

TEXT: 6 "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. 7 I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD Almighty. 8 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the LORD Almighty. 9 'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the LORD Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the LORD Almighty."

Dear Friends in Christ. The Desired of All Nations,

You will recall that in our last sermon on the Book of Haggai, two weeks ago (10-4-15), I promised that I would use my next sermon to explain the words “the desired of all nations” more completely. Some translations translate the Hebrew word תְּדִמָּה “desired things.” The problem that translators face in this verse is that the noun/subject of the sentence is in the singular form (תְּדִמָּה - הַדְּמָה, noun common feminine singular construct), but the verb form is plural (וַאֲבִיבֵי - אָבִיבֵי verb qal waw consec perfect 3rd person common plural). The question is how is this Hebrew sentence to be understood? Does it refer to Christ? In other words, is Jesus himself the Desired of all the nations that came in fulfillment to the promise or does this word refer to desired or desirable things (i.e. wealth, treasures) of the nations that were to come to God’s people as one of the blessings attributable to the messianic kingdom.

Let’s first look at the immediate context of the words. These words are part of the second of four messages that Haggai received from the LORD and spoke to the people in 520 B.C. (“the second year of King Darius,” 1:1) You will recall from our first sermon on the book of Haggai that God wanted the people of Jerusalem to return to the abandoned project of building the temple. Outward opposition and inward attitudes of indifference and selfishness had brought that project to a standstill. During the delay the people turned their attention to their own homes.

The construction project had had a quick and enthusiastic start. According to Ezra after the Remnant returned and resettled themselves in Judah they gathered in Jerusalem on the seventh month. Joshua and Zerubbabel and all their priests and associates built the altar of the God of Israel and began to offer sacrifices on it according to the Law of Moses. They celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles. All this before the foundation of the temple was laid (Ezra 3). Offerings were gathered in order to begin the project. The work began in the second month of the second year after their arrival. (Ezra 3:8) After the foundation of the temple was laid there was a ceremony to praise and thank the Lord as King David (1 Chron. 6:31) had prescribed. It was a joyous day. All the priests were dressed in their vestments. They were blowing their trumpets, as the Levites were clanging their cymbals. The sons of Asaph sang the celebratory words, “He (the LORD) is good; his love toward Israel endures forever.” Ezra tells us that all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. (Ezra 3:11).

Ezra also tells us that there were those in the group who were not as happy that day as they should have been. Here is what he wrote: “But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple (*Solomon’s Temple*), wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away.” (Ezra 3:12,13)

The Lord’s second message to the people through Haggai addressed this disappointment of some of the people concerning the new temple that was being constructed which in outward appearance and adornment did not compare to the former one that Solomon built. The LORD said, **“In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. 7 I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD Almighty. 8 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the LORD Almighty. 9 'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the LORD Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the LORD Almighty.”** This new temple, although inferior to the former in exterior appearance and adornment would nevertheless be just as important and glorious. In fact, it would be greater in glory. Not only would they have a visible reminder again of the LORD’s presence in their midst, not only

was the LORD remaining faithful to his covenant promises and continuing to bless them even though they did not deserve his blessing, but in addition, “**the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the LORD Almighty.**”

The noun תִּדְמָה (here translated “desired”) come from the Hebrew verb which means to desire or take pleasure in. Therefore it refers to someone or something that is desired or desirable. Those who see this verse as a promise of the Messiah himself note that the word is sometimes used with reference to specific people. They find examples in 1 Samuel 9:20 where the word is used for Saul and in Daniel 9:23; 10:11,19. But the word is most used to denote valued things or treasures. Examples would be houses (Ezekiel 26:12), ships (Is. 2:16), fields (Jeremiah 12:10), and treasure in general (Nah 2:9,10, Hosea 13:15, 2 Chron. 32:27). The LORD’s reference to gold and silver in verse 8 leads many scholars to favor the meaning of precious things.

Some argue that this word cannot refer to the Messiah because the promised Savior has never been desired or highly valued by all nations and indeed pagan nations and people in their spiritual darkness cannot and do not treasure the Promised one. A counter-argument from those who see this word referring to the Messiah is that he remains most desirable because he is needed by all nations and most beneficial to them, even if they aren’t conscious of this truth.

The Septuagint translates this phrase “the select things of all nations.” They changes the singular noun into a plural no doubt because the verb form is plural. The plural verb form requires a plural form for the subject of the sentence. If we think of the desired things as the treasures (a collective noun) of the nations (v. 8 – gold and silver are mentioned) than the plural form of the verb would fit and you could translate “the treasure of all nations shall come in.” However, those who feel this noun refers to the Messiah point out that because the word is used with the noun “nations” which is plural that the whole phrase “desired of nations” is considered plural. Grammarians say that this is an acceptable argument.

So the question can not be answered with certainty on the basis of vocabulary and grammar. One must look at the context in which these words are used.

The LORD speaks of a “shaking” that precedes the coming of the “Desired.” **“In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. 7 I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come...”** The first time the world was shaken by God was when God established his covenant at Sinai. (Ex. 33:14-17). The LORD says that he will shake the world “again.” Besides using *theophanic* language which does not need to be thought of as a literal or physical shaking or quaking of the created universe, but is used to *emphasize the reality of the coming of the LORD and his activity*, God also uses a *merismus*, that is, a literary device to express *totality*, when he uses the words “heaven and earth,” “sea and dry land.” **What the LORD is saying then is that the Lord is coming (use of a participle to announce future events and activities) again, in a little while (soon) in full divinity to do things that have worldwide impact.** God also promises that this activity will lead to the coming of “the desired of all nations.” In Haggai’s fourth message (4:22,23) we may have clarifying examples of what the LORD is referring to with this shaking activity. “Tell Zerubbabel governor of Judah that I will shake the heavens and the earth. I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms. I will overthrow chariots and their drivers; horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother.” The LORD speaks these words through the mouth of Haggai offering assurance to Zerubbabel regarding the preservation of the messianic line. The constant warfare, revolution and counter-revolution, and social-political upheavals that characterized the last five centuries of the Old Testament era were used by God to prepare for Christ’s first coming and his establishment of the messianic kingdom. These words should not, however, be limited to Christ’s first coming. The writer to the Hebrews (12:26,27) also repeated Haggai’s promise to encourage God’s people concerning Christ’s second coming. The continuing wars and rumors of wars, the shaking and sifting of nations and regimes, and the Lord’s manipulation of earthly powers a (and natural phenomena) reminds us that the promise of the coming of the “desired of all nations” remains in force in our age.

Do this “shaking activity” help us decide what “the desired” is? A person or a thing? Both are possible. There is no question that the “shaking” work of God pointed and still points to the coming of Christ himself (Hag. 2:21-23; Dan. 2:36-44; Mt. 24:6-8). There is also no doubt that the wealth of all nations comes toward believers because of the Messiah. Isaiah spoke eloquently of this in 60:5. “The wealth of the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come.” Zechariah (14:4) and John (Rev. 21:26) use the same imagery.

God made other promises to the remnant along with the “Desired.” First of all he promised, “I will fill this house with glory.” Does this promise help us identify the “desired” more precisely? “This house” obviously refers to the temple the people are to build in Jerusalem the sixth century BC. Those who see Christ in the word “desired” see this as significant, since Christ physically entered that temple, as recorded in Luke 2:27, 46. Herod made extensive additions and improvements to it, but the temple in Jesus’ day was the same temple that Zerubbabel built. But when God uses the words “this house” is he limiting this phrase to a physical building? In many prophetic statements the “house of God” concept denotes the active presence of the Lord among his people regardless of the duration or outward appearance of a particular building at a particular location. Isaiah and Micah had prophesied of the nations coming to the house of the Lord and spoke of their enjoyment of peace (Isaiah 2:2-5, Mic 4:1-5). Ezekiel had blended promises of the Messiah and the eternal covenant of peace, and the enduring sanctuary, God among his people (Eze 37:26). Like other prophets Haggai also takes important elements of other prophecies and combines them in a way that encourages his audience to resume the building project God gave them. They weren’t just building an earthly, material structure. They were participating in the progressive building and establishment of the messianic kingdom that will endure everlastingly and will be marked by the Lord’s active presence among his people. Therefore Haggai’s words could also apply to the New Testament church and God’s presence among his people as they anticipate Christ’s final coming.

Haggai uses the words “glory” and “peace” in connection with the promises God gave him to declare to the people. This is language that is common in other messianic promises and common to the people of Haggai’s day. Similar language was used regarding the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34,35), Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 8:10,11; 2 Chron. 5:13,14) and Ezekiel’s temple (Ezk. 43). The glory Haggai has in mind is not external size or adornment with gold or silver, but the Lord’s presence. This was true in the sixth century BC and remains true till the end of time.

The LORD also said through Haggai, “And in this place I will grant peace.” This peace is more than a cessation of hostilities between nations, but it refers to the gifts of spiritual peace and contentment that only God can give in connection to “the desired one.” The peace that the remnant sought to enjoy in post-exile Jerusalem was a genuine part of Haggai’s promise, but also a foreshadowing of the greater peace that all of God’s people would receive. Ultimately all such promises point to an eternal peace that is inseparable from the arrival and reign of the Messiah (See Is. 9:7, 11:1-9, Ps. 72:7, Lk. 1:79.) Christ is our peace (Eph. 2:14).

Does the filling of God’s house (the Jerusalem temple or the New Testament church) with glory or the provision of peace for Old and New Testament believers help us decide whether the “desired of all nations” is Christ specifically or treasures generally? Again both concepts are possible in both interpretations.

There is no doubt that we are dealing with messianic prophecy here. However we are not able to state with certainty whether “the desired” refers to Christ or to the desired things of the nations. What do you think.

Our hymnal (CW #7) and Luther interpret it as Christ.