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I

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS

Col. 3:11—"Christ is all and in all."

Song of Solomon 5:16—"He is altogether lovely."

THEME: "That Jesus Christ Is Infinitely And Supremely Lovely"

IN HAGGAI 2:7, we have set before us reference to our Lord Jesus Christ: "And the desire of all nations shall come."

In five particulars Jesus Christ is "The Desire of All Nations." Though Jesus Christ is not actively desired by all nations, yet He is rightly "The Desire of All Nations."

A. Because He *is* most desirable in Himself, and all things that are desirable are *in* Him; it is more blessed to suffer loss in Him than gain out of Him, the cross in Him than a crown out of Him, pain in Him than power out of Him. Gain outside of Christ is loss, and loss inside of Christ is gain. Beauty is in Christ,

bounty is in Christ, riches and honor are in Christ (Prov. 8:18). "Riches and honor are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness."

Jesus Christ is the treasure hid in the gospel, the pearl of great price; He is the sun in the firmament of Scripture, whom to know aright is everlasting life; He is a spring full of the water of life, a hive of sweetness, a treasure of riches, a river of pleasure, wherein you may bathe your souls to all eternity.

He is fullness and sweetness; "the chiefest among ten thousand" (Cant. 5:10). His wisdom "is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared to her" (Prov. 3:15).

Alas! What are all the crowns and kingdoms of the world, all the thrones and scepters of kings to Christ? I say, what are the treasures of the East, the gold of the West, the spices of the South and the pearls of the North to Him? These, or whatsoever you can imagine, are not to be compared to the blessed Jesus! The glories and excellencies of Christ excel all others. As all waters meet in the sea, and as all the lights meet in the sun, so all the perfections and excellencies of all the saints and angels meet in Christ. Christ hath not only the holiness of angels, the loveliness of saints, and the treasure of Heaven, but also the fullness of the Godhead; the riches of the Deity are in Him (Col. 1:19). "For it pleased the Father that in him all fulness dwell"—fullness of grace, fullness of knowledge, fullness of love, fullness of glory. He is lovely

to the Father, lovely to the angels, lovely to the saints, and lovely to the soul.

The story of a little Negro boy seems apropos here. When on his deathbed, he was visited by a missionary, to whom he spoke of the happiness he felt, and the longing desire he had to be with Jesus. "I am going to Heaven soon, and then I shall see Jesus and be with Him forever," said the little fellow. "But," rejoined the missionary, "If Jesus were to leave Heaven, what would you do?" "I would follow Him," replied the boy. "But suppose," said the missionary, "Jesus went to Hell, what would you do?" In an instant, with an intelligent look and a smile on his countenance, he replied, "Ah, massa, there is no Hell where Jesus is."

The fullness of Heaven is Jesus Himself.

The duration of Heaven is the eternity of Jesus.

The light of Heaven is the face of Jesus.

The joy of Heaven is the presence of Jesus.

The melody of Heaven is the name of Jesus.

The harmony of Heaven is the praise of Jesus.

The theme of Heaven is the work of Jesus.

The employment of Heaven is the service of Jesus.

Well may we arise and with all the fervor of our souls loudly proclaim Him Lord of lords and King of kings. "For of him and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever, Amen" (Rom. 11:36). Thus, Christ may well be called "The Desire of All Nations."

B. Jesus Christ is called "The Desire of All Nations" because His desire is after all nations, though He hath no need of them. He hath thousands of angels before Him, and ten thousand daily minister unto Him, yet such infinite love doth He bear to the sons of men in whom there is no loveliness, that He Himself saith, "My delights are with the sons of men" (Prov. 8:31). And on the word of His cross He, by His death, made a door that we might enter in and be with Him forever.

A gentleman in England visited a company of gypsies and found a lad alone in bed, evidently in the last stage of tuberculosis. His eyes were closed, and he looked as one already dead. Very slowly in his ear he repeated the Scripture, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." He repeated it five times without any apparent response; the lad did not seem to hear even with the outward ear. On hearing it the sixth time he opened his eyes and smiled, and whispered, "And I never thanked Him; but nobody ever told me! I return Him many thanks—only a poor gypsy chap! I see! I see! I thank Him kindly!" He closed his eyes with an expression of great satisfaction. The lips moved again, he caught, "That's it." Next day he was dead, or rather, had fallen asleep in Christ. His father said he had been very "peaceable" and had "a tidy death."

C. Jesus Christ is called "The Desire of All Nations" because it is He only who can make any person, family, or nation, truly desirable.

What is the reason that the Lord of hosts prefers His people before all the world besides? (Exod. 19:5) "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people" (Prov. 12:26.) "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor." Believers are these treasures, of whom the world is not worthy (Heb. 11:38). "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (I Peter 2:9). Now, what is the reason, beloved, that the saints are thus excellent above all the others? Is it for their birth, breeding, or learning, or riches, or greatness, or honor? No, it is for none of these; but if you would know the reason, it is because Christ is formed in them and married to them; they have the new name, the new nature, the new heart, the new spirit.

"And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2:10). The saints are those whose hearts are "comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:2, 3). Saints are "strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience, and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to

be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight" (Col. 1:11-22).

Christ is the reason of the believer's excellence. Christ is the believer's all and in all. He has made us unto our God, kings and priests. Christ has made every believer a king. It is Christ's beauty that makes us beautiful; it is His riches that make us rich; it is His righteousness that makes us righteous.

D. L. Moody,* that great evangelist, describing his personal witnessing after the battles of Pittsburgh, Lording, and Murfreesboro in the Civil War tells of a particular case: "One night after midnight I was wakened and told that there was a man in one of the wards who wanted to see me. I went to him, and he called me 'Chaplain' and said he wanted me to help him die; and I said, 'I'd take you right up in my arms and carry you into the kingdom of God if I could: but I can't do it: I can't help you to die.' And he said, 'Who can?' I said, 'The Lord Jesus Christ can; He came for that purpose.' He shook his head and said, 'He can't save me; I have sinned all my life,' and I said, 'But He came to save sinners.' I thought of his mother in the North, and I knew that she was anxious that he should die right, and I thought I'd stay with him. I prayed two or three times, and repeated all the promises I could, and I knew that in a few hours he would be gone. I said I wanted to read him a conversation that Christ had with a man who was anxious about his soul. I turned to the third chapter of John. His eyes were riveted on me, and when I came to the fourteenth and fifteenth verses, he caught up the words, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.' He stopped me and said,

* Stories by way of illustration were added to original Dyer material in this chapter.

'Is that there?' I said, 'Yes,' and he asked me to read it again, and I did so. He leaned his elbows on the cot and clasped his hands together and said, 'That's good: won't you read it again?' I read it the third time, and then went on with the rest of the chapter, when I finished his eyes were closed, his hands were folded, and there was a smile on his face. Oh, how it was lit up! What a change had come over it! I saw his lips quivering and I leaned over him and heard, in a faint whisper, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have eternal life.' He opened his eyes and said, 'That's enough: don't read any more.' He lingered a few hours and then pillowed his head on those two verses, and went up in one of Christ's chariots and took his seat in the kingdom of God." Christ alone makes us truly honorable, and desirable. Well may Christ be called "The Desire of All Nations": it is He that can make the souls in a nation desirable.

D. Jesus Christ is called "The Desire of All Nations" because all nations stand in need of Him. Nay, not only all nations, but all persons, young and old, rich and poor, high and low. He that will be saved must have a Saviour to save him, or else he can never be saved. Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man

cometh unto the Father, but by me." Matthew 1:21, "And thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

You may go to Heaven without health, without wealth, without honor; without pleasure, without friends, without learning; but you can never go to Heaven without Christ.

It was Charles Spurgeon who said, "I am a great lover of John Bunyan: I met with a story the other day which I think a very good one. There was a young man in Edinburgh who wished to be a missionary. He was a wise young man; he thought, 'Well, if I am to be a missionary there is no need for me to transport myself far away from home: I may as well be a missionary in Edinburgh.' There's a hint to some of you ladies who give away tracts in your district, and never give your servant girl one.

This young man started and determined to speak to the first person he met. He met one of those old coastal fishwives; those of us who have seen them can never forget them; they are extraordinary women indeed. So stepping up to her, he said, 'Here you are, coming with your burden on your back; let me ask you if you have got another burden. A spiritual burden?' 'What,' she said, 'do you mean that burden in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*? Because if you do young man, I got rid of that many years ago, before you were born. But I went a better way to work than the Pilgrim did. The Evangelist that John Bunyan

talks about was one of your parsons that do not preach the gospel: for he said, "Keep that light in thine eye, and run to the Wicket-gate!" Why, man alive! that was not the place for him to run to. He should have said, "Do you see that cross? Run there at once!" But instead of that, he sent the poor Pilgrim to the Wicket-gate first; and much good he got by going there! He got tumbling into the slough, and was like to have been killed by it.' 'But did not you,' he asked, 'go through any slough of despond?' 'Yes, young man, I did; but I found it a great deal easier going through with my burden off than on my back.' The old woman was quite right. We must not say to the sinner, 'Now sinner, if you will be saved, go to the baptismal pool—go to the Wicket-gate—go to the church—do this or that.' No, the cross should be right in front of the Wicket-gate, and we should say to the sinner, 'Throw yourself there, and you are safe.' But you are not safe until you can cast off your burden, and lie at the foot of the cross, and find peace in Jesus."

If the nations need nothing more than Christ, yet they slight nothing more than Christ.

Tell me how you will live when you die, you who are dead while you live? (Eph. 2:1.) What will you do, if you begin to die naturally, before you begin to live spiritually?

Is it not odd that the nations should resist Christ, His gospel, and government as they do?

Many deny their need of God, mock His power, and flaunt His grace. Mr. Roy Campbell says, "It is said of the Eddystone lighthouse which was built nearly 200 years ago just off Plymouth, England, that the arrogant builder had this inscription placed on the lighthouse: "Blow ye winds; rise, O ocean; come on, ye elements, and try my work." The builder had boasted that the lighthouse could withstand anything; it lasted three years and was destroyed during a bad storm! Another builder rebuilt the lighthouse; this man was a "believer in God" and he had this inscription placed on the lighthouse, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." The lighthouse still stands after 185 years. History shows that no nation can disregard God, neither can an individual, without paying the penalty.

The rebellion of the world blinds their eyes. If the Jews might have been their own judges, it was not the Son of God whom they crucified, but an enemy to Caesar. It was not Paul the saint they persecuted, but one that they found to be a pestilent fellow; some men will say even now that they do not persecute the saints of God, but seditious lunatics: but God will shortly take off the veil of hypocrisy from their faces! Grieve for them, that cannot grieve for themselves!

E. Our Lord Jesus is called "The Desire of All Nations" because when He sets up Himself in anyone as their desire, then they run after Him, and count

nothing too dear for Him: "The desire of our soul is to thy name . . . with my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my Spirit within me will I seek thee early" (Isa. 26:8, 9). When "The Desire of All Nations" once sets Himself up in the soul, then He becomes the desire of the soul. When He has thus endeared Himself to believers, they count nothing too dear for Him, all is at His command: their gold, their silver, their strength, their lives. As it is written, "They loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12:11). Christ casts out all fear in life and in death. He fills the life with perfect trust.

Dr. Cuyler frequently told this story: When Dr. James W. Alexander was about breathing his last, a friend by his bedside repeated the words, "I know in whom I have believed." The dying man, with that scholarly accuracy that always distinguished him, said, "No; it is, 'I know *whom* I have believed.'" The original Greek of this glorious passage is even stronger than our translation. A good rendering of it would be: "I know whom I have trusted, and am persuaded that he is able to keep the trust which I have committed to him unto that day."

Now, put all these thoughts together and it will fully prove Christ to be "The Desire of All Nations." And shall He not be the desire of your souls? Whom will ye love, if not the King of saints? Whom will ye long for, if not for "The Desire of All Nations?" Whom will ye prize, if not the Prince of peace? Where will

ye find the way if ye reject Him who is “the way, the truth, and the life?” He is the Son of God, the second Person in the glorious Trinity, before whom angels and archangels, and all the host of Heaven bow. He is the glory of glories, the crown of crowns, the Heaven of heavens.

He is a light in darkness, joy in sadness, riches in poverty, life in death; it is He who can resolve all your doubts, secure you in danger, save your souls, and bring you to glory, where all joys are full! Then let all the glory of your glory be to give all glory and yourselves to Him!