

## Psalm 24      The King's Glory      Brent Schlittenhart

One of the major themes in the Old Testament is the kingship of God. Psalm 24 is one of many passages about the kingship of the Lord as a basis of worship and praise. Psalm 24 is unique in how it emphasizes the kingship of God. Hassell Bullock writes that “This name for God (“King of glory”) is found nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible, although Psalm 29:3 has “the God of glory.” The name King of Glory is used five times in this psalm.”<sup>1</sup> Michael Green writes that “God’s “glory” is how we describe the sum effect of all of his attributes. Grace, truth, goodness, mercy, justice, knowledge, power, eternity—all that he is. Therefore, the glory of God is intrinsic, that is, it is as essential to God as light is to the sun, as blue is to the sky, as wet is to water. You don’t make the sun light; it is light. You don’t make the sky blue; it is blue. You don’t make water wet; it is wet. In all of these cases, the attribute is intrinsic to the object. The glory that is God’s is his in his essence. You can’t de-glory God because glory is his nature. You can’t touch his glory. It cannot be taken away. It cannot be added to. It’s his being.”<sup>2</sup> Psalm 24 reads.

**PS 24:1 The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; <sup>2</sup>for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters. <sup>3</sup>Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? <sup>4</sup>He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. <sup>5</sup>He will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God his**

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<sup>1</sup> C. Hassell Bullock, [\*Psalms 1–72\*](#), ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, vol. 1, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2015), 178.

<sup>2</sup> Michael P. Green, [\*1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 168.

Savior. <sup>6</sup>Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, O God of Jacob.

<sup>7</sup>Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. <sup>8</sup>Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. <sup>9</sup>Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. <sup>10</sup>Who is he, this King of glory? The Lord Almighty—he is the King of glory.<sup>3</sup>

### 1. The King's Glory through His Creation (24:1-2)

One of the ways this psalm emphasizes the King's Glory is through God's creation. Everything and everyone is created by God and is dependent on God for existence. It all belongs to the Lord because he created it and established it. As such the King of Glory has authority over everyone and everything. Psalm 19:1 says, "the heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the works of his hands." Romans 1:20 says that "for since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities that is his eternal power and his divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been created." In their book *Exalting Jesus through the Psalms*, the authors show the connectivity of the creation with the Lord Jesus Christ. "And just who is this Lord who created all that is? Listen to the Word of God. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.* (John 1:1–3)

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<sup>3</sup> [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), Ps 24.

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through him and for him.* (Col 1:15–16)

*Long ago God spoke to our ancestors by the prophets at different times and in different ways. In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son. God has appointed him heir of all things and made the universe through him.* (Heb 1:1–2) Who is this Creator-God (vv. 1–2) and King of glory (vv. 7–10)? It is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is the King of glory.”<sup>4</sup> The King’s glory is revealed through His creation.

## **2. The King’s Glory through His Gifts (24:3-6)**

This psalm declares the King’s Glory is revealed through his gifts of righteousness, holiness, blessing, and vindication. The question asked in this psalm is who can approach the Lord and be in his presence. These verses echo the fuller expression found in Psalm 15. The questions spoken in these verses indicate that those who seek entrance need to rely upon the grace and mercy of the Lord to be in the presence of the King of Glory. The emphasis in these verses is not on ritual purity but on ethical, behavioral, and motivational aspects required of the worshipper. None of us can fulfill these requirements on our own merit. Romans 3:23 says that we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Tremper Longman writes that “the liturgy is not so much a self-righteous

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<sup>4</sup> J. Josh Smith and Daniel L. Akin, [\*Exalting Jesus in Psalms 1–50\*](#), ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2022), 181.

declaration of innocence as it is a solemn admission of dependence on the merciful grace of God.”<sup>5</sup> Willem VanGemereren writes that “The Lord expects purity and singleness of heart from all who seek his presence. Purity of “hands” and “heart” is the condition of living before God in accordance with his precepts and out of the desire of his heart. Appearance of holiness is not enough, because the “clean hands” are expressive of “a pure heart”. The one who has “clean hands” is innocent of wrongdoing and readily asks for forgiveness when he or she has sinned against God.”<sup>6</sup> The King of Glory expects his people to be loyal in their devotion to him and not lift their souls to idols. Michael Wilcock emphasizes “To meet God there required right living, right thinking, a right relationship with him, and a right relationship with one’s fellows. But these things were a righteousness (*vindication*) which could only be received, not achieved: things which the God who saves from sin gives to *those who seek him*.”<sup>7</sup>

VanGemereren writes that “The reward for a walk of integrity is the enjoyment of God’s presence by his “blessing” and “vindication.” The “blessing” is the status of God’s favor extended to his loyal servants. Moreover, they receive “vindication” from their

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<sup>5</sup> Tremper Longman III, [\*Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary\*](#), ed. David G. Firth, vol. 15–16, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2014), 139–140.

<sup>6</sup> Willem A. VanGemereren, [“Psalms.”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 260.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Wilcock, [\*The Message of Psalms: Songs for the People of God\*](#), ed. J. A. Motyer, vol. 1, The Bible Speaks Today (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 88.

Savior-God.”<sup>8</sup> In other words they are declared justified and right in relationship with God.

Warren Wiersbe reminds us that “Good works or religious character cannot save us. The only way we can enter into God’s presence is through the merits of Jesus Christ, which means we must repent of our sins and put our faith in Him. Only Jesus Christ qualifies to enter the Father’s presence, and He has gone to heaven to represent His people and intercede for them before the Father’s throne. To “seek God’s face” means to have an audience with the King, and this is now possible through the work of Christ on the cross. God’s righteousness is a gift, not a reward for good works.”<sup>9</sup> I love how Daniel Akin emphasizes how these qualities are demonstrated by Jesus Christ and applied to us. He writes that “There is only one who had such clean hands that it is said of him in Acts 10:38, “[He] went about doing good.” There is only one whose heart is so pure and dedicated to God that he can say in John 8:29, “I always do what pleases him [the Father].” There is only one so devoted to the glory of God that he alone can say in John 17:4, “I have glorified you on the earth by completing the work you gave me to do.” Yes, there is only one whose words were of such truthfulness and integrity that the Bible says in 1 Peter 2:22, “He did not commit sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” Yes, there is only one man who can ascend the holy hill of Zion and stand forever in the holy place. That one is Jesus. Now, by his perfect work of atonement, we

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<sup>8</sup> Willem A. VanGemeren, “[Psalms.](#)” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 260.

<sup>9</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, [Be Worshipful](#), 1st ed., “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2004), 100.

can be found in him. We can be found with a righteousness not our own but an alien righteousness, his righteousness, imputed to us by faith. Now, in him I can come to the Lord clean, pure, undivided in loyalty, and with integrity. Yes, in him, I can come cleanly into his holy presence. I come in the righteousness of the King of glory!”<sup>10</sup>  
The King’s glory is revealed through his gifts.

### **3. The King’s Glory through His Victory (24:7-10)**

The third point of revealing the King’s glory is through his victory. Scholars see two possible contexts that are fitting for the origin of this Psalm. One context is David bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem with great joy and celebration. The other context emphasizes the victory the Lord brought in Israel’s battles with the Ark of the Covenant going before them. Since the verses state that the one approaching the gates, this King of glory is the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle it is probably better to see the context of the Lord bringing military victory to Israel against their enemies.

Wilson writes that “Lifting up the head is a sign of joyous anticipation and hope. When one lifts one’s own head, it is a sign of the hope and joy that characterizes the person’s outlook. When one lifts another’s head, it is an indication of offering hope and joy where there is none. In Ps 3:3, when God lifts the head of the struggling

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<sup>10</sup> J. Josh Smith and Daniel L. Akin, [\*Exalting Jesus in Psalms 1–50\*](#), ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2022), 183–184.

psalmist, God offers hope and joy in the midst of a threatening setting.”<sup>11</sup>

Peter Craigie writes that “Ps 24, in its present form, is essentially a *hymn*, for use in the celebration of the Lord’s kingship. The early use of the hymn in the annual celebration of the Lord’s kingship was later transformed to weekly usage in the worship services of temple and synagogue.”<sup>12</sup> Writing on this concept, James Montgomery Boices notes that “Interestingly, the ancient rabbinical sources tell us that, in the Jewish liturgy, Psalm 24 was always used in worship on the first day of the week. The first day of the week is our Sunday. So, putting these facts together, we may assume that these were the words being recited by the temple priests at the very time the Lord Jesus Christ mounted a donkey and ascended the rocky approach to Jerusalem.”<sup>13</sup> We see that during the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, Jesus was fulfilling multiple prophecies in that event and in the events that would follow his entry into Jerusalem. The people were shouting praises of Hosanna, blessed is he comes in the name of the Lord. The Lord Jesus Christ would bring victory by defeating death, the power and penalty of sin, and the grave through his own sacrificial death and resurrection.

Tremper Longman reminds us that “Psalm 24 encourages Christian readers that their God continues to fight for them in the midst of the

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<sup>11</sup> Gerald H. Wilson, [Psalms](#), vol. 1, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 454.

<sup>12</sup> Peter C. Craigie, [Psalms 1–50](#), vol. 19, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1983), 212.

<sup>13</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [Psalms 1–41: An Expositional Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 214.



turmoil of life. They also wait in hope for the future reappearance of their Warrior, Jesus Christ, who will bring all evil, human and spiritual, to an end (Rev. 19:11–21).<sup>14</sup> The King's glory is revealed through his victory.

As a part of God's creation, our lives are to proclaim and demonstrate the King's glory. As recipients of God's blessings, our lives are to proclaim, demonstrate, and share God's blessings with others for the King's glory. As we share in the victory of the King's glory we live out our faith every day as God continues to transform our lives into the likeness of Christ. We submit to God's Spirit working in our lives to overcome our sinfulness.

One of the most famous hymns written by Fanny Crosby is called "To God Be the Glory". To God be the glory—great things He hath done! So loved He the world that He gave us His Son, who yielded His life an atonement for sin and opened the Lifegate that all may go in. **Chorus:** Praise the lord, Praise the Lord, let the earth hear His voice! Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, let the people rejoice! O come to the Father thru Jesus the Son, and give Him the glory—great things He hath done.<sup>15</sup> We need to emphasize the King's Glory for who he is and for the great things he has done, is doing, and will continue to do in our lives.

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<sup>14</sup> Tremper Longman III, [\*Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary\*](#), ed. David G. Firth, vol. 15–16, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2014), 141–142.

<sup>15</sup> Kenneth W. Osbeck, [\*Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1996), 357.