

“Who is This King of Glory?”

Psalm 24 | Pastor Jason Van Bommel

A Psalm of David.

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. *Selah*

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 this 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! *Selah*

Intro: A Joyful Procession of Victory

After a long, hard-fought campaign has brought victory, we tend to like throwing a big parade. The end of World War 2 was marked by victory parades across America. I remember being in downtown Baltimore, working for Shine-FM, during the Ravens' first Super Bowl victory parade in 2001. And of course, every year on the 4th of July, we have a parade to celebrate our independence from Great Britain.

What we have in Psalm 24 is a victory parade psalm. Scholars disagree as to when David would have written this psalm, but it seems most likely to have been written for the joyful procession of the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem. This joyful procession came after many years of conflict and struggle for both David and for the people of Israel. The Philistines had oppressed Israel for generations.

During one battle in the years of hardship, Israel had been defeated, the sons of Eli the high priest had been killed in battle and the Ark of the Covenant had been taken captive by the Philistines. The Philistines returned the Ark after God brought curses and plagues upon them. But the Ark remained in private homes for years.

King David had spent many years after his anointing as king running for his life, hounded by King Saul. In a tragic battle against the Philistines, King Saul was killed. But rather than propel David to the throne, Saul's death led to years of civil war in Israel. Finally, after all of these years, David was crowned King of Israel, and he led the people to capture Jerusalem, a city held by the Jebusites in the midst of Israel.

Having captured Jerusalem and having defeated the Philistines decisively, David had just one more desire: To bring the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem, so the throne of God could be set within the new capital city. The first attempt to do so did not end well, as the Ark was placed on a cart, rather than being carried on poles by the Levites, as the Lord had commanded. Disaster struck when Uzzah reached out his sinful hand to steady the Ark of the Covenant, and he died.

Sobered by the experience, David led a joyful and holy procession three months later to bring the Ark into Jerusalem, this ancient city. *“And when those who bore the ark of the LORD had gone six steps, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened animal.¹⁴ And David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁵ So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the horn.”* – 2 Samuel 6:13-15

It seems David wrote Psalm 24 for this holy procession. It may even have been sung as a call-and-response between David and the priests and the people. What David makes clear in this psalm is that he himself is not the true and glorious king over God's people. The Lord is king.

I. **Creator and Lord of All the Earth**

What does all the world owe Him?

The opening stanza, verses 1-2, proclaims the Lord not only as Israel's king, but as the sovereign Lord over all the earth:

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.

God has made everything, His words framed the heavens and the earth, and His breath gives life to all people who live on the earth. What is fascinating here, as throughout the Bible, is the bold and plain declaration of God's position as Creator and Lord of All. This is not disputation, but proclamation. The Bible never engages in logical argument to prove the existence of God. It does not reason to persuade us of God's reality. It proclaims:

- *“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”*
- *“The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof”*
- *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*

These proclamations are backed up by demonstrations of God's power: As plagues strike Egypt, God demonstrates He is the true God, and the gods of Egypt are lifeless idols. When the Ark was taken into the Temple of Dagon by the Philistines, the statue of Dagon twice fell on its face before the Ark, the second time being broken in pieces. When Goliath mocked God, God used David to bring the giant down with a single stone from a sling. When Jesus proclaimed His kingship, He demonstrated it in numerous public miracles.

This is the way of Scripture: **Proclamation of the truth and demonstration of the reality of that truth.**

Here David is proclaiming the glorious truth that the Lord, YaHWeH, is the maker of all, and that all people belong to Him. Israel may be His chosen people and David His anointed king, but all people belong to God and owe Him worship. This proclamation was a direct challenge to Dagon of the Philistines and to Baal the storm god and Asherah the fertility goddess, the false gods of Israel's surrounding culture.

Today, it is an equally strong and clear challenge to the false gods of our age – whether the god of science and evolution, the god of the state, the god of the American Dream, the gods of pleasure, convenience, etc. Our culture may not make literal statues of Dagon, but its idols are very real nonetheless, and their attraction to our hearts is as real as the lure of Baal and Asherah were in the days of King David.

God alone created the world and made us in His image and put on this earth. Thus, the Lord alone deserves our worship.

But how can we approach God in worship?

II. Holy, Holy, Holy God

Who can stand before Him?

This is what the next stanza in Psalm 24 addresses. If we owe God our worship, what does it take to be able to approach Him in worship? Most gods of the nations just require some

sacrifice, some price to bribe them. The Lord is different. He requires holiness of heart and righteousness of conduct:

- 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. Selah*

Clean hands and a pure heart. God cares not only that we do the right things, but that we do these right things for the right reasons, He sees our hearts as clearly as He sees our actions, more clearly than we see them ourselves.

Around the throne of God, the four living creatures never stop chanting, “*Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD Almighty*” as they cover themselves from the radiant glory of His holiness.

Only he who has clean hands and pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false, who does not deceive either himself or others, may ascend the hill of the Lord or stand in His holy place, in His presence. The problem we all face when we read verses 3-4 is the truth that none of us is qualified. Our hands are dirty and our hearts are impure. Romans 3:10-18 summarizes our condition before God:

- “None is righteous, no, not one;
¹¹ no one understands;
no one seeks for God.
¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;
no one does good,
not even one.”*
- ¹³ *“Their throat is an open grave;
they use their tongues to deceive.”*
- “The venom of asps is under their lips.”*
- ¹⁴ *“Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”*
- ¹⁵ *“Their feet are swift to shed blood;
¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery,
¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known.”*
- ¹⁸ *“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”*

So, where is our hope? Well, this is where we come to Jesus and from Psalm 24 to Palm Sunday.

One person alone among all humanity does not fall under the sweeping indictment and condemnation of Romans 3. One person alone pleased the Lord in everything He ever thought or did and truly had clean hands and a pure heart. On Palm Sunday, He rode into Jerusalem, ascended the hill of the Lord and stood in the Temple, in the holy place. He alone, of all people in Jerusalem and in the Temple that day, had the right to ascend and to stand, for He passed the test of Psalm 24:3-4.

Here's something interesting about Psalm 24: In the Greek version of the Old Testament, which was the Bible read in most Jewish synagogues and used in the early church, Psalm 24 is labeled as being for use on the First Day of the Week, not the Sabbath Day, but Sunday, the day after the Sabbath, the First Day. This usage probably dates back to the Babylonian exile, or 600 years before Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

So, on Sunday, the day after the Sabbath (which He spent with Mary, Martha and Lazarus in Bethany), Jesus rode into Jerusalem in triumphal procession, in a scene very much like a victory parade. Hundreds of thousands of people teemed in the Kidron Valley as Jesus was hailed and cries went up before Him. People cried out, "Hosanna!" – Save us now! "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the Son of David, the King of Israel!" They were hailing the entrance of their king into Jerusalem and asking Him to be their deliverer.

Jesus had come to Jerusalem before, but now He comes having fulfilled all righteousness. He has pleased His Father in everything during His whole life, and He has unmistakably demonstrated His identity as the Messiah, the Son of God. Through a life of perfect obedience, clear proclamation and undeniable demonstration, Jesus had shown Himself to be the sinless Savior, the mighty Messiah, the coming King of Israel. All had been fulfilled, and now it was time for His Triumphal Entry.

When He comes, He receives blessing from the Lord – "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" When He comes, He also receives righteousness from the God of His salvation. As I've pondered Psalm 24, I believe this line has a different significance for Jesus than it does for us who follow and trust in Him.

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

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

Jesus receives God's blessing as One who has lived a perfect, sinless life. He receives His righteousness, given to Him as a gift He can give to others, as He agrees to take our sins upon Himself. This is what will happen on the cross as Jesus suffers. He will make the exchange. He has perfect righteousness from God, which he has earned and which He is able to give to others, in exchange for His taking their unrighteousness, their sin, upon Himself.

When we come to God, we don't come claiming our own righteousness. We don't meet the qualifications of verses 3-4. But if we come in faith, trusting in Jesus and not in ourselves, we receive the gift of His righteousness.

Jesus is the true Israel in Himself. He is the holy generation. He sought the face of the Lord unwaveringly, and thus He became in Himself the true Jacob, the true Israel. We who seek Him become in Him the true Israel, the truly vindicated people of God.

Psalm 24, in addition to anticipating the Triumphal Entry of Christ on Palm Sunday, also anticipates His resurrection, which also happened on a Sunday. Let's see that together now . . .

III. The LORD of Hosts, Mighty in Battle

What battles has He won?

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 this 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! Selah*

These words were originally sung to call for the ancient gates of the city of Jerusalem to be opened up before the Ark of the Covenant, that the Lord, the King of Glory, may come in. But in Jesus on Palm Sunday, they are fulfilled powerfully, as He crosses the Kidron Valley and enters through the Sheep Gate into the city. It is Passover Week, and Jesus enters the ancient gate through which God's people had brought Passover lambs for hundreds of years.

Jesus comes in as the King of Glory, mighty in battle. He has fought against the devil's temptations and has overcome them all. He has faced down the scoffers and mockers, has faced down demons and tormentors, overcome disease, blindness, ignorance, death, storms and more. He has battled and He has won, the LORD, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle!

He will enter to do more battle, as He will turn over the tables of the moneychangers and drive out the animal sellers from the Temple courts. He will face down the devil again in the Garden of Gethsemane, and He will again show Himself to be mighty in battle, winning victory through great agony.

Yet, once Jesus is dead and buried, He then wins victory over death by rising again. Here, the gates of death and Hades must open before Him, the victorious LORD, mighty in battle. He shows His victory over death and Hades because He now has the keys of death and Hades.

This is how He appears in Revelation 1: He appears to John in His glory, overwhelming John so powerfully John falls at His feet like a dead man. Christ then speaks to John words of comfort: *"Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."*

The Gates of Jerusalem and the Temple had to open before Jesus on Palm Sunday because He rode in as the truly righteous One, the One who had fulfilled the Law and who had perfectly clean hands and a pure heart. The Gates of death and Hades, even more ancient and strong than the gates of Jerusalem, had to open before Jesus on Resurrection Day, because He was given the keys of death and Hades as His reward for satisfying all requirements and winning the battle for our salvation.

Another connection we can see from Psalm 24 to the life of Christ is in the title for the King of Glory used in verse 10: Lord of Hosts. "Hosts" here doesn't refer to people who welcome you at a restaurant, but rather to the angel armies of heaven. We sang "God of Angel Armies" last week, and this is the title used here. In the life of Christ, we see angels announce His birth, attend Him in the wilderness after He had fasted for 40 days and was tempted by the devil, in the Garden of Gethsemane when He was in agony, at the Garden Tomb where they announced His resurrection, and at His ascension, where they told the Apostles to stop looking up at the sky, for Jesus would return again the same way He went up, through the sky. Jesus is the LORD of Hosts, the commander of the angel armies of heaven.

Seeing how Psalm 24 is fulfilled in the life and victories of Jesus also helps us see how He is both truly God – the LORD, Yahweh Himself, the King of Glory, mighty in battle, and He is also

the true Righteous Man, the One who alone is qualified to abide in the presence of God.

Conclusion: The Victory Won for You, Given to You

He who is true God and true man, the righteous One and the holy One, has not won His victory for Himself alone. He is not just the God-man, but He is the Savior, because He won the victory for us and for our salvation. Thus, Psalm 24 is about Christ, but it is not just about Christ. It applies to all of us who have fled for refuge to Christ, putting our faith in Him alone. In Him, and because of Him, we are counted as righteous. We are given clean hands and pure hearts as a gift, as His righteousness is counted as ours and His Spirit fills us.

So, rather than feeling overwhelmed by our own inadequacy when we read Psalm 24, we can cling to Christ, knowing that He not only fulfilled Psalm 24 perfectly, but that He did so for us. In Christ, we can be the generation of those who seek Him, those who stand in His presence on His holy hill, praising His holy name. In Christ, we are blessed and we are brought near and we are never again driven away in disgrace.