

The King of Glory  
 Psalm 24  
 ABC 7/9/23

We all know of some famous trilogies: JRR Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, CS Lewis' space trilogy, *The Godfather* trilogy, Suzanne Collins' *Hunger Games*, & we could go on & on. Today we look at a psalm that is the 3<sup>rd</sup> in a trilogy of psalms. Psalms 22, 23, & 24 form a trilogy which prophetically gives us the work of the Christ. Ps 22 presents the Lamb of God who gave His life for sinners. Ps 23 depicts the good Shepherd in resurrection glory leading His sheep through the wilderness of this life into their rest. & Ps 24 portrays King Jesus in all His exalted, glorious, reigning might.<sup>1</sup> G Campbell Morgan connects it like this: *By our calendars, yesterday He passed through Ps 22. Today He is exercising the office of Ps 23. Tomorrow, He will exercise finally the authority of Ps 24.*<sup>2</sup> In Ps 24 David asks an important question, one that every person will eventually face: *Who can stand before a holy & mighty God?* In these vss, David not only asks the question, he also shows us the answer. **Ps 24:1-10**

This psalm was possibly written to commemorate the event recorded in 1 Chron 13 & 2 Sam 6. After David was anointed King, defeated the Philistines, & captured the city of Jerusalem (2 Sam 5), he celebrated God's victory by bringing the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. The ark was a testimony of God's presence with His people. Jerusalem or Zion (Ps 87) became known as the dwelling place of God. But the Ark & the Tabernacle, with the sacrifices, celebrations, & festivals were always pointing to something greater. They gave God's people a glimpse of what God would one day do through Jesus on the cross. Here in Ps 24 we have an early presentation of the gospel. A clear picture of Jesus, sung as Israel rejoiced that God was in their midst.

**1. The God Who Reigns** (1-2) David begins with the fundamental truth that **in the beginning God created the heavens & the earth** (Gen 1:1). God owns this earth. He designed it, engineered it, sustains, & is sovereign over it. The whole **earth** belongs to God, & not just the earth, but also **all it contains** (1). It's all God's. He owns not just the land, the water, the air, animals, plants, & birds.

<sup>1</sup> Erling C. Olsen, *Meditations in the Book of Psalms*, pp 163-64

<sup>2</sup> [www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/gcm/psalms-24.html](http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/gcm/psalms-24.html)

He also owns & is sovereign over every man, woman, & child. We aren't the accidental product of an impersonal universe, subject to blind chance & random forces, without purpose or meaning. This has huge implications that shape our worldview & our worship. There isn't a single nation, people group, or place in this world that doesn't belong to God. There isn't a single moment of the day that isn't His. He is Lord, not just on Sunday, but Monday through Saturday as well. He is worthy of our worship & praise, not just when we're gathered as the church, but at home, at school, at work, in our neighborhoods, in our stores & restaurants, in every place. The **world** & those who  **dwell in it** all are the Lord's. In vs 2 David tells us why. Because He is the Creator of all things. We aren't told how God **founded it upon the seas & established it upon the rivers** (2) but we're clearly told who owns the world. God is the rightful Owner & Sovereign over the earth because He made it. This God made us & all things. This God watches over all of His creation. Nothing is hidden from Him. This is the God to whom we all must one day give an account. & so in vs 3 David asks the question...

## 2. Who May Approach God? 3

The **hill of the Lord** is a reference to Mount Zion, or Jerusalem, where God symbolically dwelled above the ark of the covenant. **Who may ascend** & approach God? Asked another way, **Who may stand in His holy place?** *Who is spiritually qualified to fellowship with this God?* Who can approach & draw near to such a holy & mighty Sovereign & **stand in His holy place?** That's the \$64k question. Who can approach this awesome, holy, & mighty God? David asked this question in the context of the OT Levitical priesthood who would serve in the presence of God in the Tabernacle & Temple. But it's question we must ask as well. David begins his answer to this in vs 4 by listing 4 qualifications:

## 3. God's Requirements 4

The answer David gives here is a shortened version of the one he gave in Ps 15.

**O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? He who walks with integrity, & works righteousness, & speaks truth in his heart. He does not slander with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor takes up a reproach against his friend... (1-3).**

Here in Ps 24 David gives just 4 qualifications of those who could approach God:

A) **Clean hands:** This demands outward purity, purity in our actions & activities. If we are to approach God everything we do must be perfectly clean.

B) **Pure heart:** This demands inner purity, purity in our thoughts & motives. Everything we think, every reason we have for doing what we do, it all must be pure. It's to have a soul that's holy & undefiled, set apart to God without moral defilement. Both the inner life, a person's character, & the outer life, a person's conduct, are represented. A person's life must be pure & clean if God is to be approached.<sup>3</sup>

C) **Has not lifted up his soul to falsehood:** This phrase could refer to idols. Idols are lifeless & false. An idol is anyone or anything that a person loves, fears, or serves more than God. This demands purity in our devotion to God alone. We're to have a heart & life committed to seeking & serving only the one true God. The only way we can avoid pursuing what is false is to pursue God & His glory in all things. We must have no other gods. We must have a love for & loyalty to the one true God (Ex 20:3).

D) **Has not sworn deceitfully:** This demands purity in speech. It demands that we don't speak lies, that we aren't deceitful in what we say, but always speak the truth.

All of these are marks of holiness, without which no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:14). Having clean hands, having a pure heart, forsaking what is false for the pursuit of God, & speaking the truth in love are all commanded by God & we were created for them. We must have these if we're to approach Him. It's here we have to stop & make sure we grasp what this is saying. This is showing us what qualifies us to come into God's presence, what must be true in order for us to come & stand before our holy God. Some come to a wrong conclusion & read this & water down its meaning & recast it into something they think they can achieve on their own. They pretend they're better than they really are. *God doesn't really mean perfection here. I'm not as bad as those people. Look at all the good I do. Surely my good things will outweigh my bad things.* But remember what vs 4 says: Clean hands, a pure heart, a life that doesn't pursue what is false, lips that speak only truth, these are God's high & holy standards for those who'd draw near to Him. Who can meet these

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<sup>3</sup> Steven Lawson, *Psalms 1-75*, p 134

qualifications? If we honestly assess our own hands, hearts, & heads, who among us can say that all we do is perfectly pure & clean? Who can say that all we think is pure, that our every motivation is right? That we have **not lifted up our souls to falsehood?** That God & His glory are 1<sup>st</sup> in all things? That we've always spoken truth & **not sworn deceitfully?** This doesn't describe us, does it? As we saw a couple of weeks ago in Ps 14:2-3, **The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God. They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.** If this is true of all of us, & it is, & we're left to ourselves to meet these requirements, we can only despair as ones who've miserably failed at every turn. There's a clear impossibility to these requirements. We are condemned in our sinfulness. Were we to stand before God in judgment, outside the gracious provision of Jesus, we'd see written against us a multitude of sins we're not even aware of. **The certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us** (Col 2:14) would overwhelm us. If this psalm ended here we'd be without hope of ever standing before God. Our just end would be condemnation because **the wages of sin is death** (Rom 6:23). Of course, we should all strive to have clean hands & a pure heart. But the Bible also tells us that none of us are righteous in & of ourselves. So how are we supposed to ascend the hill of the Lord? Only the righteous may approach God. Again, this psalm may have been written when the ark was brought to Jerusalem. Remember what happened when David moved **the ark of God which is called by the Name, the very name of the LORD of hosts who is enthroned above the cherubim?** Uzzah reached out to steady it & **God struck him down... & he died** (2 Sam 6:1-7). Uzzah's death reminds us that none are righteous. The ark represented God's presence here on earth. Do you think you could have grabbed hold of the ark without dying? Can you ascend the hill of the Lord & stand in His holy place? Do you have clean hands & a pure heart? Not apart from Jesus. Only Jesus can ascend the hill of the Lord & stand in God's holy place. Only Jesus has perfectly clean hands & a pure heart. Only Jesus is perfect & without sin. Only Jesus can grab hold of the ark & not die. Thankfully, the psalm doesn't end here. David now considers the provision that God has made for us.

#### **4. God's Promise of Blessing 5**

This is an OT expression of justification by faith. A holy life isn't the cause of our justification before God. We receive justification & eternal life as a free gift from God, by virtue of God's grace.<sup>4</sup> It's something He provides so we can approach Him in the way He finds acceptable. There's only one Man who's ever met this standard in His own self, the Lord Jesus Christ. Only He was a man of perfectly clean hands & pure heart. Only His righteousness measures up to the standard which God has set. We can't meet God's requirements. If we're going to be fit for the King, we need the King to give us the robes of righteousness that are necessary to be in His presence. It's been suggested that in order to understand vss 4 & 5, it's helpful to take the phrases in reverse order. In other words, although it's true we must approach God cleanly & purely to find salvation, these characteristics are provided for us by God as a result of justification. That is, they're part of the blessing vs 5 promises. Let's look at it backwards:

1. Righteousness comes from God our Savior (5b) &...
2. Blessing is from the Lord (5a), which results in...
3. Clean hands, a pure heart, a life which doesn't lift itself up to idols or swear falsely (4).<sup>5</sup>

We can't stand before God on our merit & live. Are these blessing beyond our reach, because of our sin? No, because God Himself provides for us in Christ with a righteousness that's not our own. Ps 65:3 reads: **Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, You forgive them.** In other words, God has provided a way of salvation for His people. There's no other way to approach God apart from His qualifications & His provision. We can have hope, not in ourselves, but in our God. God Himself provides a way for us to enter into His presence. Vs 6 concludes the 1<sup>st</sup> portion of the psalm. **6**

The reference to Jacob at the end of vs 6 is difficult but seems to be a reminder of God's loyal love that refuses to give up on His promise, even to a fast-talking, shifty-eyed, self-serving person like Jacob.<sup>6</sup> Jacob, the trickster who manipulated Esau to give up his firstborn rights. Jacob, the liar who deceived his father to seize Esau's blessing. Jacob seeks God's face? How can Jacob be the model

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<sup>4</sup> David Dickson, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, p 126

<sup>5</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 1–41: An Expositional Commentary*, p 218

<sup>6</sup> Douglas D. Webster, *The Psalms: Jesus's Prayer Book*, vol 1, pp 209–210

for one who seeks God & enters His presence? Because we're all sinners just as Jacob was. If Jacob can receive a blessing & righteousness from God, so can we.

The psalm now gives direction for a musical interlude. The word **Selah** provides a moment of reflection, a pause to stop & consider what's just been said. Who can ascend into the hill of the Lord? How can anyone enter God's presence & worship Him? Who is able to stand in His holy place? Who has this salvation & righteousness from God? These are questions we all must ask & find the answer to. In vs 7 we learn the answer to David's question from vs 3. Who has clean hands & a pure heart? Who hasn't lifted up His soul toward what is false? Who has always spoken the truth of God? We're told in vss 7-10.

**5. The King of Glory** This psalm was probably sung by those coming into Jerusalem. As they ascended **the hill of the Lord**, they sang, 7

Those in the city responded, **Who is the King of glory?** The choir answered, **The Lord strong & mighty, the Lord mighty in battle** (8). Isaiah expressed similar themes when he announced,

**Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, Lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; Lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" Behold, the Lord GOD will come with might, With His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him & His recompense before Him (Is 40:9–10).**

In David's time this referred to the carrying of the ark into Jerusalem. The ark represented the King of glory, the very presence of God. This was a call to bring the ark into the sanctuary in triumphant procession. During the 1<sup>st</sup> coming of Christ, the greater Son of David, it refers to the triumphant entrance of Christ into **Jerusalem** on Palm Sunday (Mt 21:1–11). Ultimately, it refers to the ascension of Christ to the heavenly **Zion** to be enthroned at God's right hand. Hints of this can be heard in Paul's exclamation, **thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ** (2 Cor 2:14). Even the shout, **Lift up your heads, O gates** (7) may cause us to think of Jesus. The picture of worshipers ascending the mountain of the Lord is eclipsed by the coming of the Lord, who comes not only as the King of Kings & Lord of Lords but as the Friend of sinners offering them His perfect righteousness. This is the One who's called faithful & true, whose eyes are like blazing fire, & who is wearing many crowns. **He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, & His name is called The Word of God** (Rev 19:12–13). Jesus

is the answer to the question, *Who is He, this King of glory?*<sup>7</sup> This is too good to sing only once. & so the chorus, with its question & answer, is repeated in **9-10**.

Again the request for entrance comes from those carrying the ark outside the city gates: **Lift up your heads, O gates**. For effect, it's repeated, **lift them up, O ancient doors**. All this heralding occurs so **the King of glory may come in!** From within the city walls, the question comes, **Who is this King of glory?** The answer comes from those carrying & attending the ark, outside the gates, **the Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory**.<sup>8</sup>

Who is the King of Glory? It's our Lord Jesus Christ! We read God's declaration back in Ps 2:6-8, **But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain. I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, & I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, & the very ends of the earth as Your possession.'** The King of glory is Jesus, who entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday in order to die for us. It's because He ascended to Jerusalem, entered it, & died there that we can approach our holy God.<sup>9</sup> Jesus alone meets all these qualifications. Only He has perfectly fulfilled the Law in perfect righteousness & can ascend the holy hill. He alone has clean hands & a pure heart, free from any hint of idolatry. He alone speaks only the truth. We're told of Christ in Is 53:9, **He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth**. It's Jesus who went to the cross & became our salvation & our righteousness. It's He who entered the temple not made with hands, the heavenly temple, to make lasting atonement for our sins. It's His death & resurrection that's removed our guilt & shame. Paul exclaims that God has forgiven us in Christ, **having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; & He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross (Col 2:14)**. Jesus is our salvation, our Mediator. His righteousness alone is our provision.

As Paul tells us, God **made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor 5:21)**. Jesus is the righteous One who died for our sins & makes us righteous in Him. Only Jesus can make us righteous. Only Jesus can cleanse our hands &

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<sup>7</sup> Webster, pp 210–211

<sup>8</sup> Lawson, p 135

<sup>9</sup> Boice, p 218

purify our hearts. Only in Christ may we ascend the hill & stand in the holy place before our holy God.

However important & moving the transport of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem by David may have been, it's not nearly as significant when the true King of glory entered the holy city. On what we call Palm Sunday. Interestingly, rabbinical sources tell us that in Jewish worship Ps 24 was always used in worship on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week,<sup>10</sup> on Sunday. If this is correct, we can assume that these were the words being recited by the temple priests as Jesus mounted a donkey & ascended to Jerusalem. The people who were outside the walls, who were approaching Jerusalem with him, exclaimed: **Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!** (Mt 21:9). Inside the priests were saying: **Ps 24:9–10**.

But the priests weren't joining in the cries of acclamation for Jesus & within days they would conspire to have Him executed as a blasphemer. As far as the people were concerned, even though some hailed Him as the Lord's Anointed on Palm Sunday, they would be crying, **Crucify Him! Crucify Him!** (Mt 27:22-23) before the week was out.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, isn't it remarkable that this psalm would also be sung on the morning of Jesus' resurrection? This is a fitting hymn of praise to sing each Lord's day, because it rejoices in the believer's salvation & is a declaration of confidence in the return of our Lord.<sup>12</sup>

For those who think you can approach God on your own merit outside of Jesus, I plead with you to come to Him by faith. You'll never, by your own works & efforts, meet the demands of God's perfect & holy law. It's impossible. Your only hope is to find a righteousness not your own. Christ is that righteousness. In Him you can be forgiven of your sin & cleansed & given His righteousness. In Him you can stand before God & fear no condemnation. Jesus is the only way, the only truth, & the only life (Jn 14:6). If you're to stand before God & not be crushed & condemned by your own sin, you must have Jesus. His righteousness must be credited to you by faith. My prayer is that you'd

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<sup>10</sup> Ps 24 was used on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week; Ps 48 on the 2<sup>nd</sup>; Ps 82 on the 3<sup>rd</sup>; Ps 94 on the 4<sup>th</sup>; Ps 81 on the 5<sup>th</sup>; Ps 93 on the 6<sup>th</sup>; & Ps 92 on the Jewish Sabbath

<sup>11</sup> Boice, pp214–215

<sup>12</sup> Mills, electronic edition



see your need for Jesus today & for the righteousness that only He can give you, & that you'd turn to Him in faith & repentance from sin, & find true life as God created you to have.

For those who are trusting & resting in Jesus, my prayer for you is that you'd stand fast in the gospel. As you came to Christ by the gospel, trusting fully in Him, so walk & serve Him by the gospel. We desire that God would work in us & produce in us clean hands, pure hearts, a steadfast soul, & lips that speak truth. This He does as He sanctifies & conforms us more & more to the image of His Son. We're never justified by the work & the fruit produced in our lives. Our standing before God is solely on the basis of Jesus & His work for us. Because of Him, we don't have to pretend we're something we are not. We don't have to pretend to be better than we are. We don't have to pretend we don't struggle with sin. If we say we have no sin, we make God a liar (1 Jn 1:10). We cut ourselves off from the gospel & deny the very reason that Jesus came to die on the cross. Because of Jesus we can acknowledge & confess our sin, & know that God is faithful & just to forgive us (1 Jn 1:9). So I encourage you to remember Jesus & remember what He has done to bring you near to our sovereign, holy, & mighty God. He is the King of glory. Is He your King?