

## Psalm 24

Psalm 24 is a psalm that the people would sing when the king would enter into Jerusalem. Here you have to imagine a few things. You have to imagine the high hill called Mount Zion. It wasn't a snowcapped mountain like we would see in Colorado, but it was a high hill; and on top of Mount Zion, the glorious city of Jerusalem was built—an ancient city, a city that had been there for hundreds and hundreds of years, and a city that God had given to David. This city was beautiful, with the king's palace, many different buildings, and powerful walls. The temple was not yet built in David's day; that would be built in Solomon's day; but Jerusalem was a grand city on top of the hill. And now all of the people are in a procession, making their way to that hill and winding their way up that hill to the gates of the city of Jerusalem. And the king of the people is out in front. There is David, leading this procession; and there are his people, following behind him.

Psalm 24 is a confession about the God who lives in Jerusalem, first of all (vv. 1–2). Then we get to an entry challenge—who may come into this city? who is allowed to ascend the hill of the Lord?—and the answer to that challenge (vv. 3–6). Then, finally, we have the glorious, triumphant entry of David and his people into that city (vv. 7–10), which is a picture of Jesus Christ and his ascension into heaven. That is the scene as we read Psalm 24.

In verses 1–2 of this psalm, there is a confession of the greatness of God. The song has to begin that way because as this procession makes its way up Mount Zion, the people in the procession need to be impressed with where they are going. They are going to the city of God, the place where God dwells. They are going to the place where in David's day God had his house in the tabernacle and where in Solomon's day God would have his house in the temple. They are going to meet with God, and so the whole procession must be impressed with how great God is.

How great is God? So great that the earth is the Lord's—the whole earth. The fullness of the earth belongs to God. The fullness of the earth means all of the things that are in it—all the plants and all the animals and all the people, the heavens and the earth and the seas and everything that is in them. "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (v. 1). Not only the people of Israel belonged to God as his creatures but also the Philistines and the Edomites and the people who dwell in the islands of the seas. All things are the Lord's. All belong unto him, for he is the great creator. That is how great he is. "For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods" (v. 2). That verse refers to God's creation of the world. He made all things. He is the one who established the earth, and that is why the earth and all its fullness and all of its inhabitants belong to him. The people, as they ascend Mount Zion and go to the city of Jerusalem, are not about to meet with some local, insignificant king but with the God of heaven and earth, the God to whom all things belong.

And so when they come to the gates of the city, a challenge has to be made. Verses 3–6 are an entry challenge. In a city with gates that would keep out the foe, there might be a sentry posted, a soldier whose task was to challenge anyone who wanted to enter into the city. Not just anyone may enter, after all, especially into the house of a great and mighty king. Only those who are worthy may enter. And so the sentry, the soldier, at the gates might say something like this: "Halt. Who goes there?" That would be an entry challenge, and then an answer would have to be given, and the person would either have the right to enter or have no right to enter. At the gates of God's city, this is the entry challenge: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?" (v. 3). That entry challenge asks, do you know who you are dealing with here? This is the Lord's hill, Jehovah's hill, the hill of the I AM THAT I AM. He is the God of heaven and earth. He is the one who made all things. The heavens and the earth

are his, and all the fullness of them belongs unto him. Who shall ascend into *his* hill, and who shall stand in *his* holy place? Do you know what kind of a God he is? Not only is he the creator of all things, so that all things belong to him; but he is also a holy God. He is a consuming fire. Jehovah God burns to himself constantly with a perfect, a perpetual, an infinite love. He is perfectly consecrated to himself and can stand no opposition or contradiction to himself because he is a mighty, powerful God. This is the holy God, and he has a holy place.

Coming to the holy place of Jehovah God, the entry challenge is, “Who may stand with him? Who may be in his presence?” There is only one kind of person who may. The first requirement for that person is “he that hath clean hands” (v. 4), so that the entry challenge to all those who stand outside the gate is this: Show me your hands. Are your hands clean? *Hands* here is a picture of all the work we do, all the things we do. Just like your eye is the instrument of seeing and your mouth is the instrument of speaking, your hand is the instrument of working. So this is referring to everything you have ever done. Show me your hands. Is everything you have ever done perfect? Is everything you have ever done clean? You must have clean hands to come before the Holy One.

And he that hath a pure heart. The heart here is your spiritual center, just like the heart that pumps blood through your body is the center of your body. That heart sends blood to every corner of your body, every cell of your body. So also our spiritual heart is the center of our whole spiritual life; and the entry challenge is that your heart must be pure. Let me see your heart. Is there any thought in that heart contrary to God? Is there any desire in that heart that is not perfectly pure? Only those whose hearts are pure may come into the hill of the Lord.

The entry challenge goes on in verse 4, “Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.” “Vanity” there is another word for *idol*. Vanity is emptiness, and idols are empty. They are nothing. They are wood; they are stone. They are not powerful. They have eyes, but they do not see. They have hands, but they do not handle. They don’t do anything. They are empty. And so the Bible often calls idols vanities—emptiness, nothingness. Whoever has not lifted up his soul to vanity, to an idol—that is, he has only ever worshiped God perfectly—may enter in. “Nor sworn deceitfully,” that is, sworn falsely, so that there is a lie in him. Only those who are perfectly truthful, only those who have never lifted up their souls to idols, only those whose hearts are pure and whose hands are clean, may come in.

Verse 5 continues that entry challenge. “*He* shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.” Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? A perfect man—he shall receive the blessing from Jehovah.

Now, can you imagine this entry challenge’s being made as the king ascends the hill of Zion? Who may come into the house of the Lord? It is evident, then, that this psalm is talking about one person, and it wasn’t David. David was only the picture. His hands were not perfectly clean nor his heart perfectly pure. As he went up Mount Zion, he stood as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the one whose heart is pure. He is the one whose hands are clean. He is the one who has always worshiped God perfectly and never lifted up his soul to an idol. He is the one who has never sworn deceitfully but has always, always spoken truth, for he is the truth. He is the one who may ascend the hill of the Lord and stand in his holy place.

And, indeed, the gates are opened for that one. But before those gates are opened, as all the people look at their king, type of Jesus Christ, and see Jesus Christ, the man who may come into God’s presence,

there is a beautiful, wonderful declaration about all the people. “This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob” (v. 6). That is, these are the people who seek God and his church. The king may go in because his hands are clean and his heart is pure—and he takes us with him! He takes a generation with him, the generation of his people. You may go into the house of the Lord, not because your hands are clean and your heart is pure, not of yourself. But you may go into the house of the Lord because Jesus’ hands are clean, and his heart is pure. And when God looks at you, he looks at you through Jesus’ hands and through Jesus’ heart and says, “I see in you clean hands and a pure heart”—not because they are clean and pure by nature but because he sees Christ there. This is the glorious gospel of salvation for the generation of God’s people: you may go up to the house of the Lord; you may go up the hill of Zion; you may stand in his holy place for Jesus’ sake.

And then comes the third section of the psalm, after the description of the greatness of the God whose house we are going to and the description of the entry challenge for who may enter God’s house. In verses 7–10 we come to the actual entry itself. Here God has looked at the king. He has examined the one who stands outside the gates, Jesus Christ. He sees his pure heart and his clean hands, and so he declares, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates”; and the gates of the city open up. “And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors”; and the doors of the city open wide, and the king of glory enters in.

There are a couple of things that are surprising and unexpected about this part of the psalm. Notice what kind of doors they are. Everlasting doors. The doors of Jerusalem were old. That city had been around a long time, even before Israel had entered the land of Canaan. Mighty nations had built that city long ago. But the doors in that city were not everlasting. This psalm speaks of “everlasting doors.” When it does so, it is teaching us that Jerusalem is just a picture and that our eyes and hearts are not to be fixed on that earthly city but on the reality, which is heaven. Heaven is the kingdom, the city, that has everlasting doors. Heaven is Mount Zion, so that what we are dealing with is entering into heaven and entering into God’s home and living with him. “Be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in” (v. 7). That is the first surprising thing: we are actually talking about heaven!

And then the second surprising thing is that the king we are talking about is not merely David. Look at how this king of glory is described. The question is asked, “Who is he?” so that all the people can praise this king as he comes in. They could all shout his name. Who is the king of glory? The answer is that Jehovah is the king of glory, so that we are talking about Jesus Christ, who is God come in our flesh and the Word made flesh as our savior. This is the king who comes into heaven.

When did the Lord Jesus Christ come into heaven with this thunderous, glorious, exalted entrance? In his ascension, when a cloud picked him up from the Mount of Olives, where the disciples were gathered, and carried him into heaven. This was what was said in heaven when Jesus Christ was brought to the gates of heaven by that cloud of glory. “Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle” (v. 8). The gates of heaven gave way, the bars of heaven opened up, the doors opened, the Lord Jesus Christ entered, and the cloud chariot brought him right to the throne of Jehovah God. God gave him a seat at his own right hand. We are reading here about the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ into heaven.

And that ascension of our Lord is a promise to you. There is a pledge in that ascension that because Jesus went in, you may go in; that because he sits at God’s right hand, you may too, for his sake and through him; and that he will surely bring you there when it is his time because that is his home with Jehovah God, and that is where he made your home with God forever as well.

That is the glorious processional of Psalm 24.

- Reverend Andy Lanning