

The Book of Psalms

Psalm 24

Opening Prayer

Read Psalm 24

Overview

Psalm 24 is the entire history of salvation in 10 verses. It begins with a description of God as the creator. Then follows with questions about who may be in God's presence since He is creator and holy. This question is answered with the one who has "clean hands and a pure heart". As we will see this is no one and through Christ, everyone! The last part of the psalm is truly a celebration of this reconciling work of Christ and a hymn of His ascension following that work completed.

Some have seen Psalm 24 as an *entrance liturgy* for the priests and Levites as they come to serve in the temple. Certainly this is a possibility. Verses 7-10 and the repetition found there lend credibility to this understanding. Additionally the Mishnah tells us that the Levites recited Psalm 24 on the first day of the week since God began His creation on that day. The Septuagint actually adds words to the title of the psalm and so it reads in the Septuagint, "a psalm of David on the first day of the week."

Outline/Structure

Following the description given in the overview the outline would look like this:

- I. The Lord is Creator – 24:1-2
- II. Who may come into His presence? – 24:3-4
- III. God through Christ brings a blessing and salvation – 24:5-6
- IV. The Lord enters His rightful place in heaven – 24:7-10

The Lord is Creator – 24:1-2

- :1 - While most English translations start this verse with "the earth", the Hebrew actually has "the Lord" in first position. This is done to emphasize what is most important. The psalmist, David, wishes to set the true God, Yahweh, apart as creator versus others gods and versus the notion of pantheism.

What is pantheism? How does Psalm 24 set itself against this idea?

- Paul quotes this verse. ***Read 1 Corinthians 10:23-30.***

What is Paul's purpose in quoting the psalm?

How can Paul's purpose be extended to all created things?

How did the Fall change both the nature of the created things and our appropriate use of them?

- :2 - That God had “founded” the earth upon the seas and the rivers(currents) reflects the experience of the ancient people. They envisioned the earth(land) as a disk that floated upon the waters. “A ninth-century BC Babylonian map represents the earth as a circular disk surrounded by another circle named on the map as “ocean” and qualified by another term meaning “river”.¹
- There is also a distance placed again between the Creator and His creation. They are not one and the same thing. (see verse 1)

Who may come into His presence – 24:3-4

- :3-4 - Verse 3 asks the important question of the psalm. Rephrased the question simply would be, “who may be in God's presence?” The answer comes in verse 4. Since God is the almighty, holy Creator we cannot on our own be in His presence or come to Him.

Read Hebrews 9:11-14

Who is able to enter the holy place?

What does He offer to enter the holy place?

What is the result for us?

How does that then also place us in Psalm 24?

- “clean hands and pure heart” is a *metonymy*. A metonymy is a word or association that represents something else. For example, the word “suit” may be used for a business executive or “crown” for a king or “track” for horse betting. When I ask how you did at the track I am not asking how you felt there, but how your betting went. So the phrase here in Psalm 24, “clean hands and pure heart” is representative of the works, words, and thoughts that one has. In order to approach God, these things must be holy.

*How are these things holy in us? **Read Hebrews 10:19-22***

How have we entered the holy place?

What did Jesus' blood do for our conscience and our bodies?
(“clean hands and pure heart”)

¹ Saleska, Concordia Commentary, Psalms 1-50, page 421

God Through Christ Brings a Blessing and Salvation – 24:5-6

- :5 - Blessing and righteousness are not a reward, but a re-declaration of what makes one have “clean hands and a pure heart”. **Read Romans 4:5-8**
How does Paul link blessing and righteousness?
As Paul quotes Psalm 32, what makes one blessed and therefore righteous?
- :6 - “Jacob” – Here the name is representative of all believers. (***You may want to review all of Jacob’s story, but we will touch a few highlights to make our connection.***) A couple of things about Jacob that give us understanding of the use of his name here:
1. Jacob received the blessing of his father, Isaac, although by right it should have gone to Esau. **Genesis 27**
 2. Jacob’s blessing is the blessing of Abraham – **Genesis 28:1-9**
 3. Jacob is renamed Israel – **Genesis 32:24-32**
 4. “Israel” is all who believe – **Romans 9:6-13**

The Lord Enters His Rightful Place in Heaven – 24:7-10

- :7-10 - This section was undoubtedly a liturgical refrain possibly used for the priests coming up to the temple. Yet it may also be a prophetic song looking ahead to Christ’s ascension into heaven. The word translated “ancient” may also be translated “eternal” in which case the interpretation as prophecy fits nicely. In either case, we recognize these verses as the foundation for the hymn from our hymnal, “Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates”. (LSB # 341). This hymn is sung during Advent.
Why does this hymn fit the Advent season?
What is the main focus of the Advent season?
- “King of Glory” – This title is unique to Psalm 24. The Glory of the Lord always denotes the presence of the Lord. Recall in **Exodus 33** that God passed by Moses on the mountain and His glory caused Moses face to shine. The title “Lord of Glory” appears in **1 Corinthians 2:8**.

Summary

Psalm 24 moves us from acknowledgment of God as the creator of all to His work in giving us a blessings righteousness for salvation. All of this work is accomplished through the King of Glory, whose ascension is celebrated and Second Coming is anticipated by the end of the psalm.

Closing Prayer