

## How Do You Approach Holy God?

Psalm 24

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We were made to worship God. Our hearts cry out for a relationship for God just as we need someone to love us and us to love them.

You know what it feels like to be lonely and desire the company of other people.  
Do you know what it feels like to miss the presence of God?

What does your need for God feel like?  
When there is an ache in your soul, what do you reach for to satisfy it?

Do you turn to hard work, or seek out people to fill the void?  
Do you excel at recreation to fill the time and the void?  
Maybe it is in food you seek comfort or a book to lose yourself in.

When you finally figure out the hunger in your soul is for God, how do you approach Him?

How would you approach Holy God? If He was behind the curtain in the Holy of Holies, would you just barge in?

Did you know God was dangerous and demands respect and to be treated holy?"

Rope and bell when a priest entered the Holy of Holies

What if you found the Ark of the Covenant? The Golden box with golden Cherubim on top. What would you do with it? How would you handle it? How powerful would the Ark of God be?

I want to look at Psalm 24. In verse 3 David writes "Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place?"

David considers the history of the ark along with his interaction with the Ark and is led to ask this question.

Let's look at a few of the examples in history

### **THE ARK DIVIDES THE WATERS OF THE JORDAN**

Joshua 3:6 (NIV)

*Joshua said to the priests, "Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people." So they took it up and went ahead of them.*

*Tell the priests who carry the ark of the covenant: 'When you reach the edge of the Jordan's waters, go and stand in the river.'* "

Joshua 3:8 NIV

When they enter the waters, at flood stage during the harvest period, they parted and the priests stood with the ark in the middle of the river bed on dry ground while all of Israel passed by.

12 stones.

*And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan.<sup>21</sup> He said to the Israelites, "In*

*the future when your descendants ask their parents, 'What do these stones mean?'<sup>22</sup> tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.'<sup>23</sup> For the LORD your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The LORD your God did to the Jordan what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over.<sup>24</sup> He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God."*

Joshua 3:11 (NIV)

*See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you.*

Notice two things.

1. The Levite priests carried the ark and they used poles to do so.
2. The ark preceded the people.

## **JOSHUA AT JERICHO**

Joshua 6:12-13 (NLT)

*Joshua got up early the next morning, and the priests again carried the Ark of the Lord. [13] The seven priests with the rams' horns marched in front of the Ark of the Lord, blowing their horns. Armed guards marched both in front of the priests with the horns and behind the Ark of the Lord. All this time the priests were sounding their horns.*

After seven days of this and seven times on the seventh day, the walls fell and they conquered the city.

So powerful was this display that when word went out across the land that the God of the Israelites was powerful, they made treaties as fast as they could.

## **PHILISTINES CAPTURE THE ARK**

You've watched Indiana Jones and the Ark of the Covenant haven't you. The Germans wanted the ark for a power to help them defeat the world. They were not the first to see the power of God's ark and want it for their own use.

Later when Israel was at war with the Philistines, the Philistines captured the ark.

1 Samuel 5:1-6 NIV

*After the Philistines had captured the ark of God, they took it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. [2] Then they carried the ark into Dagon's temple and set it beside Dagon. [3] When the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the Lord! They took Dagon and put him back in his place. [4] But the following morning when they rose, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the Lord! His head and hands had been broken off and were lying on the threshold; only his body remained.*

*[5] That is why to this day neither the priests of Dagon nor any others who enter Dagon's temple at Ashdod step on the threshold.*

*[6] The Lord's hand was heavy upon the people of Ashdod and its vicinity; he brought devastation upon them and afflicted them with tumors.*

Dagon was a very old god dating from 2300 B.C. But it turns out he was just a rock and the rock recognized the presence of the God of the universe and bowed down.

1 Samuel 5:7-12 (NIV)

When the men of Ashdod saw what was happening, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not stay here with us, because his hand is heavy upon us and upon Dagon our god." [8] So they called together all the rulers of the Philistines and asked them, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?"

They answered, "Have the ark of the God of Israel moved to Gath." So they moved the ark of the God of Israel.

[9] But after they had moved it, the Lord's hand was against that city, throwing it into a great panic. He afflicted the people of the city, both young and old, with an outbreak of tumors. [10] So they sent the ark of God to Ekron.

As the ark of God was entering Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, "They have brought the ark of the God of Israel around to us to kill us and our people." [11] So they called together all the rulers of the Philistines and said, "Send the ark of the God of Israel away; let it go back to its own place, or it will kill us and our people." For death had filled the city with panic; God's hand was very heavy upon it. [12] Those who did not die were afflicted with tumors, and the outcry of the city went up to heaven.

### **THE ARK RETURNS TO ISRAEL**

1 Samuel 6:1-8 (NIV)

When the ark of the Lord had been in Philistine territory seven months, [2] the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the Lord? Tell us how we should send it back to its place."

[3] They answered, "If you return the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it away empty, but by all means send a guilt offering to him. Then you will be healed, and you will know why his hand has not been lifted from you."

[4] The Philistines asked, "What guilt offering should we send to him?"

They replied, "Five gold tumors and five gold rats, according to the number of the Philistine rulers, because the same plague has struck both you and your rulers. [5] Make models of the tumors and of the rats that are destroying the country, and pay honor to Israel's God. Perhaps he will lift his hand from you and your gods and your land. [6] Why do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did? When he treated them harshly, did they not send the Israelites out so they could go on their way?"

[7] "Now then, get a new cart ready, with two cows that have calved and have never been yoked. Hitch the cows to the cart, but take their calves away and pen them up. [8] Take the ark of the Lord and put it on the cart, and in a chest beside it put the gold objects you are sending back to him as a guilt offering. Send it on its way,

1 Samuel 6:11-14 (NIV)

They placed the ark of the Lord on the cart and along with it the chest containing the gold rats and the models of the tumors. [12] Then the cows went straight up toward Beth Shemesh, keeping on the road and lowing all the way; they did not turn to the right or to the left. The rulers of the Philistines followed them as far as the border of Beth Shemesh.

[13] Now the people of Beth Shemesh were harvesting their wheat in the valley, and when they looked up and saw the ark, they rejoiced at the sight. [14] The cart came to the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh, and there it stopped beside a large rock. The people chopped up the wood of the cart and sacrificed the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord.

So the people of Israel received back the ark. They did a strange thing, they sacrificed the cows from the philistines and used the wood of the cart to burn them. The one thing they did right was the Levite priests lifted the ark off the cart.

But they got a little too curious.

### **WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THEY LOOKED INSIDE?**

1 Samuel 6:19 (NLT)

*But the Lord killed seventy men from Beth-shemesh because they looked into the Ark of the Lord. And the people mourned greatly because of what the Lord had done.*

## **WHO CAN APPROACH HOLY GOD?**

1 Samuel 6:20 (NLT)

*"Who is able to stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God?" they cried out. "Where can we send the Ark from here?"*

1 Samuel 7:1-2 (NLT)

*So the men of Kiriath-jearim came to get the Ark of the Lord. They took it to the hillside home of Abinadab and ordained Eleazar, his son, to be in charge of it. [2] The Ark remained in Kiriath-jearim for a long time—twenty years in all. During that time, all Israel mourned because it seemed that the Lord had abandoned them.*

Do you ever feel like God has abandoned you? Do you know how to approach Him?

Well 20 years later the story picks up with David bringing the ark to Jerusalem.

## **DAVID RETRIEVES THE ARK**

2 Samuel 6:1-11 (NLT)

*Then David mobilized thirty thousand special troops. [2] He led them to Baalah of Judah to bring home the Ark of God, which bears the name of the Lord Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim. [3] They placed the Ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the hillside home of Abinadab. Uzzah and Ahio, Abinadab's sons, were guiding the cart [4] with the Ark of God on it, with Ahio walking in front. [5] David and all the people of Israel were celebrating before the Lord with all their might, singing songs and playing all kinds of musical instruments—lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets, and cymbals.*

*[6] But when they arrived at the threshing floor of Nacon, the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah put out his hand to steady the Ark of God. [7] Then the Lord's anger blazed out against Uzzah for doing this, and God struck him dead beside the Ark of God. [8] David was angry because the Lord's anger had blazed out against Uzzah. He named that place Perez-uzzah (which means "outbreak against Uzzah"). It is still called that today.*

*[9] David was now afraid of the Lord and asked, "How can I ever bring the Ark of the Lord back into my care?" [10] So David decided not to move the Ark of the Lord into the City of David. He took it instead to the home of Obed-edom of Gath. [11] The Ark of the Lord remained there with the family of Obed-edom for three months, and the Lord blessed him and his entire household.*

David was afraid. He leaves the ark where it is. And he asks the question "Who can approach the Lord? Who can stand in his presence?"

You must first recognize who you are dealing with.

## **WE WORSHIP GOD-THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE**

Of David. A psalm.

*The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.*

Psalm 24:1-2 NIV

We sang about God of all creation. Do you understand this is true? God created everything?

Job 26:10 NAS

*He has inscribed a circle on the surface of the waters, at the boundary of light and darkness.*

Psalms 104:5-9 (NLT)

You placed the world on its foundation  
so it would never be moved.

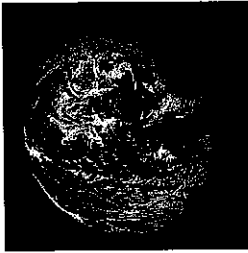
[6] You clothed the earth with floods of water,  
water that covered even the mountains.

[7] At the sound of your rebuke, the water fled;  
at the sound of your thunder, it fled away.

[8] Mountains rose and valleys sank  
to the levels you decreed.

[9] Then you set a firm boundary for the seas,  
so they would never again cover the earth.

God created the earth and all of the stars. There are 250-300 billion galaxies. When you look at the milky way at night, that is our galaxy. One among billions.



When you think about approaching God, do you take into account who he is?

With all this power and glory David asks,

**WHO MAY ASCEND THE HILL OF THE LORD?**

*Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.*

Psalms 24:3-4 NIV

What conditions must be met for worship?

Clean hands - no sin.

Pure heart - desire for righteousness.

No false idols established in your life.

No deceit and swearing in your speech.

Before you can stand before a holy God, you must be holy. Wherever God is it is holy.

When Moses approached the burning bush God said for him to take off His shoes because he was standing on holy ground. What kind of ground was it? Dirt in the presence of God.

We can only truly worship God after God has entered our hearts and cleaned us up.

We cannot be holy unless like He is holy unless He makes us holy.

When God attached His presence to the ark, He told Moses to tell Aaron not to come into the tent any time he pleased because the glory of God was present. If he did he would die.

Uzzah died because they were moving the ark their way and not the way God had instructed.

You cannot just worship God any old way you please. There are not many paths to the holy creator God. He has taken great pains to let us in on the secret of how to approach him.

We must be holy. And since we cannot accomplish that on our own, we must approach God through Jesus. It is Jesus that cleans us up. Through surrendering our life to Jesus we are made righteous, pure. Then...

*They will receive the Lord's blessing and have right standing with God their savior. They alone may enter God's presence and worship the God of Israel.*

Psalm 24:5-6 NLT

#### **AS BELIEVERS WE WORSHIP THE KING WHO WILL RETURN**

*Open up, ancient gates! Open up, ancient doors, and let the King of glory enter. Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, invincible in battle. Open up, ancient gates! Open up, ancient doors, and let the King of glory enter. Who is the King of glory? The Lord Almighty—he is the King of glory.*

Psalm 24:7-10 NLT

Are you ready for Jesus to march back into the world and claim his rightful place as Lord of all creation?

The psalm calls us to be prepared. Wake up! Our King is the King of Glory. Jesus carved the way for us fulfilling all things righteous. He did everything God asked of Him, without fail. He reflected the glory of God perfectly without sin.

Who is the Lord of hosts? Jesus is the Lord of Hosts. *The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, invincible in battle.*

God is holy and God is powerful, and God is righteous and no one can approach Him on his own.

When David understood that he needed to do it God's way and after he saw that God was blessing the household of Obed-edom, he retrieved the ark and brought it all the way to Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 6:12-15 (NLT)

*Then King David was told, "The Lord has blessed Obed-edom's home and everything he has because of the Ark of God." So David went there and brought the Ark to the City of David with a great celebration. [13] After the men who were carrying it had gone six steps, they stopped and waited so David could sacrifice an ox and a fattened calf. [14] And David danced before the Lord with all his might, wearing a priestly tunic. [15] So David and all Israel brought up the Ark of the Lord with much shouting and blowing of trumpets.*

What David experienced is meant to be a story of instruction for us. Do not think you can come to God any way you please and expect Him to respond, and then get upset when you do not hear from Him.

With Jesus to guide you and introduce we can approach a holy God and offer up our worship to Him. In return we receive life eternal. His presence lives us and we become His place of dwelling, His temple.