

MOUNT SINAI MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

MONDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

Psalm 24

When Worship Is Right

Quote

“There should be some preparation of the heart in coming to the **worship** of God. Consider who he is in whose name we gather, and surely we cannot rush together without thought. Consider whom we profess to **worship**, and we shall not hurry into his presence as men run to a fire.”

Charles H. Spurgeon

I. Introduction

The King Stands for the King of Kings

George Fredrick Handel is regarded as one of the greatest composers in the history of the church. His famous oratorio *Messiah* is the most popular of his works; it has moved countless believers to **worship** God. This masterpiece was first performed in London on March 23, 1743. On this occasion the king of England, George II, was present. All who attended were deeply moved as they heard this inspiring music and biblical text.

When “The Hallelujah Chorus” was sung, containing the powerful words, “For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth,” something unexpected happened. King George II himself rose to his feet in an act of homage. This prompted the entire audience to do the same. They remained standing throughout the entire chorus, recognizing the greatness of heaven’s one, true King who reigns over all, even over earthly kings. From that time to the present, it has always been customary to stand during “The Hallelujah Chorus.”

This is the true heart of **worship**—a humble recognition of the **sovereignty** of our triune God and responding appropriately by presenting our praise, devotion, and lives to him. Authentic **worship** involves beholding God’s unveiled glory and responding to his splendor. It requires the pledging of our loyalty to him, ascribing

to him his supreme worth, and affirming his incomparable value. True **worship** is an all-consuming desire to give ourselves to God, yielding all that we are to all that he is.

Psalms 24 is a hymn of praise that directs the hearts of his people to **worship** God in a manner that recognizes his glory. This psalm has also been labeled an entrance psalm written by David. The possible events that spurred its writing might have been the entrance of the ark of the **covenant** into **Jerusalem**, an anniversary of that same occasion, or perhaps a festival commemorating the event. As a royal psalm this song contains several overtones of other royal psalms (Pss. 47; 68; 118; 132), which celebrated God's entrance into the **holy** city.

II. Commentary

When Worship Is Right

MAIN IDEA

David describes the Lord's glorious entrance into the **holy** city of **Jerusalem** while preparing those who **worship** the Lord to prepare themselves properly.

A A Recognition of God's Power (24:1–2)

SUPPORTING IDEA: David declares the Lord's sovereign authority over his **creation** and all it contains.

24:1. This psalm begins with a dramatic declaration, **The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it**. This is to say, everything on the earth, including the earth itself and all that it contains, belongs to God. This universal ownership includes **all who live in it**. All people live under God's sovereign dominion (Exod. 19:5; Deut. 10:14; Pss. 50:12; 89:11).

24:2. God's dominion over the earth and all it contains is established because he has made it: **For he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters**. This is not saying that the earth actually floats on a terrestrial ocean. Rather, using poetic language, this pictures the world as an ordered **creation** founded and established by God (cp. Ps. 135:5–6; 1 Cor. 10:26), a metaphor taken from the founding of a city (cp. Josh. 6:26; 1 Kgs. 16:24; Isa. 14:32). Like a large temple the earth is portrayed as having foundations. This language recalls the act of **creation** in which God summoned the dry land to rise from the watery surface

(Gen. 1:2, 9). He is Lord over all the works of his hands, establishing everything in its place, including man.

B A Revelation of God's Purity (24:3–6)

SUPPORTING IDEA: David prepares the worshiper to enter the **holy** presence of the Lord by stating the type of worshiper who may come to **worship**.

24:3. Since God is sovereign Lord over all **creation**, who may approach him? This is the reasoning behind the question, **Who may ascend the hill of the Lord?** Who among earth's inhabitants is acceptable and able to come before this sovereign king? Or how must a person prepare himself to approach him? "The hill of the Lord" is a reference to Mount **Zion**, or **Jerusalem**, where God dwelled above the ark of the **covenant**. Asked another way, **Who may stand in his holy place?** This reference was to **Jerusalem**, which sat atop Mount **Zion**, "his **holy** place." The question is, Who is spiritually qualified to fellowship with this awesome king?

24:4. The answer is: **He who has clean hands and a pure heart**. The phrase "clean hands" speaks of the purity of a person's outward actions. A "pure heart" refers to an inner soul that is **holy** and undefiled, set apart to God without moral defilement. Both the inner life, a person's character, and the outer life, a person's conduct, are represented. In other words, a person's life must be pure and clean if God is to be approached in **worship** and fellowship.

Specifically, this requires that a person not lift up his soul to an idol. He must have no other gods before his love for and loyalty to the one true God (Exod. 20:3). An idol is anyone or anything that a person loves, fears, or serves more than God. Likewise, this mandates that a person not **swear by what is false**. This would be to place a higher allegiance upon a false god. These requirements do not call for sinless perfection, but the integrity of all of a person's life, including both inward motive and outward manner.

24:5. The person who does come to God in holiness and humility **will receive blessing from the Lord**. This blessing is God's goodness and favor extended to his loyal subjects. Likewise, he will receive **vindication from God his Savior**. Such vindication (Heb. *sedaqa*, "**righteousness**") refers to God's just treatment of his faithful servants. What is more, here is an Old Testament expression of justification

by **faith**. The person who approaches God through **repentance** and **faith** will be declared the **righteousness** of God.

24:6. The phrase **Such is the generation of those who seek him** refers to true worshipers who seek entrance into the **holy** sanctuary. These who come, as verse 4 prescribes, are those who genuinely **seek your face, O God of Jacob**. There is no hypocrisy here, just genuine and humble **faith**.

C A Realization of God's Presence (24:7–10)

SUPPORTING IDEA: David calls upon the city of **Jerusalem** to prepare for the entrance of God into her gates.

24:7. The phrase **Lift up your heads, O you gates** refers to the entrance of worshipers into the city of **Jerusalem**. The gates of the **holy** city are called to open up to prepare themselves for the triumphant entry of God himself. This is a literary device known as personification in which attributes of personality are attributed to inanimate objects. The city gates need to stretch themselves open to make way for the entrance of earth's sovereign King. The psalmist repeated this for dramatic emphasis: **be lifted up, you ancient doors**. The word *doors* is a synonym for gates. Prepare yourself, the psalmist says, **that the King of glory may come in**.

In David's time this referred to the carrying of the ark into **Jerusalem**. The ark represented the King of glory or the manifested presence of God. This was a call to bring the ark into the sanctuary in triumphant procession. During the first coming of Christ, the greater Son of David, it refers to the triumphant entrance of Christ into **Jerusalem** on Palm Sunday (Matt. 21:1–11). Ultimately, it refers to the ascension of Christ to the heavenly **Zion** to be enthroned at God's right hand.

24:8. From within the walls of the city, the rhetorical reply comes, **Who is this King of glory?** The answer follows, perhaps from those who surrounded the ark from outside the walls: **The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle**. This is the One who may enter the city, **the Lord** himself, he who shows himself strong and mighty in defeating all of Israel's foes in **battle**.

24:9–10. Again the request for entrance comes from those carrying the ark, now just outside the city gates: **Lift up your heads, O you gates**. For effect, it is repeated, **lift them up, you ancient doors**. All this heralding occurs so **the King of**

glory may come in. From within the city walls, the question comes, perhaps spoken by the guard of the city gates, **Who is he, this King of glory?** The answer comes from those carrying and attending the ark, outside the gates, **the Lord Almighty—he is the King of glory.**