ESCHATOLOGICAL EXPECTATIONS IN THE PSALTER: A STUDY OF PS 145

by
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Introduction

Ever since Mowinckel’s proposal “YHWH has become king,” the debates on eschatological expectations in the Psalter have revolved around the usage of the two words “messiah” and “king.” Some scholars contend that the “royal psalms” not merely represent the nostalgia or the witness of the glorious past but “also as beacons to give direction to the hopes and expectations of a new king.” Others, such as Norman Whybray and M. A. Vincent, are not enthusiastic about the eschatological interest in the Psalter. Vincent writes, “One can read the Psalter eschatologically, even to the extent of finding an eschatological ‘programme’ within it; but the final editors’ organizational scheme is a far cry from making one or even encouraging one to read the Psalter in that way.” Still others differ and join Geerhardus Vos, who asserts that it is “in the Psalter that the term Messiah enters into the eschatological vocabulary. This nomenclature of messianism does not have its seat in the

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1 S. Mowinckel, Psalmenstudien Vol. 2 (Oslo: Kristiana, 1921), 6.


5 Ibid., 79.
prophets. The term Messiah, i.e. ‘the Anointed,’ is specifically proper to the Psalter.”

The eschatological issues in the Psalter are not only about the extant of the eschatological king but also the identity of king and the domain of his kingdom—Who is this king? What is the nature of his kingdom? How is the kingdom connected to eschatology? Who are the subjects of his kingdom? Is there any ethnic particularity?

On the one hand, some scholars from classical Dispensationalism, who seek the literal fulfillment of the OT promises, claim that the term “kingdom is synonymous to Millennium.”

Israel and the Church are antithetically distinct to the extent that “the Davidic kingdom is the millennial kingdom” to be realized in the future. Therefore “there is no promised kingdom on earth in this age.” They vehemently argue against the “already” aspect of the kingdom. For example, concerning the proclamation of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, Stanley D. Toussaint writes, “It is best to conclude that the kingdom was not

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6 Geerhardus Vos also points out that the eschatological character of the Psalter is evidenced not only in the kingship language but also in other expressions, such as: (1) references to a new song (Pss 33:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1), new things, new creation, or new name (cf. also Isa 42:9-10; 62:2; 65:17; 66:22; Rev 2:17; 21:5). These conceptions are all connected with the fulfillment of God’s plan; (2) reference to “set time” (cf. Ps 75:2-[75:3, RV]; 102:14—[102:13]; and Hab.2: 3); (3) a definite fixed program and the implication that there is a plan organically linking the previous works of God with the present and future, eschatological events (Ps. 77:10ff; 138:8—“perfect that which concerneth me”; for not the work of thine own hand”); (4) reference to judgment being “written” (cf. Ps. 149:9) “Morning” in Psalms 46:5; 49:14; 130:6 (cf. 59:16; 112:4; 118:27; 143:8; Hos 6:3; Isa 17:14; 21:11-12) suggested the break (dawn) of the great day of Jehovah. See Geerhardus Vos, The Eschatology of the Old Testament (ed. James T. Dennison, Jr.; Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2001), 131, 140.


8 Ibid.
proclaimed as being present by John the Baptist, the Lord, the Twelve, or the seventy, but only as being in a condition of nearness.9 On the other hand, some scholars oppose such a belief. Some postulate the replacement of Davidic kingship.10 Others see the kingdom fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who represents the Davidic line, and therefore abrogates the expectation of Davidic kingship.11 Others see the transition as simply transferring messianic hope from an individual Davidic king to the congregation of Israel. Still others, like Vos, purports the enlargement of the house of David in its role as ‘Messiah’ but not the rejection of the covenant with David (Is 55:3).12 The contentious nature of these discussions underpins the importance of the study of eschatological expectation in the Psalter and demands more focused study of the text of individual psalms at a micro level. Thus, in this paper I intend to study Ps 145 and explore the possible clarifications this text might bring to some of these litigious issues.

Translation of Ps 145

In order to highlight the literary structure that signifies thematic connections, transitions, movement, and inclusio in the text, I have underlined, bolded, and highlighted the

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9 Ibid., 232.

10 H. G. Wilson and others in the non-dispensational camp claim the rejection of human Davidic king based on Ps 89.


text with different colors. These highlights accentuate the poetic ingenuity of the text, both in the external and internal structures.

PRELUDE

1. A Song of Praise, of David.
   (8) I will exalt you my God, the King;
   And I will bless your name forever and ever.

2. Every day I will bless you,
   And I will praise your name forever and ever.

STANZA I

3. Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised;
   And His greatness is unsearchable.

4. One generation shall praise your works to another,
   And they will declare your strength.

5. The glorious splendor of your majesty,
   And upon words of your wonderful works, I will meditate.

6. They will speak of your frightening might
   And I will recount your greatness.

STANZA II

13 The phrase in BHS is in plural construct but it is singular in Septuagint, Syriac (P) and Targum.

14 Perhaps the phrase is deleted or the letter or is deleted. Ref Syriac (P).

15 Septuagint and Syriac (P) have which is future active indicative verb, probably it should be read with Qumran where it is piel verb.

16 Septuagint and Syriac (P) have which is future middle indicative verb, probably it should be read as .

17 The phrase in Septuagint and the Targum has 3rd plural reading, probably to be read as .

18 The Kethiv reading is singular construct here. Many manuscripts such as the Septuagint, Theodotion, Syriac (P), and Targum follow Qere reading which is plural construct, but Jerome follows Kethiv.
They shall bring the remembrance of your many goodness and they shall sing out loud of your righteousness.

The Lord is gracious and merciful; slow to anger and great in loving kindness.

The Lord is good to all, and his mercies are upon all his works.

All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and your godly ones shall bless you.

They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and they will talk of your strength;

To make known to the sons of men his strength, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion is throughout all generations.

INTERLUDE

All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and your godly ones shall bless you.

STANZA III

They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and they will talk of your strength;

To make known to the sons of men his strength, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion is throughout all generations.

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19 Probably it should be read as בְּרוֹפֶה instead of בְּרוֹפֶה. Ref. Septuagint.
20 The word דְּרָאָסְת in Symmachus’s Greek version and Jerome is plural.
21 The phrase בְּרוֹפֶה is missing in Syriac (P).
22 The phrase יִכְפָּרֵד in few manuscripts of Targum has יִכְפָּרֵד as 2ms suffix.
23 The phrase יִכְפָּרֵד in Jerome is translated as plural construct.
24 The phrase יִכְפָּרֵד in Septuagint and Syriac (P) have singular construct.
25 The word יִכְפָּרֵד is missing in Targum and Syriac (P).
26 Instead of 3ms suffix in יִכְפָּרֵד Septuagint and Syriac (P) have suffix 2 sg.
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STANZA IV

14 The Lord sustains all who fall, and he raises up all who are bowed down.

15 The eyes of all look up to you with hope, and you will give them their food in due time.

16 Your hand is open, and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

17 The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and kind in all his works.

18 The Lord is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth.

19 He will fulfill the desire of those who fear him; He will also hear their cry and will save them.

20 The Lord guards all those who love him; But all the wicked, he will destroy.

POSTLUDE

21 My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord; And all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.

Why Ps 145?

Ps145 is a beautifully regular and well-integrated acrostic composition

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among all other acrostics psalms,\textsuperscript{32} except for the omission of the \textsuperscript{1} line.\textsuperscript{33} Both the external and internal structures show that its composition is intentional and programmatic. An analysis of its literary structure enhances the theological interpretation of the text. It is also the only psalm that has the word הַלְהָלָה in its title. Its reoccurrence with הַלְהָלָה in v.21 forms an interesting inclusio (v.1 has הַלְהָלָה and v.21 has הַלְהָלָה). In the Synagogue liturgy this is one of the most popular psalms\textsuperscript{34} because it begins with the word \textit{Ashre}.\textsuperscript{35} But in recent biblical scholarship the importance of this psalm has emerged because of its location in the Psalter’s division. It is positioned as the last psalm of book V, just before the five \textit{hallel} psalms, and represents a dramatic turn in the Psalter, the last of the David series (Ps 138-144). This Davidic psalm, along with Ps 146, revisits Yahweh kingship theme of Ps 

\textsuperscript{32} Other acrostics psalms are Ps 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, and 119.

\textsuperscript{33} Since the Septuagint, Syriac (P), Vulgate and the Qumran Psalm scrolls have almost identical nun text, some scholars think that it was just a transmission error. Nevertheless, the Talmudic rabbis contended for a deliberate dropping of nun in the original composition. They suggested the letter nun is associated with Amos 5:2 (נֶפֶל לָא לְהַלְהָלָה יָשָׂרָא, “Fallen is Virgin Israel, never to rise again . . .”), which is a negative prophesy on Israel’s destruction and does not fit in the context. Since the nun would have reminded the readers an event that was entirely contradicting the verse starting with mem and also the whole of intent of this Ashre Psalm, its omission was deliberate. See Chaim Pearle, “The Theology of Psalm 145: Part II,” \textit{The Jewish Bible Quarterly} 20/1 (1991): 78.

\textsuperscript{34} Willem A. VanGemeren writes, “In Jewish practice this psalm was recited twice in the morning and twice in the evening service. The Talmud commends all who repeat it three times a day as having a share in the world to come (Ber4b).” See Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” \textit{The Expositor’s Bible Commentary with the New International Version} Vol. 5. (ed. Frank E. Gaebelein; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 860. According to Z. Adar, in Jewish liturgy this psalm was prefixed with Ps 84:5 and Ps 144:5 and suffixed by Ps 115:8 in order to give a nationalistic tone. See Adele Berlin, “The Rhetoric of Psalm 145,” in \textit{Biblical and Related Studies Presented to Samuel Iwry} (ed. Ann Kort and Scott Morschauer; Winona: Eisenbrauns, 1985), 17-22.

\textsuperscript{35} Pearle, “The Theology of Psalm 145: Part II.” 73.
93, 96-99 in book IV creating discontinuity with Ps 2-89. Michael D. Goulder sees the setting of this psalm especially after the lament of David in Ps 144 as the culmination of the sequence. In his view, the celebration of the victory is expressed in the acrostic arrangement. He does not see the omission of nun as an error, but part of a purposeful design. Wilson also sees this psalm as “the ‘climax’ of the fifth book of the Psalter, with the final hallel (Pss 146-50) drawing its impetus from Ps 145:21.” In the Qumran Scroll (11Qps), it is interesting to note that it occupies the middle of the scroll. These salient features make this psalm significant for this study. In recent scholarship this psalm has often been studied in connection with the late composition of book IV and V. The high concentration of “royal psalms” in books IV and the return of Davidic Psalms in book V with a special emphasis on “kingship of Yahweh,” have been interpreted as programmatic. Scholars have shown interest in probing the editorial intent of this arrangement. What might be the editorial intent underneath this arrangement? Does it imply any shift in the theology of Yahweh kingship? The answers to these questions might help us understand the language of eschatological expectations in the Psalter.

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38 Ibid.
**Thesis Statement**

In this paper, I contend that the study of Ps 145, both at the macro and micro levels,\(^40\) demonstrates the kingship of Yahweh to be both “realized” and “forward looking.” In other words, the eschatological expectations of Ps 145 are both “already and not yet.”\(^41\) Furthermore, I will also argue that in the “forward looking” eschatological expectations, the poet’s concern is progressively moving towards universalism rather than particularism. The eschatological kingship of Yahweh is gradually cosmic in nature rather than limited.

**Methodological Approach**

According to Vanhoozer, questions about meaning and interpretation are inherently theological.\(^42\) Theology has to do with language, language has to do with theology, and the source for biblical theology is the biblical text. Therefore, in biblical theology, which I want to pursue in this paper, the preeminence of biblical text, the importance of canonical approach, and the illocutionary aspect of biblical text shall remain non-negotiable. Nevertheless, I am aware that such methodological affirmation does not reduce the inherent complexities of the language, especially in absence of both the speaker

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\(^40\) By the phrase “macro level” I mean the literary and thematic connections of this psalm with other psalms in books IV and V and by the phrase “micro level” I mean the literary and thematic connections within this psalm.

\(^41\) I am adapting the term “already and not yet” to highlight the perspective of the hope “realized” and hope “forward looking” in the book of the Psalter.

and the referents. This is why, since the first use of *eschatologia* by K. G. Breschneider in 1804, the meaning and the theological nuances of eschatology have multiplied. I. Howard Marshall, in his article “Slippery Words,” presents a brief but very helpful description of this confusion. He summarizes his findings into nine prevalent meanings for the words “eschatology” or “eschatological.”

G. B. Caird, in the last chapter of his book *The Language and the Imagery of the Bible*, also presents an insightful analysis of the meanings of the word “eschatology.” Eschatology, according to him, is not concerned with referentiality, but the merging of the promise with the Promiser—who is the alpha and the omega.


46 According to Marshall, the nine meanings of eschatology are: “(1) study of or teaching about the last things; (2) the last things themselves; (3) the last things, or teaching about them, understood in biblical terms as the coming of the kingdom and the Son of man, rather than primary in terms of death and the future state of heaven or hell; (4) the doctrine that the last things are near; (5) in the phrase “consistent eschatology”, the belief that the teaching of Jesus was wholly determined by the belief in the imminence of the last things; (6) in the phrase ‘realized eschatology’, the view that the ministry of Jesus the last things were fully and finally taking place; (7) in the phrase ‘eschatology in process of realization’, the view that in the ministry of Jesus the last things had been set in motion and were working towards a climax; (8) the meaning found in recent writers by Whiteley, that an ‘eschatological’ event is the work of God; (9) the view of Barrett that ‘eschatological’ can be applied to events whose significance is determined by the final elements in the series.” See Marshall, “Slippery Words,” 267.

omega, the beginning and the end. Interpretation of eschatological languages also demands an appropriate understanding of typology. Typology, when it is defined with strong emphasis on historical correspondences, has its limitations and does not answer all the questions pertaining to the relationship between the OT and the NT. Francis Young refuses to define “typology” by means of historical correspondence and referentiality, but he presents it as a literary device for inter-illumination through inter-textuality, “architext,” and a “super-text.” For him, this phenomenon functions through mimetic symbols, parallel narratives, corresponding characterization, exemplary patterns, or inertextual resonance.

Incorporating these valuable insights into the intricacy of language, I have adopted a method that majors on the literary analysis of the biblical text and also, that takes the final form of the Psalter more seriously. I have applied “rhetorical criticism,” which looks “for repetitions and patterns in the use of words and phrases, for the particular structuring of words and ideas, and for various other rhetorical or poetic devices, such as chiasm and inclusio.” I agree with Adele Berlin who writes, “The potential success of rhetorical criticism lies in the fact that the devices and symmetries that are present in a poem are not merely decorations—but are pointers or signs which indicate what the meaning is.” The literary form and the structure of this psalm make these methods appropriate.

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51 Ibid.
Eschatological Expectations in Ps 145

Literary Form and Structure

First, notice the external acrostic features of this psalm, as it is used in this composition to add certain nuances in the thematic development. The psalm begins with א and ends with מ drawing the attention to the progression and expanse of time. L. J. Liebreich points out the centrality of time in the following structural markers.

- v. 1: לשהלמ יתע
- v. 2: לשהלמ יתע
- v. 13: כל-行贿ים
- v. 21: לשהלמ יתע

However, Liebreich fails to see its connection with the root word דה, which appears twice in this psalm (v.4 דה, דה, and v.13. דה) to emphasize the expanse of time rather than its centrality. This emphasis on the vastness of time becomes more lucid when this connection is seen in the context of the preceding psalm.

Ps 144:3

אлюд לשהלמ יתע הז ימי הצלח שובר

(Man is like a mere breath; His days are like a passing shadow)

Yahweh, in contrast to the human king, will be praised from one generation to another until eternity (לתחלמל שִׁוע). According to VanGemeren, the structural elements of this psalm highlight the praise of the Lord’s kingship and the covenant fidelity of Yahweh.

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A. In Praise of the Lord’s Kingship (vv. 1-3)
   B. In Praise of the Lord’s faithfulness to the Covenant (vv. 4-9)
A’. In Praise of the Lord’ Kingship (vv.10-13a)
   B’. In Praise of the Lord’s Covenant Fidelity (vv 13b-21)

VanGemeren rightly claims the attributes and the acts of God as the major themes of this psalm; however, the covenantal relationship needs explication. The chiasm between B and B’ is not convincing because the word “covenant” is absent and the indirect covenant language is inclusive and generic in nature. Furthermore, this chiasm does not explain the progressive movement in the poetry—from to irl. Adele Berlin divides this psalm into two halves (vv.11-9 and vv. 10-20). According to him, the first half is an invitation to praise Yahweh, while the second half gives the basis for that praise. He further subdivides the two halves into quarters that form a chiasm in an ABB’A’ structure of divine greatness and grace. But Berlin’s division does not take into account the widening sphere of Yahweh’s act. Wilfred G. E. Watson highlights the ingenious work of the poet in the internal structure of this psalm by pointing out the “miniacrostic” in vv 11-12 and a reverse rootplay in vv.11-13.

**Miniscrostic**

| v.11 | כֶּבֶד ("glory") |
| v.12 | לְוָדָה ("To make known") |
| v.13 | לְךָלֵבֵת הַלְלָה ("your kingdom is kingdom") |

**Reverse rootplay**

54 Ibid.
This reversing phenomena of the letters ב, ל, and מ into ולם in the root of הַלֵּם, in the chiasm, and the four fold repetition of ולם leads Watson to suggest that the basic theme of this poem is “God’s eternal and universal kingship.” But Berlin sees this phenomenon simply as feature of the alphabetic acrostic, rather than a reverse acrostic. Nevertheless, Watson’s observation cannot be set aside without a stronger counter-argument. He rightly contends that the thematic center of this psalm is the kingship of Yahweh.

At the same time, Barnabas Lindars and Reuven Kimelman’s literary structure, which highlights the change in the subject of בָּרָא from an individual blessing to the community and then all flesh blessing, deserves our attention. Based on my translation above, I have adapted their literary structure to highlight the transforming and broadening progression of the themes in the internal structure of this psalm (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1
LITERARY STRUCTURE AND THEMATIC MOVEMENT

Prelude: vv. 1-2 בָּרָא (I will bless) Individual

Blessing

Stanza I: vv. 3-6 Greatness of Yahweh

57 Ibid.


In the above figure, the motif of individual blessing unfolds into the blessing of the community but it does not stop there. Their experience of Yahweh’s attributes (greatness, goodness, kingship, shepherdhood) is so contagious that it perpetuates from one generation to another until all humanity (כָּל-בָּשָׂר) receive his blessing. The above structure highlights the thematic development of “blessings” and the characteristics of Yahweh as king; however, it requires a detail discussion in the following paragraph.

**Thematic Development**

In the following paragraph, I will investigate five thematic developments to substantiate my thesis. First, I will show how the nature of the king in this psalm is idealistic and cosmic in dimension. Second, I will discuss how the eschatological expectation in regard to the kingship is in some sense already realized. Third, I will contend that jurisdiction of the kingdom within this psalm expands from particularism to universalism. Fourth, I will show that there are some elements of eschatological expectations that are still located in future.
Fifth, I will argue how the pattern of the “realized” and “forward looking” aspects of the eschatological expectations of this psalm has correspondence in the NT.

(1) The Nature of the King

Unlike Ps 2, the identity of the king is forthrightly stated as “my God” (v.1) and “Lord” (v.3, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 17, 18, 20, 21). There is no mention of the king’s enthronement in Zion (Ps 2:6) but his reign is real and present, and his dominion extends over Zion for all generations (Ps 146:10). He is great and his greatness is proven. He deserves all the praise of man. This is why one generation will commend him to another generation (v.4). He is gracious, compassionate and slow to anger (v.8). He receives praise and exaltation from all (v.21). He is both righteous and loving (v.17). He is the promise-keeper and faithful (v.13b; Ps 146:6b). He is not like a human king who cannot be trusted (146:3). The language of “promise” and “faithfulness” in v. 13b indirectly alludes to the “covenant” and yet in the subsequent verses the king’s sovereign domain surpasses the covenant boundary. He is the ideal—the eschatological cosmic king whom the pious in Israel always believed to be real and ever present. Notice the connection with some other OT texts:

Is 33:22  
כִּי יְהוָה תְהֹמֹן יְהוָה מַהוֹלֹא יְהוָה מַלְכָּה יְהוָה יִישְׁתַּנֶה:  
(For the Lord is our judge, The Lord is our lawgiver, The Lord is our king; He will save us)

Ps 5:3  
הַשְׁמֵיכָה לְכָלָל שָׁעִי מִלֵּךְ יִשְׁלָמִי כִּי-אִירָלִי אֲהָבֶל  
(Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God, For to Thee do I pray)

Ps 44:5  
אַהֲבָה-הוּא מִלֵּךְ אֶלֹהִים צְוָה יִשְׁרָעַת-נַעֲכֶב  
(Thou art my King, O God; Command victories for Jacob)

Ps 84:4  
יוֹהָה אֶבֶּסַּה מִלֵּךְ אָלֹהִים  
(O LORD Almighty, my King and my God)

Ps 144:1  
אָוֹרֹתָה אֶלֹהִים מַלְכָּה  
(I will exalt you, my God the King)

But what about the Davidic king as promised in 2 Sam 7:16? Some conservative scholars agree that Ps 89:38-39 presents the rejection of the Davidic human king, who failed to meet Yahweh’s expectations. Israel as a nation was expected to be a theocratic nation, but they desired a human king. In 1 Sam 8:5, we read that Yahweh saw the demand for a human king as his own rejection; however, he granted them their demand. But after the perpetual failures of the human kings, the hope for the restoration of ideal kingship of Yahweh becomes gradually stronger among the godly. In response to this hope and expectation when the psalmist saw the restoration of the temple, law, and the remnant community in the post-exilic period, he saw it as the kingship of Yahweh is restored. The psalmist also sees the future hope for its fuller realization and yet in a strange way, he affirms with confidence the kingship of Yahweh as if it is present and real.

(2) Realized Eschatological Expectations

The mood in this Psalm is apparently one of high optimism and jubilation. Not only does the poet himself exalt and bless Yahweh, but he also anticipates every godly person in the community (v.10, ר"ך" ※ץ) and ultimately all human beings in the world to bless Yahweh as well (v.21, ז"ל ושת). His confidence is empowered by the mighty acts (בבב ל), the wondrous acts (בבב), and the awesome acts (בבב) of Yahweh in the past and the present (vv.3-6) through which he has shown his great goodness and compassion. Notice them in vv.5-6,

v.5  נף תבש בות חורכ יברכ נפשות אישים (The glorious splendor of your majesty, and upon words of your wonderful works, I will meditate)

v.6  ושת ננהק יאמר וילשכsocial (:ם) (They will speak of your frightening might and I will recount your greatness)
But what are these great mighty, wondrous, and awesome acts? The poet is not specific about them. Lexically, v.5 connects with v.13 of Ps 77, where Israel’s miraculous experience during the first exodus (vv.15-20) is narrated. And v.6 is connected with v. 4 of Ps 78, which is a long account of God’s favor upon Israel from the exodus to the reign of David. Perhaps these two verses do not allude to a specific event, but to God’s perpetual and persistent faithfulness to his people. This means that this psalm could be considered as pre-exilic composition. But Goulder suggests that these acts may refer to both the first and the second exiles (as Ex 34:6 is cited in v.8) during which Israel experienced the mighty acts of God.61 Based on this interpretation, he locates this psalm in the period of Ezra when no king existed. He asserts that since the opening verse does not use the standard phrase *my king and God* but ἡμῶν υἱός θεόν (my God, the King), the kingship of Yahweh is more likely to be a present reality. Leslie C. Allen also places this psalm in post-exilic period.62 However, some scholars think that this Yahweh kingship affirmation may be because of the failure of the Davidic king.63 Goulder and Allen’s position seems to be more convincing due to the historical context. Since the temple, city wall, and the laws were restored after Israel’s final return from exile, it is plausible that the community felt that some form of Yahweh’s


62 Allen points out few words such as *mlkt* and *jkp* in v.13 and v.14 to be dated as post-exilic. I do not subscribe to this argument. I have argued against this in my paper *The Early Composition of the Psalter*—a paper submitted in the History of Bible (DOT 910) class this semester. Nevertheless, it is possible that an older composition may have been redacted for a contemporary situation in postexilic time. See Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150* (WBC 21. Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983), 371.

kingship was restored. Goulder insists, “[I]n some sense Ezra did institute a theocracy which has endured through all generations from that to this.”  

Could it be possible that the editor might have taken a psalm composed earlier and relocated it into its new historical context?

Furthermore, the optimism of the poet seems to surpass the enthusiasm caused by Ezra’s restoration of the law. It is both present as well forward looking. Yahweh has not only become their king but He is also the transcendent king of the cosmos. Undoubtedly, the complete deliverance from the severe suffering that Israel underwent in the captivity has given the psalmist an optimism to see the final fulfillment of God’s promise imminent.

This optimism can be better understood if it is read in connection with the last psalm of book IV, Ps 106, where Israel’s sin and suffering of exile is explained. Notice the following two verses which are lexically connected to v. 1 and 21 of Ps 145.

Ps. 106: 2  
שבעת יִבְאָרְלָה יְהוָה יְשַׁפְּלוּ יִךְּלַּהֲלֵתָה (Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the LORD or fully declare his praise?)

Ps 106: 47  
’לַשׁיָּנֵמִי יְהוָה אָלָלָהּ יָכִּ֣סְנָ֑ה יָדֵ֥רָת יִלְוֹרָת הַלֶּשֶׁ֖ת בַּזִּ֣וֶּל בַּזִּֽוֶּל (Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise.)

Israel lived in exile with the constant expectation that Yahweh would one day restore the glory of the Davidic kingdom—that he would gather the remnant in Zion.  

The reason for the optimism at the end of book V is anticipated at the end of book IV (Ps 106:44-46: But he took note of their distress when he heard their cry; for their sake he remembered

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his covenant and out of his great love he relented. He caused them to be pitied by all who held them captive). In Ps 145, the picture is of the godly ones who are now in the city of Zion to worship.\(^6^6\) The temple is restored, the walls and gates are erected, and the book has been read. When the poet experienced the great moment for which the people have waited for so long, he begins to see the eschatological expectations of the past as partly realized in the restoration of the theocracy and in the return of the captive.\(^6^7\)

(3) The Nature of the Kingdom

According to Vos, the content of the Psalter is “eschatological and messianic.” He believes that the eschatological throne is not earthly but heavenly and the kingship of Yahweh is absolutely universal (cf. Ps 47:2; 48; 96-99; 103:19 146; also 2 Kings 11:12).\(^6^8\) I would like to examine how much of this can be affirmed in Ps 145. A careful exegesis of Ps 145 reveals that the theocratic reign in this psalm is present and real. This is why the praise and exaltation is in effect (v.1-2). The domain of this kingdom is not limited but extended to all (also see Ps 103:19). Nothing is said about its geography or ethnic demography. It stretches from the poet’s individual experience to the chosen ones (v.10) and then to all people. The word \(כָּל\) “all” is repeated 14 times, emphasizing the cosmic nature of his domain.

v.9 שָאַלְתָּה אֶל הayah וַעֲלַי וָשְׁלָל מִשְׁפַּי
v.10 יִרְחַה יִרְחָה פָּשְׁעָתָה נֹבֶלֶרֶךְ וְיֶהוֹדֶה
v.13 כָּל עָנָלָתָה וְכָל עָנָלָתָה בְּכָל הָיָה וַרָאָה.

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\(^{6^6}\) As discussed earlier, I subscribe to the possibility of inscripturation of an earlier composed psalm to a post-exilic \textit{Sitz im Leben}.

\(^{6^7}\) Vos, \textit{The Eschatology of the Old Testament}, 143.

\(^{6^8}\) Ibid., 141.
The criteria to receive the benefit of this kingdom are surprisingly wide and inclusive. Notice the following list of the beneficiaries of his kingdom.

(i) The poet himself. The editor ascribes this poem to David (David).

(ii) The generation (Ezra and Nehemiah (v.4)).

(iii) The remnant and the God fearing gentiles (Nehemiah) (v.10). Thy include all those:
   a. who are fallen and bowed down (v.14).
   b. who look up to Yahweh for food (v.15).
   c. who call on him in truth (v.18).
   d. who fear him (v.19).
   e. who love him (v.20).
   f. who will praise his name (v.21).

The poet testifies that the king has already extended his benefits to him and to a group of people in his generation. According to him, the favor is extended to the people because they are God-fearing, fallen and bowed down. They look up with hope to Yahweh, they call upon him in truth, they fear him, they love him, and they praise his name. The criteria for the Yahweh’s favor are remarkably generic, moral, and spiritual. The diminishing language of the covenant and particularism is certainly upsetting to those who insist on particularism.

This language of universalism reappears Ps 146:7-9. In this passage, the favor of the king is

69 The polemic discussion on date and authorship of this psalm is difficult to resolve. It is commonly agreed that the authorship is attached only to ascribe authority, a common practice in biblical writings. See J. H. Eaton, Kingship and the Psalms (London: SCM Press, 1976), 86.
extended to the oppressed (נִדְוָא), the hungry (רַעַע), the prisoner (נַוֶּר), the blind (נָעָר), the bowed down (נָעָר), the righteous (נְיָדְי), the alien (נַוֶּר), the fatherless (נִדְמָה), and the widow (נִדְמָה).

Furthermore, there is no place for the wicked in this kingdom, for the king will destroy all of them (v.20; 146:9). The future kingdom, without the wicked, is not temporal but eternal (v.13; 146:10). The identity of the “wicked” is generic, permeating across ethnic or religious boundaries. Whether the wicked are inside the covenant relation or outside; he will destroy all of them. This implies that the particularism in this psalm now seems to be focused on moral and spiritual character, rather than covenant or ethnic identity—such an emphasis on moral and spiritual character could be defined as particularism of righteousness.

(4) Forward Looking Eschatological Expectations

Besides the fact that the kingdom is perpetual and universal in nature, the language of future hope sets this psalm into forward looking. Notice the following verses:

v.15 תֵלֵי עֵינִי אֵלֹהִי נָשָׁבָי יִפְסָחֵי אֲהֵזָה נָחְרֵי גָּלֶל-אַבָּלָן בְּנֵיה (The eyes of all look to you and you give them their food in due time)

v.20 אֲשֶׁר נַעֲדַהוּ לַשְׁכִים נַפְשֵׁיה (But all the wicked, He will destroy)

v.21 נָבָה לְבָשֶׁר שָׁם נַפְשֶׁיה (And all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever)

In above verses, the psalmist anticipates an eschatological expectation that is not yet realized but imminent in near future. He is looking forward for the food in due time. He is looking forward for the complete destruction of the wicked, and he is also looking forward for all flesh to bless Yahweh forever and ever.
Such forward-looking eschatological theme is not only confined to this psalm but also in other psalms. For our discussion, let us consider the “royal psalms” of book IV, where the royal king is also projected as the coming judge who will destroy the wicked.

Ps 93:1

יוהו מלך נאמ תבש
(The LORD reigns, he is robed in majesty)

Ps 94:2

הנה שמח האחים חשב לбро ועליו נמה
(Rise up, O Judge of the earth; pay back to the proud what they deserve)

Ps 94:3

עו לך ישות הזה עButtonText ישועה יתשל
(How long will the wicked, O LORD, how long will the wicked be jubilant?)

Ps 94:23

יהב עלה מכלWINDOWS וכרחים יכריחו יכריחו יהו אלהינו;
(He will repay them for their sins and destroy them for their wickedness; the LORD our God will destroy them.)

Ps 95:3

כإل יצהל יהוה מלך בหนה עליל יצליל אלוהים
(For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods)

Ps 96:13

ככ לאמשק הלעם ישמות בכריך יפים באמרותה
(for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth.)

Ps 97:1

יוהו מלך נטזל הארץ וانيا ארבע
(The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice)

Ps 98:9

ככ לאמשק הלאם ישמות בכריך יפים במושרה
(for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.)

Notice that in above references, Yahweh is projected as king as well as judge.

His kingship is referred to as present reality but his role as a judge is placed in the future. In Ps 94:2-3, the psalmist pleads Yahweh to rise up as judge because the wicked are jubilant. In Ps 96:13 and 98:9 that hope is sustained. This same hope is furthermore affirmed in Ps 145:20, *but all the wicked, he will destroy*. The poet sees the role of Yahweh as the judge not yet fulfilled but he eagerly expects it to happen in the future—which supports the notion of forward looking eschatological expectations. Such future expectations are affirmed in other OT passages:

1 Sam 2:10bcd

יוהו נבר אפסאר ואש ופלפ הלעם ויה יבר משיחו
(The Lord will judge the ends of the earth. “He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.”)
1 Ch 16:33  הוהי ידבר לשבט אחים׃
(For he is coming to judge the earth)

Ezek 34:20  הנני אנות לשפתיי ובתם בני איש תאני
(Behold, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep)

Zech 14:9  יוהי ידבר על כל הארץ
(The LORD will be king over the whole earth.)

(5) Ps 145 and the Doxology of the Psalter

Wilson claims that the juxtaposition of Pss.145-150 demonstrates the
editorial technique that highlights the programmatic grouping of themes. In Wilson’s
opinion, the doxology of the Psalter is a response to v.21. (And all flesh will bless his holy
name forever and ever). I agree with Wilson on this point as I see the explicit correspondence
of the structural pattern of this grouping with that of the internal structure of Ps 145 (see
Figure 2).

FIGURE 2
STRUCTURAL PATTERN OF THE DOXOLOGY AND PS 145

Ps 146-150  Ps 145
The Doxology

Wilson, The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter, 193.
This correspondence in the patterns, especially at the end of the Psalter, underpins its significance. John S. Kselman also sees such correspondence in an alternative pattern. According to him, the movement from David’s praise to the praise of all flesh in Ps 145:21 previews not only the beginning and end of the *hallel* sequence in Psalms 146 and 150, but also the alternating sequence that moves from David’s and Jerusalem’s praise (Ps 146-147) to the praise of all creation (Psalm 148), and again from David’s and Israel’s praise (Ps 149) to the praise of all that have breath (Ps 150). Gowan rightly states that the tension between universalism and particularism is heightened “in subsequent Jewish experience;” however, in Ps 145 it is evident that this tension is shifting more towards

72 Ibid.
universalism. The picture becomes even more explicit in Rev 7:9 where after describing the specific number of the tribes of Israel, John goes on to say:

Metà ταῦτα εἶδον, καὶ ἴδοὺ (After these things I looked, and behold)

ὀχλὸς πολὺς, (a great multitude)

ὅν ἀριθμήσας αὐτὸν οὐδεὶς ἑδύνατο, (which no one was able to count)

ἐκ παντὸς ἑθνοῦ καὶ φυλῶν καὶ λαῶν καὶ γλωσσῶν
(from every ethnic group and tribe and people and language)

ἐστῶτες ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου καὶ ἐνώπιον τοῦ ἀρνίου
(standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.)

(6) Patterns in the NT

Although Ps 145 is not directly quoted in the NT, its patterns of the realized kingdom and the forward-looking kingdom have continuity in the NT. For brevity of space I will discuss only a few NT passages.

Matt 3:2  [καὶ] λέγων· μετανοεῖτε· ἡγγικέν γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
(Repeint, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand)

Matt 4:17  μετανοεῖτε· ἡγγικέν γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
(Repeint, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.)

Mark 1:15 ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἡγγικέν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ· μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ
(The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel)

Matt 10:7 ὅτι ἡγγικέν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
(The kingdom of heaven is at hand)

(The kingdom of God has come near to you.)

(that the kingdom of God has come near)

I have chosen the above passages because Stanley D. Toussaint uses these passages to argue against the “already” aspect of kingdom. According to Toussaint the word ἡγγικέν in these verses is comparable to the Hebrew verb בֵּיתֶ (Isa 13:6; Ezek 30:3; Joel; 1:15; 2:1; 3:14; Obad.15; Zeph 1:7, 14), which means “near.” Toussaint asserts that in the
above passages it is the idea of imminence that is being proclaimed rather than the nuance of “here.” Toussaint fails to consider the rhetoric behind the persuasion in the Gospel. How is the gospel “good news” if the kingdom is “near” rather than “here”? How did the story of redemption progress from the OT (בָּאָרָךְ) to the NT (ἳγγικεν) if they are one and the same in its historical meaning? Toussaint’s argument in favor the millennial concept of kingdom is not persuasive. The verb ἰγγικεν is made explicit in the statement of Jesus in Luke 21:8.

Notice the parallel:

οδε εἶπεν·
βλέπετε μὴ πλανηθῆτε || πολλοὶ γὰρ ἔλευσονται ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου
λέγοντες· ἐγώ εἰμι, (I am He)|| καὶ ὁ καιρὸς ἰγγικεν. (The time is near/come)
μὴ πορευθῆτε ὅπισώ αὐτῶν.

The parallel between “I am He” and the word ἰγγικεν unequivocally affirms the factual reality of present rather than future. The parallelism in the above sentence suggests that the meaning of the word ἰγγικεν connotes the “present” aspect of time rather than future. If this is so then in above NT passages the word ἰγγικεν need not be pointing only to the future millennium kingdom but also to a kingdom that was actualized in the arrival of Jesus. What about the meaning of ἰγγικεν in Rom 13:12 (ἡ νύξ προέκοψεν ἡ
dὲ ημέρα ἰγγικεν, the night is nearly over and the day is at hand)? Surely, Paul does not imply an imminent future here. Notice how Paul describes the time aspect of the kingdom in the following text.

74 Toussaint, “Israel and the Church of Traditional Dispensationalist,” 232.
Col 1:13 ὃς ἐφρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους καὶ μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ ὑιοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ,
(For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son)

Paul saw himself and the believers already transferred into the kingdom. Also John, while he was on the island of Patmos, saw himself as a companion in the kingdom (Rev 1:9, συγκοινωνῶς ἐν τῇ θλίψει καὶ βασιλείᾳ, companion in the suffering and kingdom). I, therefore, agree with Darrel Bock and Walter Kaiser, who claim that on one hand, the kingdom of God in the NT is realized in the arrival of Jesus, on the other hand, it is an imminent future. Believers are informed that they are already the citizens of the kingdom of God and yet they are warned or encouraged to look for a future entrance into the kingdom of God.

Matt 7:21 Οὐ πᾶς ο λέγων μοι κύριε κύριε, εἰσελθεῖται εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν,
(Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven)

1 Cor 15:24 ἔτα τὸ τέλος, ὅταν παραδίδῃ τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρί
(than comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father)

Furthermore, the kingship of God in the NT is also cosmic. His dominion is beyond ethnic and geographical boundaries.

Matt 24:14 καὶ κηρυχθήσεται τούτῳ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ εἰς μαρτύριον πάσιν τοῖς ἑθνεσιν, καὶ τότε ἥξει τὸ τέλος.

(And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.)

Rev 11:15  ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ κόσμου τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ, καὶ βασιλεύσει εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.
(The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and he will reign forever and ever)

There are several passages in the NT, which specifically indicate the widening nature of Yahweh’s domain. The language of particularism in the NT excludes ethnic, national or geographical particularity. Emphasis is more on the penetrating power of the Gospel that has broken all barriers between Jews and Gentiles. A comprehensive discussion on this colossal topic is not possible in this paper. Nevertheless, it has been made clear that the eschatological expectations of Ps 145 have overt correspondences in the NT. Therefore, even from the canonical perspective the pattern of eschatological expectations observed in Ps 145 is affirmed.

**Conclusion**

Based on the macro and micro level examination of the text in Ps 145, I have argued that the kingship of Yahweh is both a “realized” and a “forward looking” eschatological phenomena. In other words, the eschatological expectations of Ps 145 are both “already and not yet.” The eschatological expectations of the kingdom, in some sense, are already realized during the time of the poet, but at the same time they are also anticipated for their fuller actualization. I have also demonstrated that the forward-looking eschatological expectation of the poet is progressively cosmic rather than confined to a geographical or ethnic boundary. There is inbuilt tension between universalism and particularism; however, the tension favors universalism.
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