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When I blithely accepted the invitation to give this lecture, I thought it would be quite an easy topic to speak about. All you need to do is to look up the mention of nations or peoples in the Psalter, then put the passages in some sort of logical order to build up a composite picture of the nations as they are depicted in the Psalms. But as I read the psalms with this in mind and what some others have written on the topic I realised there were problems I had not thought of. The nations are discussed even when the term is not used. Sometimes specific nations are mentioned, such as Egypt, Edom or Babylon. Or their leaders are mentioned, their kings, who represent the nations. Some psalms, e.g. 100, which on the face of it appear to be addressed to Israel alone, have been seen to addressing all the nations, e.g. Ps 100:1 'Make a joyful noise all the earth!'. Other scholars have argued that the Psalms should be read eschatologically and present a programme for future of Israel and the nations. These are some of the issues that are raised by this topic.

A canonical approach

But there is a more fundamental one of exegetical method. Should we read the psalms as independent songs, or should we read them as parts of a collection? Is it right to allow the message in one psalm to influence our reading of the next? Or should each psalm be interpreted in isolation? Connected with this major issue is another. Should our exegesis aim to recover the sense of the original poet who composed the psalm, or should we be content to recover the sense of the psalm as it was understood by the editors of the Psalter? These issues have been hotly debated down the centuries, and particularly in the last 20 or 30 years.

Psalms 1 and 2 as programmatic

It is not my intention to discuss these issues in depth this evening. Rather I shall simply state my preference for the modern canonical approach to the psalms, which favours reading the psalms in sequence in their present final form in the book. The canonical approach does not ignore discussion of the original author's understanding of a psalm, but it holds that the most accessible and authoritative sense of a psalm is that of the Psalter's editor, a sense that is opened up by reading the psalm within its wider context of surrounding psalms. This method is best demonstrated by Vesco in his recent French commentary entitled *Le Psautier de David*.

So let us turn to the Psalter and read it through consecutively, noting where the nations are mentioned. The Psalter opens with two untitled psalms. Their anonymity is quite unusual in the first 90 or so psalms, thereafter there are quite a proportion of psalms without a title giving the author's name. This anonymity and their position at the beginning of the Psalter has led most commentators to recognise that psalms 1 and 2 are introductory to the whole collection. Recent canonical critics would go further and affirm that these two psalms are programmatic: that is that they introduce the major themes of the Psalter.

Psalm 1 introduces the fundamental choice facing everyone: are you one of the righteous or one of the wicked? The righteous meditates on the law of the LORD day and night and everything he does will ultimately prosper, whereas the way of the wicked will perish. The psalms that follow are full of references to the conflicts between the righteous and wicked. Many are the complaints of the righteous as they suffer at the hands of the wicked. They cry

out to God to save them in what are termed the laments, and when that happens they sing thanksgivings in gratitude.

The theme of conflict emerges with full vigour in Psalm 2. Here the nations led by their kings attack the God-appointed king in Jerusalem, so vv. 1-3. Older form critics suggested that the background to this psalm is the accession of a new king in Jerusalem. The surrounding nations, who formed part of the Davidic empire, seize the opportunity of a new and inexperienced king in Jerusalem to rebel, to 'burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords'. Perhaps speaking through a prophet, God declares that the nations' plans will fail. Why? Because God has appointed the king of Jerusalem. More than that God has adopted the new king at his coronation as his son. And as God's son the new king will rule the nations surrounding Jerusalem. They may be thinking of rebelling, but they are advised. 'Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling.' This is the sort of scenario that older commentators think explains the original composition and use of the same. They may be right.

But how does one's understanding of the psalm change if one sees it as announcing a major strand in the Psalter's theology? How would it have been understood by the editor or editors of the Psalter, who must have lived in the post-exilic era, when there was no Davidic empire, no king in Jerusalem, not even an independent Jewish state, just a province of the Persian empire? We could I suppose think this coronation psalm was preserved just for antiquarian interest, but its placing at the beginning of the Psalter and the references later to the promises to the Davidic king make this unlikely. Rather it witnesses to an enduring belief among the Jews that God's promises to David are still valid and that there will be a new David who will restore the great empire by reconquering the nations. Psalm 72:8 prays that the new Solomon will 'have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth'. Similarly Ps 89: 35-36 reminds God of his oath to David:

'Once for all I have sworn by my holiness,

I will not lie to David;

His offspring shall endure forever,

his throne as long as the sun before me.

Finally near the end of the Psalter that promise is reaffirmed:

'The LORD swore to David a sure oath.....

"If your sons keep my covenant....

Their sons also forever shall sit on your throne.'"(132:11-12)

This highlighting of the promises to David in an era when there was no Davidic king shows that the editors of the Psalter looked for their fulfilment in the future. In other words they interpreted these psalms messianically. They looked for a new David who would emulate the achievements of his great forefather.

If the new David is yet to be revealed, so too must the activities of the nations lie in the future. Their raging, their plotting against the new David, their subjugation, and their serving the LORD with fear. Thus in a few verses the second psalm gives a sketch of the Psalter's vision of the future relationship between the nations on the one hand and Israel and Israel's God on the other. Mitchell sums up the significance of Psalm 2 as follows:

'That means the ensuing collection to be about ultimate war between the LORD's anointed and his foes, his triumph and the establishment of his universal dominion, centred on Zion. The combined effect of Psalms 1 and 2 together may be that Psalm

1 foretells the triumph of the righteous divine king who meditates on the law of the LORD, and Psalm 2 shows him going forth to battle with its predicted outcome.' [1]

More controversially he goes on:

'The two psalms together announce....the eschatological wars of the Lord, describing the coming events and the allegiance to the LORD required of those who triumph.' [2]

Five themes

Let us unpack these ideas more slowly. I think we can see in Psalm 2 five themes that keep recurring in the Psalter.

1. The divine choice of David as king. See v. 7
2. The choice of Jerusalem or Zion as God's dwelling place. v. 6
3. The attack of the nations on the Davidic king in Jerusalem. v. 1-3
4. The defeat of the nations. vv.8-9
5. The invitation to the nations to serve the LORD. vv. 11-12 [3]

We shall trace these themes through the Psalter. The next psalm is headed a psalm of David. For nearly two centuries these titles have been under critical suspicion. It is alleged that they are later additions to earlier psalms and therefore cannot be relied on to tell us who actually wrote the psalms. I think most of the reasons cited for doubting the antiquity of the titles are pretty weak and subjective, but whether the sceptics are right or wrong, these titles tell us who the editors of the Psalter think wrote them. And as I have already said, it is the editors' understanding of the psalms we are trying to recapture. So canonical readers must take the headings seriously. We must hear the voice of David in those many psalms headed 'A Psalm of David'.

But what do we find when we read Psalm 3 this way? We find an attack of the enemies, vv. 1-2 (Theme 3); God's choice of David, v. 3 (Theme 1); God dwelling in his holy hill i.e. Zion (Theme 2); and Faith that the enemies will be defeated (cf. Theme 4). Theme 5, the invitation to submit to God and his king is not mentioned. Nor is it clear that the king's enemies are the nations, indeed the title, 'A psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son' seems to rule this interpretation out. Another difference from Psalm 2, is the promise of victory. David prays for it, but it is not clearly promised as it was in the previous psalm. This uncertainty about the outcome of the conflicts between the righteous David and his wicked enemies runs through many psalms. Typically they end on a positive note as in 3:8, 'Salvation belongs to the LORD, your blessing be on your people.' But the presence of so many laments witnesses to the intensity and length of the struggle David faces.

If some of the titles identify David's enemies with other Israelites, does this mean that other nations are not his enemies? Not apparently in Psalm 7. David appeals for God's intervention against his enemies in v. 6. 'Lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies; awake for me; you have appointed a judgment.' He continues in v. 8, 'The LORD judges the peoples; judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness.'

Kirkpatrick comments on this judgment scene. 'The psalmist prays that "the peoples" may be summoned to stand round the tribunal. It is a general summons. No distinction is made between Israel and other nations. Jehovah is exercising his judicial functions in their fullest extent as the Judge of all the earth.' [4] This picture of the nations summoned to account for their deeds is developed in Psalm 9. It should be noted that Psalm 9 is deliberately linked with Psalm 7, by its opening lines echoing the closing lines of Psalm 7.

Ps 7 ends: 'I will give thanks to the LORD....

I will sing praise to the name of the LORD, the Most High.'

Ps 9 begins: 'I will give thanks to the LORD....

I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.'

This linkage justifies us seeing Psalm 9 as a commentary on the allusion to universal judgment in 7:8. Evidently David sees his present success as the result of the heavenly judgment in his favour (see vv. 3-4). From the perspective of the Psalter's editors this must have been problematic, for there was no David in their day. For them the divine decree in the heaven still stood, promising them ultimate victory. In this way the hope first expressed in Ps 2 that the nations will be defeated is reaffirmed. But is this destruction of all the nations? Surely not: it is the enemies of the Davidic king, v. 3. It is the wicked, who parallel nations, in v. 5. It is their name that is blotted out forever and ever. These early Davidic psalms do not mention the possibility that there may be righteous among the nations, who will escape this judgment, but in the light of the programmatic statement inviting them to serve the LORD 2:11, it cannot be ruled out.

This is clear in the great Davidic thanksgiving Psalm 18. Here David at the height of his success, having seen off the challenge of Saul's family and subdued the surrounding nations, ascribes this success to the LORD:

'You made my enemies turn their backs to me' v. 40

'You delivered me from strife with the people; you made me the head of the nations'
v. 43

That some nations survive the conflict is apparent from their service to David. He is their head. He is going to praise God among them v. 49. Submission to the Davidic king is clearly the prerequisite for their salvation. Earlier in the psalm David has said:

'With the merciful you show yourself merciful;
with the blameless you show yourself blameless....
For you save a humble people,
but the haughty eyes you bring down.' (18:25, 27)

It would therefore seem that these are qualities that David looked for in his subjects, including subjects from the nations (cf. Ps 101).

But how would this psalm have been understood by the later editors? Why did they include it for their contemporaries to meditate on? The very last verse shows they believed this psalm was permanently relevant.

'Great salvation he brings to his king
and shows steadfast love to his anointed,
to David and his offspring forever.' (18:50)

Vesco sums up the message to the later readers,

This Davidic psalm ...comes to reassure the nation that God will come to deliver them from the oppression to which they are subject.....Psalm 18 is a messianic song of

thanksgiving after the exile. The king awaited in the future is a model of justice. God will save him and make all the peoples submit to him. To a people in anguish this psalm brings hope. As he did at other times in theophanies God will intervene again on behalf of his messiah.... All the nations will recognise one day that there is no other God except Israel's.' [5]

That there is hope for the nations is clear in the familiar Ps 22. The first 20 verses describe in vivid detail the suffering of David at the hands of his enemies. With such comments as 'they have pierced my hands and my feet' and 'for my clothing they cast lots', the Christian reader cannot but see this as a prophecy of the crucifixion. And such a reading is quite consonant with a canonical interpretation from post-exilic times, for many of the Davidic psalms describe the psalmist's suffering at the hands of his enemies. And in the editors' understanding they must describe the suffering of the new David. What the evangelists and later Christian readers do is to affirm that Jesus is that new David.

From verse 21 onwards the mood of the psalm suddenly changes. His prayer has been heard (v. 24) and he declares 'You have rescued me.' (v. 21). The psalmist's vindication is cause for jubilation among 'the congregation', 'the offspring of Jacob', that is among the Israelites, but not only them.

All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before you.
For kingship belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations.' (22:27-28)

The psalmist sees the impact of this deliverance resounding into the future.

Posterity shall serve him;
it shall be told of the LORD to the coming generation;
they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn. (22:30-31)

Some commentators suggest that the psalm envisages 'the conversion of all peoples' [6], or at least that all nations to earth's remotest bound, will pay homage to Jehovah.' [7] If they mean everyone from every nation will be converted, I think they are suggesting a universalism that conflicts with other passages in the psalms; e.g. 2:9; 149:6-9. The scope of salvation may be universal: it is open to all nations, but not all nations and certainly not every member of every nation will accept the terms of that salvation.

Lohfink has argued that Psalm 23 does indeed represent the sentiments of such a convert. He calls God his shepherd, i.e. His king. The psalmist is on his way to the temple in Jerusalem, where he hopes to dwell for ever. Such a pilgrimage of the nations to Jerusalem is of course part of the prophetic vision of Isaiah 2:2-4, Micah 4:1-5, and Zechariah 14:16-19.

Then according to Lohfink we have in Psalm 24 the conditions for entry to the holy city to which the converted Gentiles must conform.

Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?
And who shall stand in his holy place?

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. (24:3-4)

If this is the thinking in putting psalms 23 and 24 after psalm 22, it is possible that those who fear him in Ps 25:14 include Gentiles to whom God 'makes known his covenant.' As Lohfink observes, it would be remarkable for other nations to be included in the covenant, but this is where the sequence of thought leads him. He writes, 'The promise of the covenant of Israel also for the peoples, which psalm 25 comprises, is obviously unique in the whole Hebrew bible.' [8] I remain intrigued, but unconvinced. The titles of the psalms, which must be taken seriously on a canonical reading, make it difficult to suppose that the author of psalm 23 could be supposed to be a converted Gentile. Neither the historic David nor the eschatological David was a Gentile. And while the psalmists may well have known of the pilgrimage of the nations to Jerusalem, Psalm 24 would be an obscure reference to it.

While we could continue to work our way steadily through the Psalter, endeavouring to see how one psalm leads into the next, the constraints of time mean that we must be more selective. Psalm 33 is one of the few hymns in the first book of the Psalter. It is a response to the appeal at the end of Ps 32 to 'Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous' (32:11). Ps 33 essentially praises God for his work in creation (vv. 8-9) and for his continuing providential care (vv. 18-19). But this has implications for peoples who plot in vain (2:1). Whereas their plans will be frustrated, God's will stand for ever (vv. 10-11). Clearly the nations believe their armies will achieve their goals, but the psalmist affirms their ineffectiveness in vv. 16-17. Only if God is on their side will the military succeed vv. 18-19. Quite what the nations were planning is left unsaid. But in the light of psalm 2 and psalms 46-48, an assault on Jerusalem seems the most likely plan. These psalms promise God's protection of the city, but like the promise of eternal Davidic dynasty, this hope too seem to have been disproved by history in the era that the psalms were collected. Psalm 44 gives poignant voice to this feeling. This is the first psalm attributed to the sons of Korah and probably dates from pre-exilic times, perhaps the same time as Ps 60 with which it has many affinities [9]. Some defeat by surrounding nations prompts this outburst. The psalm insists that the defeat cannot be attributed to some major sin v. 17, so why did God let it happen? He must have gone to sleep! (v.23). In the post-exilic period, when they made a strenuous effort to keep the law, the Jews must have asked the same question. The next group of psalms suggest some answers.

Psalm 45 may originally have been a royal wedding song. But in its present setting it is to be understood as a messianic psalm, the messiah is marrying his bride Israel. Verse 2

You are the most handsome of the sons of men;
grace is poured upon your lips;
therefore God has blessed you forever.

Is rendered by the Jewish targum

Thy beauty, O King Messiah, exceeds that of the children of men;
a spirit of prophecy is bestowed upon thy lips.

While v. 10, an address to the bride

Hear, O daughter, and consider and incline your ear

is translated

Hear, O congregation of Israel, the law of his mouth, and consider his wondrous works.

The messianic interpretation is of course presupposed by the New Testament in such passages as Hebrews 1:8-9 and passages where the church is described as the bride of Christ, and those likening the kingdom of heaven to a wedding.

Psalm 44 bewailed Israel's oppression by her enemies. Psalm 45 on the other hand looks forward to their submission to king messiah. 'The peoples fall under you.' v. 5; 'The people of Tyre will seek your favour with gifts.' (v. 12), and 'nations will praise you for ever and ever.' (v.17) Vesco sums up the relationship between the two psalms well.

'After the supplication of ps 44 which wondered about a possible rejection of Israel by Yahweh and presented the elect people as animals destined for the slaughter house, Ps 45 brings a message of hope. It conjures up the messianic reign, it recalls the ancient promises and it announces a glorious future for a people humiliated by a foreign occupier. The messiah, victorious, priest and king, will reign with law and justice. His people will be married to him. Ps 45 has led us to the temple of Jerusalem. And it is about Jerusalem that Ps 46 is going to speak.'

Psalms 46-48 are often called Songs of Zion for they celebrate Jerusalem as the city where God dwells and which he protects. The nations may attack Jerusalem, but they will be thwarted because lives in her (46:5-10).

Ps 47 continues in the same vein (see vv. 1-4). Note now a new element. The peoples are summoned to clap their hands and shout for joy, *because* they have been defeated, v. 3. This implies a fundamental change of attitude. They have been converted. They recognise the Lordship of the God of Israel, and this makes them and their leaders part of the people of the God of Abraham [10]. After this remarkable openness to the possibility that all the nations will join in the worship of the God of Israel, they reappear in the more typical guise in Ps 48 attacking the city of God, where again they are defeated. This oscillation between the nations attacking the city of God on the one hand, and acknowledging the sovereignty of the son of David and worshipping his God on the other, characterises the rest of the Psalter. The failure of their attacks it is hoped will lead to submission and worship, but that is obviously not always the case. Nevertheless the attitude to the nations seems to become more positive as one reads on, in much the same way as laments become fewer and hymns of praise become more frequent later in the Psalter.

Three consecutive psalms (66-68) speak of the whole earth or all the nations or their kings praising the LORD or bringing him tribute.

66:4 declares 'All the earth worships you and sings praises to you. 68:29 affirms 'Because of your temple at Jerusalem kings shall bear gifts to you.' and even more strikingly 'Nobles shall come from Egypt; Cush shall hasten to stretch out her hands to God.' (68:31)

And sandwiched between these two psalms comes Ps 67, which repeatedly urges all the peoples and nations to praise God. The same Hebrew tense is used through most of the psalm, and it may be translated as a jussive (let x happen) or as a future prediction (x will happen). In the opening verses the sense is clearly jussive and in the last two verses future. But what about v. 5? Should it be translated 'Let the peoples praise you' jussive so EVV or 'The peoples will praise you' so Kirkpatrick.

The latter is a more satisfying climax and prepares the way for the predictions of 68:29, 31.

The theme of this magnificent psalm is the march of God to victory. It traces the establishment of His kingdom in Israel in the past; it looks forward to the defeat of all opposition in the future, until all the kingdoms of the world own the God of Israel as their Lord and pay Him homage. [11]

The issue of jussive versus future surfaces again in Psalm 72. As a prayer for Solomon it makes best sense to translate the verbs as jussives. 'May he have dominion from sea to sea...may desert tribes bow down before him' (72:8-9, so RSV, ESV, NRSV), but read messianically a future sense is perhaps preferable, 'He shall have dominion...shall bow before him' (so AV, NIV). Though one might pray for the new David to enjoy universal dominion, it would seem more consonant with other passages to see that dominion as promised. But whether we take Ps 72 as hopes or promises, there is no doubt that the ultimate fulfilment involves all nations acknowledging the rule of the messiah. As Ps 86:9 puts it so clearly: 'All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.'

Psalm 87 develops these ideas in an amazing way. Verses 4-6 are the words of God. He declares that Israel's traditional great enemies, Egypt (Rahab) and Babylon and the Philistines are being granted citizenship of Jerusalem. The formula granting this citizenship is 'This one was born there'. Other peoples mentioned such as the Cushites from Nubia and the people of Tyre show that the list is representative of all the peoples of the world.

'The names that are mentioned mark the four heavenly quarters: west (Egypt), east (Babylon), north (the land of the Philistines and Tyre, and south Cush.' [12]

In Ps 45 Israel was pictured as the bride of the Messiah. Here we have another picture, Jerusalem i.e. its inhabitants, is the mother of the nations. They enjoy a similar relationship to God as Israel, for God declares they know him (v. 4). Kirkpatrick sums up the import of this psalm magnificently:

'This psalm is fittingly placed here, for it expands the thought of 86: 9 in the style and the spirit of prophecy. It is terse, abrupt, enigmatic, like a prophetic oracle; in its breadth of view and fulness of Messianic hope it vies with the grandest of prophetic utterances. It depicts Zion as the metropolis of the universal kingdom of God, into which all nations are adopted as citizens. The franchise of Zion is conferred upon them as though it were theirs by right of birth.

'Thus the Psalm is a prediction of the incorporation of all nations into the Church of Christ, and the establishment of the new and universal nationality of the kingdom of God.' [13]

or to put it Zenger's way

'The world revolution of Psalm 2 becomes transformed into a great world family in Psalm 87, when Zion as the mother of messianic Israel (psalm 2) and mother of all mankind (ps 87) becomes the capital of the world king Yahweh himself. That is the great theme of the fourth book of the psalter.' [14]

The last psalm of book 3 is 89 which is a prolonged lament over the end of the Davidic monarchy: God seems to have forgotten his promise to David.

He had 'sworn by my holiness;

I will not lie to David.

His offspring shall endure for ever,
his throne as long as the sun before me. (89:35-36)
But now you have cast off and rejected;
You are full of wrath against your anointed.
Lord, where is your steadfast love of old,
which by your faithfulness you swore to David? (89:38, 49).

Book four

It seems to many modern commentators that the next book of the Psalter (psalms 90-106) are an answer to this lament. At the heart of book 4 is a group of psalms celebrating the LORD's kingship. Mowinckel saw these psalms as used in the autumn festival of tabernacles when God was ritually enthroned as king. It is not necessary to buy this theory to see that psalms 93-100 do indeed focus on the LORD's reign, several of them begin or include the cry 'The LORD reigns.' Though some commentators see this reign of God as a substitute for a messianic king, this seems unlikely given the prominence of the messianic psalms placed at key places in the psalter. It is also unlikely because clearly royal/messianic psalms appear in the fifth and final book of the Psalter, e.g. Pss 110 and 132. But there is no doubt that the hope of the conversion of the Gentiles is reinforced in the fourth book. Ps 100 is a further example, as is Ps 96. Note how 96:1 summons all the earth to sing to the Lord; that his saving deeds have to be proclaimed to all nations v. 3; verse 8 urges them to come to the temple with their sacrifices, and verse 9 makes it clear that this applies to the whole earth. Verse 10 may even be the confession of the peoples worshipping the Lord in Jerusalem. [15] Whereas in vv. 1-3 Israel proclaims God's deeds in history, here the nations 'confess YHWH, the king and sustainer of the world, with a quotation from 93:1.' [16] Similar sentiments to those in ps 96 are found in Ps 98: God's saving deeds prompt a new song, v. 1. The nations see it in v. 2, so all the earth must burst forth into joyful song, vv. 4-5.

But all these remarks are capped by Psalm 100 which Zenger declares is the most spectacular statement of theology in the OT. Already we have been told that the nations will hear of God's deeds, confess that he is king, and offer sacrifices in Jerusalem. Now they appropriate the covenant formula to themselves. Like Israel they see themselves in a covenant with the LORD. The nations say:

Know that the LORD, he is God!
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture (100:3)

Zenger writes

'If we read Psalms 93-100 as a continuing context, the nations move steadily into the center of the event, drawing closer and closer to Israel and its God.

'Psalm 100, as the climax of the composition, integrates the nations of the world in worship before the God of Zion: they should, and they will, shout aloud to YHWH, serve him (and not the idols; cf. 97:7) with joy, and experience his nearness – like Israel and together with it.' [17]

Not all commentators share Zenger's daring reading that makes v. 3 a confession by the nations, but it is clear that this psalm calls on all of them to join in the true worship of the God of Israel.

Book five

In the fifth and final book of the Psalter, psalms 107-150, we find the five themes set out in Ps 2 reaffirmed. God's choice of David and his successors is reaffirmed in Ps 132:11. So too is the election of Zion as God's dwelling place in several of the Songs of Ascent (e.g. 122, 125, 132). The third theme of the attack on Jerusalem and the Davidic king is not forgotten either, as in the most poignant of psalms 137.

However though when the Psalter was compiled, the Jews had only seen a partial answer to their prayers through Cyrus' conquest of Babylon, they still looked for the LORD's anointed to conquer their foes. Psalm 110 declares:

'Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies your footstool.
'The LORD is at your right hand;
he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath.
He will execute judgement among the nations,
filling them with corpses.' (110:1, 5-6).

Psalm 118 is a thanksgiving uttered by the hoped for king entering Jerusalem in triumph. While Psalm 144 is a prayer by David for deliverance 'from the hand of foreigners, whose mouths speak lies and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.' (vv. 7-8) While the last-but-one psalm pictures God's warriors celebrating God's victory over the powers of evil, the nations that oppose God's rule.

But this is not the Psalter's last word on the nations. The psalms still hope that nations and their leaders will as a result of his people's vindication join in God's praise. Ps 148 bids all mankind (including the nations) join in praising him, and the Psalter's very last word is:

Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. (150: 6)

Notes

[1] Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter*, p.87.

[2] Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter*, p.87.

[3] Verse 12 is a bit problematic with its advice to kiss the son, 'son' being an Aramaic word. So a conjectural emendation that the kings of the nations are being addressed in the lingua franca of the time, i.e. in Aramaic. Whatever the correct reading, it is clear that the kings are being challenged to submit to both the LORD and his anointed king in Jerusalem.

[4] Kirkpatrick, p.32.

[5] Vesco, pp.203-4.

[6] Delitzsch, *I*, p.324.

[7] Kirkpatrick, p.122.

[8] Norbert Lohfink and Erich Zenger, *Der Gott Israels und die Völker*, p.83.

[9] Kirkpatrick, p.236.

[10] The Hebrew of 47:9a is literally 'the princes of the peoples have gathered, people of the God of Abraham. The second phrase, 'people...Abraham' seems to be in apposition to 'the princes of the peoples', hence ESV inserts 'as'.

[11] Kirkpatrick, p.375.

[12] Hossfeld and Zenger, p.385.

[13] Kirkpatrick, pp.518-9.

[14] Lohfink and Zenger, p.150.

[15] Lohfink and Zenger, p.161.

[16] Hossfeld and Zenger, p.466.

[17] Hossfeld and Zenger, p. 497.

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