



Articles and Sermons :: Katz Who Shall Stand

Katz Who Shall Stand - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/4/2 4:05

Who Shall Stand in His Holy Place?
Art Katz

Psalm 24:

“The earth is the Lord’s, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it” (vs. 1).

One wonders whether the church has rightly acknowledged what this verse says about God. It is an awesome statement, and there is always the possibility that it will go right over our heads as a kind of biblical rhetoric, a nice sounding thing, and that the content will, therefore, be lost to us.

The earth is the Lord’s because,

“He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the rivers” (vs. 2).

In other words, the earth and all that dwell on it belong to the Lord because He is the Creator of them. What God originates is His own, and belongs to Him for His own purpose. Imagine announcing to mankind that their little pieces of territory to which they have given their national name are really the Lord’s, and it is for His own purpose. Those that dwell in it are dwelling in it for His sake - not their own. It is so shattering in all of its foundational truth that it takes profound audacity, not only to believe it, but also to proclaim it. We have to allow the word of God alone to instruct us, and that what God says about the earth and the world is truth. And we need therefore to dwell on the implications of what this means for ourselves and for those that dwell in the earth.

Re: Katz Who Shall Stand - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/4/2 10:14

2. The psalmist talks about the earth being “founded upon the seas and established upon the rivers.” It sounds like poetry, but there is a profound truth represented here. The rivers (floods) and the seas are always symbolic of the primordial and ancient enemies of God. The fact that He has established upon them indicates His triumph over every adverse force that is opposed to God. He has won something by His own majesty over the powers of darkness, who vie and contend with Him as to whose earth this is.

We must be careful not to allow this concept to become a mere scientific fact or a piece of technical information. They are sublime spiritual thoughts, and indeed, the whole foundation of reality and being itself. We have to fight for the significance of the earth being the Lord’s, and the world, and those that dwell in it, and not allow it to be reduced by the world to a commonplace. The whole psalm is given, amongst other things, to elevate the church into the place of God’s intention, and maybe that is why it begins with this foundational statement, and continues on with,

“Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place?” (vs. 3)

Re: Katz Who Shall Stand - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/4/2 16:36

3. Unless a deep-rooted understanding of God as Creator is foundational to our own being, there can be no ascending. It is more than subscribing to the truth of the earth and the world being the Lord’s; it is abiding in that reality, and then, from that place, we can talk about ascending the hill of the Lord. The pronoun who as in “who may ascend the hill. . . and who may stand. . .” implies that there are not many. And maybe the only one is actually the Lord Himself, and that only those who can be candidates with Him are those who are in Him. It implies that this is not for the many, but for the few. And it is almost like God is laying out a challenge, “Who dares ascend this hill?”

Re: Katz Who Shall Stand - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/4/3 2:39

4. And then the requirement is given,

“He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood (vanity – alt. reading), and has not sworn deceitfully” (vs. 4).

“Clean hands and a pure heart” require some deliberation. Clean hands are something external; a pure heart is something internal. The fundamental requirement, therefore, for anyone to ascend is at least this minimal requirement. Clean hands are not those that have trafficked in things that are offensive in God’s sight. And we need to come frequently to the place of the blood to have those hands cleansed, even if we have inadvertently given ourselves to something that would be disrespectful to God. Do we pray, “Purify my heart as You are pure.” That always ought to be a daily prayer. There is an ongoing process of purification because there are daily assaults against purity of heart.

There is much that hovers in the atmosphere, in the things that we speak, say and hear. And the principal place in the church where the purifying process of God takes place is in the midst of the brethren. It is available to us in relationships that God has given with the saints in the organic reality of what is called the church. If we’ll not find purity of heart in that place, we simply will not find it.

In the church, God confronts, He identifies and shows us the kinds of things that compromise purity of heart, and where He will deal with it and address it. And that can be anytime the word of God is proclaimed, be it in a Bible study time, a Sunday morning service, or even a conversation. A pure heart that we think will come in monastic isolation is a deception.

It is in the church that we are made conscious of where we are impure, and we can then receive the correction, the exhortation, and the rebukes that make for a pure heart. The most sublime provision that God could give a saint is correction in the Body of Christ, through the process of God, by the Word. Unless we recognize what a provision that is, and thank God for it, we will never obtain this purity.

The book of Proverbs is full of references to those who are grateful for the rebuke, the correction, and the chastisement of God. Only fools and scoffers are averse to being corrected. But a saint recognizes that this is a very great and necessary provision from God, or we cannot ascend to the holy hill.

Re: Katz Who Shall Stand - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/4/3 14:51

5. A pure heart means that there is no admixture in it. Therein lies the problem. There are legions of things that find sway with us: mixed motivations and desires, mixed ambitions, and the disdaining and being critical of others or of other ministries. This is a delicate matter, and I always have a deep reserve when a subject comes up by which other ministries are being discussed. Maybe it is to some degree a necessity in this age of deception to ferret out and speak often one to another in the fear of the Lord about those things that are deceptive in our age, but it is always at the risk of ourselves becoming contaminated. And having been involved in conversations like that, I will always and without exception pray, “Lord, Your blood now to purge me from any inadvertent thing that has come in, even with a necessary and right discussion of other men and other ministries in our age. For we know that there is an insidious temptation to exalt ourselves at the expense of another. And so, Lord, however necessary this examination may have been, guard my heart, and let Your blood wash me from any thing of which I am not conscious and which I have given myself.” That is the kind of careful attention a pure heart requires.

Re: Katz Who Shall Stand - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/4/4 1:33

6. What shall we say about “not lifting up one’s soul unto vanity”? It is like two choices: you lift up your soul unto the Lord, or you lift it up unto vanity. But we are the key for the thing to which we allow our souls to be engaged. Vanity, of course, means that which is vain, that which does not profit. But for those who want to ascend this mount, it’s not just the issue of giving your soul over to that which is carnal.

The thing that will get us will more likely be scriptural and even spiritual when He Himself has not called for it. There is something in man that enjoys giving his soul over to it for a particular delight that he might obtain from it. For example, we can delight in the book of Daniel and the examination of prophecy - both valid in themselves. But if we are pursuing that for a particular gratification that it gives our soul in the enjoyment of that investigation, I would say it is in the risk of being vain.

Even though it is legitimate and biblical, and deserves examination, if it is a subtle means by which our own soul is being lifted up for a gratification that would not come to us through carnality, then it is a vain pursuit. This is how strenuous and how exacting the ascent must be. Ascent means going up against gravity, and against every force that wants to keep us at an earthly plain. Those who can ascend to the holy hill of God, and who can stand before the Lord, are those who are this exacting and careful about what they give their souls to. We must not be ruled by our affinities, or give our souls to them because of a satisfaction that we desire to obtain. The Lord Himself has to guide us, and we have to be careful in the ascent, because the question still is "Who may ascend?"

Re: Katz Who Shall Stand - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/4/5 7:49

7. Who is that careful and who is that concerned about his soul? Who is that concerned for swearing deceitfully? These phrases are so all-inclusive. It does not merely mean taking a false oath or taking the Lord's name in vain. That is the most blatant and evident form of swearing deceitfully. Any use of language that is false, though correct, but is used for a false end, is a swearing deceitfully. It is a misuse of the privilege of speaking and of the use of words.

The one who wants to ascend the hill of God has got to be just as careful about what he speaks as about what his soul delights in. That is why there are only a few who will ascend to that holy place. As we shall see later, this is not a matter of mere individuals obtaining an ultimate place of desire before God; it is the issue of opening the gate that the "King of Glory might come in."

That is how Psalm 24 ends. It begins with "The earth is the Lord's" but it ends with the King of Glory standing at the gate. He is not yet able to come in, for the implication is, "Who can ascend to the hill to throw the bolt that opens the gate that the King of Glory might come in? Whose hands are clean, and whose heart is pure to ascend up to that place?" For the issue of the King of Glory's coming is not just His own desire and satisfaction, but salvation for the world. The King of Glory is waiting at the gate, but it is the gate that forbids entry. What is the connection here?

Re: Katz Who Shall Stand - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/4/5 13:14

8.

The key of the opening of the gate is addressed in the last verses of this psalm:

"Lift up your heads, O gates and be lifted up, O ancient (everlasting) doors, that the King of glory may come in" (vs.7).

Is God speaking to some inanimate substance? Is He actually talking to a literal gate made of iron, or a door made of wood? Or is there a way of understanding this verse that intimates that we as the church are the gate. Are we the gate, and therefore the key to the coming of the Lord Himself as the King of Glory into His own earth? Is this why we are being addressed? The Lord waits and has restricted Himself, waiting for a gate that can be opened, a door that can be opened by those who constitute that gate or door, and that can only be opened by ascending the holy hill.

Our coming into this kind of relationship with the Lord is the issue of the King of Glory coming in. What makes Him the King of Glory is that He is willing to limit Himself, and wait for, and trust those who will ascend that hill at His invitation. He could do it without us, but what makes God glorious is His employment of us, and not that we are some secondary thing. But He uses metaphorical language as if we ourselves are the gate and the door to His entry. What forbids it? "Open, open" - but how, by what? By ascending this hill with the clean hands and the pure heart, not having given your soul to vanity or using your mouth in any deceitful manner.

So, this takes vigilance, and I would say it is a sacrifice, an offering; it is the Cross. And maybe we will not do it for our own sanctification except that we know that it is also the key for the King of Glory coming in to bless a mankind that does not know that the earth is the Lord's, and the world, and them that dwell in it.

Re: Katz Who Shall Stand - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/4/6 1:28

9.

“This is the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Thy face - even Jacob” (vs.6).

The word “generation” means a forty-year span. But in this context, it means a certain type or a particular quality of individual. Who is going to ascend? It is that same one who is going to seek the Lord. And I do not know what your experience is, but my experience in seeking the Lord tells me that there is no more strenuous activity before us as believers. It is as if every single thing conspires against it. I am not just talking about phones ringing and other distractions; our own flesh is resistant and unwilling. And then God goes even further: “seek His face.” Well, no one sees the face of God and lives. It is almost as if this is an invitation to death. In fact, if you seek the Lord in this way, it is an invitation to death!

To seek the Lord is to have something happen to your own soul. There is something that takes place in seeking, because it is so contrary to everything in the flesh and soul. The very engagement and pursuit of the seeking of Him has the potential to purify the soul. And we are in our dull condition for the lack of the effort to ascend the holy hill and to seek the Lord. Notice that it does not say to seek the Lord for any benefit; it says to seek Him. So, there is seeking and there is seeking, and for most of us, if we are engaged in any seeking at all, it is because we are faced with problems, issues, needs that we want the Lord to answer and to solve. But the scriptures do not say that; it says “seek Him, seek His face.” There is another condition, another quality of seeking beyond the things that pertain to our need, and few there be that will seek the Lord for Himself alone. And that is why it says, “This is the generation, this is that kind of believer that will attain to the holy hill.” And meanwhile, the King of glory waits for just that fulfillment.

Re: Katz Who Shall Stand - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/4/6 15:56

10. Time itself militates against this ultimate seeking, nor does our disposition give us an incentive. It is going to take a ruthlessness against the flesh, against sloth, against indifference, against casualness, against spiritual self-satisfaction. Maybe we are too happy with ourselves as we are, or we think we have arrived, or at least we are heads and shoulders above or better than this one or that one. All of those things conspire against ascending to seek the Lord. We need, therefore, to pray for a divine dissatisfaction with where we are, and what we have, and know that we are falling so short of what it is that will release the King of Glory to come in.

We will never find a discipline that will make time for the Lord, and that will exert itself in some quiet, early morning time to seek Him, not for the benefit but for Himself, if we are not already in a place of discipline. If we have not a discipline in other and ordinary aspects of our life, do you think we are going to find a discipline for this? There is very little requirement for discipline in our life, or even an understanding of the meaning of the word.

The root of “disciple” is the same as the root “discipline.” You cannot be a disciple without some measure of order, structure, attention, devotion, and consecration. These are all disciplines against a flesh that is slothful, lazy, indifferent, and casual. Discipline is a requirement to ascending this mount, over and against every impulse that wants to keep us down. It is not only the device and stratagem of the enemy to keep our spiritual life to a minimum, but it will also keep the King of Glory from coming in.

Re: Katz Who Shall Stand - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/4/7 1:26

11.

“Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle” (vs. 8).

He is strong and mighty, but He will not break in on the basis of His might and strength. He waits at the gate, and at the door, for that one whose hands are clean, and who can ascend the mount and throw the bolt that allows the King of Glory to come in. This is exactly what glorifies God; that He does not employ His might and strength to obtain His ends.

He waits for us to participate with Him - for that is what glorifies Him. There is no visible glory without a temple. God requires a housing; we are that structure. There is no glorifying of God in His coming into the earth that He is made except that it has come through the instruments of His own choice - beggars that He has taken off of garbage dumps, and who H

He has made to sit with princes. He is glorified by what He performs and achieves through those whom He has saved. In fact, this whole psalm is an invitation for us to be reminded that His power will give every enablement, if we will provide the "I will."

Re: Katz Who Shall Stand - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/4/7 10:37

12. Karl Barth, the Swiss theologian asks, "This is the right word, but why does it enlighten us so faintly? Why does it not penetrate our ears and issue from our lips? Why do we not ascend and stand, even amidst the needs that surround us in the holy place? Why is it not true and real to us? Why do we not live by the word, "The earth is the Lord's"? Why then do we live as though it is not true if it is true? We live our days as though not a flicker of light would reveal itself. How poor our words are. How darkened are our spirits. How little we seem to be able to say to the great need and darkness of our times that the earth is the Lord's. Even our Christian words, our sermons, our observations are helpless faltering and lacking in light and spirit. The saddest part of all is that we speak and hear the word of God as if it were a mere word of man; it no longer possesses its unique power and meaning."

Re: Katz Who Shall Stand - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/4/8 6:22

12. Karl Barth, the Swiss theologian asks, "This is the right word, but why does it enlighten us so faintly? Why does it not penetrate our ears and issue from our lips? Why do we not ascend and stand, even amidst the needs that surround us in the holy place? Why is it not true and real to us? Why do we not live by the word, "The earth is the Lord's"? Why then do we live as though it is not true if it is true? We live our days as though not a flicker of light would reveal itself. How poor our words are. How darkened are our spirits. How little we seem to be able to say to the great need and darkness of our times that the earth is the Lord's. Even our Christian words, our sermons, our observations are helpless faltering and lacking in light and spirit. The saddest part of all is that we speak and hear the word of God as if it were a mere word of man; it no longer possesses its unique power and meaning."

Re: Katz Who Shall Stand - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/4/8 14:41

13. Barth continues, "So who will ascend the hill of the Lord, and who is the generation of them that seek after Him, who seek His face? Such zealous striving after truth or much praying is in vain, because we will never by these ways make it right with God. The holiest thing is lacking, even though we talk much about it. That deep respect for God's majesty, that real reverent respect is wanting. . . There is wanting that earnest prerequisite of the knowledge of God, not of what I think, intend and say, but only His name, His kingdom, His will. . . And when that is wanting, it is not merely something that is wanting, but everything is wanting. When that is wanting, nothing will succeed, everything is loose and empty doctrine even if it be ten-fold true."

Only a pure heart can even desire to ascend. If we do not have the desire, it is the ipso facto evidence that our hearts are impure. If they were pure, we would have this desire of God to go up. We have allowed a mixture of many things. Our first prayer ought to be to ask the Lord to purify our heart as He Himself is pure. We need to ask Him to purge our hearts from everything that dulls it, and keeps it from desiring what He desires. We cannot even identify correctly the issues of our heart, but we know that if we lack a desire to ascend, and we do not see ourselves as included in the "Who," then that is the evidence of impurity.

Re: Katz Who Shall Stand - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/4/9 8:40

14. I would to God that Israel and the Palestinians would bow before this word, who are presently vying with each other over the possession of the Land. It is the Lord's, and He will give it to whom He will, when He will, and under the conditions that He will. But the very fact that they are competing and contending over it shows that they are outside the context of this statement, and they are outside of it because we as the church are outside of it.

In fact, the kind of bickering and contention that is presently going on in the Israel cannot be alleviated or be met by anything less than the revelation of God in His glory as King. No diplomacy or treaty will work; only the revelation of the God who created the earth and all that is therein coming as King of Glory can bring resolution to this conflict that is threatening to tear up the Middle-East as well as the world.

Re: Katz Who Shall Stand - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/4/9 16:04

15. The issues of this age are of such a kind that only the revelation and the actual incoming of the King in His glory can resolve them. If God is not God and revealed in glory as Creator, and that the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof and those that dwell therein, then there is no prospect for mankind. To acknowledge God as Creator requires a submission to Him who has created. It is that critical, and God makes the whole issue rest on the "gate" and the "door" that will be opened to allow His entry - which is ourselves as the church rightly related to Him on the holy hill.

Re: Katz Who Shall Stand - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/4/10 5:25

16. The world does not know that the earth is the Lord's. It sees it only as a geophysical accident, and not as a result of His creation. Nor has the church rightly acknowledged that its own physical life is the Lord's. We are dust, and therefore we are the Lord's. We are as much His creation as the physical terra firma on which we have been placed. But if we are not living as if our bodies are the Lord's, then how should we expect the world to understand that the larger earth is the Lord's. We are a case in point. It is one thing to mentally acknowledge that this piece of earth is the Lord's, but are we living in the truth of that acknowledgment? And that if it is His, then it is His to direct and employ, His to do with as He will. If we ourselves are usurping and controlling, and leading our own life and purpose, we are contradicting the testimony of God with the regard to the entire earth. The earth remains, therefore, in the ignorance of whose earth it is, because we as the church do not testify to it that our own earth is the Lord's.

Re: Katz Who Shall Stand - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/4/10 14:20

17. I just want to pray that we will hear this as the word of God addressed to our casual Christian mentality and attitude, which has not even thought to ascend the holy hill of God. It has not been a priority or an intention, and yet, we can say that the redemption of mankind waits for the King of Glory to come in. He will not use His power and might to do so, but waits for the gate to be opened by only those who can ascend the hill, having the pure heart and clean hands, and have not given themselves to vanity. It is an ultimate requirement for the Church, and it is also the issue of the glory of God for mankind. They need to know that the "earth is the Lord's and those that dwell therein."

Prayer

Lord, I am speaking on behalf of our whole body and myself. We are slothful, indifferent, casual and satisfied merely with what is correct. We ask, my God, that You would address us through this psalm and through these comments that we might be part of the generation that seeks the Lord and that seeks His face.

We want to give ourselves for the kind of seeking that is strenuous and that is itself a kind of dying. And the very effort of that seeking is itself a purifying agent that will bring our hearts to a place, my God, that enables us to go up.

We know that we need to be frequently, if not continually, reminded. For the world, the flesh, and the devil seem to have such a powerful sway as to give to our church life such a common air, such a predictable every-day kind of ordinary quality.

We lack the intensity, Lord, the devout desire, the intent to go up, and we thank You, Lord, that You are giving us an invitation. You wait to be sought. And so, precious God, help us. Break us up in the deeps. Make us to see the shallowness

of our self-satisfaction, the lack of earnestness toward God, and what is at stake with the King of glory, to manifest that glory in His own creation.

Speak to us Lord, as the gate and the door that holds You back, waiting for those hands that are clean that can ascend and throw the bolt to open that permits Your entry and Your glory into Your own creation.

Thank you for Your jealous love that will not let us go, that knows the truth of our heart and our condition. You know that we are not moving from faith to faith; rather we are stagnant and predictable in what we are about. There is no going up. Bid us, come, Lord we pray. Stir us up in the inner man. Thank you that You have provided the enablement and that You have gone before, and that there are steps we can walk in and follow.

In Jesus Name. Amen.