

## Psalm 24: Let the King of Glory Come In!

**Introduction:** Fourth-century church father Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, strong defender of orthodox Christianity against Arianism and paganism, once said that the Psalms are the **gymnasium of the soul**. Do you like to go to the gym? I confess we don't go, but we do daily exercise because we know how important it is to our health; but it's not just your body that needs exercise – it's your soul! So take your soul to the gym this summer! I like to call the Psalms the Lord's "**therapy sessions**" for our souls, counseling His saints through the rocky places, desert wilderness, valley of the shadow, and all the other rough terrain: teaching us to pray, to praise, to fight our battles in His strength, teaching us lay our burdens and sorrows on Him, and pour out our hearts – not just in isolation, but in community. The Psalms were the Jewish hymnbook, the gateway to worship, their prayer manual, their spiritual warfare manual; besides all that, it's the Old Testament book most quoted by Jesus (He knew it all by memory – that's how important it was to Him!).

What greater motivation do you need to get you reading a psalm a day? How will you manage to order your life otherwise? Our psalm for today, Psalm 24, is a royal or kingship psalm, focusing on God's ownership of creation, requirements for approaching His presence, and culminating in the triumphal entry of the King of Glory to the celestial city. But it's also like a riddle that needs solving!

**vv. 1-2:** "The earth belongs to Yahweh and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein. For He founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the rivers."

So who's the Owner of creation? It's Yahweh Himself – that sacred name that God had revealed to humans as early as Gen. 4:26, and which in the time of Joel the prophet was called on for salvation (Joel 2:32, Acts 2:21, Rom. 10:13). The thesis that says everything that exists is the result of random chance – that everything sprang from nothing on its own – makes no sense at all! The very laws of the universe dictate against that lack of logic! And the psalmist insists that everything God made belongs to Him, including *our very lives*! This is why in our inner being we can hear the **echo of a voice** that's calling us to our Creator Father. What we **most long for**, only He can provide. This is why **Augustine** the famous 5<sup>th</sup>-century theologian (354-430), said, "You made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you." We were made for love, so we could enjoy communion with Him. As creatures, our natural inclination is to admire and worship whatever is greater, more powerful, or more beautiful than we are, but in fact, only the greatest, most powerful and beautiful of all is worthy of our worship: the worship that nourishes and saves! Not so idolatry, which is false worship, and also our default mode! So we actually have a **thirst for God** (or spirituality) = thirst for something deeper than what religion can provide; a **thirst for justice** = thirst for fairness more authentic than what human courts can achieve; a **thirst for relationship** = more gratifying relations than what we often experience in our society and families; a **thirst for beauty** = glory more permanent than what this world can offer. And all this thirst is actually provoked by the echo of a voice that resounds in our souls and makes us want to **know the Author** of this voice!

**v. 3:** So the psalmist David poses a rhetorical question: "Who shall ascend the hill of Yahweh? And who shall stand in His holy place?" It's the same question as in Ps. 15: "Yahweh, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill?" And both remind us of the apostle John's vision in Rev. 5 when he saw a book sealed with seven seals, and the angel announced: "**Who is worthy** to open the scroll and break its seals?" Basically it's the same question in each case, but in none of these cases is it about a popularity contest or a beauty contest, or a test of strength, or some kind of merit system. This question is much more complex than that, because the standard is extremely high: basically it's perfection ... the perfection of love! Let's look at the response (v.4).

**v. 4:** “The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false [vanity = idols], and does not swear deceitfully [by what is false].” In the first part, talking about clean hands and a pure heart, the focus is on right relationships, which really are the source of our greatest satisfaction and happiness in life; but at the same time they tend to be the source of our deepest conflicts and sorrows in life! (Someone has said, “Love and pain go together!”) Is it that way in your family? In biblical families it was generally that way, from the Garden of Eden all the way to the family of Jesus! So don’t be surprised when your family feels that way sometimes! In summary, this part of the verse is about loving your neighbor as yourself: perfectly!

The second half of the verse talks about “lifting up your soul” to something or someone; this is the **language of worship**! David often spoke of “lifting up his soul” to the Lord (try this out some time in your private devotionals!). But worship also has to be perfect, unmovable loyalty, complete faithfulness. So this is about loving the true God with all your being! So both parts of v. 4 focus on our **relationships** (horizontal and vertical). What king wants to have a soldier in his service who sometimes has friendly connections with the enemy? (Whenever we give in to our old nature, we are in effect cooperating with the enemy’s plans!) Jesus said, “You cannot serve two masters,” end of story! But this is precisely what our old nature tries to do! “Just play the field, so you can get the best deals!” It reminds me of a situation in our neighborhood: we have a Mercadona, Lidl, and Ahorramás all in a row together. So everyone looks at their ads and products to see who has the best prices, discounts, deals. Of course, this is just good consumer logic! But the Israelites applied this same logic to Yahweh, Baal, Moloch, and Astaroth – putting the local Canaanite gods on the same plane with the God of Israel, all in the hope of gaining some advantage! The Bible teaches us that **overcoming idolatry is the most complicated challenge you’ll ever face** in your whole life, and you won’t achieve it on your own, because Jesus is the only One in all of history who has done it right (which is the reason we call Him Savior!): loving His Father and His neighbor perfectly throughout His life, even in the agony of death, being tortured and mocked by the human race and all of Satan’s hosts. So the **remedy that Jesus offers** is the only one that works: “take up your cross and follow me.” No other remedy can make a true, lasting difference! Please take time to meditate on that!

**vv. 5-6:** This is the one who will receive the blessing of Yahweh as his recompense, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. And **such is the generation** of those who seek the face of God. – But wait! – “Those who seek the face of God”? In Ps. 14, David, under inspiration from the Holy Spirit, recognized that **no one truly seeks God** (the Bible’s verdict regarding the human race): “they’ve all fallen away; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.” And Paul quotes this Psalm in Rom. 3 to affirm the same truth, that there’s no hope for our race if we have to depend on our own resources! So in John’s apocalyptic vision, when he realizes that no one – in heaven or on earth or under the earth – was able to open the scroll or even to look into it, he felt such desperation that he broke down and wept (that reflected the true situation of humanity!). Such a true and painful verdict, but NOT THE END of the story! (“Is He Worthy?”)

**vv. 7-10:** So in the next stanza of the psalm the doors of the eternal city are commanded to lift up their heads, to raise their gates, so that the King of glory may come in. So we return one more time to Rev. 5 to pick up an interpretive key for this passage. Because of John’s anguish, seeing that no one was worthy to open the seals of the scroll, an elder came over to him and said, “Weep no more! Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, **has conquered**, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.” And what does the Lion of Judah have to do with this King of glory in Ps. 24? Paul gives us a clue in 1 Cor. 2:8, “None of the rulers of this age understood [the hidden wisdom of God], for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” So clearly the Lord of glory (who was crucified) and this King of glory are one and the same! And this is precisely what vv. 8/10 point to as they pose the question “Who is this King of glory?” Then they respond to the question by identifying this King of glory with Yahweh Himself! But that’s also exactly how Jesús had identified Himself: with Yahweh! He called Him His Father, He declared

that He and the Father were one, that “before Abraham was, I AM”; “if you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father!”

We just have a final question left to resolve: **what was the glory** this King was clothed in? To answer this, we turn to the story of Moses when he was just starting to lead the children of Israel through the desert, but he was growing in confidence. And one day it occurred to him to ask God if he could **see His glory**. Remember what happened afterward? God hid Moses in the cleft of the rock, covered him with His hand, then caused His glory to pass by so that Moses could just contemplate that glory that radiated from God’s backside. But we mustn’t think this was just about a light show! God’s revelation is always accompanied by the word that interprets it; and in this case it was Yahweh himself who announced **His sacred covenant name**, and declared His eternal **character** that describes the essence of His Being: (Heb.) *rajún v-janún, érek appáyim, v-rav jésed ve-emeth*, which means, “compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, great in lovingkindness and truth (=faithfulness).” These five “heavy weights” reflect the glory of the King, and they are repeated so many times through the O.T., that it’s impossible not to recognize the importance they have: e.g., Ps. 86:15, 103:8, 145:8; Joel 2:13, Jonah 4:2, Neh. 9:17, etc. **It matters very much to God** that we know His true character; and He wants us to see His glory; He longs for His holy mount to be full of saints, who reflect His glory to the world! This is why He sent His Son to represent Him – nobody better! And the Gospel of John is where we see an especially strong emphasis on Christ’s glory (Jn. 1:14, Jn. 12-13, Jn.17). In Jesus’ final high-priestly prayer, He, like Moses, had a special request for God regarding His glory – but it wasn’t about a desire to *see* that glory, but to *enflesh* it: “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son, so that the Son may glorify you.” I.e., Jesus was longing to manifest all that glorious character of His Father: incarnating His compassion, grace, slowness to anger, lovingkindness and truth, in the straits of His suffering and agony. He believed that the cross of Calvary would be His moment of greatest earthly glory ... in the midst of all the rejection, insults and torture He wd have to endure at the hands of His creatures, forgiving them and defeating our greatest enemy at the same time! True glory begins for us by opening the gates of our lives and letting Jesus enter to rein as the true King that He is, even in moments of stress, crisis, or tragedy!

Will you let the King of glory come in this morning? Into your struggles and sorrows! Confess His name over your fears and insecurities! Confess His Lordship over your troubled relationships and impossible situations! ... Let Him in, give *Him* the control of your soul, let *Him* reign in your brain ... so that you too can manifest His character and glory in *His* world!