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A Psalm by David.

PSALM 24: 1 The earth is the LORD's, with its fullness; the world, and those who dwell therein.

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The Lord is Sovereign Ruler of the universe, Psa 24:1, Psa 24:2. The great question, Who is fit to minister to the Lord in his own temple? Psa 24:3-6. The glory of God in his entrance into his temple, Psa 24:7-10.

It is probable that this Psalm was composed on occasion of bringing the ark from the house of Obed-edom to Mount Sion, and the questions may respect the fitness of the persons who were to minister before this ark: the last verses may refer to the opening of the city gates in order to admit it. As many of the expressions here are nearly the same with those in Psa 15:1-5, I must refer to that place for their particular illustration; though it is most likely that the two Psalms were composed on very different occasions. The first contains a general question relative to who shall be saved? This is more particular; and refers to the temple and tabernacle service, and who is fit to minister there.

Verse 1

The earth is the Lord's - He is the Creator and Governor of it; it is his own property. Men may claim districts and kingdoms of it as their property, but God is Lord of the soil.

The fullness thereof - "All its creatures." - Targum. Every tree, plant, and shrub; the silver and the gold, and the cattle on a thousand hills.

They that dwell therein - All human beings.

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PSALM 24: 2 For he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the floods.

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Verse 2

He hath founded it upon the seas - He not only created the vast mass, but separated the land from the waters, so that the mountains, etc., being elevated above the waters, appear to be founded on them, and notwithstanding all the tossings and ragings of the ocean, these waters cannot prevail. It is established upon the floods, and cannot be shaken.

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PSALM 24: 3 Who may ascend to the LORD's hill? Who may stand in his holy place?

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Verse 3

Who shall ascend - Who is sufficiently holy to wait in his temple? Who is fit to minister in the holy place?

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PSALM 24: 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood, and has not sworn deceitfully.

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Verse 4

He that hath clean hands - He whose conscience is irreproachable; whose heart is without deceit and uninfluenced by unholy passions.

Who hath not lifted up his soul - Who has no idolatrous inclination; whose faith is pure, and who conscientiously fulfils his promises and engagements.

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PSALM 24: 5 He shall receive a blessing from the LORD, righteousness from the God of his salvation.

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Verse 5

He shall receive the blessing - Perhaps alluding to Obed-edom, at whose house the ark had been lodged, and on whom God had poured out especial blessings.

And righteousness - Mercy: every kind of necessary good. It is the mercy of God that crowns the obedience and fidelity of good men. For what made them good and faithful? God's mercy. What crowns their fidelity? God's mercy.

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PSALM 24: 6 This is the generation of those who seek Him, who seek your face—even Jacob. Selah.

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Verse 6

This is the generation - This is the description of people who are such as God can approve of, and delight in.

That seek thy face, O Jacob - It is most certain that אלהי Elohey, O God, has been lost out of the Hebrew text in most MSS., but it is preserved in two of Kennicott's MSS., and also in the Syriac, Vulgate, Septuagint, Ethiopic, Arabic, and Anglo-Saxon. "Who seek thy face, O God of Jacob."

Selah - That is, It is confirmed; it is true. The persons who abstain from every appearance of evil, and seek the approbation of God, are those in whom God will delight.

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PSALM 24: 7 Lift up your heads, you gates! Be lifted up, you everlasting doors, and the King of glory will come in.

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Verse 7

Lift up your heads, O ye gates - The address of those who preceded the ark, the gates being addressed instead of the keepers of the gates. Allusion is here made to the triumphal entry of a victorious general into the imperial city.

In the hymn of Callimachus to Apollo, there are two lines very much like those in the text; they convey the very same sentiments. The poet represents the god coming into his temple, and calls upon the priests to open the doors, etc. Αυτοι νυν κατοχηες ανα κ λ ι ν ε σ θ ε πυλαως, Αυται δε κληιδες· ο γαρ Θεος ουκ ετι μακραν; "Fall back, ye bolts; ye pond'rous doors, give way

For not far distant is the god of day."

Callim. Hymn in Apol., ver. 6, 7.

The whole of this hymn contains excellent sentiments even on the subject of the Psalms.

Everlasting doors - There seems to be a reference here to something like our portcullis, which hangs by pulleys above the gate, and can be let down at any time so as to prevent the gate from being forced. In the case to which the psalmist refers, the portcullis is let down, and the persons preceding the ark order it to be raised. When it is lifted up, and appears above the head or top of the gate, then the folding doors are addressed: "Be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors;" let there be no obstruction; and the mighty Conqueror, the King of glory, whose presence is with the ark, and in which the symbol of his glory appears, shall enter. Make due preparations to admit so august and glorious a Personage.

PSALM 24: 8 Who is the King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle.

Verse 8

Who is this King of glory? - This is the answer of those who are within. Who is this glorious King, for whom ye demand entrance? To which they reply: -

The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle - It is Jehovah, who is come to set up his abode in his imperial city: He who has conquered his enemies, and brought salvation to Israel. To make the matter still more solemn, and give those without an opportunity of describing more particularly this glorious Personage, those within hesitate to obey the first summons: and then it is repeated, Psa 24:9.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in - To which a more particular question is proposed: - Who is He, This King of glory? To which an answer is given that admitted of no reply. The Lord of hosts - he who is coming with innumerable armies, He is this King of glory. On which, we may suppose, the portcullis was lifted up, the gates thrown open, and the whole cavalcade admitted. This verse seems to have been spoken before the ark appeared: Who is this (הַזֶּה zeh) King of glory? when its coming was merely announced. In the tenth verse the form is a little altered, because the ark, the symbol of the Divine Presence, had then arrived. Who is He, (הוּא מִי mi hu), this King of glory? Here He is, to answer for himself. "The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him."

Though this Psalm has all the appearance of being an unfinished piece, yet there is a vast deal of dignity and majesty in it; and the demands from without, the questions from those within, and the answers to those questions, partake of the true sublime; where nature, dignity, and simplicity, are very judiciously mingled together. The whole procedure is natural, the language dignified, and the questions and answers full of simplicity and elevated sentiments.

Several, both among ancients and moderns, have thought this Psalm speaks of the resurrection of our Lord, and is thus to be understood. It is easy to apply it in this way: Jesus has conquered sin, Satan, and death, by dying. He now rises from the dead; and, as a mighty Conqueror, claims an entrance into the realms of glory, the kingdom which he has purchased by his blood; there to appear ever in the presence of God for us, to which he purposes to raise finally the innumerable hosts of his followers; for in reference to these, He is the Lord of hosts; and, in reference to his victory, He is the Lord mighty in battle.

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PSALM 24: 9 Lift up your heads, you gates; yes, lift them up, you everlasting doors, and the King of glory will come in.

PSALM 24: 10 Who is this King of glory? The LORD of Armies is the King of glory! Selah.

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