

Psalm 24 - Who is God and what has He done?

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[0 : 00] Now, if you turn in a Bible to Psalm 24, it's on page 555, which is quite pleasing!

Psalm 24, of David, a psalm. The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it. For he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.

Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy presence? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god.

They will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God their Savior. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, God of Jacob.

Lift up your heads, you gates. Be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty.

[1 : 22] The Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, you gates. Lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is he, this King of glory?

The Lord almighty. He is the King of glory. Ray, over to you. Let's pray, shall we? Father, we thank you already for the reminder of your greatness and your glory.

And Lord, we see that so beautifully in our Lord Jesus Christ who gave his life for us. Lord, thank you for that. Thank you for this psalm. We pray that you would speak to us.

And Lord, you would tell us what you want us to hear from you tonight. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. I thought I'd try and put a title.

Don't always do this. But I'll try and put a title to Psalm 24, mainly to help me, but perhaps it will help you. Perhaps not. I've got a clicker here. Right.

[2 : 31] Don't want to spoil the punchline there. So my title was this, okay. A song about the attributes of God and the history of redemption. But then I thought, let's try and break it down a bit.

And I'll come up with this one. Who is God and what has he done? That's the story of this psalm.

And in fact, you could say, if you're a Bible scholar, that that's the story of the whole Bible.

Who is God and what has he done? Psalm 24 is about a specific event in Israel's history. It's also the story of a much bigger picture.

The Olympic Games is an event that, if you are following it, happens every four years. But it has a bigger meaning to it.

The bigger story is this. Nations coming together, contributing to world peace and promoting friendship and mutual understanding between the nations.

[3 : 32] That's pretty much a dictionary definition of what the Olympic Games seek to do. So the bigger picture is much more important than the specific event.

And so it is with Psalm 24. It's a song written in celebration of a specific event in history. But it's also the story of a much bigger picture.

The historical event celebrated in the psalm was probably, we can't be certain of this, but it was almost certainly when David brought the Ark of God into Jerusalem.

We read about that in 2 Samuel chapter 6. And it was either written at the time of the event or perhaps afterwards to look back and celebrate the event.

And they're celebrating the symbol of God's presence, which was the Ark, being brought up the hill to Jerusalem and through the gates of the city of David.

[4 : 31] You'll see as you read it that it's a processional psalm, processional song, and it also is describing a journey. The bigger picture, let me give you a spoiler right at the beginning.

The bigger picture of the psalm is also a journey. But this is the journey of world history. That's a big claim for this psalm.

If you read it through, you'll see that it is the story of world history. Verses 1 and 2, God creating the world. Verses 3 to 6, God redeeming his people.

We'll see more about that later on. And in verses 7 to 10, Jesus ascending to heaven, leading his people home. Some of that isn't immediately apparent, but I hope as we go through it, we'll see that together.

The psalm seems to divide into these three sections. And I'd like to look at them under three headings. The main heading, who is God? Subheading. I think I'm supposed to turn on there.

[5 : 37] He's the maker and owner of everything. He is holy, unlike us. And he is the king of glory. To David and his people, it was a song which spoke of who God is and what he is like.

But when you and I read the psalm in the light of the New Testament, God's complete revelation, of course, we see clearly it's a song about Messiah Jesus and what he has done, not just for the Israelites, but for his people of every age.

So, where are we at to here? The first section here, who is God? He's the maker and owner of everything. Verses 1 and 2. I'm going to try and walk you through a bit here.

So, if it gets a bit kind of ploddy, forgive me. Just try and stay with him, following your Bibles. Verse 1, a statement is made. And it's a statement of fact.

All right? It doesn't actually surround it with anything where this could be true or it may not be true. It's an actual bold statement of fact. The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it.

[6 : 51] That is, every mountain, every field, every river, every tree, all the birds, all the animals, every human being belongs to God.

Every village, every city, every house, and all of the house contents belong to God. So, this is the fact that verse 1 tells us. The earth is the Lord's.

Now, verse 2 gives us the outflow of that statement. It gives us the logic of it. Why it's an undeniable fact that God, that the earth is the Lord's.

And it says, for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters. So, the logic is this. God owns this world because he made it.

God owns everything in it because he made it from nothing. No one else, nothing else contributed in any way to our existence. Even those we consider man-made and made by people God has made, with materials God has made.

[7 : 56] God has made everything. So, how should we respond to this knowledge? God has made everything. certainly with awe, awe and wonder at such a marvellous God, but also with confidence.

Confidence that our God is powerful and sovereign over all creation and therefore we can trust him. Confidence that living under the rule of the creator is the best for us because it was what we were made for.

To love him and to serve him is the best thing we can do. And confidence, thirdly, that it's the most loving thing we can do, that you can do, to tell someone that they need to submit to God's rule in their lives.

It's a truth that is relevant and applicable to everyone, whether they understand it or not. So in verse 2, David takes us back to the creation account and you notice there he says he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.

What does that remind you of in Genesis? Genesis 1 verse 9, God created the landmass by gathering together the waters. So David is taking us back then to Genesis, the first few chapters of Genesis.

[9 : 13] So in summary, we were created by God to live under his ownership, but we know as soon as Genesis chapter 3, Adam and Eve had a problem with this ownership of God.

And let's be frank, you and I, all human beings, still find it a problem today. In fact, a good friend of mine said to me that these verses are probably the most offensive verses in the whole of Scripture. Think of this. God owns me because he made me. If you were to tell that to a work colleague or a friend, how would they react to that? Nobody has the right to tell me how to live.

Nobody owns me. We don't want to live under God's rule. And bear this in mind as we go on now to the next section. He is holy.

Again, verse 3 is interesting actually to follow through the psalm to see what are statements, what are questions, why are things asked as questions.

[10 : 24] And I think it's to draw us into it. And verse 3 starts with two questions to draw us in. Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?

Well, we're not left very long to ponder on that because the next verse, verse 4, tells us, the one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false God. Do these verses seem completely disconnected to you from the verses we just read about God making the world? It seems to be a completely different subject. So why do they follow on from the wonderful declaration of God being maker and owner?

Well, David is trying to build a picture of God. And these verses tell us at least two things. Firstly, God is holy and we are not.

And secondly, and because of that, there is one who can ascend the mountain for us. Firstly, God is holy and we are not. The context of the whole psalm is about God's authority and glory, I think.

[11:37] It's drawing a comparison here in these verses between sinful human beings and a holy God. So these verses here, verse 3 onwards, are written so that we can see how awesomely pure God is and how utterly sinful we are.

Now we have some lovely white walls in this church. And some people have been working very hard, particularly Anna, working very hard to paint them. I don't know a lot about painting, Anna, but one thing I do know is that when you paint a wall, lovely white, brilliant white like this, you start to notice all the things around it which are not so clean and not so brilliant.

Well, that's what this psalm is doing for us. It's showing us the holiness of God and automatically we see how ungodly, how sinful we are.

Now, the passage isn't intended for us to measure up to see if we're holy enough, you know, asking us the question, well, I wonder whether I could ascend the mountain of the Lord.

I wonder whether I could stand in the holy place. No, it's clearly not that. Instead, it's written to show us how holy God is and therefore how different he is from us.

[12:54] So secondly, we're told about one, perhaps, who can ascend the mountain. Who can ascend this mountain? Who can stand in his holy place?

Who can stand before a holy God? Who is the one referred to in verse four? Who is it who receives blessing from the Lord and who will be vindicated or better translated, receive righteousness?

It says there in verse five. Well, of course, you've all sat under a good pastor's teaching and you know the answer to that, particularly with this morning sermon. Jesus is the only one who deserves the blessing of his father, but was cursed on a cross for us.

So that we would know his blessing. And receive his righteousness. By his death, he restores rebels who refuse to own God as their maker and owner.

And brings them to glory. My favorite commentator on this, on the Psalms, puts it like this. We see portrayed in Psalm 24 verses three to six.

[14:08] One flawless man bringing a whole generation, a new community of men and women with him covered by his righteousness and heirs of his blessing.

So where is he leading us? Where is Jesus taking us? And we see that in the next section. He is glorious.

Verses seven to ten. So glorious. He's the king of glory. I don't know whether you can read the words there, but I'll try and call it out to you.

This section has a command, a call and a response. If you're at the funeral on Friday, most of the congregation were Congolese.

And if you were there, you would have heard one guy calling out and the rest of the congregation following with a kind of a refrain.

[15:08] So between the two of them, there was the call and there was the response. And that is exactly what's happening here. There's a command, first of all. Then there's a call.

Then there's a response. So what is the command? Verses seven and verse nine are saying similar things. In fact, exactly the same thing.

Lift up your heads, you gates. Be lifted up, you ancient doors. Now, the picture here is of huge gates set into the city wall of Jerusalem.

The stone wall, thick wall, heavy wall with gates set in. So there's stonework going over the top. Anna will know about this. She's know about architecture.

It lintels over the thing to stop it, stop the stonework falling down and the gates. And the strange command is for the wall and the gates that they should be lifted up to make way for the king.

[16:09] We're clearly talking imagery here. And the point of the imagery is that the huge gates are far too small to let the magnificent king of glory through.

We see this illustrated in London with Tower Bridge. Most ships and vessels that use the Thames, they're under nine meters high so they can go under the bridge.

But larger ships, we might say to fit in with this text, the more glorious ships, they can't fit under there. And they have to raise the road that runs through so that the ships can go through.

So the gates of Jerusalem, again, this is a picture language, isn't it? The gates of Jerusalem were designed for people, carts and wagons to pass through. They were nowhere big enough for the king of glory to pass through.

He's far larger in magnificence. So the command was lift up your heads, you gates, be lifted up, you ancient doors. What was the call?

[17:14] It's a question. Who is this king of glory? It isn't David, though he was king in 2 Samuel chapter 6.

We told him immediately who it is in the response of verse 8. The Lord, Yahweh, he is the king of glory. How glorious is he? He's glorious beyond our imagination.

Now, last week, David Brown, standing here, was very brave. And he tried to explain what God's glory is like. I tried to remember word for word what he said.

And this is what I can remember. It might not be exactly right. Imagine the best thing you can think of, but multiplied and in perfection. All right.

So the best thing you can think about, multiplied and in perfection. In other words, David, it's really beyond our imagination. We can't get hold of the glory of God.

[18:16] It is too massive. So I'm not going to try and explain God's glory any more than that. I can't. But how do we see his glory? Well, verses 1 and 2 have told us that we see his glory in what he has made.

Verses 3 and 4 tell us that we see his glory in the spotless character that he has. But the psalmist here in this part of the psalm wants us to reflect on what he has done.

What victory he has won. We see this in response to the question, who is the king of glory? The response is in two verses. Very, very similar, but slightly different.

Verse 8. The Lord strong and mighty. The Lord mighty in battle. Verse 10. The Lord almighty, or the Lord of hosts. He is the king of glory. So the Lord is pictured here as a warrior.

Verse 8. Strong and mighty. Mighty in battle. And in verse 10, the Lord of hosts. The Lord of the armies of heaven, in other words.

[19:25] So who is the text talking about? The father or the son of Jesus? I think the answer to that question is yes.

Both. God's people reading and singing this in David's time would have thought of Yahweh, who had defeated their enemies. Given them victory.

And therefore given them security in their land. But with your perspective on history, my perspective, this side of the cross, we see this is about Jesus, king of glory.

And we see that in John chapter 1. He's co-creator with the father. It says through him, all things were made.

And without him, nothing was made that has been made. We see him in Colossians 2 as a savior. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

[20:27] And we see him in Philippians 2. And we see him in Philippians 2. He's the ascended king. Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.

That at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth. But you know, just as amazing is this truth here.

Not only is Jesus ascended, not only is he seated in glory, rightfully receiving the praise. But in doing so, in ascending, he leads the procession of his people to glory themselves.

Who are those people? They're those described in verses 5 and 6 of the psalm. Those who have received his righteousness and the blessing that he should have got.

And we now follow him to glory. So this has happened in Jesus' ascension. But it's fully realized.

[21:39] It will be fully realized when Jesus returns. And we rise to join him. And we enter into the presence of his father. What a glorious king we have.

So, finally, what does this mean for us today? Well, as a summary, Jesus fulfills this psalm completely. As creator, savior and enthroned king.

And enables us to join the procession that he leads to glory when he comes again. How should you respond to this today? How should I respond? Well, clearly with worship.

Worship the father and Jesus for creation, salvation and glorious exhortation. He is worthy of our praise. He is all glorious. The king of glory.

But also the right response is also submission. God is our creator, our king and our ruler. And therefore, every area of our lives should be submitted to him.

[22 : 44] To do with as he wishes. For his glory. That the king of glory may receive more glory. He is your king and ruler.

Lastly, trust. Should respond with trust. Trust Jesus, the only one who makes it possible for us to stand before the father. And will one day complete the glorious procession by taking us home with him forever.

Now, we know that's true. It's fact. We know that will happen. But sometimes our understanding, our vision becomes a bit clouded, doesn't it?

And we don't see it so clearly. It's a fact. He is coming back. And whatever you are going through and experiencing at the moment, which may turn your eyes from that.

It's a fact that you will be with him. Praising him forever. Giving him glory. As you should do. Not just as you want to do now. But really fully as you should do.

[23 : 52] So how does this all play out in eternity? David's song is a journey through history. As we've seen. But it's also the song of heaven.

Going on throughout eternity. It's a song to our creator. Revelation chapter 4. You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power.

For you created all things and by your will they were created and have their being. The heavenly hosts are still singing Psalm 24. You are worthy.

You are our creator. It's a song to our saviour. Revelation chapter 5. You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals because you were slain. And with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

A song to our saviour. You are worthy. And it's still a song about our glorious king. Revelation 21. Revelation 21. It tells us that the city does not need sun or the moon to shine on it.

[25 : 01] The glory of God gives it light. And the lamb is its lamp. Jesus, the glory of heaven. May God help us to realise that in our day-to-day living.

We just pray and then I'll come back to the stage. Father, thank you that you and your son are altogether glorious.

Beyond description. Beyond imagination. We thank you that one day because what you have done for us, we will be with you in glory and we will see that gloriousness and we will be able to respond in a fuller and a better way.

Lord, until that time, help us to see more of your glory. More of your ownership over us. More of what Christ has done for us on the cross.

And may we long for that day when you take us to be with you forever. In Jesus' name. Amen.