Psalm 24 • Hymn to the King of Glory

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Psalm 24. Let's go ahead and read it.

"1 The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, 2 for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

3 Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?

4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.

5 He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

6 Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

7 Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.

8 Who is the King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, The LORD, mighty in battle!

9 Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.

10 Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory!"
(ESV)

What a great Psalm. This Psalm, you'll probably notice, is pretty different from a lot of the other Psalms in that there's no petition. There's no prayer in this Psalm. This is all declarative. And so David is using this Psalm to make several different dramatic declarations about the Lord.

But one of the things I like to do when I'm looking at the Psalms is to see if there's some order to the way that it's being laid out. And when we look at this Psalm, we see that there are 3 distinct sections. Let me put them up on the screen for you so we can see them together here.

Snapshots of God in Psalm 24

- the Creator-God: 1-2
- the holy God: 3-6
- the glorious King: 7-10

They are: and these different snapshots of God that are given to us in verses 1 and 2, David covers basically **the Creator God**.

In verses 3 through 6 he speaks of **the holy God**.

And then in verses 7 through 10, he makes reference to, or gives us a snapshot of **the glorious King**.

And so we're going to look at each one of these in its own order.

Even though there is no hint in the introduction of this Psalm to connect it with any specific event that is going on with David's life, there are many who believe that the occasion of this Psalm was when David brought the Ark of the Covenant into the city of Jerusalem.

You'll remember that there was a failed attempt first, because they didn't stop to consider the Word of God nor the holiness of God. And you'll remember that when they were bringing the Ark of the Covenant into the city they were carrying it on a cart pulled by oxen and one of the oxen stumbled, apparently. The Ark began to teeter a little bit on the cart. And so one of David's men reached out to steady the Ark with great intention. But he dropped dead on the spot because no man was to touch the Ark.

This was the representation of the presence of God in Israel, the holiness of God. And David was pretty upset even after that first attempt, thinking, how in the world are we going to do this? Well, then they went back and consulted the Word of God. They brought it in the way they were supposed to, carried on the shoulders of the priests and so forth. And it was a wonderful and glorious celebratory event. And it's very possible that this Psalm does find its center on that particular event.

However, I will tell you that there are others who believed that this Psalm may, while being connected to that event of bringing the Ark in, is also a prophetic look forward to the time following the Great Tribulation when Jesus makes His way into the city of Jerusalem as the conquering hero of Israel when He comes to put away the enemies of Israel and usher in the time of the Millennial Kingdom. I think it's very, very possible that is also the case here.

But you'll notice that this Psalm begins with a powerful statement declaring that as Creator God, the whole world belongs to the Lord. Again, it says, *"The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein,..."* And that's a simple statement. Basically says, everything belongs to God. And I think that if you and I probably had that question on a test, we'd probably get it right. True or false, the world and all therein belongs to the Lord. Yeah, I think that's probably true.

But it's interesting how it's so easy to forget in any given day, where we're using the words my and mine to describe the things that we own or the things that we have. Our name might be registered on a title deed somewhere showing that we have a legal right to some particular plot of land or whatever.

But ultimately everything we believe that we own belongs to God. Because this verse tells us in no uncertain terms, *"The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof,..."*

And it goes on to include you and me. Notice it goes on to end by saying, "*and those who dwell therein,.."* In a general sense, God can lay claim to not only everything, but everyone. It all belongs to Him.

Now, for you and I as believers, this is even more so true because we know that something additional has taken place as it relates to our relationship to God. Let me show you how the apostle Paul put it in 1 Corinthians chapter 6. He said,

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV)

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

There you go. You're not your own. As a Christian, you don't belong to yourself. That's a strange thought because it seems like I do. I mean, I seem to have this freedom to do what I want to do, go where I want to go. I can eat what I want. I can drink what I want. I can decide when I'm going to go to sleep. And it seems like I have this control over my body. And yet the Bible says that as a Christian, you've been bought with a price. And we know what that price is. It was the blood of Jesus Christ.

You have been purchased with the blood of Christ and you aren't your own. You can't say, it's my body, I can do what I want with it. You can't say that. It's His body. And He's going to direct that course.

You and I can't say, it's my future. It's my decision. It's... I do what I want to do and I consult no one. That's not possible for a believer. Well, it's possible you can do that, but you're going to be miserable. Our lives belong to the Lord. Our lives have been given to Him. And that is such an important thing to remember.

Now remember, the second part of this Psalm underscores the holiness of God. And it begins by asking some questions. Look at verse 3 with me. "*Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?"* This is the God who owns everything.

And now David asks the question; so, in light of His sovereign ownership of the earth, who has the right to stand before Him? Who can come before Him?

And then David gives the answer. Verse 4, check this out, *"He who has clean hands and..."* By the way that speaks of their outward actions. He also says, he who has "*a pure heart,..."* That speaks of the inward motives of the heart.

He goes on to say, "*who does not lift up his soul to what is false."* In other words, no false gods, no idolatry going on in his life or her life. "*...and who does not swear deceitfully."* We see there's 4 things that are listed here, and they're given as the reason, or the things that are required for somebody to come before the Lord.

I don't know if you're depressed yet. Because even David couldn't lay claim to always having clean hands or a pure heart. His, David's hands weren't always clean. His heart was not always pure. And how much more us.

I mean, I look at these verses and I think, okay, who can come before the Lord? *"He who has clean hands and a pure heart."* Do I have clean hands? No, I haven't all my life, for heaven's sake. And a pure heart? No, I can't say that. I

can't say that at all. We all have the same problem. Unfortunately for us, that means we're out of luck apart from Him.

Fortunately for us, God made a new covenant, a better covenant. By the way, that's what the writer of the Book of Hebrews says over and over again in the first several chapters of that book, that God made a better covenant, and that covenant it says, that anyone who enters by faith may enter the righteousness of God and come into His presence because our righteous standing is not earned, it is imputed.

And I know that sounds like theological talk, but it simply means that you and I, it's not about clean hands and a pure heart. That's not saying that God doesn't want us to have clean hands and a pure heart. What we're saying though is, that's not what's required to come into the presence of God.

The Bible says, "*the righteous shall live by faith*." (Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11) And so it's by faith in the finished work of Jesus we are imputed a righteousness, which is Jesus's righteousness. And it is by that righteousness that we're able to come into His presence and pray and worship.

And aren't you glad? I am tremendously glad that it's not based on my righteousness because I would be disqualified from coming into the presence of the Lord. I could never go into His presence apart from Christ. I couldn't. I would get to the gates and I would get turned away. And so would you.

The third and final section of Psalm 24 in verses 7 through 10, call upon the worshipper to open wide the gates that the King of glory may enter. It begins, *"Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in."* And then the question is echoed back. *"Who is this King of glory?"*

The answer is *"The LORD,* (and that is YAHWEH) *strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory!"*

Those of you who are at all familiar with Handel's Messiah will remember the lyrics to one of the songs that is included in Handel's Messiah. And it's an incredible piece.

It is possible that this portion of the Psalm, or maybe even the whole Psalm was used in corporate worship to reenact the entrance of the Ark into the city and

that sort of thing as we mentioned. But once again, I think that there is a prophetic connection.

I want to show you a quote here by a man by the name of F. B. Meyer. He made this quote, and I thought this was interesting. He said,

> This Psalm is accomplished in us when Jesus enters our hearts as our King to reign, and it will have its final realization when the earth and its population welcome Him as its Lord. **- F. B. Meyer**

This Psalm is accomplished in us when Jesus enters our hearts as our King to reign, and it will have its final realization when the earth and its population welcome Him as its Lord.

And that's what happens to usher in the Millennial Kingdom. Again, we see a prophetic element to this Psalm. And as Meyer says, not just prophetic of the future but speaking also of our own personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Open wide the gates that the King of Glory may enter.