

# “WHO IS THE KING OF GLORY?”

## EXEGETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON PSALM 24:7-10

### Abstract

The study explores the rich liturgical and theological elements of Psalm 24. This psalm depicts a triumphant procession towards Jerusalem, culminating in a cultic dialogue at the gates of the sanctuary. This dialogue, which features a call-and-response between those outside the gates and those inside, emphasizes Yahweh's identity as the “King of Glory.” This theme is discussed in different theological contexts throughout the study. The investigation aims to establish the historical background for the psalm's ceremony while also exploring the theological implications of referring to Yahweh as both “the Lord mighty in battle” and “the Lord of Hosts.” Through detailed exegesis and comparisons with other Scriptural texts, the study argues for a nuanced understanding of divine kingship in the Old Testament. Additionally, the study examines how the early Christian Church Fathers interpreted these passages, often seeing them as foreshadowing the ascension of Christ – referred to as “the King of Glory” – to heaven. By integrating both Jewish and Christian exegetical traditions, this study presents a comprehensive analysis that underscores the theological complexity of these verses and their lasting significance in religious thought and liturgy.



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## Introduction

Psalm 24 depicts a procession heading toward Jerusalem. As the crowd approaches the sanctuary gates, an entrance ceremony takes place, characterized by a cultic dialogue, in anticipation of the solemn entry of the King of glory (Kraus 1993, 311). The people call out for the gates to be opened so that the King of glory (Heb. *Melek hakkābôd*) can enter: "Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in" (Ps 24:7, 9). This request is made twice, each time followed by the question from those behind the gates: "Who is the King of glory?" The response from outside the gates identifies the King of Glory first as "The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle!" and then as "the Lord of hosts," gradually revealing His identity (Ps 24:8,10).

The ceremony of entry involves bringing the Ark of the Covenant into the sanctuary. By carrying the Ark, which symbolizes the divine presence, the people in procession affirm that Yahweh, the King of Glory, is among them and desires to dwell in His holy place. This act signifies that from the sanctuary, He may demonstrate His sovereignty over Zion and Israel (cf. Ps 46:4-7; 84:4-10)<sup>[1]</sup>.

This study aims to analyze verses 7-10 of the psalm to offer answers to the following questions: Can we establish the historical context of the entrance ceremony? Who is the "King of glory" from a theological perspective, and what does this title signify in the context of the Old Testament? Do the two descriptions given in verses 8 and 10 – "Lord mighty in war" and "Lord of hosts" – express the same theological concept, or do they delineate two distinct attributes of Yahweh? Finally, how was this text received in the Tradition of the Church? To answer these questions, this study will provide an analysis of the psalm's structure to identify a possible historical context. It will reflect on divine kingship as portrayed in the Old Testament, analyze the two formulas that identify the King of glory, and examine how the theological image of Psalm 24:7-10 was received in the Patristic Tradition of the Church.

## The structure, content, and possible historical context of Psalm 24

Psalm 24 is divided into three sections<sup>[2]</sup>. The first part is a hymn of praise, proclaiming that all creation belongs to the Lord (Psalm 24:1-2)<sup>[3]</sup>. Yahweh governs the entire world and all its inhabitants as their Creator. Among all of God's creative acts (Gn 1:1-31), the Psalmist highlights a specific one: that He established the earth over the seas (Heb. *Yammim*) and set it upon the rivers (Heb. *Neharot*). This assertion, as many

biblical scholars note, is rooted in a cosmological understanding from the Ancient Near East, where it was believed that the earth is supported by foundations above the seas (cf. Job 38:4-7)<sup>[4]</sup>.

The following two sections have a ritualistic character and are structured as a dialogue between the laity and the priests. This dialogue occurs in three stages: question, answer, and blessing. The laity approaches the entrance of the sanctuary and poses the question: "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord and who shall stand in his holy place?"<sup>[5]</sup> The priest answered and pronounced the necessary conditions for the one who wished to enter: the one "who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully" will be allowed to enter the holy place of the Lord<sup>[6]</sup>. The essential interior conditions for standing before the Lord are purity of heart and love for God and neighbors (cf. Hos 6:6). The priest then offers a blessing for entry: "He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation". This means that a person who fulfills these conditions is permitted to enter and remain in the presence of God<sup>[7]</sup>.

The third part of the psalm unfolds as a cultic dialogue. The people arrive at the sanctuary, carrying the Ark of the Covenant in procession, and request that the gates be opened for the King of Glory to enter: "Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in" (v. 7). From within the sanctuary, a question is posed: "Who is the King of Glory?" In response, Yahweh's name is proclaimed, and His strength is affirmed; He is described as "strong and mighty, mighty in battle" (v. 8). The gates do not open immediately. The people again plead for them to open, and the question is repeated from inside: "Who is the King of Glory?" The definitive answer reveals God's name: "Lord of Hosts (Heb. *Yahweh Sabaoth*), this is the King of glory". This statement serves as the climactic expression that the psalmist reserved for the conclusion (Gunkel 1903, 369-70). The divine name holds inherent power, and its utterance highlights the divine presence among the pilgrims standing before the gates<sup>[8]</sup>. Consequently, the gates of the city or temple, which had been closed, open at the mention of the name *Yahweh Sabaoth*.

The gates before which people stand are referred to as "ancient" or "eternal" (Heb. *ʾōlām*; Gr. *aionios*), and they open by being lifted<sup>[9]</sup>. In the Masoretic Text, the gates are personified: "Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors". This highlights that they are commanded to rise for the great King entering, without the need for gatekeepers<sup>[10]</sup>. In the Septuagint, the leaders are instructed to raise the gates,

with the phrase "raise the gates, O rulers of yours". In this context, the rulers refers to the priests responsible for opening the doors (Clements 2015, 121-2).

Identifying the gates mentioned can offer insight into the potential historical context of the psalm's composition; however, it is difficult to link it to a specific event definitively. Some scholars suggest that the reference is to the gates of Jerusalem, while others believe it pertains to the gates of the temple.

Most scholars believe that King David wrote the psalm in the context of bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Zion (2 Sam 6:1-19). During this event, David organized a festive procession from the house of Abinadab to the gates of Jerusalem. This interpretation suggests that the "ancient gates" refer to the gates of Jerusalem, which David captured from the Jebusites (2 Sam 5:6-7). Additionally, the use of the divine name *Yahweh Sabaoth* in connection with the Ark of the Covenant supports this view, as it aligns with the cultic tradition that began in Shiloh and was later adopted in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 4:4; 2 Kgs 6:2). For these reasons, this framework appears to be the most appropriate context for understanding the historical background in which the psalm was composed (Sumpter 2015, 176-182; Davidson 1998, 87; Hengstenberg 1863, 411-413). However, over time, other interpretations have also been proposed.

Rashi asserts that King David composed the psalm for Solomon to recite during the consecration of the temple in Jerusalem, specifically during the procession when the Ark of the Covenant was brought to the Temple to be placed in the Holy of Holies (see 1 Kgs 8; 2 Chr 6:1-42). The "gates" mentioned in the psalm refer to those of the temple or the entrance to the Holy of Holies. They are described as "eternal" due to their holiness. It should be noted that these cannot refer to ancient gates since the construction of the temple had just been completed<sup>[11]</sup>. In that solemn setting, Solomon would initiate the cultic dialogue by requesting that the doors be opened. Rashi points out that Solomon appeals to the covenant that God established with his father, David, when he makes this request (2 Pt 6:42; cf. 2 Kgs 7:8-15) (Gruber 2004, 267).

Diodorus of Tarsus illustrates that Psalm 24 offers encouragement to the Israelites returning to Jerusalem from the Babylonian exile<sup>[12]</sup>. The concluding section of the psalm demonstrates the joy of those returning from exile as they engage in an antiphonal dialogue at the gates of Jerusalem. These gates are called eternal because they have remained closed for far too long. God, depicted as King, leads them into the city, having cared for them during their time in Babylon, liberated them from exile, and granted them the freedom to return to Jerusalem. Additionally, Diodorus

of Tarsus notes that some commentators have interpreted this antiphonal dialogue as a reference to Christ the Lord and His ascension into heaven. He acknowledges the value of this interpretation while also recognizing the historical message of the psalm (Diodorus of Tarsus 2005, 75-77).

Some exegetes, such as Allen P. Ross, suggest that Psalm 24 describes the Israelites return from a victorious battle against the Canaanites. In this interpretation, the army and the people go to the sanctuary, praising God for the victory they have achieved. They carry the ark of the covenant to the temple, which symbolizes the presence of God who accompanied them on the battlefield (Ross 2011, 575-576)<sup>[13]</sup>. However, this interpretation, while rooted in Israel's history, appears insufficient. The psalm references the coming or entry of the King of Glory, rather than His return. It seems that the Lord is entering those gates for the first time (Hengstenberg 1863, 412). Additionally, there are no direct references to armed conflict, nor are there elements indicating a specific military situation. Instead, the solemn, poetic, and ritualistic language evokes a liturgical celebration, recalling the entirety of God's interventions on behalf of His chosen people in a theological manner. The ceremony described in Psalm 24 represents Yahweh's entry into the sanctuary through the ark, as well as a remembrance of His mighty deeds throughout the history of salvation (Wambacq 1947, 163).

The interpretations of Psalm 24 suggest that its context relates to the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem during King David's reign (2 Kgs 6:12-19). This event marks the establishment of Jerusalem as a unique place of worship and serves as a reminder of the victories the chosen people experienced with Yahweh's assistance in battles. Over time, the psalm became part of temple worship and was used as a hymn of praise to Yahweh. Scholars believe it was recited during a feast that celebrated the kingship of Yahweh. The Ark was at the center of the procession that ascended to the temple, reaffirming annually that Yahweh is the supreme King of Israel (Mowinckel 1967, 169-82)<sup>[14]</sup>.

### “The King of Glory”. On the kingship of Yahweh (Ps 24:8,10)

Psalm 24, when considered in its entirety, articulates a central theological motif: the divine kingship. The Lord is referred to as מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה הַכְּבוֹד (Melek hakkābôd), the King par excellence of creation (verses 1-2) and of Israel (verses 7-10). In the Old Testament, the Hebrew term *melek* means “king” or “monarch” of a people, designating the human leader at the head of the chosen people who fulfills military (1 Kgs 12:23-24), judicial

(1 Kgs 3:16-28), or religious (2 Kgs 23) responsibilities. More broadly, the king is seen as the "shepherd" responsible for the well-being of the people (2 Chr 6:6). While the Old Testament sometimes refers to the Israelite king specifically as "the king of Israel" (1 Sam 26:20; 2 Sam 6:20), it never labels him as "king of kings" or "the great king". This distinction exists because, in Israel, the earthly king was considered the anointed one of Yahweh, the Heavenly King. The king's entire reign was to be grounded in the Law and the fear of God (Dt 17:18-19) (J.A. Soggin 1997, 672-9; Brettler 1989, 30).

The Old Testament frequently refers to God as "King" utilizing metaphorical language that enriches the faith of the chosen people. The metaphor "God is King" is particularly prominent in poetic and prophetic writings, which employ figurative language (Brettler 1989, 23-8). When applied to Yahweh, the Hebrew term *melek* highlights divine attributes that extend beyond traditional notions of kingship. As King, the God of Israel demonstrates His power in warfare (Ps 24; Zech 14), acts as the protector of His chosen people and the city of Zion (Ps 45:5; Jer 8:19), and serves as the Judge of Israel (Is 33:22). In certain passages where God is referred to as King, He is also depicted as a "shepherd" who cares for His flock, Israel (Mic 2:12-13).

The expressions "Yahweh is King" differ significantly from those that describe human kingship. While both the "Yahweh-King" and earthly kings share certain attributes, the qualities of God are expressed superlatively, often in a uniquely applicable way. Therefore, God's kingship is superior to that of human kings. Human kings typically construct houses, palaces (1 Kgs 7:1; 22:39), temples (1 Kgs 6), or fortresses (1 Kgs 12:25). In contrast, God, as King, is the creator of the entire world and everything within it. He reigns by constantly manifesting His divine providence (Ps 89:11). Yahweh is not only the "shepherd" of Israel but also "the one who made Israel" (Ps 149:2) and "the creator of Israel" (Is 43:15). He is referred to as the "King of Israel" (Is 44:6), yet His sovereignty extends to all nations (Ps 46:8). His power is unmatched by any human authority. As King, God demonstrates His strength in some of the battles fought by Israel (Jer 10:6-10). From an eschatological perspective, His power will be fully revealed with the establishment of eternal peace. King Yahweh reigns over all creation; He is the "King of heaven" (Dn 4:37) and the "king of all the earth" (Ps 47:7). His kingdom encompasses not only the transcendent realm but also the "kingdom of creation."

Psalm 24 illustrates that Yahweh's kingship is rooted in the act of creation (verses 1-2) and is affirmed in historical events (verses 7-10). From a cosmological perspective, God as King, creates the world and establishes order within it. Historically,

He is recognized by the people as a strong and powerful King who has demonstrated His might at various moments throughout history (Craigie 1983, 213).

The pilgrims proclaim that *Melek hakkābôd* (“King of Glory”) will enter through the city’s gates. This phrase, found only in this context, emphasizes that the One who enters is the supreme King of creation and of His chosen people. It is only of Him that we can say He is the King of Glory, as similarly stated in Ps 29:3, where He is referred to as the “God of Glory.” The divine glory<sup>[15]</sup> associated with the majesty and power demonstrated during the Exodus from Egypt – through miracles and victories over the Egyptians – led to the acknowledgment of God’s kingship: “The Lord will reign forever and ever” (Ex 15:18). Over time, God has revealed His glory in various events, prompting the Israelites to reaffirm His kingship (Craigie 1983, 213) continually.

Rabbinic tradition teaches that Yahweh is called the “King of Glory” because Israel not only witnessed His glory but also partook of it to the extent of His justice. God shares His glory: He granted the king of Israel His throne, gave Elijah His chariot and horses of fire, and placed His scepter in Moses’ hand to lead the people. God covered Israel with His royal robe, which represents His power. Unlike human kings, who would never allow anyone to use their name or title, God showed Moses that he would be “god” to Pharaoh (Ex 7:1). Therefore, God is called the “King of Glory” because He offers His glory to the righteous (Feuer 1996, 303).

### “The Lord, mighty in battle”. On God’s power in battles (Ps 24:8)

From behind the gates, the cultic question is asked: “Who is the King of glory”? And the first answer offered by those in front of the gates is:

יְהוָה עֲזוּז וְגִבּוֹר יְהוָה גִּבּוֹר מִלְחָמָה  
(*Yahwe ‘izzuz we-gibbôr, Yahwe gibbôr milhāmāh*).

The king of glory is Yahweh, and the divine attribute emphasized in this verse is His power. The two adjectives, *‘izzuz* and *gibbôr*, particularly highlight the strength exhibited in warfare. The term *‘izzuz*, which is rarely found in the Hebrew text, signifies strength – especially strength in battle – and, in relation to Yahweh, underscores His perfect power (see Ps 144:6; Is 43:17). The other term, *gibbôr*, is a frequently used epithet in the Old Testament that refers to a “warrior,” “brave person” or “hero” who is strong in battle. It can refer to an individual or to a group of people (*gibbôrim*) experienced in

warfare (1 Sam 17:51; 2 Sam 20:7), and it also describes God as the Mighty One who fights for His people (Is 10:21). In Psalm 24, Yahweh, the King of glory, is given the title *gibbôr milḥāmāh* ("valiant" or "hero in war") because He has demonstrated His strength in battle throughout Israel's history. Hans Urs von Balthasar notes that, Israel experiences the power of their God primarily in warfare:

at first Israel experienced this might of its God above all in war. Yahweh has the power of nature as his helpers to conquer his and Israel's enemies and cast panic and fear among them: some foes he drowns in the sea, others he buries in the gaping earth. He himself is a «warrior hero» (Ex 15:3) and his glory merges in the processional hymn Ps 24 with his renown in war [...]. Victory in battle is the first decisive proof of the fact that the God who has chosen Israel and given it his command can accomplish what he has desired and begun (Balthasar 2019, 42-3).

God demonstrated His power by caring for Israel, as He had promised to do. This includes the support He provided to Israel during certain battles, which contributes to the perception of the God of Israel as a warrior God. The portrayal of Yahweh as a warrior is rooted in the context of the Israelites' liberation from Egypt. This event not only led to the acknowledgment of divine kingship (Ex 15:18) but also to the description of Yahweh as *'iš milḥāmāh*, meaning "warrior" or "man of war" (Ex 15:3)<sup>[16]</sup>. In Deuteronomy, Moses urges the Israelites to obey the law they received from Yahweh, the one true God. He reminds them of all that God did to free them from bondage:

Has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord is God; there is no other besides him (Dt 4:34-35).

The recognition of divine interventions in the history of Israel leads the people to affirm God's complete leadership and sovereignty over all creation. This belief forms the foundation for understanding God as king, judge, and warrior. By acknowledging God as "mighty in battle," Israel demonstrated its faith that He has full control over their lives and that their historical existence depends on Him. As stated in Psalm 108:11-12, "Have you not rejected us, O God? You do not go out, O God, with our armies.

Oh grant us help against the foe, for vain is the salvation of man!” Israel, a small nation surrounded by powerful empires, placed all its hope in the aid of the King of Glory, the “Mighty in War” (Miller 1965, 39-46).

The Ark of the Covenant is closely connected to the depiction of Yahweh as *gibbôr milhāmāh*, which translates to “mighty warrior.” In rabbinic thought, the psalmist describes Yahweh in martial terms because, until that time, the Ark had accompanied Israel into battle, its presence ensuring victory over their enemies. However, the significance of the Ark of the Covenant extends beyond its role as a symbol of protection in war. This sacred object represents the presence of God among the people, emphasizing its importance in their spiritual and communal life (Feuer 1996, 302; Semen 1997, 150).

In Psalm 24, represented by the Ark of the Covenant, the Lord enters the city in all His glory. The “King of Glory” is described as “strong and mighty,” not because of a recent victory in battle, but as a reminder of how Yahweh supported Israel in their conflicts. The psalmist illustrates that God’s power is actively manifested in both creation and history. The portrayal of the King of Glory, accompanied by this martial description, emphasizes His sovereignty over creation and His engagement in historical events. In the realm of creation, He overcame chaos and established order; in history, He aids His people in battles, affirming the promises He has made to them.

### “Lord of Hosts”. On the God of the heavenly hosts (Ps 23:10)

From the sanctuary the question is again asked: “Who is the King of glory”? And the second answer that the people offer is:

יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הוּא מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד  
(*Yahweh Sabaoth hū' melek hakkābōd*)

This verse marks the climax of the psalm, shifting the focus from Yahweh’s warlike strength (v. 8) to a divine name that highlights His transcendence and authority over all creation. The title “Lord of Hosts” (*Yahweh Sabaoth*) identifies the “King of Glory”. In the psalm’s structure, this title serves as the key to access the sanctuary; once it is uttered, the gates open. Thus, the significance of the name is underscored, intricately linked to the One who bears it (see Cyril 2024, 13-25; Pașca-Tușa 2010, 15-26).

In the Old Testament, “Lord of Hosts” first appears in connection with the sanctuary at Shiloh (1 Sam 1:3,11), and later, it is associated with the Ark of the Covenant

and centralized worship in Jerusalem. The early chapters of Samuel describe how David received support from the "Lord of Hosts" in his role as king of Israel (2 Kgs 5:10; 7:8-9). Reflecting the Davidic reign and dynasty, the Book of Psalms emphasizes the protection that the "Lord of Hosts" provides to Jerusalem/Zion (Ps 46:7, 11; 48:7), the city that King David conquered from the Jebusites and the place where God chooses to manifest His presence.

Some exegetes consider *Yahweh Sabaoth* to be equivalent to *gibbôr milḥāmāh*, emphasizing Yahweh's warrior character (Ross 2011, 587; Briggs & Briggs 1907, 217). This interpretation suggests that the term *šēḇā'ōt*, which is the plural of *šābā'* meaning "army," refers to the earthly armies of Israel – specifically, the battle-ready people of Israel. In this view, *Yahweh Sabaoth* is the supreme leader of these armies, engaging in battles alongside His people. This understanding is further supported using the divine name in battle contexts and its association with the presence of the Ark of the Covenant on the battlefield (cf. 1 Sam 17:45; 4:4). However, the meaning of the name "Lord of hosts" extends beyond depicting Yahweh as merely a "divine warrior." It encompasses a much broader significance. In many prophetic and poetic texts, the term *šēḇā'ōt* ("hosts") designates the heavenly beings who serve God, forming a "heavenly council" that reflects the absolute sovereignty of the heavenly King (cf. 1 Kgs 22:19; Is 6:1-3; Dn 7:9-14). Yahweh, the "King of glory", is surrounded by heavenly servants, distinct from the servants of earthly kings. In this context, the prophet Isaiah, in his inaugural vision in the Temple, sees Yahweh the King, the Lord of hosts, sitting on His throne, with seraphim flying around Him and singing, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory" (Is 6:1-3,5). Psalm 89, which highlights the idea of God as King, also speaks of the heavenly council in various forms (vv. 6-8) and poses the question: "O Lord God of hosts, who is mighty as you are?" (v. 8) (Mettinger 2005, 134).

It should not be overlooked that, in connection the Ark of the Covenant, the full designation is "Lord of Hosts, who sits on the cherubim" (2 Sam 6:2; Is 37:16). In Psalm 80, this title appears as "You who are enthroned upon the cherubim" and after that, the divine name "Lord of Hosts" is mentioned four times (Ps 79:1, 4, 7, 14, 19). The Ark was often viewed as the (unoccupied) throne of Yahweh, the invisible King who is represented as seated there among the cherubim (Karagiannis 1995, 274-82; Semen 1997, 149-50). This understanding is further clarified when we consider the temple in Jerusalem. In the Holy of Holies, Solomon placed two large cherubim (1 Kgs 6:23-28). They were positioned parallel to one another, with their faces directed

toward the temple entrance (2 Chr 3:13). Their wings extended toward the temple walls on one side, while on the other, they met forming a throne (1 Kgs 6:27). To the human eye, this throne appeared empty, but it was believed that God was invisibly seated there, in the Holy of Holies. The Ark was placed beneath the wings of the two cherubim (1 Chr 28:2; Ps 132:7). Thus, the temple was referred to as the house of the Ark (1 Chr 28:11) and regarded as the palace of the King of Glory, designated by the Hebrew term *hêkāl* (Ps 27:4), a word also used for the palace of an earthly king (1 Kgs 21:1). Such elements have led rabbinic tradition, as well as a number of modern exegetes, to posit that Psalm 24 was originally composed – or at least first employed – in the context of the temple's dedication. The psalm depicts God's majestic approach to the temple – His palace. He is the "King of Glory" entering His sanctuary. Additionally, the prophet Jeremiah frequently refers to God as "the King, whose name is Lord of Hosts" (Jer 46:18; 48:15; 51:57) (cf. Mettinger 2005, 127-33; Semen 1997, 149-50).

The procession with the ark in Psalm 24, along with the invocation of the name "Lord of Hosts" to enter the gates of the sanctuary, illustrates that the "King of Glory" represents more than merely a "mighty man in battle." In verse 10, the concept of "the King of Glory" is presented more deeply and completely than in verse 8. While Yahweh is described there as a *gibbôr milhāmāh* – a valiant warrior against earthly foes – here He is depicted as the Lord of the heavenly hosts, reigning over both the visible and invisible realms. Rabbi Ohel Yaakov explains that the psalmist initially speaks of the Temple during pre-messianic times, characterized by violence and force, a period when God demonstrated His power in battles to compel the wicked to submit to His will. In contrast, during messianic times, there will be no need for God to reveal Himself as an avenger. Instead, He will present Himself as the God of the faithful hosts, referring to the people of Israel and possibly the nations that will fulfill His will. Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra emphasizes that the "legions" or "armies" mentioned are the heavenly beings. The response in verse 10 is prophetic, describing divine revelation in the Messianic era, when all nations will be inspired to serve the true God. This Messianic time is envisioned as a period of peace, where there will be no need for armed forces. According to the prophets, in those days, instruments of warfare will be transformed into tools for agriculture, and "nation shall not lift up sword against nation" (Mic 4:3; cf. Ps 46:9-11) (Feuer 1996, 302-303).

The transition from the image of the warrior in verse 8 to that of the heavenly King in verse 10 highlights that Yahweh is the ruler of Israel because He is fundamentally the

King of all creation. "He cannot be first in the fullest sense unless He is also the second; just as He cannot truly be the God of Israel unless He is also the God of the world. What God is on earth depends on what He is in heaven. If He has any equals there, He cannot be the King of Glory on earth in the fullest sense. This conclusion reflects the opening line of the Psalm, where the Lord is similarly praised as the God of the world" (Hengstenberg 1863, 423). Viewed this way, the last verse of the psalm clarifies the first: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein". The universal sovereignty of Yahweh, proclaimed at the beginning of the psalm, is reaffirmed at the end by the name *Yahweh Sabaoth*, the God of angelic hosts – the King whose dominion extends over all creation.

### Jesus Christ as the King of Glory in Patristic Exegesis

Rev. John Breck, in his exploration of patristic hermeneutics, articulates that for the Church Fathers, the Old Testament and the New Testament together present a unified testimony to the history of salvation. Both sections of Scripture are regarded as "Christian books" as they directly or indirectly refer to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Truth (Jn 14:6). Breck explains that the Holy Fathers justify the view of the Old Testament as a "Christian book" by recognizing that in every theophany or manifestation of God throughout Israel's history, it is not God the Father they perceive but God the Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity. They discern the voice of Christ in the Psalms. For the Church Fathers, figures such as the infant Emmanuel in Isaiah 7, the Suffering Servant described in Isaiah 52-53, the innocent man who loves a prostitute in Hosea, and the outpouring of the Spirit foretold by Joel serve as types (*typoi*) or figures of the incarnation of the eternal Son of God. When interpreted correctly, these figures reveal the essence of His person and the purpose of His earthly mission (Breck 2001, 33-34). The Church Fathers, along with Christ and later the New Testament authors, demonstrate that the transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament signifies a movement from "promise" to "fulfillment," from prophecy to its realization in the person of Christ.

The hermeneutical considerations outlined here also form the foundation for the patristic interpretation of Psalm 24:7-10. The Holy Fathers viewed the history of salvation as a unified narrative, demonstrating that these verses serve as prophetic foreshadowing of Christ's ascension to the Father in bodily form. Through His resurrection and

subsequent bodily ascension into heaven, Christ assumes His role as King, seated at the right hand of God (as reflected in Ps 109:1-2 and Heb 1:13)<sup>[17]</sup>.

St. Justin the Martyr and Philosopher, in his *First Apology*, illustrates that Christ's sufferings were foretold by Isaiah (Is 53:8-12), His ascension into heaven was proclaimed by the Psalmist (Ps 24:7-8), and Daniel spoke of His coming in glory (Dn 7:13) (St. Justin the Martyr and Philosopher 1980, 59). In *Dialogue with Trypho*, St. Justin argues that Psalm 24 was not written about Solomon and the temple he built, but rather about Christ, who is described as the “Lord of powers.” At His ascension into heaven, God's rulers in heaven (the angels) were commanded to open the gates, allowing the King of glory to enter and sit at the right hand of the Father, as noted in Psalm 110:1: “until I make your enemies your footstool.” St. Justin explains why Christ was not initially recognized: “For when the rulers of heaven saw Him of uncomely and dishonoured appearance, and inglorious, not recognising Him, they inquired, «Who is this King of glory?» And the Holy Spirit, either from the person of His Father, or from His own person, answers them, «The Lord of hosts, He is this King of glory»” (St. Justin the Martyr and Philosopher 1980, 131).

The text of Isaiah 53 offers, in St. Justin's interpretation, an explanation for why the angels at the gates of heaven do not recognize Jesus. The angels are confounded by how the God-Man ascended into heaven with His body. Origen explores this interpretation in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, relating it to the text of Is 63. He explains that after vanquishing His enemies through His suffering, the Lord ascends into heaven with the body raised from the dead, to be welcomed in the glory of the Father. When the heavenly powers see Him, they inquire, “Who is He who comes in purple, with garments redder than those of the one who gathers in the vineyard, adorned and proud of the abundance of His power?” Those accompanying Him tell the gatekeepers, “Lift up your gates, and the King of glory will enter.” However, the gatekeepers are confused when they notice the bloodstains on His hands and ask, “Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress?” He replies, “I have crushed them (the enemies).” After taking away sin for the sake of all humanity, Christ ascended to the Father to cleanse His garment in wine and in the blood of grapes (Gn 49:11). According to Origen, this was the baptism to which Christ referred when He said, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!” (Lk 12:50). Once exalted, Christ hears the words: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool” (Psalm 110:1) (Origen 1989, 246-9).

The text of Psalm 24:10 is used by St. Athanasius the Great as an argument against the Arian heresy, highlighting the immutability and divinity of the Son of God. St. Athanasius points out that Christ is not a created being; rather, He is true God, exalted above the angels. This can be demonstrated through the Father's words (Ps 2:7; Mt 3:17), the fact that angels ministered to Him (Mt 4:11), and the permission He granted Thomas to call Him "my Lord and my God" (Jn 20:28). Additionally, the prophets referred to Him as "Lord of powers" (Ps 48:8) and "Lord of hosts" (Ps 24:10), which is interpreted as the "Lord of hosts" and the true, omnipotent God. If He were merely one of the creatures, He would not be worthy of worship. However, since He is not a creature but the uniquely begotten Son of the worshipping God, He is worshipped and acknowledged as God. He is the Lord of hosts and the Almighty Ruler, just like the Father (St. Athanasius the Great 1989, 257).

Although it is considered part of apocryphal literature, the *Gospel of Nicodemus* presents a unique interpretation regarding the Savior's descent into hell. In this account, two men raised from the dead (as mentioned in Mt 27:52) illustrate how the souls of the righteous in hell were delivered. In the darkness where the Old Testament righteous were found, a bright light suddenly appeared, which was recognized by the prophet Isaiah, the righteous Simeon, and St. John the Baptist as the Son of God. Satan attempts to persuade Hell to receive Jesus merely as a man, arguing that He is not the Son of God. However, Hell demands that its gates be closed. The righteous, in contrast, implore Hell to open its gates, confident that they will be overcome. A voice like thunder commands the gates to be opened for the King of Glory to enter, to which hell responds with the question, "Who is the King of glory?" King David recalls his prophecy and answers Hell with the words, "The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle. This is the King of glory." Thus, Christ, the Lord of Glory, enters hell, liberates all the righteous of the Old Testament, and takes them to Heaven (*Gospel of Nicodemus* 2011, 145-56).

Saint Gregory of Nyssa, in his homily on the Ascension of the Lord, emphasizes that in Psalm 24:7-10, the prophet David provides a more detailed account than what is found in the Gospel. While the Gospel recounts Christ's earthly life and briefly describes His ascension into heaven (Mk 16:19; Lk 24:51; Acts 1:9), David speaks of the reaction of the heavenly powers now when the Son of God, who is incarnate and victorious over death, approaches the heavenly gates. The angels accompanying the Lord during His ascension ask for the gates of heaven to be opened. The ushers, unaware of who is approaching, inquire, "Who is the King of glory?" The heavenly powers respond,

proclaiming that it is "the one who is strong and mighty in battle," who will confront the being that had imprisoned human nature and who is destined to break the bonds of death. By overcoming this last enemy (cf. 1 Cor 15:26), He will restore freedom and peace to humanity. Although the victory has already been achieved, the ushers repeat their question because they do not recognize the One who has taken on human life and whose garments are stained with human sin (Is 63:2). Those who accompany Him no longer declare Him simply as "strong and mighty in battle," but now recognize Him as "the Lord of powers" (according to the Septuagint translation), who has attained dominion over all, has recapitulated everything in Himself, and has restored creation to its original state: "He is the King of glory" (St. Gregory of Nyssa 1994, 101-6).

In the interpretation of Psalm 24:7-10 by the Church Fathers, the idea emerges that Christ, through His ascension into heaven, opens the gates of heaven for all humanity<sup>[18]</sup>. In the *Treatise on the Incarnation of the Word*, St. Athanasius explains that Christ did not need the opening of the gates, as He is the Lord of all. The request for the doors to be opened refers to the human nature He assumed and with which He ascended to heaven (St. Athanasius the Great, 1987, 121). By this act, all humanity now has a representative at the right hand of the Father (St. Augustine, 2000, 248). St. Gregory Palamas notes that after blessing the Apostles, Christ "ascended in glory, entered the Holy of Holies not made by hands and sat down on the right hand of the heavenly majesty, making our human substance share His own throne and divinity". By ascending to heaven in His body, Christ united things below with things above and formed one Church that is both heavenly and earthly. He has placed human nature on the heavenly throne, and everyone who believes in Him is resurrected and ascends with Him (St. Gregory Palamas, 2020, 13-23).

### Conclusions

Represented by the Ark of the Covenant, Yahweh, the King of glory, enters the sanctuary. This act carries significant theological implications. In worship, the earthly sanctuary and the heavenly sanctuary are intimately connected. The presence of the Lord in the earthly sanctuary reflects His presence in the heavenly sanctuary. The Psalms highlight a mysterious relationship between Yahweh's dwelling place in heaven and His presence in Zion (Ps 9:11) (Clements 2015, 114; Kraus 1993, 314). For Israel, Yahweh is the heavenly King who manifests His presence in His holy place.

The theme of divine kingship appears frequently in the Old Testament. God, seen as King, is the Creator of the world, the maker of Israel, and the one who cares for His people. Psalm 24 refers to Him as “the King of glory,” emphasizing that the One who enters the gates is not an earthly king, but Yahweh, God who has revealed His glory throughout Israel’s history.

The answers to the question “Who is the King of Glory?” clarify His identity through two complementary characteristics. The first answer – “the Lord Mighty and Strong” – depicts Him as the King who supports His people in battle, rooted in the covenant established with them. The second answer – “Lord of Hosts” – highlights both His transcendence and His protective presence among the people. He is the King of the Heavenly Hosts, whose sovereignty extends over all creation. These two answers not only define Yahweh’s identity but also suggest that His power is directed towards the unfolding of salvation history. Yahweh demonstrates His power and reveals Himself as the absolute Master of both the seen and unseen worlds, not to dominate Israel’s enemies but to protect, rule, and deliver His people. The goal is that in the kingdom of the King of glory, wars will cease, and people will live in eternal peace. The rabbinic tradition speaks of the pre-messianic era, characterized by wars and violence, and the coming messianic era, in which peace will be established, and the sovereignty of the God of Israel will be recognized by all nations.

In patristic exegesis and the teaching of the Church, the theological message of Psalm 24:7-10 is understood as a prophetic testimony to Christ’s bodily ascension into heaven. Church Fathers such as St. Justin Martyr, Origen, St. Athanasius the Great, and St. Gregory of Nyssa interpret the liturgical dialogue of the Psalm as a heavenly scene, where the angels accompany the risen Christ and call for the gates of heaven to be opened. Those who guard these gates, unable to comprehend how human nature can enter heavenly glory, ask, “Who is the King of glory?” The response proclaims Christ’s victory: “The Lord who is strong and mighty, the Lord who is mighty in battle, Lord of hosts, this is the King of glory.”

This patristic interpretation views the history of salvation from a typological perspective. In the cultic procession of Israel, the Ark of the Covenant, symbolizing God’s presence, is placed in the Holy of Holies within the sanctuary. Yahweh is present amid His people, offering protection and safety. In His ascension to heaven, Christ enters the Holy of Holies – not made by human hands – and sits on the heavenly throne, remaining present in the Church and in communion with those who believe in Him.

### Notes

[1] In worship, both actions and words serve to signify a particular situation, symbolizing what is taking place. The entrance of Yahweh, represented by the Ark of the Covenant, into the Temple in a solemn procession illustrates His recognition as the King of Glory and the Almighty, present among the people. When the priests lift and carry the ark of the covenant in procession, it signifies that Yahweh Himself is leading His people as their King (cf. Ex 15:17-18; Nm 10:35-36) (See Mowinckel 1967:20-21).

[2] The three sections of the psalm are generally recognized by most exegetes. However, there are differing opinions regarding the relationship between these sections. Some scholars argue that we cannot consider the psalm to have a unified structure; instead, they believe it consists of three distinct texts that were later compiled into a single hymn. Other scholars assert that the psalm does form a cohesive structure, with each part logically flowing into the next from a poetic standpoint. Peter Craigie suggests that the psalm can be viewed as a unified composition if we consider the theme of divine kingship, which is present in all three sections but expressed with varying nuances. Hans Kraus also supports the idea of a unified structure, focusing on the cultic event of the procession from the end back to the beginning. In this interpretation, the pilgrims arrive at the sanctuary gates and engage in an antiphonal dialogue (vv. 7-10). Prior to their arrival, the requirements for entering the holy place of the Lord are outlined (vv. 3-6); meanwhile, during the procession, praise is offered to God, the Creator of the world (Sumpter 2014, 31-54; Kraus 1993, 311; Craigie 1983, 211).

[3] This aspect of the Lord's perfect dominion over the world, which stems from God's creative action, is also present in Ps 74, 89, 95. In the last psalm mentioned, universal sovereignty is directly linked to divine kingship: "For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods, In his hand are the depths of the earth" (Ps 94:3) (See Gunkel 1903, p. 367).

[4] According to Athanase Negoită, liberal researchers of the Old Testament show that, in poetic and prophetic writings, similarities with the myths of the Ancient Near East can be observed in terms of cosmogony. In Job there is the image of the laying of the earth on the foundations (Job 38:4-7). Peter Craigie points out that the message of verse 2 is more profound, with the psalmist intending to show Yahweh's supremacy over creation, in contrast to the Canaanite god Baal. In Canaanite cosmogonic mythology, *Yam* ("sea" – expanse of waters) also called *Nahar* ("river"), the god of the sea, was considered a threat to the order of creation; the conquest of *Yam* by the god Baal represented the subjugation of the forces of chaos and the establishment of the kingship of Baal. Using the terms *yam* and *nahar* in a demythologized and depersonalized sense (Ps 23:2), the psalmist detaches himself from the Canaanite myth, emphasizing that God the One – Yahweh is master of

creation and that, as creator and supporter of the whole world, he rules over the forces of chaos. The message is significant, because just as in the Ugaritic myth the conquest of *Yam* culminated in the kingship of Baal, so the creative work of the Lord is linked to the divine kingship affirmed in verses 7-10 (Negoiță 2004, 69-70; Craigie 1983, 212).

[5] To enter the palace of a king, one must adhere to the etiquette of the court. Similarly, individuals should demonstrate proper spiritual behavior in the house of God, the King of glory (Gunkel 1903, 368).

[6] A parallel text of this passage is found in Psalm 15. An echo of the enumerated conditions and a clarification of what he desires in man's relationship with God can be seen in the book of the prophet Micah 6:6, 8:

"With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Gunkel 1903, 367).

[7] The Hebrew term *tzedākah* refers to the justice that a person receives from God because of His judgment. Those who embody the qualities described in the psalm are regarded as "righteous" by God. This means that God acknowledges them as faithful and committed to fulfilling His will, and as a result, He blesses them (Gunkel 1903, 368).

[8] In the Ancient Near East – both in Israel and among other cultures – names, particularly those of deities, were regarded as extremely significant and held in high esteem. Pronouncing the name of a god was believed to invoke their presence, allowing believers to overcome opposing forces by uttering that sacred name (Gunkel 1903, 369-370).

[9] The Hebrew term *‘ōlām* has the meaning of "ancient", "long ago (in the past)", which later acquires the meaning of "eternal" or "forever". In the Greek text it is translated as *aionios*, meaning "eternal", in opposition to what is temporary or transitory (Jenni 1997, 852-861; Sasse 1964, 208).

[10] Exegetes indicate that this is a metonymy used in cultic language. The "gates" that people reference are represented by the gatekeepers, who have the responsibility to open or close these gates (Craigie 1983, 212).

[11] Rabbi David Kimchi, following the same line of interpretation, points out that until the construction of the Temple, the Ark Covenant did not have a permanent abode. With its erection and consecration, the Ark passes through its gates to find eternal rest in the Holy of Holies. For this reason, gates are called eternal (Feuer 1996, 301).

[12] While captive in Babylon, the Israelites long for their homes and the Temple in

Jerusalem. The Psalmist reminds them that the entire earth belongs to the Lord, which means He is present with them even in Babylon. Offering this reassurance, the Psalmist encourages them to live virtuously and to contemplate the question of who will be worthy to return from Babylon to Jerusalem. The answer is that only those who adhere to the principles outlined in verses 4-6 will be deemed worthy of returning to the holy place of the Lord.

[13] The interpretation draws parallels with another battle fought by the Israelites against the Philistines. In that battle, the Israelites, believing they were losing, brought the Ark of the Covenant to the battlefield, convinced that God's presence among them would guarantee their victory. In this context, the Ark was viewed as a symbol of divine power against their enemies. However, the Israelites ultimately lost the battle, which suggests the opposite. While the ark is indeed a symbol of divine power, it is not an instrument for achieving victory in war (1 Kgs 4:4).

[14] This cultic interpretation of the text faces some challenges. There is no clear historical evidence to support the claim that after Solomon placed the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple, it was carried out in liturgical processions, as suggested by the interpretation of verses 7-10 of Psalm 24. Once the Ark was definitively established in the Holy of Holies within the Temple, there is no record of such a procession occurring (Craigie 1983, 212).

[15] In the biblical context, glory refers to a way of revealing God's presence in a manner that humans can perceive. Throughout history, God has demonstrated His glory in various forms to reassure Israel – both individually and collectively – that He is present, that He is with them, and that He is the living, almighty God who cares for them (see Chirilă 2020, 73-90).

[16] The image of the “divine warrior” also appears in other texts of the Old Testament, such as Nm 21:14, 1 Sam 18:17, Is 42:13, and Zeph 3:17. These passages contribute to the theme of the divine warrior, Yahweh being understood as a God who is involved in the wars of Israel. To understand why Yahweh was perceived in this way, it is important to explore the historical, contextual, and theological explanations (see Miller 1965, 39-46).

[17] St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in his well-known catechesis, emphasizes that the Son did not gain the honor of sitting on the throne because of the work of salvation that He accomplished. Rather, He has been sitting on the throne with the Father from eternity. The events are therefore presented in the order of temporality. (St. Cyril of Jerusalem 2003, 244).

[18] St. Jerome indicates that after the Incarnation and the victory on the cross, Christ enters the gates of heaven with greater strength than when He first came to earth. This correlates with the Scripture, “This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous will enter

through it" (Ps 118:20). St. Jerome recalls the saints who have already passed through these gates, such as the thief crucified with Christ, St. Peter the Apostle, St. Paul, and all the apostles and martyrs. That is why, in an Easter homily, St. Jerome encourages Christians by presenting these figures as proof that strengthens their faith in their own entry into the gates of heaven, which Christ has opened for them (*The Homilies of Saint Jerome*, 1964, 251). In a spiritual sense, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, in his Easter homily, speaks about the call for every Christian to follow Christ, both in times of suffering and in moments of victory:

"If you are crucified with him as a thief, come to know God as kindhearted (...). If he descends into Hades, go down with him. Know also the mysteries of Christ there: what is the saving plan (...). And if he ascends into heaven, go up with him. Join with the angels escorting him or those receiving him. Give orders that the gates be lifted up or become higher, that they may receive him, lifted high from his passion. To those in doubt because of the body and the identifying marks of the passion, with which he did not descend but did ascend, who because of this inquire, "Who is this King of glory?" answer that he is "the Lord strong and mighty," both in everything that he has always done and is doing and in the present battle and triumph of his humanity" (St. Gregory of Nazianzus 2008, 185).

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