

The King of Glory

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[0 : 00] Okay, well before we get to that, we are coming to our Bible and our Bible scripture reading for this evening. Phil Copeland is going to be preaching this evening and he's going to be for the next few weeks leading us in some of the Psalms.

So this evening we're going to read together from Psalm 24, a version of which we sang a few moments ago.

So Psalm 24. A Psalm of David. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and all 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 : 09] He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. And 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, that the King of glory may come in.

Who is this King of glory? 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. And may God bless to us his word. Who is the Lord?

[2 : 14] How powerful is he? Whom does the Lord count as righteous? Who is it who receives blessing from the Lord? As those are some of the most important questions that any human being could ever ask or ponder.

And Psalm 24 answers every single one of them. And that's what we're going to look at tonight. We'll get straight into the Psalm in just a few moments. But before then, let me say something about the historical setting of the Psalm.

I don't know whether I should admit this or not, but hopefully you don't laugh at me. But for some period of my life, I used to watch YouTube clips of archaeological digs.

And hopefully you don't find me really boring after I've said that, but there you go. But historians and archaeologists would excavate a particular site where someone had stumbled across some kind of ancient ruin under the ground or remains.

And usually when they would dig up ancient artifacts or objects, they could tell you immediately like that. This is what it was, this item. This is what it is, and this is what it was for.

[3 : 21] But occasionally they would come across an object that would stump them. They really had no certainty as to what the item was and what it was for. I remember watching one clip, I remember it vividly, where something came out of the ground, this really bizarre thing.

And four different historians just passed it around to each other, having no clue what it was or what it was for. They all said, I can't be sure. And they all suggested something different. And friends, it's a bit like that when it comes to reading Bible commentators on the historical setting of Psalm 24.

Some suggest it was a psalm written for or about the majestic time when David, King David, brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem in 2 Samuel 6.

Others suggest that it has in view those times when the Ark of the Covenant came back to the city gate or the temple entrance after it had been out with the people of God fighting in a war.

There are many suggestions, but at the end of the day, they are all guesses. We can't be certain, for the psalm doesn't tell us. But actually, in this case, I don't think that matters at all.

[4 : 31] What we can be certain of is that this psalm was written for the covenant people of God in all generations. And it declares to us momentous truths that we should cling to constantly in our hearts and in our minds.

Truths that will deeply encourage us as we persevere through the life of faith today. And I've said this before, but just please notice that it's structured like a sandwich.

There's lots of sandwiches in the Bible, but there's a sandwich here again in Psalm 24. Verses 1 and 2 and verses 7 to 10 are like bits of bread that sit at either side of the sandwich. And these sections declare momentous truths about the identity of the Lord and the scale of His power. And in between verses 3 to 6, the psalmist addresses this colossal question that he asks in verse 3. It's really the same question mentioned twice.

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord and who shall stand in His holy place? And let's look at the bits of bread in the sandwich under our first two points. And then at the end, towards the end, as we finish, we'll look at the middle section.

[5 : 39] So then our first point this evening is this. From verses 1 and 2. The Lord is the sovereign creator and sustainer of everything.

Of everything. Please look at verse 1. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.

And actually in the Hebrew text, this verse actually says, To the Lord belongs the earth and the fullness thereof. The psalmist is very emphatic. He wants all of us to be absolutely clear beyond any doubt.

The earth and all of the stuff in the earth. It belongs to the Lord. The covenant God of Israel. And that includes people. That includes every single human being in the world.

Without exception. We are all subject to the Lord. That includes even those who have set themselves against the Lord and his kingdom. Dale Ralph Davis, the great Bible teacher.

[6 : 41] When he was training to be a minister at seminary in America. He had a lecturer who would often quote Psalm 24 verse 1. Except this lecturer would add his own twist.

He would change the end of the verse to say, The world and the Assyrians that dwell therein. In other words, he would substitute whatever might be the most frightening entity or power in the world for Israel.

Or indeed for us today. In order to stress that even for example, the butchering nation of Assyria. Those bloodthirsty people. Even they were subject to the Lord's sway.

Right now you and I could say, The world and all the terrorists therein. All belongs to the Lord. There is no one who can rival.

No one who can act outside of the Lord's sway. Everything and everyone is subject to the Lord. It is as though David is kicking off the psalm with a reminder to us not to belittle our Lord God.

[7 : 46] And that is something that we can so easily do. Especially when the enemies of the kingdom and of the gospel seem so impressive. And so visible. And so tangible to us. David says, Do not be fooled by what you see.

The earth and all its contents belong to the Lord. No one else. This is not man's world. This is not our world. It is the property of the covenant God of Israel.

And why is this? Well, verse 2 tells us. Look at verse 2. The earth and everything that fills it belongs to the Lord. For, because, He has founded it upon the seas.

And established it upon the rivers. The Lord owns everything. Because He made everything. And if you know your Bible well, which I'm sure most of you do, I know most of you do, all sorts of texts throughout the Bible will be firing up right now in your mind.

Reminding you of this wonderful truth. It comes up all the way through Scripture. Most obvious being Genesis 1 verse 9. Remember? Where the Lord, all He had to do was speak.

[8 : 52] And there was water. And there was dry land. And the Lord formed and filled the earth. And please notice, the second verb that's used in verse 2, this really matters.

It's a bit technical, but it really matters. In our Bibles, it's translated as established. In the past tense. I was talking to Bob File this week, and also reading Alec Motier.

And both of these great men say that that's actually an imperfect tense in the verb. It means that we should read it as, the Lord establishes it upon the rivers, the waters.

What David is really saying there is that the Lord didn't simply create and fill the earth and withdraw like some kind of a watchmaker who makes his watch, winds it up, and then lets it go.

No. The Lord created the earth, filled it, and he has carried on caring for it and sustaining it throughout all time, even after the rebellion of mankind against him.

[9 : 52] The Lord has continued to sustain all of life and everyone in the earth. Now friends, we could be here for hours upon hours pulling out implication after implication of this.

But for the sake of time, let's just think about two implications. Here's the first of them. First implication of verse one and two is that every single one of us owes absolutely everything to the Lord.

Just think about this. The only reason that you and I are breathing right now is because the Lord is letting us. The only reason that there's blood pumping around my body and pumping around your body is because the Lord is letting that happen and allowing that.

He is the one who's given us life and he's the one who continues to give us all life. He is our maker, our sustainer, whether you're a Christian or not. And therefore, he alone deserves all the love, adoration, praise, thanksgiving, and worship of our hearts.

And the same goes for every human being across the globe. The Lord alone is worthy of all praise from all people. Here's another implication in verses one and two is that we are living in a world that has stability.

[11 : 18] That the Lord exercises worldwide sovereignty and has imposed upon and maintains an order upon his creation goes a long way toward allowing us to live in a world without ultimate fear.

Let me just unpack that. I want to say, you know, many of you that I used to work down in England, I had a great time, great place, lovely people. But I once met a man for dinner down in England and he just, we were in the starters and he burst out crying.

He was so full of anxiety, he was so depressed. And it turns out the reason he was in that state was because his workplace was in absolute chaos, absolute mayhem.

And the reason it was incomplete mayhem was because he had multiple line managers. Good grief. He had to report to all of these different line managers every week and these managers never agreed with each other.

They never seemed to communicate with each other either. It seemed that no one was really in control of the company and as a result, the staff experienced nothing but chaos and turmoil.

[12 : 25] And this poor man that I was meeting, he was weeping in front of me, he just spent most of his working week trying to please all of these different line managers at once, even when the line managers were asking him to do different things, things that opposed each other.

Now friends, that is essentially how it was in the ancient Near Eastern paganism. In fact, listen to one scholar. He said that society back then suffered from overtones of anxiety and the problem was theological.

See, the nature of pagan gods made it impossible to live in peace. In pagan belief, there wasn't one true, sovereign, almighty god of creation. There were many gods.

The technical term for it is polytheism. And each of the gods ended up having their own realm or own area of rule or domains of personal lordship. There was a god of the sun, god of the harvest, the god of this land, the god of that land, god of love, god of fertility, god of weather, etc., etc., etc. What a nightmare it was to live under such a system of beliefs because you were never sure which god you should pay more attention to. And if you loved one god more than the others, you would kick off a war amongst the gods.

[13 : 44] Your whole life, like my friend who was weeping at the dinner table in front of me, was a torturous experience of trying to please them all. Again, Rodil Ralph Davis says this, none of these pagan deities had ultimate power.

There was thought to be a realm of magic around and beyond the gods and the god themselves drew upon this magic in order to hex each other. Imagine living under a system of beliefs.

How could you have peace or sanity in it? No one controls the world. It's a recipe for perpetual angst. And he says this, this is a great line, chaos in the highest and for that reason, chaos in the heart.

But Psalm 24 verse 1 and 2 is wonderfully, beautifully different, isn't it? the earth and everything in it belongs solely to the Lord alone.

There is no other. And he has infused his world with a certain stability. And you know, I take it that this is the truth that Paul speaks about in Colossians 1 17 when he says, Christ himself is before all things and in him all things hold together.

[15:00] Likewise, Hebrews 1 verse 3 assures us that Christ is continually upholding all things just by the power of his word. In other words, the Son of God supplies the glue that holds the universe together.

So friends, we should rejoice in these verses deeply. And the fact that God has given a built-in order and cohesion to the world, it should cause us to praise him. Yes, there are many times in our lives when you and I will be hit with chaos because we are living in a cursed world that's under the curse of sin.

But because of the order that the Lord has built into his world, we can have what Dale Ralph Davis calls general predictability in the earth that makes science and sanity possible.

He goes on to say it means that there is a certain steadiness about life in God's creation on which we can depend. So I am saved from overtones of anxiety because I'm not subject to an array of flaky pagan gods but the Lord, the God of the Bible who is faithful.

Because the universe is held in a nailed scarred hand, I am kept from going crazy. And that seems to call for worship, doesn't it not?

[16:21] And praise and thankfulness. Well, that's the first point this evening. The Lord is the sovereign creator and sustainer of everything. And here's the second.

And we're going to look at verses 7 to 10. Here's the second point. The Lord, the King of glory, is a mighty and strong warrior. Let's read verses 7 to 10 again.

The psalmist says, Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is the 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.

And who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts.

He is the King of glory. Now, as I said earlier in the sermon, back at the start, it is really hard, actually, to pin down the historical setting of this psalm.

[17:21] But these verses, I take it, they may suggest to us that this psalm was written for the Ark of the Covenant, arriving back at the gates of the city, maybe even to the doors of the temple, after Israel's troops had enjoyed a victory, courtesy of the Lord God, on the field of battle.

I'm sure you know this, remember the Ark of the Covenant always signified the presence of the Lord, so when it arrived, it is as though he arrived. And you can imagine the procession going upwards, up the road, surrounding the Ark, approaching the gates of the city, all praising the Lord, singing these words out with great joy and thankfulness in their hearts, that the all-powerful, sovereign creator and sustainer of the earth, the Lord of glory, had returned.

And what is the King of glory like? Answer, he is the ultimate warrior, the ultimate warrior. He goes out to fight for his people, armed with invincible power.

That's what's repeated again and again there. He is strong and mighty, mighty in battle. You do not want to come up against this King of glory on the battlefield.

I just notice verse 10, how is he described in verse 10? He's the Lord of hosts. That's probably referring to the fact that he is the Lord of the hosts of the armies of heaven, the host of the armies of angelic beings are all at this King of glory's disposal.

[18:56] Alec Moutier also says that the term Lord of hosts could be translated the God who is hosts. Meaning that within himself the Lord compromises every potentiality and power.

There is none more powerful than him. this is meant to blow our minds about the limitless power and the resources that the ultimate warrior has.

And you know friends, throughout scripture, this is exactly how the Lord time and again displays himself to be the ultimate fighter who comes to save his people. Just think back to Exodus 15.

Think back to after the time when the Lord came upon Egypt and absolutely laid it waste, humiliated the pagan gods of Egypt and showed them to be a sham and humbled Pharaoh and freed his people, redeeming them out of slavery.

What did the people do in response? They sang in praise and Moses and all the people of Israel said, the Lord is a man of war. The Lord is a man of war.

[20:02] And it's the same all the way through scripture, whenever the Lord comes to his people. Read on into the New Testament and you will see that out of sheer mercy, the wide mercy that we've just been singing about and out of love, undeserved love, the Lord, the King of glory, the covenant God of Israel humbled himself, left the beauty and glory of heaven and came into this

world veiling his glory in human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.

And he came to wage war on the enemies that you and I can't possibly handle on ourselves. Sin, Satan and death.

Through his life, his death, his resurrection and his ascension back to glory, he fought for us and won victory for us.

And the Bible says that he will return in glory and on that day, Revelation says he'll come as a warrior, a glorious warrior, no longer veiled as glory, he will come. And on that day, all of his enemies, which are still rumbling and raging on, they will be done away with forever.

And you and I, if we trust in him, we will dwell with him in his peace forever under his unopposed and beautiful reign. One commentator says this, Psalm 34 tells us that the Lord is not only the God of the sanctuary, but the God of the battlefield.

[21 : 30] Not merely the God of the church, but the God of the trenches, I plead with you not to allow those who only want to speak of Jesus meek and mild to rob you of the manly, virile comfort of having a God who is mighty in battle.

See, Jesus, the King of glory, will come as a warrior at the last. And thankfully, he is also the God who, in a way, comes to his people right now when we are in trouble now in this current age.

He is in the midst of us and he comes when we are in trouble very often to bash to bits the fetters of the enemy and to bear arms for his weary and crushed people.

Dear Ralph Davis says, you have no comfort if the King of glory is a wimp who reeks of hand-moisturizing cream. You only have solace if your defender is in the thick of war.

So, friends, that's our second point. Remember that. Cling on to that in your heart, especially if right now you are going through the mill and life is beating you up.

[22 : 42] Our Lord is the ultimate warrior, the King of glory. Well, having looked at the two pieces of bread, let's look at the filling. Let's look at this middle section in verse 3 to 6, which is really taken up with a momentous question in verse 3, which is asked the same way twice.

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? Who shall stand in his holy place? And the answer is there in verse 4. 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.

Who's being described here in these verses? Well, the answer is a believer. These verses are describing a believer.

See, very often in Hebrew poetry, something is stated in one line and then immediately in the next line, it is interpreted for us. In other words, the second line tells us what the first line means.

Technical term for it is parallelism, which all you release the word people should know and all you Cornhill people will know. There's different types of parallelism, but this type of parallelism is that one line is interpreted by the next line, the previous line.

[23 : 57] And that's what's happening in verse 4. What does it mean to have clean hands and a pure heart? Well, the text says you have clean hands and a pure heart if you do not lift up your soul to what is false.

And again, I was picking the mighty brains of the great Bob File earlier in this week, and he helpfully pointed out that you could translate this as he who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to idols, to false gods.

That's what it means specifically by what is false. You see, to lift up your soul to something is to lift up your soul and ask something or look to something to save you.

It's really another way of talking about trust. Just flick over, please. I'm not really a big fan of cross references, but have a look at 25 verse 1. And again, here's a verse that tells us what it means to lift up your soul.

It's the same business as what we've seen in the verse 4 of Psalm 24. One line states something, and then the next line interprets it for us. So 25 verse 1 says, of David, to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

[25 : 07] And what does that mean? Well, verse 2, O my God, in you I trust. You see? To lift up your soul just basically means to trust something.

So looking back at Psalm 24 verse 4, the one who can ascend the hill of the Lord, the one who can worship the Lord and share in his victory, the one who can stand in his holy place, is the person who has turned and is still turning away from what is false, from idols, to trust in the Lord alone for salvation.

That is what Psalm 24 is actually saying here. And look what will happen to the man who does this. Look at verse 5. Glorious.

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.

Friends, if we turn to the Lord, abandoning all other means of protection and rejecting all other gods, to trust in the true living God alone, the God of the Bible, we will be blessed by him more than we could possibly comprehend or imagine.

[26 : 19] We will even be declared righteous in his sight when we don't deserve it. Maybe you're here tonight and you're not yet a Christian. Maybe you're here and you want to find out what it is that we believe.

Well, if that's you, it's great that you're here and I hope that you feel at home amongst us and you enjoy your time with us this evening, but please know that this is what our God is like.

He is so merciful. He's holy, but he's so merciful. And if you turn to him alone for salvation, for eternal life, for forgiveness, you too will be welcomed into his people and you too will come to know his great blessing in Christ Jesus' Son.

As one commentator puts it, our God is both awesome and approachable. Our God is both a cosmic God and a congregational God.

You yourself are a creature, but you also may be a communicant. Only if you turn to him with your whole being, heart and hands. And for those of us who profess to be Christians here this evening, I take it that at the very heart of this psalm, it is a great encouragement to us all to keep on trusting in the Lord and to keep trusting in him alone.

[27 : 39] And it's to motivate us to call upon the Lord, to help us to keep turning away, keep rejecting idols. What are idols?

Well, basically false gods. False gods, whatever other religion, even counterfeit Christs, that you encounter in Islam, go as witnesses, Mormonism and so forth.

Anything that depicts God that's not from Scripture is an idol. But it doesn't stop there. Listen to how the Heidelberg Catechism, and again, you've been studying this if you release the word.

It's one of the great Reformed documents. It defines it really well. Idolatry is having or inventing something in which one trusts in place of or alongside of the only true God who has revealed himself in his word.

And that's true. That's actually how the Bible speaks of idolatry from beginning to end. It is anything more important to you than God or anything that you trust alongside of God.

[28 : 44] Anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God. Anything that you look to in order to give you what only God can give you. One theologian puts it like this.

A false god is anything so central and essential to your life. Should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living. An idol has such a controlling position in your heart that you can spend most of your passion and energy, your emotional, financial resources on it without a second thought.

It can even be family and children, career or money making, achievement, critical acclaim, saving face, and social standing. It can be a romantic relationship, peer approval, competence and skill, secure and comfortable circumstances, your beauty and brains, a great political or social cause, your morality and virtue or even success in Christian ministry.

An idol is whatever you look at and say in your heart of hearts, if I have that, then I'll feel my life has meaning. Then I'll know value.

Then I'll feel significant and secure. There are many ways to describe that kind of relationship to something, but probably the best way to describe it is worship. If anything becomes more fundamental than the Lord God to our happiness, our meaning in life, and our identity, then friends, that is an idol.

[30 : 23] There are cultural idols such as military power, technological progress and economic prosperity. The idols of traditional societies include hard work, duty, moral virtue.

In the West today, probably the biggest cultural idols are things like individual freedom, self-discovery, personal affluence and fulfillment. All these things in some senses are good things. All the things I've listed before are lots of good things. They're good gifts from God. But when we turn the good thing into a God thing, they become an idol. There can be even intellectual idols, often called ideologies.

When people take an ideology and trust in it, and trust in it completely, letting it master their lives and their directions, it's become an idol. So friends, as we close, let's be encouraged by Psalm 24 to take this seriously and to ask ourselves this question.

What things am I currently looking to in life in order to find happiness, meaning, and identity? Well, these very things that could well be in and of themselves, very good things, could so easily be abused by our hearts.

[31 : 37] And we turn to look at them and worship them instead of turning to the Lord and trusting Him alone. Another exposing question to ask ourselves is this.

What makes me feel secure in life? If the answer that we give to that question is not the Lord, then we've got some repenting to do and turning.

But the wonderful news again is that our Lord is the God who graciously wants His people to come to Him by turning away from these things and ascending His hill and coming to Him.

Everyone who does that, everyone who turns and surrenders to the Lord with their heart and their hands, they will be blessed by the Lord and counted as righteous.

Well, amen. Let's bow our heads and have a moment of quiet and then I'll pray for us. Our gracious God and Heavenly Father, we praise You and we confess that You are worthy to receive glory and honor and power for You alone have created all things and by Your will they were created and have their being.

[32 : 58] We praise You that You are the King of glory, a majestic, all-powerful, almighty warrior who throughout history has so graciously and mercifully fought for Your needy and weak people.

We praise You for the great victory that was won for us when You came into the world in the person of Jesus Christ. and we pray that by the power of Your Holy Spirit living in us now these days, You would help us to turn away from any false gods that our hearts may be clinging to and instead give us the strength and the help that we need to trust in You alone.

Help us and give us a greater desire to seek Your face, O God of Jacob. We pray all this in Jesus' precious name and for His sake.

Amen.