

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS

Haggai 2:7

INTRODUCTION

- In a science article earlier this year, the author posed the question: “What is life?” Then came his answer, “Scientists still can’t agree...do we, humans, know what life fundamentally is? No.”
- Is it not true that without the fear of God, man is without even the beginning of knowledge and wisdom?
- For us who know God and believe the Bible, we understand what life is and where it comes from
- God is the source of all life; he made all things and breathed life into his creation (Acts 17:28; John 1:4; 14:6)
- To reject God is to reject life
- The prophet Haggai ministered to the Jews who had returned from the Babylonian captivity
- God had punished the nation for their rebellion, and sent them to Babylon for seventy years
- But in faithfulness to his covenant, he stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, to allow the Jews to return to the land of Israel and to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem in 538 BC (2 Chronicles 36:21-23)
- The book of Ezra records the events of those days, particularly the work of construction of the house of God
- When the foundation of the temple had been completed there was a mixed response from the Jews – some of the ancient men who

had seen the glory of Solomon's temple wept at the sight, but others shouted aloud for joy (Ezra 3:10-13)

- Then the adversaries of the Jews rose up to oppose the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 4:4) and the work came to a halt in 536 BC until 520 BC – a period of sixteen years (Ezra 4:24)
- The Jews were discouraged and in their hearts they lost their focus on the worship of God and their priorities turned to their own selfish wants – they were concerned with their own houses while neglecting God's house, and God chastened them accordingly (Haggai 1:9)
- So God raised up two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to rebuke the people as well as encourage them back to the work of God's house (Ezra 5:1-2), and under their ministry the temple would be completed in 520 BC (Ezra 6:13-15)
- Haggai addressed an attitude amongst the Jews who were building the temple that the glory of Solomon's temple would never be matched – and he showed them that the future glory of the temple would be greater than its past glory
- Why? because “the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts”
- The Hebrew word for “desire” understood by some to not be referring to Christ but to the “precious things” of all nations, that is, the tributes of the Gentiles rendered to Christ in his future kingdom (Isaiah 60:5; 61:6)
- But it is Christ who is the Desire of all nations – he is the only One who can meet all the longings of the human heart

I. THE ASPIRATION IN MAN FOR THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS

A. God's grace upon all nations

1. In many places, Christ is said to be the Saviour of Israel (Psalm 14:7; Luke 2:25)
2. While God chose one nation out of all the nations of the earth to be his covenant people, his mercy extends to people of every nation (Genesis 22:18; Psalm 22:27; Isaiah 49:6; 52:10; Luke 2:10-11)

B. The universality of this desire

1. God has set eternity in the heart of man – an awareness that beyond the temporal and physical realm there is a spiritual and eternal (Ecclesiastes 3:11)
2. God has written his law in the heart of man, so that we are aware our duty to God's standard of righteousness, and our consciences bear witness when we sin (Romans 2:15)
3. All people do not seek after God or Christ
 - a. In our natural state "there is none that seeketh after God" (Romans 3:11)
 - b. Men hold (or suppress) the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18)
 - c. "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." (Psalm 58:3)
 - d. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John 3:19)
4. While the people of this world do not desire Christ, they desire those things that only Christ can give them
5. Men desire everlasting life in the bliss of heaven (John 3:36; 10:10; 14:6)

6. Men desire purpose and meaning in their lives (Revelation 4:11)
7. Men desire a god and creator who made us
 - a. Prominent atheist, Richard Dawkins, suggested that life originated on earth by aliens who “seeded” the planet
8. Men desire a clean conscience (Hebrews 9:14)
9. Men desire justice to be done (Acts 17:31)
10. Men desire peace on earth (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 2:14)
11. Men desire a deliverer who will come and solve all our problems
 - a. The false religions of the world all have a Messianic figure, whose coming they look for
 - i. Islam – Mahdi
 - ii. Zoroastrianism – Saoshyant
 - iii. Buddhism – Maitreya
 - iv. Hinduism – Kalki
 - v. Taoism – Li Hong
 - b. Modern secularism regularly exalts as “secular saints” leaders who claim to have the answers to their problems
 - c. Others hope that aliens will come and rescue us from ourselves

12. All this is evidence of the truth of Scripture which tells us that the whole creation is in bondage of corruption, and groans, travails and waits for liberation from that bondage (Romans 8:19-23)
- C. In all nations, God graciously calls out a people to worship him, the true God
1. In heaven there are redeemed “out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Revelation 5:9)
 2. In Scripture we read of heathen people who responded to the light God had given them and came to worship the true God
 - a. The wise men from the east (Matthew 2:1-12)
 - b. Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48)
 - c. The Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39)
 3. Throughout history there are numerous accounts of remote heathen people who rejected idolatry and sought to worship the one true God
 - a. The We people of Burma turned from their headhunting and spirit-appeasement, believing that the true God would send a “white brother with a copy of the lost book”, and were eventually led to a missionary with a Bible who showed them the Gospel
 - b. The Gedeo people of Ethiopia believed in Magano, the benevolent, omnipotent, Creator of everything and were shown in a vision that two white men would arrive with a message from Magano, which resulted in missionaries leading them to Christ

II. THE ADVENT TO MAN OF THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS

- A. When does the Desire of Nations come and fill the temple with his glory?
1. At his first coming, he came in human form and entered the temple
 - a. While Solomon's temple had the Shekinah Glory of God fill it at its dedication, God in human flesh entered this temple during his earthly ministry
 - b. In that sense, the glory of the latter temple was greater than the former
 - c. Yet the heavens and earth were not shaken (Haggai 2:6) at this time
 2. The church is the spiritual temple during this age (Ephesians 2:19-22), and was filled with glory at Pentecost (Acts 2)
 - a. God inhabits the temple of the church (Matthew 18:20; 28:20)
 - b. God's glory is manifest in the church by Christ Jesus (Ephesians 3:21)
 3. The individual believer is the temple of God
 - a. Before he comes to heal and save, he "shakes" us by the law's condemnation and the Spirit's conviction (Deuteronomy 32:39; Job 5:18; Hosea 6:1)
 - b. Christ, the Desire of Nations comes into the believer, dwelling in him (Colossians 1:27)
 - c. The glory of God is revealed to and in the believer, as he is "changed into the same image from glory to

glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18)

- B. It is at his Second Coming that the ultimate fulfilment of this prophecy will take place
1. The Hebrews 12:26-27 quotes Haggai 2:6 and shows that the shaking of the heavens and earth are still in the future
 2. The shaking of the nations (Haggai 2:7) will take place during the Tribulation period when there will be global earthquakes (Revelation 6:12-17)
 3. When Christ comes in glory (Matthew 24:30; Isaiah 40:5), the temple described in Ezekiel 40-48 will become the centre of global worship and God’s glory will again fill the temple (Ezekiel 43:5)
 4. Then “the glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former”, and then “in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts”
 5. Christ will “overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen” (Haggai 2:22)

CONCLUSION

1. Christ is rightly called the Desire of All Nations, yet how few in this world desire him!
2. Rather, “he is despised and rejected of men...we esteemed him not...there is no beauty that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2,3)
3. To those who presently reject Christ, they will be rejected by him on the Great Day (Matthew 10:33); “he will miserably destroy those wicked men” (Matthew 21:41)
4. What is the chief desire of your heart?

5. Can you say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." (Psalm 73:25-26)
6. Can you say, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalm 42:1-2)
7. There are many who profess to be Christians, who "draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me" (Matthew 15:8)
8. We must seek God's grace to rid us of all other desires and fill us with a love and desire for Jesus Christ alone, that will transform our hearts and our lives into temples of his glory
9. And as we do so, we look with expectation for the day when the Desire of All Nations will come and we will dwell with him eternally
10. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. (Revelation 22:20)