

The King of Glory

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Date: 24 June 2015

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[0 : 00] Well, can I welcome you to this lunchtime Bible talk. This is the fifth and final one in this short series on the king, the Davidic king, Psalms of David.

And we come fittingly to this psalm, which is the psalm about the king of glory, whom David prefigured, but of course was only a foreshadowing of him.

So we're going to begin by reading that psalm, Psalm 24, which you'll find on page 458. Psalm 24, page 458.

A psalm of David. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.

[1 : 11] He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, and the king of glory may come in. Who is this king of glory?

The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates, and lift them up, O ancient doors, that the king of glory may come in.

Who is this king of glory? The Lord of hosts. He is the king of glory. Amen. May God bless to us that reading from his word.

And let's pray together. Amen. King of glory, king of peace, I will love you, and that love may never cease, I will praise you.

[2 : 11] Father, we thank you for these great psalms, these psalms written long ago by and for David, and yet pointing beyond his time, beyond his country, to the day when his greater son would reign over the whole earth.

We thank you that at the moment he is king of the earth, but the world does not see it. And there is so much that is wrong, discordant, and fallen in the world order.

And so we pray as we read this psalm together, Lord, that our hearts will be encouraged, that we will look to the future and see how this throws its light on the present.

And we pray, Lord, that you will indeed give to us a vision of the king of glory, who reigns and who is to come. We pray this in his name.

Amen. Someone once asked me, what's the most interesting thing to do in Glasgow?

[3 : 21] And I take my life in my hands. I very cheekily reply, take the train to Edinburgh. I am an incurable East Coaster, I am afraid.

Anyway, if you do that, and just as you are coming into Waverly Station, if you are on the right-hand side of the train, your vision will be totally dominated by the Castle Rock.

It's a most impressive and most, in fact, in many ways, an awe-inspiring sight. It totally fills the horizon, totally fills the landscape.

And you can see how strong it was in the old days when it was a defensive fortress. And the story is told that when Robert Bruce was capturing various castles in the south of Scotland, he failed to take Edinburgh, because Edinburgh was so strong.

One of his lieutenants, Thomas Randolph, promised that he would manage to take the Citadel. And the reason he promised this was because a young guy in his company had a girlfriend in the castle.

[4 : 33] And he, on dark nights, he used to sneak up a very dangerous, twisting path, kind of path, a mountain goat who had hesitated to go on in broad daylight, but love conquers everything, as they say.

And so he promised Randolph that he would lead people up there, which he did. And this little path came out behind a little poster and gate, which the garrison had not defended because they thought it was impossible.

Anyone would ever enter the city. And he took the castle. Now, you may wonder what else this got to do with Psalm 24. All will be, well, all will be made clearer in a moment.

If you read 2 Samuel 5, you'll discover that David had a similar problem about the citadel of Jerusalem. He wanted to take Jerusalem. The Lord had promised it to him, but it was virtually impregnable.

Once again, standing on its hills, once again, indeed, the Jebusites who held the city sneered at David, you will not get in. Even the blind and the lame could hold you off.

[5 : 44] Now, David knew there was a water shaft went up inside the city rock, and once again came out at a gate that was badly defended.

And basically, he said, if anyone can capture the city for me, I'll make him my commander. And Joab, one of his generals, did that and took the city, the way that I say Randolph had managed to take Edinburgh Castle.

And this psalm celebrates that occasion, or more exactly, celebrates the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant into the city, celebrates the presence of God among his people.

The account in 2 Samuel 6 of the taking of the Ark into Jerusalem says, it was taken with shouts and sounds of trumpets. Now, the Ark of the Gold-plated Chest containing the tablets of the law, a reminder of who God was and of his presence among them, a celebration of the Great and the Good Shepherd of Psalm 23, and answering the question, who is the King of Glory?

That question really lies at the very heart of the psalm. Who is the King? Who is the King whose presence is in the Ark of the Covenant, but who also fills heaven and earth?

[7 : 09] And three reasons are given in this psalm. First of all, he is the Creator. In verses 1 and 2, he is the King of Glory because he is the Creator.

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. Creation both staggers the imagination and also is very practical because the creation is adapted so that dwellers like us in time and space are able to live in it.

I'm no astronomer. My knowledge of astronomy comes from the sky at night, but I imagine the late Patrick Moore knew his stuff. And essentially, you'll know that if you know anything about astronomy, of the planets in the solar system, earth is the only one that's at the exact right distance from the sun for life to be sustained.

The other planets, Mercury and Venus, are far too hot, and the outer planets are far too cold. But here on our planet, everything is adapted for life.

Now, notice, first of all, the incredible wealth and the incredible vastness. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, everything that fills it.

[8 : 30] Think of the vast array of sea and land, the variety, meadows, woodlands, mountains. The amazing generosity of the Lord. The Lord didn't need to give us so many things he gives us.

As I said, it's adapted for life. But there's so many generous things. God didn't need to give us sunsets. He didn't need to give us moonlight on waters.

He didn't need to give us so many beautiful things. And that shows his generosity. And also his concern for the inhabited world, the world and those who dwell therein.

So we often get in Hebrew poetry, a statement which is followed by another statement, which is not identical, but which develops it. The world is the human world, the inhabited world and those who dwell therein.

So there's incredible generosity, incredible wealth, all the beautiful things we can see. And of course, modern technology has brought so many of these into our living rooms.

[9 : 33] Even when we can't go and visit some of the splendid places, we can still see something of their wonder. And then he says it's founded on the waters. Now, this, of course, is both the oceans of the world and the rivers which crisscross the continents.

Indeed, if you looked at the planet from space, you might well call it water rather than land, because so much of the Earth's surface is covered with water rather than Earth.

The sea is his, for he made it, says another psalm. But it also means the place of the enemies of God, the dark raging forces, the powers of evil were believed to inhabit the dark chaos waters.

And this, of course, makes much more powerful an already powerful story in the New Testament when Jesus rebuked the waters. And the disciples, we know, said, Who then is this that even the winds and the waves obey him?

This was before Peter's great confession that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God. But it's an important step in their dawning realization of who it was that they had gone to follow.

[10 : 47] And worship gives us true perspective. If we look at the universe simply from a scientific, humanistic point of view, then the danger is we'll feel rather conceited.

After all, look at the advances in science and technology that have happened, many of them in the last 40, 50 years. Look at the ingenuity of human beings.

We can be anywhere on the planet within 24 hours nowadays. But you see, we still haven't solved the problem of sin.

We still haven't solved the problem of evil. We still are fallen. And we still need help. But if we think of the greatness of God, then it's wonderful because what we must never do is what Paul says in Romans 1, worship the creation rather than the creator.

We mustn't lapse into a kind of nature mysticism and worshiping the planet and so on. We must never do that. There's no part of the universe that's not his.

[11 : 52] David is to say in another, where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to heaven, if I go to the uttermost parts of the sea, if I go down to the underworld, you're still there.

Why is he the king of glory? Because he is the creator. But secondly, in verses 3 to 6, he is the creator because he is holy.

Now, in other words, it's not simply power. God doesn't simply rule the universe in power. He does. But he rules it in holiness, in justice, and in love.

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? As the pilgrims went up to Zion, to the hill of Zion, particularly carried the Ark of the Covenant, this would be being sung, who shall ascend the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place?

Now, in one sense, of course, God is everywhere. That's really what verses 1 and 2 are saying. God is everywhere. There is nowhere we can escape him. But there's another sense in which, in order truly to experience the presence of God, we need his forgiveness.

[13 : 06] We need to recognize his holiness. You see, we don't come into the presence of God, in one sense, when we meet for worship, because we already are in the presence of God.

But in another sense, we need to prepare our hearts. We need to prepare ourselves. And you notice, who shall ascend? This is active. Who shall climb up the hill?

Who shall stand? The passive verb, stand. And as the hymn says, only by grace can we enter. Only by grace can we stand.

And notice this holiness is both outward and inner. He who has clean hands. In other words, these are our outer actions. And a pure heart.

That's our inner motives, our inner thoughts, our inner emotions, which, sooner or later, will express themselves in what we say. And what we do. Someone who has integrity, who does not lift up his soul to what is false.

[14 : 10] This sense of integrity is so important, isn't it? It's very important that people are what they seem to be, isn't it? It's good when you say of someone, what you see is what you get.

You may not like what you get very much, but at least there is integrity there. And in the presence of God, there can be no pretense. God knows us inside out.

God knows our hearts. God knows our motives. God knows our actions. And we can't pretend to him. Although sometimes we do, don't we? Sometimes even in the presence of God, we pretend.

We try to be other than we are. Who does not lift up his soul to what is false. The word false here is often translated idol. Someone who doesn't lift up his soul to an idol.

Put it in other words. Somebody who is not obsessed with godlets, other gods, false gods. Gods of money, gods of position, gods of intellect, gods of pride.

[15 : 15] All these other gods. So, and does not swear deceitfully. But notice, this isn't salvation by works.

Verse 5. He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. In other words, it's God's grace which leads us to seek him.

It's God's grace which leads us to ascend the hill and to stand in his presence. And notice, this is going far beyond David's time. Such is the generation, verse 6, of those who seek him.

In other words, this is something that goes on throughout the ages and across the world. Not confined to that time. Not confined to that place. Not confined to that building.

So, first of all, he is the king of glory because he is the creator of everything seen and unseen, visible and invisible. He is holy.

[16 : 15] One day, he will make the world what he intended it to be from the very beginning. A place where there is holiness and love and righteousness.

And the third reason, and the third reason is he is the conqueror. Verses 7 to 10. As the ark of the covenant is taken up into the city, you could imagine the gates being swung open as the king of glory enters.

Now, the ark, the ark was a symbol of his presence. The ark was the sign that he was among them.

And if you read the story, see, in Samuel and in Chronicles, you'll discover the sense of wonder and the sense of excitement. Now, the ark of the covenant no longer exists.

It was almost certainly destroyed by the Babylonians when Jerusalem was sacked and the temple burned and the people taken into exile. We read in the book of Ezra that some of the furniture of the old temple, which had been kept in the temple of the Babylonian gods, was taken back.

[17 : 26] There was no mention of the ark of the covenant. And there's no mention of the ark of the covenant because the ark of the covenant was one day going to take flesh. When David's greater son came, John, in his gospel, says, the word became flesh and pitched his tent, made his tabernacle among us.

He brought, and we saw his glory. So, in a sense, the exile was teaching people not to idolize the ark of the covenant.

It's also a temptation, actually, to idolize visible and tangible things. And that's what we're continually being warned against. They're not only symbols.

Now, the ark was an important symbol. It was a symbol of the presence of God. But it was no longer needed when Jesus came. Now, probably this is where this psalm would originally be sung by a variety of voices, by choirs, by solo voices.

Who is this king of glory? Probably sung by either a choir, a solo voice responding, or the other way around. Now, he is, first of all, the god of battles, the Lord mighty in battle.

[18 : 46] Verse 8. That's taking us back to the Exodus story where Moses sang after being rescued from Egypt, the Lord is a warrior. He is the god of battles.

The god whom David himself trusted when he faced Goliath. I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel. So, back to the Exodus.

And at the present time of the writing of the psalm, to David's own victories, of course, obviously, including the victory which won him the city of Jerusalem, which was to lead to the building of the temple.

But surely it's pointing beyond that. Surely it's pointing to the defeat of Satan by his greater son at the cross. Read Book of Revelation 12, 13, powerful, dramatic account of the effect of the death of Christ in the heavenly places, where the heavenly hosts fight the armies of the dragon, and Jesus Christ, the Lord, defeats Satan.

But the battle still rages. Satan is defeated, but he is still active. In the years following the Second World War, preachers and commentators used the illustration of the cross being Didi, and the time still to come, the final coming being V.E.D.

[20 : 07] On Didi, the Allies landed on the Normandy beaches. The war was won, essentially, but there were still 18 months to go. 18 months of tough, savage, nasty fighting before the final victory.

And so it is now. Satan is still active. This is the battle that begins right away back in Genesis. Genesis 3, verse 15, where the Lord God said, the descendant of the woman will crush the head of the serpent.

So this is the battle that goes on through the ages. And this is the battle which we can win in his strength. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

None of the victories we win in this world are full victories. We all sort of stagger between defeat and victory, ups and downs, don't we? But one day, he will be seen to be the King of glory.

And he is the Lord of hosts, title used throughout the Old Testament. The heavenly hosts sang at creation. Job 38 says, when God laid the foundations of the earth, the sons of God shouted together.

[21 : 26] And of course, they sang over Bethlehem, to you is born this day, in the city of David, a savior, a conqueror, a victor, who is Christ the Lord.

So you see how this little psalm, to use an illustration I'm very fond of, you overuse it probably, is an hourglass psalm through which the past and past history and future history travels.

And therefore, this is a tremendous psalm for times of, it's a tremendous psalm for times of discouragement. When we feel the battle is being lost.

When we feel everything is against us. When we feel the cause of Christ is going down in defeat. It's a tremendous psalm. So let's worship him with our hearts and our lives.

And let's rejoice in his victory. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of hosts. He is the King of Glory. Amen.

[22 : 28] Let's pray. Lord God, we thank you for this great psalm. This psalm which plays so many of the themes in the biblical orchestra.

This psalm which part of this rich tapestry, which is the scriptures, presents to us the wonderful days of the past, the tensions of the present, and the glories of the future.

And help us to, as we continue in the warfare of this world, to trust in the Lord, to trust in the one who has overcome and who will conquer and who will bring in his kingdom in which there is joy and peace and righteousness.

And we pray this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.