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Recommended Citation

Keller, Walter E., "Psalm 24: A Psalm of David" (2001). *Walter E. Keller's Devotional Studies of Psalms*. 26. <https://scholar.valpo.edu/kellerpsalms/26>

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Psalm 24
A Psalm of David.
(RSV)

- ¹ The earth is the LORD'S and the fullness thereof,
the world and those who dwell therein;**
- ² for he has founded it upon the seas,
and established it upon the rivers.**
- ³ Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?
And who shall stand in his holy place?**
- 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.**
- ⁵ He will receive blessing from the LORD,
and vindication from the God of his salvation.**
- ⁶ Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob. *Selah***
- ⁷ Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.**
- ⁸ Who is the King of glory?
The LORD, strong and mighty,
the LORD, mighty in battle!**
- ⁹ Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.**
- ¹⁰ Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
he is the King of glory! *Selah***

Psalm 24 was likely sung by pilgrims going to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, and consists of an opening hymn of praise to the LORD (verses 1-2), a liturgy of preparation for entrance to the temple (verses 3-6), and an antiphonal song demanding entrance (verses 7-10). The reflection of prophetic thought in verses 3-6, and the reference to ancient doors (verses 7, 9) would seem to preclude a Davidic date for the composition of the Psalm as a whole. We may think of this Psalm as describing Jesus' home-coming when he ascended back into heaven after achieving the victory in his crucifixion and resurrection.

The LORD owns and possesses the world and all of its inhabitants (verse 1), because he has created them all (verse 2). In a similar way Jesus has become Lord of the redeemed world, because in him we were recreated in the baptismal waters. The thought of the earth being founded (or in parallel,

established) on waters recalls Genesis 1:2, and is also consistent with other ancient Near Eastern beliefs surrounding creation. In this Psalm, we have an allusion to God bringing order out of chaos.

The questions posed in verse 3, run parallel with David's questions asked in Psalm 15:1: "O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill?" The answers to the questions asked in verse 3 are then answered in verse 4. (See Psalm 15:2-5 for the analogous but more expansive answer.) Only he who has clean hands (that is, he whose deeds have been faultless) and a pure heart (that is, he whose interior life and motivations are sinless) may enter the Temple of the LORD (verse 4). Under such conditions Jesus alone qualifies for entry into heaven, together with all those who are with him by faith and who thereby participate in his victory over sin and death as forgiven sinners who now live to God. They are the ones who seek the face of the LORD, the God of salvation, the God of Jacob (verses 5-6). Sinful human beings are neither prepared nor worthy to be in God's presence or worship Him. Yet God forgives us, covers us with Christ's righteousness, and enables us to worship Him. This is why worship typically begins with the confession of sins and absolution. It is only by God's grace that we might worship with clean hands and a pure heart.

The demand to enter the gates of Jerusalem is made on behalf of the strong and mighty LORD, who is symbolized in the Old Testament by the Ark of the Covenant. Similarly Jesus, now as the King of Glory and Mediator of a New Covenant and God incarnate, demands entrance into the heavenly Jerusalem, on the strength of his victory (verses 7-10). With him Jesus brings all those who are "in him".

Prayer to accompany Psalm 24:

Lord God, ruler and guide of heaven and earth, you made your Son a priest and brought him into your everlasting temple. Open our hearts that the King of glory may enter, and bring us rejoicing to your holy mountain, where you live and reign, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Linger longer over verse 1:

**The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof,
the world and those who dwell therein.**