

Psalm 24

- The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it -

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Introduction

- ❖ Psalm 24 is a beautiful example of Biblical poetry.
- ❖ Psalm 24 consists of three parts.
 - Verse 1 and 2 declare the Creator-Kingship of the Lord. He is the divine Warrior and Savior (verse 5).
 - Verse 3 – 6 are a beautiful chorus. The climax of this part is found in the second line of verse 6: who seek your face – Jacob. These words are addressed to the Lord and are a prelude the third part of the Psalm.
 - Verse 7-10 consists of two concluding joyful choruses full of praises to the King of glory, the LORD Almighty.
- ❖ There are two interesting connections to be seen:
 - Psalm 24 – Exodus 19:4-6 (also Revelation 1:4-6).
 - Psalm 24:6 – Genesis 32:22-32, and especially verse 30, where Jacob has seen the face of God.
- ❖ This Psalm reminds us of the fact that “The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.”
 - This profession of faith must be a guideline for Christians in all aspects of life Religious, environmental, relational, social, economic, political, cultural...
- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Book of Psalms. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a “stand-alone”. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

Context

- ❖ The historical context of Psalm 24 is not known. The Psalm was possibly sung during religious festivals. See below.
- ❖ The Book of Psalms belongs to the Wisdom literature. Psalm 24 is part of the first book of Psalms (Psalm 1-41).

Form and structure

- ❖ “Like Psalm 15, this psalm is a liturgy that was to be used by pilgrims as they came to the Temple in Jerusalem for a religious festival. The psalm begins with a hymn of praise to Yahweh as creator and lord of the universe (verses 1–2). This is followed by a liturgy used by the pilgrims as they request permission to enter the Temple: the question is asked as to who may enter (verse 3), followed by the answer (verses 4–6). The last part of the psalm (verses 7–10) demands entrance for Yahweh, who is probably represented by the Covenant Box, which is being taken into the Temple.”
- ❖ “This brief psalm is based upon the refrain or chorus in which a “who” question is followed by audience response. The refrain not only provides for audience participation but also serves to give structure to the psalm. Verses 1–2 are statements, each verse consisting of two parallel lines. There are three refrains in verses 3, 8, 10, followed in each case by responses. The key word “raise” with its variants is found in verse 3 “ascend,” “stand”; verse 4 “not lift up”; verse 7 “lift up,” “be lifted up”; and verse 9 “lift up,” “be lifted up.” These words, along with the repeated refrain form, provide cohesion between the two halves of the psalm, verses 1–6 and verses 7–10.”¹
- ❖ Psalm 24 consists of three parts.
 - The first part (1, 2) declares the Creator-Kingship of the LORD.
 - The second part (3-6) is a liturgical preparation for the believers to seek the face of the Lord.
 - The third part (7-10) is a joyful song to welcome the LORD entering the temple precincts to meet the people who seek him.

<i>Superscription:</i>	Of David. A psalm.
Declaration of Faith	

¹ Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991, p. 237).

<i>Statement</i> (verse 1-2)	<p>1 The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;</p> <p>2 for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.</p>
Seek the face of the Lord, the Creator-King	
<i>Chorus:</i> (verse 3)	<p>3 Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?</p>
<i>Answer:</i> (verse 4)	<p>4 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.</p>
<i>And Promise:</i> (verse 5-6)	<p>5 He will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God his Savior.</p> <p>6 Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, O God of Jacob. <i>Selah</i></p>
The Lord will enter the gates to meet the generations	
<i>Call to glorify the Lord (1)</i> (verse 7)	<p>7 Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.</p>
<i>Chorus:</i>	<p>8 Who is this King of glory?</p>
<i>Answer:</i>	<p>The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.</p>
<i>Call to glorify the Lord (2)</i> (verse 9-10)	<p>9 Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.</p>
<i>Chorus:</i>	<p>10 Who is he, this King of glory?</p>
<i>Answer:</i>	<p>The Lord Almighty— he is the King of glory. <i>Selah</i></p>

Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

Historical setting

- ❖ Some historical contexts have been suggested in which this Psalm might have been written. All suggestions remain hypothetical.²

Translation

- ❖ There are two possible translations of the second line of verse 4 due to textual variants:
 - “Most translators follow the text of many Hebrew manuscripts and ancient versions, ‘his *nefesh*’; but the Masoretic text has ‘my *nefesh*,’ which is explained as a synonym for ‘my (that is, Yahweh’s) name,’ and the sense of the line is ‘who does not use the Lord’s name for false purposes’ (see Ex 20:7). So NJV (New Jewish Version) translates ‘who has not taken a false oath by My life’; similarly TOB (Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible) ‘who does not use God for an evil purpose.’”³
 - The NIV prefers the first option. The second option seems best to concord with the liturgical purpose of the Psalm. It is not clear why someone who lifts up his soul to an idol, wants to be present in the temple courts and sing a joyous song to the Lord. But it does make sense when someone wants to use the name of the Lord for false purposes, to be present to show his (hypocritical) adherence to the Lord.
- ❖ There are two possible translations of verse 6 due to textual variants.

NIV	NASB95
Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, O God of Jacob.	This is the generation of those who seek Him, Who seek Your face— even Jacob.

- The NASB95 added “*even*” to the translation but this addition is not necessary.
- The present writer prefers the translation of the NASB95 but without adding “*even*.” Compare the KJV: “That seek thy face, **O Jacob.**”⁴
 - “**Jacob**” receives emphasis.
- In this case, a chiasmic structure can be recognized. The two lines have a reversed order:

This is the generation (A) of those who seek Him, (B)
Who seek Your face (B) **Jacob.** (A)

² See for discussion Kraus, H.-J. (1993, p. 312).

³ Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991, p. 239-240).

⁴ Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991, p. 241):” In line b the Masoretic text has “those who seek your face, Jacob”; two Hebrew manuscripts and Syriac have “your face, God of Jacob” (the Septuagint has “those who seek the face of the God of Jacob”), which is the meaning preferred by TEV, RSV, NEB, NAB, NJB, BJ, SPCL.”

- (A) corresponds with (A) and (B) with (B). A chiasmic structure emphasizes the central part (B) of the verse: to seek the LORD.
- *Selah* = “סֵלָה”:
 - “The meaning is obscure: possibly from the Persian *salā* meaning song, sound of the strings; probably a technical term added later concerning the style of music or recitation; **suggested meanings**: 1. raising the voice to, a higher pitch; 2. Aquila and Jerome suggested it to be understood as “always”; 3. pause, from Septuagint, interlude of instrumental music; 4. siglum: an abbreviation for a sign to change the voice.”⁵
 - The meanings 1. and 4. supplement each other and are plausible with regard to the structure and the contents of Psalm 24.

Parallellismus membrorum

- ❖ Parallellismus membrorum is a special feature of Biblical literature, especially of the Old Testament Wisdom Literature, i.e. The Book of Job, Psalms and Proverbs. It “is also present, although less prominent, in biblical prose. It can be defined as the repetition of the same or related semantic content and/or grammatical structure in consecutive lines or verses.”⁶
- ❖ There are several forms of parallelism membrorum found in this Psalm:
 - Synonymous parallelism.
 - Two (or three) lines express the same thought. Verse 1 is an example:
 1. The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it,
 2. the world (*is the Lord’s*,) and all who live in it;
 - See also verse 2 and 5.
 - Syntactical parallelism
 - The second line completes the first line (verse 3):
 1. Who may ascend the hill of the Lord?
 2. Who may stand in his holy place?
 - Antithetical parallelism
 - The second line contrasts the first line (verse 4):
 1. He who has clean hands and a pure heart,

⁵ Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M. E. J., & Stamm, J. J. (1994–2000, p. 756).

⁶ See for more information: Berlin, A. (1992). *Parallelism*. In D. N. Freedman (Ed.) (Vol. 5, p. 155).

2. who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.

HOSTS, LORD OF (ESV)⁷ *Lord Almighty (NIV) (Ps 24:10)*

- ❖ One of the most enigmatic divine names in the Hebrew Bible is YHWH Seba'ot, commonly translated 'LORD of Hosts,' or 'Yahweh of Hosts.' The LXX usually renders it as 'Lord Almighty,' or 'Lord of the Forces' (*'forces'* is used in the military sense in both Attic and Hellenistic Greek). See also Rom 9:29; Jas 5:4.
- ❖ In addition to the name YHWH Seba'ot, which occurs 261 times, we also get the forms 'YHWH God of Hosts,' and 'God of Hosts.' All told, variant forms of the epithet occur 284 times in the Hebrew Bible, twice in the NT.
- ❖ Seba'ot is taken to refer to YHWH's celestial and/or terrestrial hosts, the divine council, the luminaries of the sky (Ps 145:1-5), and the totality of creation. Some would take the name to mean 'Militant YHWH,' 'Powerful YHWH,' or the like. A few scholars stress the military aspect of the epithet; others deny it, or prefer to stress the royal aspects. No doubt the epithet denotes all these elements; they are not mutually exclusive.
 - "O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth" (Isa 37:16; ESV; compare Rev 4:1-11).
- ❖ From the start, the epithet YHWH Seba'ot is understood in military terms—at least in part. The epithet appears in connection with a holy war against the Amalekites (1 Sam 15:2). Even more poignantly, this divine name is invoked by David against Goliath: 'You have come to me with sword and spear and lance, but I have come to you in the name of YHWH Seba'ot, the God of the armies of Israel' (1 Sam 17:45).
- ❖ God is presented as the triumphant king in the heavenly court. Isaiah declared: 'My eyes have seen the King, YHWH Seba'ot!' (Isa 6:5, cf. v 3). This vision should be compared with that of Micaiah ben-Imlah, for Micaiah, too, saw 'YHWH sitting on his throne, with all the host of heaven standing beside him' (1 Kgs 22:19 = 2 Chr 18:18).
- ❖ Bratcher and Reyburn comment: "The final answer (verse 10b) identifies the great king as 'Yahweh of hosts.' The word translated *hosts* means 'army' (see 44:9; 60:10; 68:12; 108:11); in 1 Samuel 17:45 Yahweh is identified as the leader of the Israelite armies (see Ps 89:8). In some places in the Old Testament, *hosts* is used of the angels, and the idea in the title may well mean that Yahweh is sovereign over all powers, heavenly as well as earthly. The Hebrew word has been transliterated into English and other languages ('Sabaoth'; see KJV 5:4; it is variously translated as 'almighty, all-powerful, supreme' (see TOB, SPCL). Most English translations have used the word 'hosts,' which does not mean much to the average Bible reader. *Lord of hosts* is sometimes rendered 'Lord of the armies.' **Since the focus is upon the**

⁷ This is in part a summary of: Seow, C. L. (1992). *Hosts, Lord of*. In D. N. Freedman (Ed., .Vol. 3, p. 304-306).

powerfulness of the Lord, the expression may often be rendered, for example, 'the Lord who is the strongest of all' or 'the Lord who has more power than anyone.'"⁸

Word Study

- ❖ Vindication = “וְיִצְחָק” : “The Hebrew word translated *vindication* (TEV ‘*declare ... innocent*’) is a noun which may mean ‘righteousness, deliverance, salvation,’ and sometimes ‘prosperity.’ Dahood translates ‘generous treatment’; FRCL ‘approval’; NEB, TOB, BJ ‘justice’; NAB ‘a reward.’ NJB has ‘saving justice,’ and NJV ‘a just reward.’”⁹

Exposition

Of David. A psalm.

- ❖ King David might have written this psalm. In that case, the gates mentioned by the Psalmist must have been the gates of Jerusalem. The temple with its precincts didn’t exist during the lifetime of David. His son Solomon has built the temple.

Verse 1-2 The statement of faith

- ❖ “**LORD.**” This name of God reminds the people of the covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex 3:13-15).
 - He has created heaven and earth and all who live in it. This includes all living creatures, the birds in the air, the fish in the seas, the wild animals and the livestock, and mankind.
 - He is the Creator-King. (See also Isa 45:128.)¹⁰
 - The LORD has complete dominion over this world. Revelation 4:11:
 - “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”
- ❖ “**For he founded it upon the seas.**” This statement is according to the worldview of the people. They distinguished between:
 - The heaven above, the earth beneath, and the waters below (Ex 20:4).

Verse 3 Chorus

⁸ Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991, p. 243).

⁹ Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991, p. 240).

¹⁰ VanGemeren, W. A. (2008, Vol. 5, p. 258).

- ❖ “Verses 3–6 are an ‘entrance liturgy’ in which the pilgrims ask about requirements for entering the Temple (verse 3) and are answered, probably by priests (verses 4–6), in a fashion similar to that in Psalm 15.” “The two verbs *ascend* and *stand* picture the pilgrims chanting as they go up the Temple mount and stop before the entrance to the Temple.”¹¹
- ❖ **“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord?”** Compare Psalm 15:1:
 - “Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary?
Who may live on your holy hill?”
 - **“The hill of the Lord”** is Mount Zion. **“His holy place”** is the temple and its precincts. A place devoted to the Lord and his worship.

Verse 4-6 Answer

- ❖ Compare with Psalm 15:2-6. Psalm 24:4 summarizes upright behaviour.
 - Hands and heart stand for actions and thoughts/feelings.
 - **“Clean hands”** means “blameless” and “not guilty” in society and in the court of justice:
 - no slander
no wrong-doing
not casting slur on somebody
keeping an oath, even when it hurts
lending money without usury
not accepting bribes
 - **“A pure heart”** means a heart devoted towards God. It doesn’t imply a heart without sin. It does imply a heart that longs for forgiveness and cleansing of the heart (Ps 51).
- ❖ **“Who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.”** See comment on textual variations above. The present writer prefers the variant reading: **“Who does not use the Lord’s name for false purposes.”**
 - It does make sense when someone wants to use the name of the Lord for false purposes, to be present to show his (hypocritical) adherence to the Lord.
- ❖ **“Blessing”**: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace” (Num 6:24-26).
- ❖ **“Vindication”** in the sense of approval of conduct: a clean hand and a pure heart. The context of the Psalm is not a court but a religious festival.
 - The parallelism indicates that the “blessing” implies “vindication” and that the “vindication” is the ground for “blessing.”

¹¹ Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991, p. 239).

- The moment that the people received the blessing and vindication was the important moment of the religious festivities.
- ❖ “Such is the generation of those who seek him” = the generation, the people who are present, sing this psalm and have devoted their hearts to God.
 - To “seek him” is an expression of a sincere desire to live in accordance with God’s standards (78:34) so as to live in the presence of his “face.”¹²
 - Note the chiasmic structure and the change in addressee. Only in this verse, the addressee is the Lord:
 - Such is the generation of those who seek him,
 - who seek your face, (O God of) - Jacob.
- ❖ “who seek your face, (O God of) – Jacob.
 - This might be a reference to Genesis 32:22-32, where Jacob was wrestling with God:
 - “So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, ‘It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared’” (Gen 32:30).

Verse 7-10

- ❖ “King of glory” is used five times.
 - Almighty = “שֶׁבַּאֲוֹת” = Sebaoth. See above.
- ❖ “Lift up your heads, O you gates.” The King of Glory will enter triumphantly.
 - This can be compared with the special visit of a president to a city. Everything will be prepared for his glorious reception.
 - God is presented as the Warrior God. (See also Rev 12.)
 - “The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name” (Ex 15:3; Isa 43:17).
 - vanGemeren writes: “The godly expect the Lord to vindicate his children by redeeming them from all adversity and by avenging them against their enemies. His retribution will bring ‘equity’ (*mêšārîm*) to this world. In utter despair and total abandonment to his Redeemer, the psalmist cries out for action: ‘Rise up, O Lord, confront them, bring them down; rescue me from the wicked by your sword’ (Ps 17:13; cf. 59:5). When Yahweh comes to deliver, nothing can stand in his way. He will use his creation in accomplishing his end (Ps 18:12–14). The psalmist portrays Yahweh as fighting with a sword and bow (Ps 7:12–13; cf. 21:12; 60:4; 64:7; 135:7; 144:6) in his war with evil. In the end he will establish peace in this world: ‘He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and

¹² VanGemeren, W. A. (2008, Vol. 5, p. 260).

shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire' (Ps 46:9). The godly need not fear (Ps 91:5), because Yahweh is with them."¹³

Application

Remarks

- ❖ Traditionally this Psalm is sung on Ascension Day and has inspired some of the great hymns for that occasion.¹⁴
 - In the Jewish tradition, this Psalm is sung on the first day of the week.
 - "The Church likewise finds it appropriate to use this Psalm on Sundays, as well as at Advent and at the *consecration* of churches."¹⁵
- ❖ This Psalm can be read and preached on different occasions:
 - Ascension Day – the glorification of Jesus Christ, receiving all power in heaven and on earth, the glorification of our Lord and King.
- ❖ Israel / the church is a Kingdom of Priests (Ex 19:4-6; 1 Pet 2:9, 10; Rev 1:5, 6). Look at the following connections:
 - "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' 'These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.'"
 - Psalm 24: 1: "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" <> "Although the whole earth is mine."
 - Psalm 24: 3: "Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?" <> "priests and a holy nation"
 - Psalm 24: 4: "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" <> "obey me fully and keep my covenant."
 - Psalm 24: 8: "Who is this King of glory? <> "my treasured possession" "kingdom."
 - Psalm 24: 8: "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." <> "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt "

¹³ VanGemeren, W. A. (2008, Vol. 5, p. 735).

¹⁴ Kidner, D. (1973, p. 131).

¹⁵ Lange, J. P., a.o. (2008, p. 185).

Praise (verse 7-10)

- ❖ This Psalm is a call to praise our God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:
 - For his creation and Kingdom (Rev 4:11; Rev 11:15).
 - For his power, wisdom and authority (Rev 5:12; Rev 7:12).
 - For his dwelling among his people (Rev 21:3).
 - For his glory and holiness.
 - For his salvation, he has won the battle against the evil forces (Rev 12).
- ❖ Christ has received all authority. He is the King of glory.
 - “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mt 28:19-20).

Verse 1-6

- ❖ This Psalm is a reminder of:
 - This creation belongs to God.
 - This involves the heavens, the seas, the dry land, the birds, the fish, the wild and the domesticated livestock, mankind.
 - This creation is not the property of mankind, a government, the few very rich, or this generation.
 - The power of the Lord is not limited such as the power the gods of this world, especially the tribal gods, the spirits of the ancestors, the demonic forces.
 - “Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ‘All this I will give you,’ he said, ‘if you will bow down and worship me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: **‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’**” (Mt 4:8-10)
 - “Eat anything sold in the meat (*offered to idols*) market without raising questions of conscience, for, **‘The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it’**” (1 Cor 10:25, 26).
- ❖ **“Clean hands”** means “blameless” and “not guilty” in a social and judicial sense (Ps 15):
 - no slander
 - no wrong-doing
 - not casting slur on somebody
 - keeping an oath, even when it hurts
 - lending money without usury
 - not accepting bribes

- Christians must have clean hands in politics, business, society, in church. John Calvin summarizes: “observing fidelity and integrity in all the affairs of life.”¹⁶
- ❖ **“A pure heart.”** Jesus promised: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Mt 5:8).
 - King David prayed: “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Ps 51:10).
 - The apostle Paul wrote: “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity” (Col 3:12-14).
 - “Be perfect (“clean hands and a pure heart”), therefore, as your heavenly” (Mt 5:48). Father is perfect.
 - “Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded” (Jas 4:8).
- ❖ **“He will receive blessing.”**
 - Blessing doesn’t necessarily imply physical welfare, but foremost the promise “I will be with you every day” (Mt 28:20).
 - Compare with the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:3-10).
- ❖ **“Seek.”**
 - “My heart says of you, “Seek his face!” Your face, Lord, I will seek” (Ps 27:8).
 - “Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always” (Ps 105:4).
 - “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near” (Isa 55:6).
 - “I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me” (Prov 8:17).
 -

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