

Psalms 24:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

Analysis

The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. This majestic opening declares Yahweh's absolute ownership of all creation. "The earth" (la'YHWH ha'aretz, בָּאָרֶץ) begins emphatically with "to the LORD," establishing divine ownership as primary reality. The parallelism between "earth" and "world" (tebel, תְּבֵל) reinforces totality—every realm, seen and unseen.

"The fulness thereof" (umelo'ah, עַמְלָאָה) encompasses not just the planet but everything it contains: resources, creatures, nations, and wealth. This includes humanity—"they that dwell therein" (yoshebe bah, יֹשְׁבֵי בָּה) —emphasizing that people are not autonomous owners but tenants and stewards of God's property. We possess nothing independently; all belongs to Him by right of creation.

This truth has profound theological implications:

1. it demolishes human pride and autonomy
2. it establishes God's right to command how His creation should function
3. it grounds environmental stewardship in divine ownership rather than human rights
4. it provides the foundation for worship—we offer back to God what already belongs to Him.

Paul quotes this verse in 1 Corinthians 10:26 to establish Christian freedom regarding food, showing its ongoing theological relevance.

Historical Context

Psalm 24 is a "processional psalm" likely used during worship ceremonies when the Ark of the Covenant was brought into Jerusalem or the temple. David probably composed it when he brought the Ark to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6), though it may have been used in subsequent temple liturgies. The psalm's structure suggests antiphonal singing between priests and worshipers as the Ark approached the sanctuary.

The historical context of creation theology was crucial for Israel's identity. Surrounded by pagan nations that worshiped nature deities or multiple gods controlling different realms, Israel's monotheism was revolutionary: one God created and owns everything. This contrasted sharply with Canaanite religion where Baal supposedly owned fertile land, or Egyptian religion where Pharaoh claimed divine ownership.

For ancient Israel, affirming Yahweh's universal ownership had immediate practical implications: it challenged royal pretensions to absolute power, undermined economic injustice by reminding the wealthy that they were merely stewards, and grounded Israel's covenant obligations in God's ownership rights. The Jubilee year (Leviticus 25) specifically applied this principle: land returned to original families because ultimately it all belonged to God, not to human owners.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does God's ownership of everything challenge our attitudes toward possessions and wealth?
2. What practical implications should divine ownership have for environmental stewardship and resource use?

3. How does this verse address the modern secular assumption of human autonomy and self-ownership?
4. In what ways do we practically deny God's ownership through our daily decisions and priorities?
5. How should recognizing God's ownership shape our worship and giving?

Interlinear Text

לְיְהוָה כָּא כֵּן וּמְלֹאת הַמָּלֹא תְּבָל וְשָׁבֵן
 is the LORD'S The earth and the fulness thereof the world and they that dwell
 H3068 H776 H4393 H8398 H3427

בָּהָרָה:

H0

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 89:11 (Parallel theme): The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.

1 Corinthians 10:26 (References Lord): For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

1 Chronicles 29:11 (References Lord): Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.

Job 41:11 (Parallel theme): Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him? whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine.

Exodus 9:29 (References Lord): And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the LORD; and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know how that the earth is the LORD'S.

Deuteronomy 10:14 (References Lord): Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.

Exodus 19:5 (Parallel theme): Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

Psalms 50:12 (Parallel theme): If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.

Nahum 1:5 (Parallel theme): The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.

Daniel 4:25 (Parallel theme): That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

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