



World Christian Fellowship

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Psalm 24

When God comes home!

Psalms 24:1-10, *The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein. ²For He has founded it upon the seas, And established it upon the waters. ³Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? ⁴He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully. ⁵He shall receive blessing from the Lord, And righteousness from the God of his salvation. ⁶This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, Who seek Your face. Selah ⁷Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. ⁸Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, The Lord mighty in battle. ⁹Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. ¹⁰Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah*

Introduction

Psalm 24 is one of the grandest processional psalms in all of Scripture. Written by David most likely penned when the Ark of the Covenant was being brought into Jerusalem (**2 Samuel 6**).

It thunders with cosmic praise and intimate challenge. It is a song written in three movements, each asking a different question and leading us deeper into the heart of God.

The psalm opens with the declaration that this,

- Entire earth belongs to God (**V 1–2**).
- Who is worthy to stand in His presence (**V 3–6**).
- Culminates in a dramatic call-and-response: the ancient gates are commanded to swing wide so that the King of glory may enter (**V 7–10**).

This is not merely an ancient liturgical poem. It is a living Word that speaks to us today about creation, consecration, and the coming King.

As we study **Psalm 24**, we will see that when God comes home, everything changes.

1. The Earth belongs to God (Psalm 24:1–2)

a) A declaration of Divine Ownership

The psalm begins not with a whisper, but with a thunderclap of sovereignty.

V 1, *The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein.*

This is not a pious sentiment, but it is a foundational theological reality.

God does not merely visit creation He owns it, sustains it, and governs it.

Genesis 1:1, *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

Deuteronomy 10:14, *Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the Lord your God, also the earth with all that is in it.*

1 Corinthians 10:26, *for "the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness."*

Colossians 1:16–17, *For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*

b) The Grounds of Ownership: Creation.

Verse 2 gives the reason.

V 2, *For He has founded it upon the seas, And established it upon the waters.*

He founded the earth upon the seas.

This is creation language.

God's ownership is not derived from conquest or accident, but it flows from the fact that He made everything. This directly confronts the ancient Near Eastern worldview where land was divided among competing gods.

David declares that there is only one Lord, and the whole world is His address.

In **Job 38**, God answers Job from the whirlwind and asks.

Job 38:4, *“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding.*

The rhetorical question underscores that God's ownership predates human existence.

We are tenants, stewards, but certainly not landlords.

A businessman once amassed considerable wealth and began to think of his empire as entirely self-made. But a near-fatal illness brought him to his knees. In his recovery, he read **Psalm 24:1** and was undone. *"I have been treating God's possessions as my own,"* he said.

He later restructured his business around principles of stewardship, generosity, and accountability to God.

When we grasp that everything belongs to God, our finances, our bodies, our families, our time we stop clutching and start stewarding.

The practical implication is profound.

If the earth is the Lord's, then we are stewards, not owners.

- Our money is His.
- Our relationships are His.
- Our very breath is His loan to us.

2. Who May Ascend?

a) The Question of Holiness

Having established that the earth belongs to God, the psalm pivots to ask an arresting question.

V 3, *"Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in His holy place?"*

This is the mountain of God, the place where heaven and earth intersect.

The question is not academic. It is existential. **Who can be in the presence of the Holy One?**

Psalm 15:1, *Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?*

Isaiah 33:14, *The sinners in Zion are afraid; Fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"*

b) The Character of the Worthy.

V 4, *He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully.*

This gives a fourfold description of the one who may ascend.

- **Clean hands:** Outward actions that are free from injustice, violence, and wrongdoing.
- **A pure heart:** Inward motivations that are undivided in their devotion to God.
- **Does not lift up his soul to what is false:** Someone who does not worship idols or place ultimate trust in anything other than God.
- **Does not swear deceitfully:** A person of integrity whose word is reliable and whose character is consistent.

This is not a checklist for moral achievement. It is a portrait of a heart in alignment with God, a soul that has been shaped by grace.

Matthew 5:8, *Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.*

Hebrews 12:14, *Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:*

1 Peter 1:15–16, *but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,¹⁶ because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.”*

The Tension: No one qualifies

Romans 3:10, *As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one;*

Romans 3:23, *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

These two verses remind us that there is no one righteous, and we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

If the standard is clean hands and a pure heart, every human being stands disqualified. The psalm creates a tension that only the gospel can resolve.

The Rich Young Ruler

Mark 10:17–22, *Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”* ¹⁸*So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.* ¹⁹*You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’”* ²⁰*And he answered and said to Him, “Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.”* ²¹*Then Jesus, looking*

at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." ²²But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

A young man comes running to Jesus, asking what he must do to inherit eternal life. He has kept the commandments, at least outwardly. But Jesus exposes the idol of wealth hidden in his heart.

Clean hands. Not a pure heart.

He went away sorrowful.

The psalm's standard is not merely behavioural. It reaches into the inner chambers of the soul.

The Gospel Answer.

The good news is that Jesus Christ, the one who is perfectly described in verse 4, ascended the hill on our behalf.

- ✓ His were the truly clean hands, hands stretched out on a cross for our sins.
- ✓ His was the pure heart, fully devoted to the Father even unto death (**Philippians 2:8**).

V 5, He shall receive blessing from the Lord, And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

When we trust in Him, His righteousness is credited to us.

We do not ascend by our merit, but we ascend in His name.

2 Corinthians 5:21, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

c) A Generation That Seeks Him.

V 6, This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, Who seek Your face. Selah

Describes not isolated individuals, but a generation a community of seekers. The word "seek" (**Hebrew: darash**) implies persistent, intentional pursuit.

This is the church: a people who have not arrived, but who are always pressing toward the face of the God of Jacob.

Consider the story of a young woman raised in a nominally religious home who, after years of moral striving and religious performance, collapsed under the weight of her own failures.

In her brokenness, she read Psalm 24 and was struck: "I cannot ascend on my own." That night, she knelt and surrendered to

Christ not offering clean hands but asking Him to make them clean.

Years later, she leads a women's Bible study, teaching others that the hill of the Lord is climbed only by grace, through faith, in Christ.

3. Open the Gates!

a) The Triumphant arrival of the King of Glory

The final section of the psalm erupts into drama. A voice cries out.

V 7-10, *Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.*
⁸Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, The Lord mighty in battle. ⁹Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.
¹⁰Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah

The command is repeated twice in **V 7 & 9**, with growing intensity.

This is a royal processional, a King is arriving, and the ancient doors must be flung wide.

But who is this King?

2 Samuel 6:12–19, David brings the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem.

Revelation 19:11–16, describes Christ on White horse as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

John 10:9, *I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*

Ephesians 1:20–23, Church has given all authority and Christ been the head of that body.

b) The Historical Meaning: The Ark comes to Jerusalem

In **2 Samuel 6**, David brings the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God's presence into Jerusalem with dancing, music, and sacrifice.

The Ark represents the Lord enthroned between the cherubim.
Psalm 80:1, *Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth!*

When David wrote **Psalm 24**, he likely did so for this great procession. The city was to receive its true King, not David himself, but the Lord of hosts.

Lesson:

God does not merely desire to be acknowledged from a distance. He desires to dwell among His people.

This was the whole story of the Tabernacle, the Temple, and ultimately, the Incarnation.

Emmanuel: God with us.

c) The Christological Meaning: Jesus, the King of Glory.

The early church fathers and the apostles understood Psalm 24 as pointing directly to Jesus Christ.

The Ascension of Christ (Acts 1:9–11) fulfils the imagery of the King of glory entering the eternal gates.

The early church read **Psalm 24:7–10** as Jesus returning in triumph to the heavenly throne room after His resurrection and ascension.

Philippians 2:9–11, *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven,*

and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Hebrews 1:3–4, *who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,⁴ having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.*

Revelation 5:9–14, Song of redemption to the Lamb of God.

In **Acts 2:32–36**, Peter preaches at Pentecost: *"God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."*

The King of glory who descended in humility to a manger and to a cross has now ascended to the throne. The ancient doors have been lifted for the One who conquered sin, death, and hell.

d) The Eschatological Meaning: The Return of the King.

Psalms 24 also looks ahead.

Revelation 19:11–16 describes the Second Coming of Christ as a triumphant warrior-king: faithful, true, and clad in robes dipped in blood.

The earth will see its rightful Owner return, not in a manger, but in majesty.

The cry "*Lift up your heads, O gates!*" will sound again, louder and more glorious, when the King of kings comes to reign forever.

Revelation 19:16, "*On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.*"

During the darkest days of **World War II**, the Allied forces were fighting back across Europe. After years of occupation, the liberation of **Paris in August 1944** was met with streets flooded with weeping, rejoicing crowds.

People who had lived under darkness and oppression came out to welcome freedom.

For the Christian, this is a faint shadow of what the Second Coming will be the entire creation groaning and finally breaking forth in joy as the true King returns.

We are not defeated people waiting to be destroyed. We are occupied citizens awaiting liberation.

Applications

Living in Light of Psalm 24

Psalm 24 is not only a song to be sung on Sundays. It is a framework for how we live all week long. Here are practical applications for the daily Christian life:

1. Practice Stewardship, Not Ownership.

Begin each day by acknowledging: ***"Lord, this day is Yours. My money, my time, my body — all of it belongs to You."***

This simple act of surrender dismantles the idol of self-sufficiency. Stewards care for what belongs to another; they hold it loosely, spend it wisely, and give it generously.

Matthew 25:14–30 (Parable of the Talents)

1 Corinthians 6:19–20, *Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*

2. Pursue Clean Hands and a Pure Heart.

The pursuit of holiness is not legalism — it is love. We pursue purity because we love the King who purchased us. This means:

- **Regular self-examination:** *"Search me, O God, and know my heart"* (Psalm 139:23–24).

- **Guarding what we see, hear,** and dwell upon in our minds (**Philippians 4:8**).
- **Confessing sin quickly** and receiving the cleansing of Christ (**1 John 1:9**).
- **Building accountability** into our lives a friend, a mentor, a small group.

3. Open the Gates of Your Heart.

The imagery of lifting up the gates is also personal.

Revelation 3:20 echoes Psalm 24 says.

Revelation 3:20, *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."*

Have you lifted the gates of your heart?

Are there areas habits, relationships, ambitions where the King of glory has not yet been welcomed?

4. Join the Generation That Seeks Him.

Verse 6 describes a community. Christianity is not a solo sport.

We are called into a generation of seekers the church.

Commit yourself to community:

- to worship,
- to the Word,

- to prayer,
- to service together.

You were not designed to pursue God alone.

Find your people those who seek the face of the God of Jacob and run alongside them.

Hebrews 10:24–25, *And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Acts 2:42, *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

5. Live as Citizens of the Kingdom, Not subjects of this Age.

Because the King of glory has ascended and will return, we live between two great events: the Ascension and the Second Coming. This means we are:

- **Hopeful — not despairing**, for the King is on His throne.

- **Courageous — not fearful**, for the Lord of hosts is our commander.
- **Generous — not grasping**, for the earth is the Lord's.
- **Holy — not conformed to this world**, for we belong to a different Kingdom.

Romans 12:1–2, *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

1 Peter 2:9, *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light;*

Conclusion

Psalm 24 moves in a magnificent arc.

From the earth as God's possession, to the question of who can stand before Him, to the glorious arrival of the King. It is, at heart, the story of the gospel compressed into ten verses.

We are creatures who have no standing before the holy God not because He has rejected us, but because our hands have not been clean and our hearts have not been pure.

Yet God, in His sovereign grace, sent the King of glory into our world.

- ✓ He descended before He ascended.
- ✓ He washed dirty hands with His own blood before presenting us clean before the Father.
- ✓ He emptied Himself before the ancient doors were opened for Him in triumph.

One day soon the cry will ring out again through the cosmos:
"Lift up your heads, O gates!"

The King of glory will come in not to a tent or a temple, but to a renewed creation, and He will dwell with His people forever.

Revelation 21:3, *"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.'"*

Until that day, we hold the gates open in our hearts.

We seek His face.

We steward His world.

We pursue clean hands and a pure heart not by our own power, but by the grace of the One who is Himself the King of glory.

Who is this King of glory?

The Lord of hosts — He is the King of glory!

Soli Deo Gloria!

To God alone be the Glory!