

GOD'S OWNERSHIP

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Psalm 24:1.

There are three important entities in the social order -- God, man and things. Out of the inexhaustible resources of His power the eternal God first made things -- the world, light, physical life and the laws that govern. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1-3). "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis 1:3). "And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so" (Genesis 1:7). "And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also" (Genesis 1:16).

God then made man and made him to be the lord of things. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:27-28). He gave him all the essentials for his support and happiness. He made man the head of the animal race, gave him the powers of conquest and told him to conquer. The great responsibilities of life are found in the relationships of these three entities -- God, man and things.

In Genesis the fact is asserted that, "In the beginning God created." While the method of His creation is not delineated, it is a certainty that God created without any special effort. Creation was an expression of His will. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Psalm 33:6).

Let me give you a few of the scriptures that declare the ownership of God.

"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" (Exodus 19:5).

"The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me" (Leviticus 25:23).

"If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land" (Leviticus 26:3-6).

"For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you. And ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new. And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people" (Leviticus 26:9-12).

"Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end; And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he swore unto thy fathers, as it is this day" (Deuteronomy 8:11-18). The very ability that man has to earn and accumulate money is a God-given talent; and without God's power no man could possess this gift.

"And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is" (Deuteronomy 10:12-14). Nothing could be more inclusive than this statement of God's ownership of all things.

"Wherefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. 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. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest ever all; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee" (I Chronicles 29:10-14).

"Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him? whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine" (Job 41:11). Thus God expresses His universal title to everything.

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1).

"For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof" (Psalm 50:10-12).

"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts" (Haggai 2:8).

"For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8).

"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (I Corinthians 4:7).

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Corinthians 6:19-20).

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers" (I Peter 1:18).

Notice that all of these passages from the Word of God are so worded that for all time they will remain in the present tense. There is no past tense where God's ownership is involved.

God's ownership is based primarily on the following:

I. Creation.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Then they are His. "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Then they are His. "And the Lord God planted a garden." It was His garden. He planted it in His earth. The trees were His. He placed His man and His woman in it to tend it and to dress it, and He gave them specific instructions about what He wanted them to do and to refrain from doing.

God created all men and all things. Thus He became the rightful owner of them. Since God calls men into being and creates all material wealth, He is the owner of all. Whether it be wealth itself, or the conditions and materials out of which it is developed, all originated in the creative wisdom, purpose and power of God. His creative work was prompted by grace. His purpose of grace can be realized only when men rightfully acknowledge His ownership.

2. Preservation.

God has not only made us, but we are kept by His preserving power. Man is upheld and preserved by the hand of God's power. God has the claim to the ownership of man by the right of His preserving and keeping power.

3. Providence.

Life and all of its powers and prerogatives must be sustained from without. Not only does God preserve us, but He feeds us and clothes us and furnishes us all of the elemental factors of life. God's ownership of the peoples of the world is written in every particle of food that goes into their stomachs to sustain life, in every thread of clothes that warms and protects their bodies, in every particle of air which they breathe into their lungs, in every ray of light that guides their feet, and in every other earthly blessing through which He shows His love for us.

4. Redemption.

In infinite grace God has redeemed us. The price which was paid for our redemption was the precious blood of Christ, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body." Our Lord Jesus Christ paid the purchase price and redeemed us. Thus the claim of God's ownership was confirmed and strengthened. Through Paul He said, "What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Corinthians 6:19-20). The price of Christ's death on the cross, which was paid by the Father's love, entitles Him to an absolute title and a complete possession of the mind, body and soul of every child of God. "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine" (Isaiah 43:1).

God's ownership is primary, absolute and permanent. But there is a difference between ownership and possession. Since God owns us, He should possess and use us. Our wills should be subject to His perfect will and our lives should be at His disposal.