



The Desire of all Nations

... the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory ...

Haggai 2:7 KJV

While acknowledging that modern scholars read this verse as an eschatological flood of material *wealth* flowing into the church for its rebuilding, we will consider it, as did older commentators, as alluding to the Messiah who is the *desire* (Hebrew singular) – or the precious – of the nations coming to his temple, the church, and filling it with his glory. We grant the accuracy of modern scholarship in its interpretation; nonetheless, the end-time flood of financial resource into the church is but an adumbration of he who is the true wealth and desire of all mankind. In fact, the worldly desire for riches – created things – is nothing more than a perversion of man's innate desire for the Creator.

Desire – the essence of all true spirituality

Desire is the essence of all true spirituality. It is the atmosphere in which all great men and women of God have lived, and is the primal force animating all humanity.

God has created us as the objects of his holy desire with the capacity to respond in like kind. In fact, beating within every soul, regenerate and unregenerate, whether acknowledged or not, is an insatiable desire for the living God. And so, the Psalmist, giving voice to these subterranean movements of the soul cries out in desperation, "*... when shall I come and appear before God?*" (Ps 42:2).

The most natural condition for the human soul is to find its repose in God. Anything less is an aberration and the result of the violence of sin. As the prophet says, "*... your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you...*" (Isa 59:2). As Paul preached to the Athenians, quoting one of their own poets, "*For we are indeed his offspring*" (Acts 17:28b); nonetheless, this innate knowledge of God has been suppressed in unrighteousness (Rom 1:18-19; 2:14-15; Ecc 3:11).

Therefore, dealing with the sin issue, the atonement of Christ restores us to open communion with the creator-redeemer God. But for this to be outworked, to be actually felt and experienced, the Spirit of God will search out our inner-life to discover that suppressed vein of true desire. Every great love story is sourced in this, in either fulfilled or unrequited desire. But surely, this is the tragedy and the disillusionment of the human condition. At the end of the day there is no man or woman, in fact, no created thing equal to that desire. No relationship or experience that this world affords can ever fully satisfy it. Why? Because, it is a God-shaped God-sized desire.

Shakings – to realign our desires

This is why he is shaking the nations right now, including every denomination (Hag 2:7)—to realign our desires. Behind every human pursuit – every aspiration of love, art, science, religion, and even war and politics – lies the

unuttered desire for God. Twisted by sin, this is the unrealised quest of all our ceaseless energies—the deep longing animating all that we are and ever do. And so, we have made 'created things' the objects of our desire—the desire that was designed to correspond only to God by whom and for whom all things were created.

And so, in great mercy and tenderness he comes to every person, and especially to the church, to shake every 'created thing' – every idol of man's making, every denominational policy, protocol, and procedure – which we have exalted over the knowledge of God, until only the uncreated remains. The aroma of our sectarian divisions will ultimately give way to the fragrance of Christ and the unshakeable kingdom of his righteousness, peace, and joy. And this kingdom is first within us.

This is the latent desire of the human spirit though dead in sin—but now, for the regenerate, made alive by the Spirit (Eph 2:1-8). And it is why James in the context of dealing with the church's adulterous liaisons with the spirit of the world refers to our spirit as "jealously desiring" (Jas 4:5). The various renderings of this verse beg the question as to whether it is actually *God* (NASB) or the *believer* (NIV) that does the 'desiring' (*epipitheo* – 'to long for greatly'). This textual dilemma, to my mind, is easily resolved.

Our spirit resonates with the Spirit of God that we are his (Rom 8:16). It therefore jealously longs for God alone; the human spirit can never be truly satisfied with anything less than God himself. This was Paul's testimony, serving God with his spirit (Rom 1:9). Nor can God, who is a jealous lover, be satisfied with anything less than unhindered communion with those he passionately loves. Both God and we are, therefore, filled with an intense, but unsatisfied desire one for the other.

A fatal attraction

In a sense there is inevitability about this—it is, in fact, a 'fatal attraction'. As 'deep calls to deep' (Ps 42:7), as the depths of God's heart calls to the depths of ours, something of eternal weight and earth-changing significance is transacted. This is the nub of every visitation of the Spirit and reforming movement of history.

This eternal desire is heard not only in the groan of creation, but also in the deep sigh of all those who, with the Spirit, eagerly await the revealing of the sons of God (Rom 8:18-23; Ps 77:3; Isa 24:7; 42:14; Ezk 9:4; 2 Cor 5:2-4). It is heard in the love-song of the bride through worship and in the cry of intercession (Jer 33:11; Rom 8:26-27). It outworks in the prophetic spirit as it confronts entrenched power – both demonic and human – and releases ministries of compassion to the poor and marginalised (Am 5:24).

This desire is the life-spring of holiness (Ps 42:1-2; 27:4; 63:1-2; Jn 7:37-39). If we yield to it, it drives us through every seduction of the world spirit into the arms of Jesus. Only through this experience could the psalmist declare with mature resolve, "*Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You*" (Ps 73:25). We come out the other side of temptation with our desire for God not only intact, but also intensified by its testing. We can say with the prophet, "*... we have waited for You; the desire of our soul is for Your name and for the remembrance of You. With my soul I have desired You in the night, yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early ...*" (Isa 26:8-9).

Our hearts resonate with his. Just as the psalmist declared, "*When You said, 'Seek My face,' my heart said to You, 'Your face, Lord, I will seek'*" (Ps 27:8). We love him because he first loved us (1 Jn 4:19). With "*desire he has desired*" to eat with us (Lk 22:15). And so, it is with desire that we respond.

This was the lesson the 'beloved' had to learn when invited by her lover to, "*Arise and come away*" (S of S 2:10); a process of responding to desire with desire: "*Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires*" (S of S 2:7; 3:5; 8:4). She was also to learn that the call to intimacy is seldom convenient, demanding that desire respond promptly (S of S 5:1-6).

Jesus waits until his desire awakens the subterranean desire of the nations—the primal cry for the one true living God. This hidden and inexplicable force is currently coming to bear on the nations. Wars and rumours of war, the tumult of nations, the collapse of men's systems and ideologies are the birth pangs of a new era, of the fullness of Christ's kingdom coming in the earth. As it does the fullness of the gentiles will come, flooding into the kingdom as living stones for the rebuilding of the eschatological house of God.

In the words of Bach's famous cantata—"Jesu, joy of man's desiring" will surely come. And he will first come to his bride as she finally responds to him in the realisation that "*I am my beloved's and his desire is for me*" (S of S 7:10).

Jesus, the desire of all nations, shall come and fill his house with glory.

May 2003