

PSALM 24

This psalm is concerning the kingdom of Jesus Christ,

I. His providential kingdom, by which he rules the world (v. 1, 2).

II. The kingdom of his grace, by which he rules in his church.

1. Concerning the subjects of that kingdom; their character (v. 4, 6), their charter (v. 5).

2. Concerning the King of that kingdom; and a summons to all to give him admission (v. 7-10). It is supposed that the psalm was penned upon occasion of David's bringing up the ark to the place prepared for it, and that the intention of it was to lead the people above the pomp of external ceremonies to a holy life and faith in Christ, of whom the ark was a type.

PSALM 24:1-2

THE DIVINE SHEPHERD

A psalm of David.

Here is,

I. God's absolute propriety in this part of the creation where our lot is cast, v. 1. We are not to think that the heavens, even the heavens only, are the Lord's, and the numerous and bright inhabitants of the upper world, and that this earth, being so small and inconsiderable a part of the creation, and at such a distance from the royal palace above, is neglected, and that he claims no interest in it. No, even the earth is his, and this lower world; and, though he has prepared the throne of his glory in the heavens, yet his kingdom rules over all, and even the worms of this earth are not below his cognizance, nor from under his dominion.

1. When God gave the earth to the children of men he still reserved to himself the property, and only let it out to them as tenants, or usufructuaries: *The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.* The mines that are lodged in the bowels of it, even the richest, the fruits it produces,

all the beasts of the forest and the cattle upon a thousand hills, our lands and houses, and all the improvements that are made of this earth by the skill and industry of man, are all his. These indeed, in the kingdom of grace, are justly looked upon as emptiness; for they are vanity of vanities, nothing to a soul; but, in the kingdom of providence, they are fulness. *The earth is full of God's riches, so is the great and wide sea also.* All the parts and regions of the earth are the Lord's, all under his eye, all in his hand: so that, wherever a child of God goes, he may comfort himself with this, that he does not go off his Father's ground. That which falls to our share of the earth and its productions is but lent to us; it is the Lord's; what is our own against all the world is not so against his claims. That which is most remote from us, as that which passes through the paths of the sea, or is hidden in the bottom of it, is the Lord's and he knows where to find it.

2. The habitable part of this earth (~~308E~~ Proverbs 8:31) is his in a special manner — *the world and those that dwell therein.* We ourselves are not our own, our bodies, our souls, are not. *All souls are mine,* says God; for he is the former of our bodies and the Father of our spirits. Our tongues are not our own; they are to be at his service. Even those of the children of men that know him not, nor own their relation to him, are his. Now this comes in here to show that, though God is graciously pleased to accept the devotions and services of his peculiar chosen people (v. 3-5), it is not because he needs them, or can be benefited by them, for the earth is his and all in it, ~~295E~~ Exodus 19:5; ~~312E~~ Psalm 50:12. It is likewise to be applied to the dominion Christ has, as Mediator, over the utmost parts of the earth, which are given him for his possession: the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into his hand, power over all flesh. The apostle quotes this scripture twice together in his discourse about things offered to idols, ~~416E~~ 1 Corinthians 10:26, 28. “If it be sold in the shambles, eat it, and ask no questions; *for the earth is the Lord's;* it is God's good creature, and you have a right to it. But, if one tell you it was offered to an idol, forbear, *for the earth is the Lord's,* and there is enough besides.” This is a good reason why we should be content with our allotment in this world, and not envy others theirs; *the earth is the Lord's,* and may he not do what he will with his own, and give to some more of it, to others less, as it pleases him?

II. The ground of this propriety. The earth is his by an indisputable title, *for he hath founded it upon the seas and established it upon the floods,* v. 2. It is his; for,

1. He made it, formed it, founded it, and fitted it for the use of man. The matter is his, for he made it out of nothing; the form is his, for he made it according to the eternal counsels and ideas of his own mind. He made it himself, he made it for himself; so that he is sole, entire, and absolute owner, and none can let us a title to any part, but by, from, and under him; see ~~~~Psalm 89:11, 12.

2. He made it so as no one else could. It is the creature of omnipotence, for it is founded upon the seas, upon the floods, a weak and unstable foundation (one would think) to build the earth upon, and yet, if almighty power please, it shall serve to bear the weight of this earth. The waters which at first covered the earth, and rendered it unfit to be a habitation for man, were ordered under it, that the dry land might appear, and so they are as a foundation to it; see ~~~~Psalm 104:8, 9.

3. He continues it, he has *established* it, fixed it, so that, though one generation passes and another comes, the earth abides, ~~~~Ecclesiastes 1:4. And his providence is a continued creation, ~~~~Psalm 119:90. The founding of the earth upon the floods should remind us how slippery and uncertain all earthly things are; their foundation is not only sand, but water; it is therefore our folly to build upon them.

~~~~PSALM 24:3-6

THE CHARACTER OF TRUE ISRAELITES

From this world, and the fulness thereof, the psalmist's meditations rise, of a sudden to the great things of another world, the foundation of which is not on the seas, nor on the floods. The things of this world God has given to the children of men and we are much indebted to his providence for them; but they will not make a portion for us. And therefore,

I. Here is an enquiry after better things, v. 3. This earth is God's footstool; but, if we had ever so much of it, we must be here but a while, must shortly go hence, and *Who then shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?* Who shall go to heaven hereafter, and, as an earnest of that, shall have communion with God in holy ordinances now? A soul that knows and considers its own nature, origin, and immortality, when it has viewed the earth and the fulness thereof, will sit down unsatisfied; there is not found

among all the creatures a help meet for man, and therefore it will think of ascending towards God, towards heaven, will ask, “What shall I do to rise to that high place, that hill, where the Lord dwells and manifests himself, that I may be acquainted with him, and to abide in that happy holy place where he meets his people and makes them holy and happy? What shall I do that I may be of those whom God owns for his peculiar people and who are his in another manner than the earth is his and its fulness?” This question is much the same with that, ^{1691E}Psalm 15:1. The hill of Zion on which the temple was built typified the church, both visible and invisible. When the people attended the ark to its holy place David puts them in mind that these were but patterns of heavenly things, and therefore that by them they should be led to consider the heavenly things themselves.

II. An answer to this enquiry, in which we have,

1. The properties of God's peculiar people, who shall have communion with him in grace and glory.

(1.) They are such as keep themselves from all the gross acts of sin. They have *clean hands*; not spotted with the pollutions of the world and the flesh. None that were ceremonially unclean might enter into the mountain of the temple, which signified that cleanness of conversation which is required in all those that have fellowship with God. The hands lifted up in prayer must be pure hands, no blot of unjust gain cleaving to them, nor any thing else that defiles the man and is offensive to the holy God.

(2.) They are such as make conscience of being really (that is, of being inwardly) as good as they seem to be outwardly. They have *pure hearts*. We make nothing of our religion if we do not make heart-work of it. It is not enough that our hands be clean before men, but we must also wash our hearts from wickedness, and not allow ourselves in any secret heart-impurities, which are open before the eye of God. Yet in vain do those pretend to have pure and good hearts whose hands are defiled with the acts of sin. That is a pure heart which is sincere and without guile in covenanting with God, which is carefully guarded, that the wicked one, the unclean spirit, touch it not, which is purified by faith, and conformed to the image and will of God; see ^{1698B}Matthew 5:8.

(3.) They are such as do not set their affections upon the things of this world, do not *lift up their souls unto vanity*, whose hearts are not carried out inordinately towards the wealth of this world, the praise of men, or the

delights of sense, who do not choose these things for their portion, nor reach forth after them, because they believe them to be vanity, uncertain and unsatisfying.

(4.) They are such as deal honestly both with God and man. In their covenant with God, and their contracts with men, they have not sworn deceitfully, nor broken their promises, violated their engagements, nor taken any false oath. Those that have no regard to the obligations of truth or the honour of God's name are unfit for a place in God's holy hill.

(5.) They are a praying people (v. 6): *This is the generation of those that seek him.* In every age there is a remnant of such as these, men of this character, who are *accounted to the Lord for a generation,* ^{<420>}Psalm 22:30. And they are such as seek God, *that seek they face, O Jacob!*

[1.] They join themselves to God, to seek him, not only in earnest prayer, but in serious endeavours to obtain his favour and keep themselves in his love. Having made it the summit of their happiness, they make it the summit of their ambition to be accepted of him, and therefore take care and pains to approve themselves to him. It is to the hill of the Lord that we must ascend, and, the way being up-hill, we have need to put forth ourselves to the utmost, as those that seek diligently.

[2.] They join themselves to the people of God, to seek God with them. Being brought into communion with God, they come into communion of saints; conforming to the patterns of the saints that have gone before (so some understand this), they seek God's face, as Jacob (so some), who was *therefore* surnamed *Israel*, because he wrestled with God and prevailed, sought him and found him; and, associating with the saints of their own day, they shall court the favour of God's church (^{<418>}Revelation 3:9), shall be glad of an acquaintance with God's people (^{<382>}Zechariah 8:23), shall incorporate themselves with them, and, when they *subscribe with their hands to the Lord*, shall *call themselves by the name of Jacob*, ^{<244>}Isaiah 44:5. As soon as ever Paul was converted he *joined himself to the disciples*, ^{<405>}Acts 9:26. They shall seek God's face *in Jacob* (so some), that is, in the assemblies of his people. *Thy face, O God of Jacob!* so our margin supplies it, and makes it easy. As all believers are the spiritual seed of Abraham, so all that strive in prayer are the spiritual seed of Jacob, to whom God never said, *Seek you me in vain.*

2. The privileges of God's peculiar people, v. 5. They shall be made truly and for ever happy.

(1.) They shall be blessed: they shall receive the blessing from the Lord, all the fruits and gifts of God's favour, according to his promise; and those whom God blesses are blessed indeed, for it is his prerogative to command the blessing.

(2.) They shall be justified and sanctified. These are the spiritual blessings in heavenly things which they shall receive, even righteousness, the very thing they hunger and thirst after, ~~4086~~ Matthew 5:6. Righteousness is blessedness, and it is from God only that we must expect it, for we have no righteousness of our own. They shall receive the reward of their righteousness (so some), the *crown of righteousness which the righteous Judge shall give*, ~~5082~~ Timothy 4:8.

(3.) They shall be saved; for God himself will be the God of their salvation. Note, Where God gives righteousness he certainly designs salvation. Those that are made meet for heaven shall be brought safely to heaven, and then they will find what they have been seeking, to their endless satisfaction.

~~1247~~ PSALM 24:7-10

THE KING OF GLORY

What is spoken once is spoken a second time in these verses; such repetitions are usual in songs, and have much beauty in them. Here is,

1. Entrance once and again demanded for the King of glory; the doors and gates are to be thrown open, thrown wide open, to give him admission, for behold he stands at the door and knocks, ready to come in.

2. Enquiry once and again made concerning this mighty prince, in whose name entrance is demanded: *Who is this King of glory?* As, when any knock at our door, it is common to ask, *Who is there?*

3. Satisfaction once and again given concerning the royal person that makes the demand: *It is the Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle, the Lord of hosts*, v. 8, 10. Now,

I. This splendid entry here described it is probable refers to the solemn bringing in of the ark into the tent David pitched for it or the temple Solomon built for it; for, when David prepared materials for the building of it, it was proper for him to prepare a psalm for the dedication of it. The porters are called upon to open the doors, and they are called *everlasting doors*, because much more durable than the door of the tabernacle, which was but a curtain. They are taught to ask, *Who is this King of glory?* And those that bore the ark are taught to answer in the language before us, and very fitly, because the ark was a symbol or token of God's presence, ^{<481>}Joshua 3:11. Or it may be taken as a poetical figure designed to represent the subject more affectingly. God, in his word and ordinances, is thus to be welcomed by us,

1. With great readiness: the doors and gates must be thrown open to him. Let the word of the Lord come into the innermost and uppermost place in our souls; and, if we had 600 necks, we should bow them all to the authority of it.

2. With all reverence, remembering how great a God he is with whom we have to do, in all our approaches to him.

II. Doubtless it points at Christ, of whom the ark, with the mercy-seat, was a type.

1. We may apply it to the ascension of Christ into heaven and the welcome given to him there. When he had finished his work on earth he ascended *in the clouds of heaven*, ^{<2013>}Daniel 7:13, 14. The gates of heaven must then be opened to him, those doors that may be truly called *everlasting*, which had been shut against us, to keep the way of the tree of life, ^{<0024>}Genesis 3:24. Our Redeemer found them shut, but, having by his blood made atonement for sin and gained a title to *enter into the holy place* (^{<392>}Hebrews 9:12), as one having authority, he demanded entrance, not for himself only, but for us; for, as the forerunner, he has for us entered and *opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers*. The keys not only of hell and death, but of heaven and life, must be put into his hand. His approach being very magnificent, the angels are brought in asking, *Who is this King of glory?* For angels keep the gates of the New Jerusalem, ^{<612>}Revelation 21:12. When the first-begotten was brought into the upper world the angels were to worship him (^{<3016>}Hebrews 1:6); and accordingly, they here ask with wonder, “Who is he? — this that cometh *with dyed garments from Bozrah?*” (^{<261>}Isaiah 63:1-

3), for he appears in that world as a *Lamb that had been slain.*” It is answered that he is *strong and mighty, mighty in battle*, to save his people and subdue his and their enemies.

2. We may apply it to Christ's entrance into the souls of men by his word and Spirit, that they may be his temples. Christ's presence in them is like that of the ark in the temple; it sanctifies them. *Behold, he stands at the door and knocks,* ~~(66)~~ Revelation 3:20. It is required that the gates and doors of the heart be opened to him, not only as admission is given to a guest, but as possession is delivered to the rightful owner, after the title has been contested. This is the gospel call and demand, that we let Jesus Christ, the King of glory, come into our souls, and welcome him with hosannas, *Blessed is he that cometh.* That we may do this aright we are concerned to ask, *Who is this King of glory?* — to acquaint ourselves with him, whom we are to believe in, and to love above all. And the answer is ready: He is *Jehovah*, and will be *Jehovah our righteousness*, an all-sufficient Saviour to us, if we give him entrance and entertainment. He is *strong and mighty, and the Lord of hosts*; and therefore it is at our peril if we deny him entrance; for he is able to avenge the affront; he can force his way, and can break those in pieces with his iron rod that will not submit to his golden sceptre.

In singing this let our hearts cheerfully answer to this call, as it is in the first words of the next psalm, *Unto thee, O Lord! do I lift up my soul.*