

Psalm. 24:1-6 "Hill-Climbing"

For the Children: There are quite a few walking tracks around the Hutt Valley. Perhaps you have been tramping along some of them? Some of them can be quite steep. Little children might have trouble climbing some of the hills around here, but most of you could probably manage. In other places, though, there are mountains that you would have trouble climbing. The climb up to the Temple on Mt. Zion, in Jerusalem, is not that difficult. What made it difficult was that God said sinful people could not enter the holy Temple – unless their sins were dealt with by sacrifices. No sinner can come close to God unless his sins are removed by the Lord Jesus. Through Him, sinners receive many blessings, both now and in heaven. **Questions:** What does the Lord Jesus give to sinners so that they can draw close to God? What effect does this have on us in this life? What does it teach us about heaven?

Introduction:

First Point: An Impossible Climb

- 1) Because of God's Standards: The Lord is the Sovereign Creator and Ruler of the whole earth, all its creatures and all men. He is everywhere present. He has the right to make moral laws for men. He Himself is holy. Sinful men break His laws. They are barred from drawing close to the Lord in worship and in relationship with Him.
- 2) The Holy Hill: In the OT, God's people could ascend Mt. Zion, to worship in the Temple. They could only do so with the proper sacrifices and ceremonies, pointing to the need for Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Vss.3-4 describe who may ascend that hill: only those who are clean and pure in heart, in practice of the truth and other actions. The criterion of avoiding falsehood would also prevent religious vows (see also Duet.23:21) – if sinners only tried to draw close to the Lord in their own strength.

Second Point: How It Has Been Climbed

- 1) Receiving Righteousness: V. 5 sounds like it is saying that the perfect man of v.4 shall be blessed because of his own perfection. However, it adds that this man shall receive the Lord's righteousness. Perfect men do not need to be given righteousness. Sinners need to have Christ's righteousness imputed. That is the only way that they can come to worship God acceptably and enter a close relationship with Him. It is the only way they can "ascend the holy hill."
- 2) Seeking the Lord: V.6 then describes these people as the generation of those who seek the Lord. Only those who seek salvation through Christ can be called true Israel/Jacob. They do not seek to draw close in their own strength.
- 3) A Present Effect: Knowing the Lord and receiving His righteousness not only enables us to draw close in worship. It affects our whole life. We begin to pursue holiness of the kind described in v.4 – though we never attain to perfection in this life. Those who do not care about holiness show that they have not sought the Lord and are therefore not able to draw near to Him.

Third Point: What It Is Like at the Top

- 1) A Place of Perfection: Ascending the holy mount also includes our ascent to heaven, following Christ. There we will find a place of perfect righteousness and purity in motive, desire, thought, word and deed. There will be no sin and no curse upon the new creation.
- 2) Other Aspects of Blessing: V. 5 speaks of those who ascend receiving the Lord's blessing. The blessings include the joy of seeing the glory of the Lord manifested, of being close to Him. The joy of being found acceptable in His sight is another part of the blessing – the gracious declaration that we have done well, as good and faithful servants – due to Christ's merits. We already have a foretaste of these blessings e.g., when we worship the Lord with His people. The heavenly perspective should govern all we do in this life.

Conclusion: