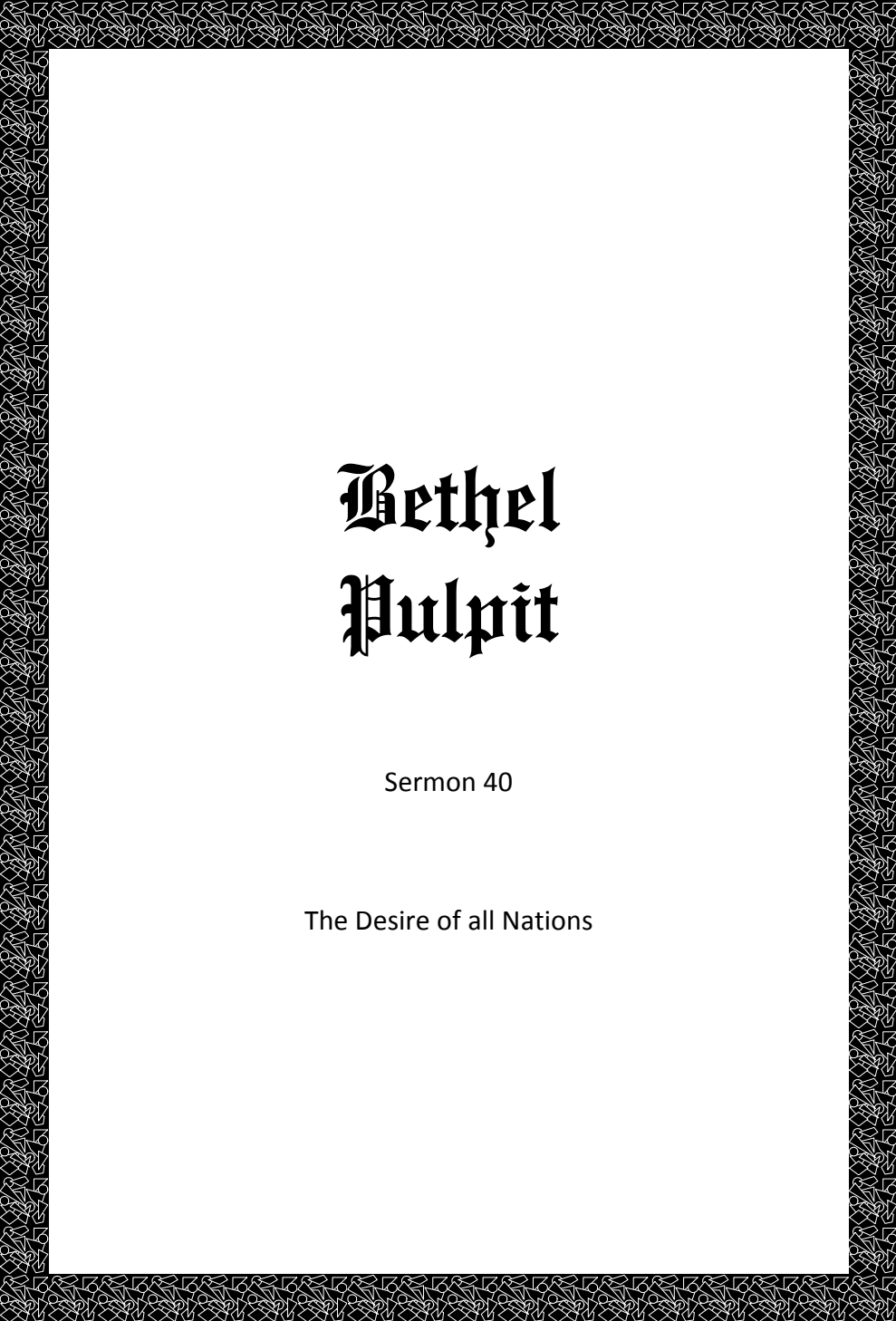




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 40

The Desire of all Nations

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Thursday, 4th September, 1969**

Text: “*And the Desire of all nations shall come*” (*Haggai 2. 7*).

Friends, do not neglect the minor prophets. These writings from Hosea onwards to Malachi are spoken of as the minor prophets; minor only because their writings are shorter, not minor because they are of less importance. Do not neglect them. You will find some things hard to be understood in them. You will find some perplexing things. But you will also find that there are some precious jewels hidden away here and there. In some parts of the Word of God you have to search for these precious jewels, and in the minor prophets you will often find them hidden away. Perhaps there will be chapters of solemn judgment, God’s denunciations against sin; and there will be one precious clause in it which speaks of Jesus. If your religion is real, this is how you come to the Word of God: you want to find Jesus there. And what a precious jewel is this promise concerning Jesus, “the Desire of all nations”! *He shall come.*

I would, first of all, just say one or two things concerning Haggai. Nothing is known of him. He suddenly appears. The Lord sends him for a special purpose. His ministry only lasts four months, the Lord’s purpose is accomplished, and then nothing else is heard of Haggai. When the Lord needs a man, that man is there; and when the Lord has a purpose to be accomplished, that purpose is accomplished; and when that man’s work is accomplished, whatever others may think, that man is removed.

Haggai glories in this as his title, his office: “The Lord’s messenger in the Lord’s message to the people.” What does it mean? It means this: that he was completely swallowed up by the message he brought from the Lord. You would think it would say, The Lord’s message in His messenger. But no, says Haggai, I am the Lord’s messenger in the Lord’s message. As if he would say, Hear my message and forget me.

My mind goes to John the Baptist when he was asked, “Who art thou?” He said, I am a voice – “the voice of one crying in the wilderness.” It meant this: it was what he said that mattered, what he said concerning God; what he said concerning sin; what he said concerning the

dear Lamb of God. That matters. “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord.” He was willing to be only a voice, that only the words he spoke from God might be remembered, that the name of Jesus might be honoured. “He must increase, but I must decrease.” O for more of the spirit of Haggai, the spirit of John! As we are made honest, friends, we have not much of this spirit really. We want people to think well of us. We do not want them to ignore us; we do not want them to forget us. O for grace to be made willing to be nothing that the name of Jesus might be exalted. Like the man who said when his name was made a reproach, “Let my name perish if the name of Jesus be honoured.”

“The Lord’s messenger in the Lord’s message.” But you know, this is the vital point: it is not the messenger, it is the message. When a king sends a messenger, it is not who he is, what his name is, how he is dressed, what he is going to do. There is one thing that matters: what is the message that he brings? “The Lord’s messenger in the Lord’s message to the people.” I wonder if you ever come to the house of God on a Sabbath like this: you want to know if there is any message from the Lord to you personally. You know, this is good hearing. You will highly regard the Lord’s messenger for Christ’s sake; but it will not be the man, it will be the message. And you will want there to be something from the Lord to you.

“The Lord’s messenger in the Lord’s message.” Haggai had to speak a message of solemn rebuke. There will be times when, if there is a message from the Lord for you, it will cut you off, it will reprove you, it will rebuke you. Haggai brought a message of exhortation. He told the people clearly, simply, what they had to do. Do you ever find the gospel ministry does this? You come with a concern: is it to be this, or is it to be that? And the word from the gospel pulpit tells you clearly what you have to do. “This is the way, walk ye in it.” Then he came with a message of sweet encouragement. There is sweet encouragement to those who walk in a way of obedience to what the Lord commands. When Haggai saw their obedience, the Lord’s message was this: “I am with you, saith the Lord.”

Now there was something which had to be performed. Haggai’s ministry concerned the re-building of the temple at Jerusalem. For fifteen

years this had been at a standstill, but it was the Lord's purpose that it should be completed. The people had no mind to work, no desire. They had many enemies without and within, but the Lord sent Haggai with this message, and it is very simple: they have got to build the temple, and when they obey, the Lord is with them; and the Lord so uses this word, it stirs up their hope. Does the Word of God ever stir up your heart? Did not one say it was like a fire burning in his bones? Does the Word of God ever stir up your heart? There was something here that the godly in Jerusalem had to do. There was an appointed pathway for them, and the Lord was leading them in a special way. And there will be times when the Lord leads you in a special way. "This is the way, walk ye in it."

Then there are bound to be things that disturb. You see, as the godly in Jerusalem saw this second temple rising, their hearts were sad. They felt so disappointed with their work; it could not compare with the first temple, Solomon's. There was a sense of frustration, of sadness, of failure with them. And so the Lord's messenger encourages them, and you know what his encouragement is. This verse is bound up with it. He speaks to them of the Lord Jesus, and he tells them that "the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former." It was to be more glorious because the Son of God Himself was to stand in the second temple. And this was the encouragement. Things seemed hard for them and they were somewhat disappointed. And things did not seem just as they would have them to be. Compared with the first temple, things seemed so poor. But the Lord's messenger shows them there is one thing that matters: the Lord Jesus Himself is going to come there and dwell there, and going to be glorified there. "And I will fill this house with glory." And really, friends, this is the only thing that matters.

If the Lord leads you in a certain pathway, there will be many things that are not as you would have them. You felt the Lord was leading you this way and everything would be straightforward, and there are obstacles, and difficulties, and disappointments; things not as you would have them to be. But if the Lord Jesus comes, and if the Lord Jesus be with you, and if the Lord Jesus be glorified in it, then this is all that matters.

Now I just say these few things by way of introduction concerning this promise to the faithful remnant in Jerusalem. This should be the crowning glory of their work: “The Desire of all nations shall come.”

I feel this is a sweet title of the Lord Jesus, “the Desire of all nations.” You know, there is something very precious in the sacred titles the Lord Jesus assumes. They are so precious to a living soul; they are so suitable; they are so encouraging; they draw your heart.

“The Desire of all nations.” Just one thing concerning “all nations.” Wherever there is a living soul, in whatever nation, or at whatever time, or in whatever place that soul is found – then this makes his religion: there are strong desires towards a precious Jesus. He is “the Desire of all nations.” This is real unity; this is the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. You can take Mary Magdalene. She was a Jewess, she lived two thousand years ago, and she had a burning desire for the Lord Jesus: “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.” You can take the godly in this country today – any of them, you can speak to them; some will be learned, some will be ignorant; some will be rich, some will be poor; but:

“There’s not a man that’s born of God,
But readily will say,
If ever my poor soul be saved,
'Tis Christ must be the way.”

He is “the Desire of all nations.” You can read the writings of a godly Scot like Rutherford, a godly German like Luther, a godly man in the States like Jonathan Edwards, a godly man in Switzerland like Calvin – it does not matter in what part of the globe they are found, there is one thing breathes in all their writings: that is, a godly desire after Jesus. “The Desire of all nations.” Now can you come in on this point, that the Lord Jesus is your desire? Can you say, “Object of my chief desire”? There is fellowship here.

“The Desire of all nations shall come.” You know, the ancient church before His coming used to cry: “O that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence.” They longed for the coming of “the Desire of all nations; they wanted Him to come who was embraced in the promises. It

seems there is a reference in this word to Genesis 49 where dear old Jacob, when he was dying, spoke of the heavenly Shiloh: “And unto Him shall the gathering of the people be” (verse 10). The godly remnant longed for His appearing, and in the fulness of time He did come.

In the context, of course, the promise is that “the Desire of all nations” should come to this temple. You remember when the Lord Jesus was twelve years old, He was found in the temple. You remember on varying occasions He spoke in the temple. You will recall that He drove out the buyers and the sellers. And then even as He hung upon the cross, as He cried with a loud voice, “It is finished,” the veil of the temple was rent in twain. The Lord Jesus *did* come to this temple.

But friends, He came that He might be the Foundation, and the Builder, and the Chief Corner Stone of *another* temple, a “temple not made with hands.” In His sin-atonement sufferings and death, the Foundation was deeply laid. And the Lord Jesus came that the spiritual temple might be built up of living stones, hewn out and brought in, and built upon this one Foundation. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Do you ever find this desire:

“May I be found a living stone,
In Salem’s streets above,
And help to sing before the throne,
Free grace and dying love”?

“The Desire of all nations” did come.

There is a reference here also to the second coming of the Lord Jesus. I think you will find this, as you read the prophets: they looked forward to days to come and they saw the two comings of the Lord Jesus, His first and His second. And at times they seemed to speak of them as if they were almost together. Like when you are in the hills, you look and in the distance you see two hills, and the peaks seem just together, but if you enquire, you find they are many, many miles apart from each other. These prophets show the two comings of the Lord Jesus. There is a word, a solemn word, which says, “He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” You know, there are some people who speculate a lot concerning the second coming of the Lord Jesus, when “the Desire of all nations shall come”; some people who have much to say concerning the millennium and

the second resurrection, and concerning so many things in the Revelation. My friends, if you are brought to a solemn concern and weighty exercise concerning this second coming, whether it be when He comes personally or when He comes to you by the hand of death, there will be one thing that will matter; to have an interest in what He accomplished in His first coming. O this is the point that matters! If you, have an interest in His first coming, to Calvary, in His precious blood, in His glorious righteousness, in His power to save, then all must be well when He comes the second time.

“The Desire of all nations shall come.” Let us be very clear on this: the Lord *will* come. The ungodly still cry, “Where is the promise of His coming?” and they go on as if He never will come. The solemn, wicked happenings which take place in this land are evidences that thousands think the Lord never will come. But if His coming seems to be slow, His coming is sure, and day by day it draws nigh. “But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?” Is it ever a question to you? I remember a godly deacon, now in heaven. He was a great lover of music in his young days, and he once went to hear Handel’s *Messiah*. He had not a thought concerning the meaning of it. He got no further than where that was sung: “But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?” He could listen to nothing else. But will *you* abide when He comes, and will *you* stand when He appears? Or will you sink eternally?

This verse speaks of a solemn shaking when “the Desire of all nations” shall come. You know, when He came the first time, there was this shaking in many ways: the miracles He performed, His death, His glorious resurrection, His ascension. There was a shaking. But there will be a solemn shaking when He comes the second time, or when He comes in the article of death. “I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come.” What is going to be shaken? Everything apart from a saving interest in Christ. Every earthly possession you have will be left behind, and whatever religion you have which is not of Christ must perish.

A minister called to see me the other week on his way to preach. He told me of a lady who lives opposite the chapel where he preaches in Kent. She did not attend anywhere, but she said, “I know I will get to heaven. I was baptized in London many years ago, and I have a

certificate.” His reply was, “When you die, that certificate will die with you.” She said, “Have you got a certificate?” He said, “Yes, I have, but it is written in blood and signed in blood.” She did not know what he was talking about.

You will find that all the Old Testament books are quoted in the New, and this verse in Haggai is quoted in Hebrews 12. “And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken.” Then, says the apostle, “Those things which cannot be shaken may remain”: the Foundation, the eternal Rock, a hope anchored within the veil. Have you a sweet hope of an interest in the covenant ordered in all things and sure? Do you have to lean on an unchanging Jesus? “Things which cannot be shaken.”

“The Desire of all nations shall come.” I want to speak of it in this way. This promise concerns the Lord Jesus *coming to the house of God*. I know it was fulfilled when the Lord Jesus came in the days of His flesh. But this promise is still fulfilled: “The Desire of all nations shall come” to the house of God. My mind has gone much to that word: “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst.” Perhaps you say, This only refers to where there are only a few. Listen friends, I do not know how many there are here tonight, but are there two or three gathered together by the Lord and have come in His precious name? Now this cuts close. This word is often quoted very loosely and very glibly. It is not a promise made to a handful of people. It is a promise made to two or three *gathered together by God*, and gathered *in the name of Jesus*. Did you just come to the house of God tonight because it is service evening, because people expected you to be here, or did the Lord gather you?

I wonder if there is one, let alone two or three, that the Lord gathered here tonight with a holy longing desire after Jesus: “Give me Christ, or else I die.” It will be a blessed thing if there are two or three here tonight the Lord has gathered together. And is it in the name of Jesus? The one thing that matters is this: not to see or to be seen, but “the season will be sweet if Jesus be but there.” “The Desire of all nations shall come” where two or three are gathered together in His name, the name of Jesus. Is the name of Jesus anything to you? Is it *everything* to you? Can you say,

“Then let His name for ever be
To us supremely dear;
Our only, all-prevailing plea,
For all our hope is there”?

“The Desire of all nations shall come” where two or three are gathered together in His name. May we pray for it: Lord, gather us together; may it be in Thy name. There is something very blessed in it. But it is unspeakably solemn. If the Lord Jesus, the Desire of all nations, does come in our midst tonight and makes His gracious presence known, then He knows those who are His, and those who are not His.

“The Desire of all nations shall come.” You know what it means; not in His bodily presence, but in the Spirit. I have thought of John 20. “Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He shewed unto them His hands and His side.” The Desire of all nations does come and He still shows to unworthy, guilty sinners His wounded side, and His wounded hands, and His wounded feet. I want to speak very, very carefully here. It is not something spectacular; it is not something visionary. What is it for Jesus to show you His wounded hands, His side, His feet? It is this. To give you a solemn realisation that He has suffered, a realisation that though He once died, now He lives. It is for Him to make you clearly and blessedly understand the reason for His wounds, that He died in the place of sinners, that He shed His blood that sinners might be saved. It is for Him to make you realise the awful nature of His sufferings, and if you are ever to get to heaven, it must be through His sufferings and death. It is to bring you to look there as the ground of your hope, to rest your hope there.

Do not misunderstand these things. The Romanists have their wonderful visions of the wounds of Jesus. You read of some who have thought so much on the wounds of Jesus that they have the very marks appear in their hands. Well, what this all means we have to leave. But when the Lord Jesus shows to you His wounded hands, and feet, and side, it is really this – to make known to you the preciousness of that great atonement which is by blood, and to bring you to look there, and to rest

there, and to hang there; to bring you with true repentance and love and God-given faith to those wounded feet.

“The Desire of all nations shall come.” Ah, He still comes, as He did in that room, the doors being shut, and shows His hands and feet and side. Then may you, pray for it. It is a good prayer:

“Conduct, blest Guide, Thy sinner-train
To Calvary, where the Lamb was slain,
And with us there abide;
Let us our loved Redeemer meet,
Weep o’er His pierced hands and feet,
And view His wounded side.”

When Luther in his monastery was under such an awful sense of guilt, he spoke to an older monk. He thought this monk knew more than the others although he was still in a measure of darkness, and he said to him, “Is there anything I can do?” The reply was: “Look to the wounds of Jesus.”

“And the Desire of all nations shall come” to the house of God. It is a mercy if by precious faith you are enabled to look to Christ. “Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.” May I put it to you: what would make you glad tonight? Would this make you glad, to see the Lord? “Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.” “The Desire of all nations shall come” to His house, to the house of God. O there is something blessed in this! I will say this: there are times when the Lord’s gracious presence is felt in the house of God. There may not be a word clearly spoken to you, you dare not lay claim to any special blessing, but there is a sweet, sacred, solemn realisation that the Lord is there. Then this is a blessed, favoured season to your soul. Hold it fast; do not let Satan rob you of it. You have a solemn sense and awareness that the Lord is there.

“The Desire of all nations shall come.” He comes *in the preaching of the gospel*. He comes *at the Lord’s table*. “The Desire of all nations shall come.” There is something very blessed about it; there is something awfully solemn about it.

“How sweet and awful is the place,
With Christ within the doors!”

If you felt the Lord Jesus was in the house of God, how it would govern everything: the way you came, the way you behaved, the way you went home! The solemn, sacred presence of “the Desire of all nations.” We speak very lightly, very glibly of it. O what would it mean if you were to feel it, to realise it, the presence in your midst of “the Desire of all nations”?

“The Desire of all nations shall come.” I want to speak of it *personally*. There are some of you here (are there not?) and you dare not deny that your desires are toward God. You can say, you cannot deny it (let me hold you fast on this point!) you dare not deny it: “The desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee.” Then this promise is made to you personally, particularly: “The Desire of all nations shall come.” Not just come to the house of God, but come into your heart to bless you and to save you in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

“The Desire of all nations.” O it is a sweet title! Was not there a time with you when there was no beauty in Christ that you should desire Him? There might have been a little natural admiration, but there was no beauty in Christ that you should desire Him. But it is different now. You could not write your exercise down, but you know in your very soul there is a living desire after the Lord Jesus. He is “the Desire of all nations” to you. There is something in your heart that cannot do without Him, that does want Him.

The Holy Spirit’s work is to make Jesus desirable to all nations, to us here. Well, has He done it for you? made Jesus desirable to you? Jesus in His glorious Person; Jesus as the Son of God eternally; Jesus in His sacred humanity; Jesus in His power to save; Jesus in His precious blood; Jesus risen, exalted, glorified; Jesus in His pardoning love; Jesus in His mercy; Jesus in His promises; Jesus in that precious, all-availing righteousness; Jesus Himself. Has Jesus been made desirable to you? Do not take it for granted: because you come to the house of God, it does not mean you desire Jesus.

Really a person is what he desires: “As he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” And if someone could look into our hearts and see what we really desired, then that person would know what we really are – and you know, this brings us to some close work as it is before God. I try to ask the question: “What do I really desire tonight as I come here?” Sometimes, if

we are honest, our hearts do not desire the things of God; we desire some earthly comfort, we desire something which is entirely carnal. As the Lord makes you honest, you will have to acknowledge that many of your desires, perhaps most of your desires, are of the earth, earthy. Yet I trust that underneath it all there is something that wants the Lord Jesus, that cannot do without Him, that when put to the test would have to say,

“I could from all things parted be,
But never, never, Lord, from Thee.”

If your religion is real, there will be times when you long for the Lord Jesus, and then there will be other times when you have to mourn because they are such feeble desires, such wishes so weak. “The desire of our soul is to Thy name,” the name of Jesus, “and to the remembrance of Thee.”

Are there ever times when you come in here: “Lord, all my desire is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee”? It does not even speak of prayer; it does not even speak of a cry; it does not even speak of any language; but there is a desire and a groan, and “Lord, it is before Thee.” The Lord’s ear is open. You know, there are one or two precious words concerning the Lord and these poor desires, these longing souls. “Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing,” and He opens His heart and satisfies the living desire of every longing soul. He opens His hand to all His creatures and He satisfies them. But He opens His heart of tenderness and love where there is a desire after Jesus. “He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them.”

Now a certainty is put upon it to those that desire Jesus: “The Desire of all nations SHALL come.” He shall come. Satan says, No. Unbelief says, Never. Something says, Others, not me. But the Lord says, “The Desire of all nations *shall come*”: and when He comes, He will bless you, bless you with Himself, bless you with what you want, bless you with His great salvation. “The Desire of all nations.” And then you will be satisfied, not disappointed, when the Lord Jesus comes, comes to your heart, comes to you feelingly, powerfully. You will be satisfied.

“The Desire of all nations shall come.” My mind has gone again, as so often, to the Emmaus road. Two there, perplexed, sorrowful,

dismayed, disappointed, everything wrong, but underneath it all there was a desire for Jesus which Satan could not completely destroy. And “the Desire of all nations” *did* come. “Jesus Himself drew near,” and He came right where they were, and spoke such precious things to them. But the great thing really was this – He blessed them with His love, and He blessed them with Himself. “Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way?” Everything was wrong; now everything was right. So it will be with you, when Jesus comes. “The Desire of all nations shall come.”