how we confidently await the return of His Son in fulfilment of His promise, to bring glory to God across the whole world, and to become *the Desire of all nations*. Amen.