

## **Naked Bible Podcast Transcript**

**Episode 344**

**Gentiles in the Psalms**

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### **Episode Summary**

Gentile inclusion is a familiar theme in the salvation plan of God. Bible students are generally aware that the idea is found in the Old Testament, typically in places like Gen 12:3. But the psalms are another fruitful (and even surprising) source for this trajectory in biblical theology. In today's episode we take a look at the Zion Hymns in the Psalms and what it means for how we should think about Israel's role (and perhaps our own) in God's salvation plan.

### **Transcript**

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 344: Gentiles in the Psalms. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! What's going on?

**MH:** Well, from this point forward until I guess the summer... Is that right, the summer? Something like that.

**TS:** The summer.

**MH:** ... I will not talk about my Fantasy Baseball team anymore. I lost by one point. So I'm eliminated now. And honestly, it ruined my day. But I'm over it. [laughs]

**TS:** Well, thankfully...

**MH:** Losing in that league is a familiar experience. [laughs]

**TS:** Yeah. Thankfully we got our Fantasy talk over with before we started the show. So hopefully we'll spare our audience...

**MH:** But I just thought I'd make that announcement.

**TS:** Okay.

**MH:** The Pugs have been eliminated by one lousy point. One tragic managerial error, and there we go.

**TS:** That *will* ruin your day. And also we have two more announcements. One announcement, Mike, is, if the audience hears snorting, that's Norman in your lap, right?

**MH:** Yes, Norman is in my lap today. Because Drenna's been gone almost two weeks and he is traumatized. So I can't really win. I'm the only one at home. If I put him outside the room, he's going to scratch on the door and whine. So usually if I put him on my lap...

**TS:** It's not me or Mike snorting if you hear that weird noise. And then our second announcement, Mike, is it's about that time for a new book study. So we're going to have our audience vote.

**MH:** Do you want me to list them or do you want to list them? I should probably list them. You can correct me if I'm wrong. So there's 1) Jude.

**TS:** Correct.

**MH:** 2) Jonah. 3) And then the third thing (this is the reason why I'm really the person to list these) is the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation. The reason I need to say this is because I need to qualify it. We're not doing a book study of Revelation as far as doing End Times speculation and End Times systems. This is exactly what it sounds like, the Old Testament in the book of Revelation—so kind of the stuff we've been doing but tracking through the whole book of Revelation for it. So there you go.

**TS:** That'd be interesting: connecting the Old Testament to the book of Revelation.

**MH:** Yeah, other than Matthew, I think it's fair to say that Revelation's the book that uses the Old Testament the most. It's kind of hard to pick, I guess. But there's a lot in it.

**TS:** Mm. So if there's any way for us (or me) to push the voting in one direction... (I wish I could, but I won't.) But hopefully people are picking up what we're putting down here and will vote accordingly. [MH laughs] Because that sounds interesting to me. This is probably the most we're going to get of Revelation from you. I mean, you've done some stuff here and there, but never this thorough with the Old Testament to Revelation. And it's not prophecy stuff. It's none of that.

**MH:** Right. It's the closest I'll ever get to that, but it isn't that. [laughs]

**TS:** Hmm. It's kind of like "already, but not yet." It's "that, but not that." That could be our new one.

**MH:** There you go. [TS laughs] You're already ready for the whole series. [laughter]

**TS:** That's perfect!

**MH:** You're already tuning in.

**TS:** Yeah, that's perfect! I've already chalked it up as a win. No, so voting starts now. As you hear this podcast, voting is officially opened up. And it's going to run for the next four weeks. And the poll is going to close October 31<sup>st</sup> (on Halloween).

**MH:** There you go. How fitting.

**TS:** [laughs] "The poll is going to close, and Revelation's going to open." Ooh. No?

**MH:** We could do a *Stranger Things* point here and say, "The gate is going to close on Halloween." How's that?

**TS:** "And the ninth gate opens." Have you seen that movie, *The Ninth Gate*, with Johnny Depp?

**MH:** No. No, I haven't.

**TS:** Oh, you've got to watch it. Because he's a book collector (or an agent or something) who sells books. And it's all about satanic books. And one book was written by the devil. And how to open the ninth gate to get...

5:00 **MH:** I wonder if the devil uses the Oxford comma or not. [TS laughs]

**TS:** Yeah, I need to go back and watch it.

**MH:** I'm interested in it just for that reason. [laughs] What side is the devil on in that debate?

**TS:** Yeah, well, you need to watch it. If you do, report back and let us know your thoughts on it.

**MH:** Sure. [laughs]

**TS:** So once again, voting starts now and runs the whole month of October. It ends Halloween at midnight. Ooh. Let's make it midnight. Perfect. And in November, we'll start our new book study.

**MH:** Yep, sounds good.

**TS:** Alright, looking forward to that. Well, this week, we're going to the Psalms. Gentiles in the Psalms, huh?

**MH:** Right. Gentiles in the Psalms. I mean, we might as well just jump right into it. This is going to feel a little bit familiar to the kinds of things we've been doing, because we've been talking about the Old Testament a lot and linking it to the New. This one's got a more conceptual or peripheral link. "Conceptual" is probably a better word there, in that you're already going to sort of know (and I'm going to remind you in at least one instance specifically, but this is going to be more general) that the New Testament writers are going to hook into these Psalms just generally because they're about Gentile inclusion in the people of God.

So we're going to be leaving Ezekiel specifically and specific connections with the Gospels or any other specific New Testament book. Today I want to take a bit of a broader look, just a topical episode, but it's going to still have this sort of linkage. And Gentiles in the Psalms specifically... We're going to narrow that a little bit. We're going to talk about the Zion hymns of the Psalms because this whole notion of Zion being the ultimate home of God—the ultimate abode of God... This is where God's family is ultimately going to live. And that family's going to include Gentiles. So there are certain types of psalms (notably these Zion hymns—that's the term scholars use) and they're going to be oriented to Gentile inclusion.

So part of the reason I'm doing this is that I think it's kind of a myth that the Old Testament doesn't have an interest in Gentiles being in the family of God. That really isn't the case. And you know, there are different places you can go in the Old Testament and find that. So today I want to just point out one that I think is just generally missed. And the source I'm going to use as a springboard today actually makes the same comment, that this is kind of a neglected area of inquiry—really an area of focus. He hasn't found a whole lot on this. And the source is an article. This is freely available online. So you can just type in the name of the article with the author and you're going to be able to get a pdf of this. It's Robert D. Miller. And the article is entitled "The Gentiles in the Zion Hymns: Canaanite Myth and Christian Mission." And it's from the journal named *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 26.4 (2009). Robert D. Miller is a Roman Catholic (and he tells you that in the article) and he teaches at the Catholic University of America. He's an Old Testament scholar. And he focuses a lot on Israelite religion and obviously not just the Psalms but the Psalms are part of that. I want to read you the abstract here so you can get

an idea of where he's going in this article and where we're going to go today. So he writes this:

The Psalms are an underused resource as a biblical basis for mission, especially since the Gentiles are treated more positively in the Psalms than in most of the rest of the Old Testament. In the Psalms, the inclusion of the Gentiles in the community of God focuses on their coming to Zion. This article explores what that means in the context of Israelite religion and the Canaanite images it borrowed. Hermeneutical conclusions are drawn from this and the history of interpretation of these Psalms in order to enrich the theology of mission.

So this journal is a journal for missions work—missions scholarship—and Miller is contributing to it with this specific point, that “Hey, the Old Testament does have these things in it about Gentile inclusion.” And due to his work on the Psalms in other areas, he has run across this. And so he's going to share a few specifics about Zion Psalms to make that point.

10:00 Now in his initial paragraph he adds these thoughts. This will give you a little more of the flavoring.

... references to inclusion of Gentiles into the community of God are more abundant in the Psalter than anywhere else in the Old Testament. The Psalms have been largely absent in treatments of mission in the Bible – completely missing, for example, in Chris[topher] Wright's essay, *The Old Testament and Christian Mission* [MH: which I believe is a book]... This presentation examines the theme of the Gentiles in the Psalter, concentrating on the Psalms that are called Zion Hymns. While these constitute a rather minor portion of the Psalter, they are an important group for understanding the attitude towards non-Israelites...

And here's an interesting sentence a little later down.

I will show that the Psalms predict an eschatological inclusion of the Gentiles or realize that inclusion now in anticipation, and Israel is the agent of that inclusion without evangelistic activity.

What he means by that last line is that in the Old Testament, you don't see Israelites portrayed as evangelists, (I'll use a term from old-line Evangelicalism) as “soul-winners.” They don't go out and knock on doors and hold evangelistic campaigns. You don't see that in the Old Testament. But you do see Israel and the nations in other activities designed to attract Gentiles into the family of God. If you're already thinking of Exodus 19:5-6 with the whole kingdom of priests idea, you're tracking already. Those kinds of themes are going to come up as we discuss these psalms. So in your head, if you're that far, you already are sort of oriented to today's episode.

Now what Miller does in this article is he first describes what a Zion hymn (or a Zion psalm—more appropriately a Zion hymn) is. In Psalm study, psalms break down into different categories. You have different types of psalms, different genres. Hymns is one of them. But you have kingship psalms or enthronement psalms. You have worship psalms. You have lament psalms (both individual and corporate). There are different genres of psalms. And so the hymn psalm is one of these that everybody who has studied the Psalms formally runs into. And so Miller says the elements of a Zion hymn are the same as a normal hymn-psalm. There's "a call to praise, a recounting of God's deeds [things that God has done], and a conclusion." Miller adds, "Because of this [sameness], there is debate as to just which psalms are Zion hymns" as opposed to just normal hymns.

Now in that regard, in this article Miller argues (he points out, he demonstrates) that Zion hymns are characterized that way, not by specific structural elements... Because they're the same as all the other hymn-psalms in terms of the elements they have. Rather, they get characterized this way by points of content. Not structure, but content. So he writes this:

Five features of *content* distinguish the Zion Hymns from other Hymns. First is the identification of Mt. Zion with the mythical highest mountain in the utmost North [MH: the heights of the North], equated with Mt. Zaphon of Canaanite mythology [MH: and this is very familiar to readers of *Unseen Realm*]. This is evident in Ps. 48:2: 'Mount Zion, the heights of Zaphon, the city of the great king' [MH: and you know, that kind of language occurs in] (cf. Ps 89:13; Job 37:22; Isa. 14:13). Second, streams (of paradise?) [MH: or some other kind of water element] flow from this [MH: cosmic] mountain [MH: flow from Mount Zion, the cosmic mountain], as seen in Pss. 87:7 and 46:4 – 'There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High' (cf. Zech 14:8). Third, this is the location of Yahweh's primordial victory over the sea of chaos.

Again, this is a familiar element for readers of *Unseen Realm*, and Miller will cite a few psalms where this shows up. For instance, Psalm 46:3-4:

... 'The sea – though the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled, *though* the mountains shake with the swelling thereof' [MH: Yahweh is going to have the victory]... Fourth, God also defeats the nations of the earth here [MH: in these Zion hymns, specifically from his cosmic mountain or at his cosmic mountain], in a great battle at dawn...

15:00

Now I mention the "at dawn" because Miller's going to make something of that point a little bit later. And he uses an example here in Psalm 45:6-7.

This victory [MH: that he has over the nations] was accomplished both through theophany [MH: an appearance of God] (Ps. 48:5), and through God's word of

reproach [MH: something God says] (Pss. 46:6)... A fifth element, most important for our purposes, is [where] the Gentile nations make pilgrimage to Zion to worship Yahweh...

And the example here he gives is Psalm 68:28-29 and Psalm 86:9. Now Psalm 68 ought to be really familiar to those who not only have read *Unseen Realm*, but just in general discussion. Because this is the psalm (Psalm 68) that mentions Hermon. This is the one that Paul is going to quote in Ephesians 4, the whole “leading captivity captive” passage. This is the psalm that he quotes. And when Paul does it (he’s the apostle to the Gentiles), he’s naturally going to link this to the plan of salvation that involves Gentile inclusion. And in Ephesians 4, it’s the passage about ascending and descending, which is connected to Pentecost. There you go with the whole notion of Jews coming to Pentecost, Jews from all over the world in all these nations, coming to Pentecost, believing, then going home. And they plant the seeds of the Gospel in all these places that Paul will eventually plant churches. So Psalm 68’s a pretty important psalm. And what Miller does in this article is he spends a decent amount of time in Psalm 68, and so we will as well.

So Miller goes on and he further notes that Zion hymns will not necessarily have *all* of those content elements, but they will have some of them. He also notes that, “Four of the five features just outlined are [specifically] drawn from Canaanite mythology”—Canaanite religion. And Mount Zaphon is the first one he discusses. Very familiar territory for those who have read, but I’ll share a little bit of what he writes here:

In Canaanite mythology, it is the home of Baal (*KTU* 1.3.1.21–22). Thus, in the *Baal Epic*, the mountain is called ‘the sacred mountain’ (6.2.23), ‘the cosmic Zaphon’ (6.3.22), ‘Baal on the peaks of Zaphon’ (2.5.23), ‘Baal on the heights of Zaphon’ [MH: these are all descriptive phrases], and ‘my mountain, the divine Zaphon... the mountain of possession’ (IVAB 3.31). The rivers of paradise also signify the residence of the high god El, called ‘the midst of the headwaters of the two oceans’ in *Baal and Anat* IIIAB C.4. The victory of Baal over the chaos sea [MH: *yam*] is well known (*Baal Epic* I). It is after his defeat of the sea that Baal receives his temple on Zaphon (*KTU* 1.3–4, esp. 1.3.iii.28–31), and ‘in the hands of Zaphon are victory and triumph’ (*KTU* 1.19.ii.34–36). In some texts, this victory occurs at dawn [MH: there’s the dawn element]. This victory ending all war [MH: it ends all war because Baal is made king of the gods and king of the nations] is reflected in *Anat* 3.11–15, where the victory over chaos will ‘banish war from the earth’.

So this is the first point. Miller highlights the whole Zaphon mindset (that part of their worldview) and he discusses it a little bit more. And then he makes an important observation. And I wanted to include this. I don’t know if I’d word this

exactly the way he does. But he explains himself, so maybe I can live with it. He says:

Israel borrowed these motifs from the Canaanites...

The word “borrowed” is the one I don't like. But he backs away from it in a moment.

The social location of the biblical writers necessitated them *contrasting* their faith with the Canaanites. What is clearly missing in the Canaanite mythology is the pilgrimage of the nations... The Israelites added this piece of their own accord [MH: he notes this, this I think is pretty profound] – I thus far have not found any ancient Near Eastern antecedent for it, and this highlights its importance for the theological message of these Psalms.

20:00

So basically he's saying, the Israelites used this stuff specifically because their circumstances (he calls it their “social location”) really required—it necessitated—they to do things like this to draw a contrast between their god (their worldview, their faith) with that of the Canaanites. And one of the chief contrasts, Miller says, is this point, where in the Baal epic, you have Baal just being overlord of all the nations. And yeah, it's an end of warfare, but Baal does this not through any sort of loving solicitation or providential solicitation. It's a conquest idea. Baal is the conqueror. Victorious Baal is one of the main epithets of Baal—Elyon Baal in Canaanite literature. But in the Psalms, you have this notion that the Gentiles—the nations themselves—are moved to seek out the true God. They come—they make a pilgrimage—to worship the Lord. And what Miller is saying is, “That just isn't anywhere else except the Hebrew Bible. You don't find that idea, where people of other gods are seeking out the Most High or the true God. You don't find that anywhere else. That's Hebrew Bible stuff.

Now from this point on, he focuses his discussion on Psalms 68, 86, and 87—so three psalms. If you get the article, you can look at his whole discussion of these things. But he spends a lot of time really in Psalm 68. And that is where Mount... I said Mount Hermon, but it's the mountain of Bashan, which is... There's only one mountain there. It's Hermon. And Mount Bashan/Hermon is a rival to Sinai in Psalm 68. And you have the psalmist... Let me just go to Psalm 68. We might as well read part of it. Let's got to Psalm 68. And I'll start with verse 15.

**<sup>15</sup> O mountain of God, mountain of Bashan;**

**O many-peaked mountain, mountain of Bashan!**

**<sup>16</sup> Why do you look with hatred, O many-peaked mountain,**

**at the mount that God desired for his abode [MH: in other words, Sinai],  
yes, where the LORD will dwell forever?**

It's either Sinai or Zion. He's going to mention Sinai in the next couple verse from this point.

**17 The chariots of God are twice ten thousand,  
thousands upon thousands;  
the Lord is among them; Sinai is now in the sanctuary.**

I mean, you could still see this as Zion and the notion that Sinai is now *in* the sanctuary could be a reference to the ark. We've talked before about how the ark and the tablets—the stone and the rock and all that kind of stuff (just a few episodes ago, about Old Testament language in certain New Testament books)... how the tablets were sort of like a piece of Sinai that traveled with the Israelites. It was Sinai, but wasn't, and all that. That kind of thinking. That could be behind this, that the ark is now in the sanctuary. But again, it could be either one. Either we're talking about Zion and then Sinai's in the sanctuary, or maybe we're just talking about Sinai. You could translate it maybe "on" the sanctuary or something like that, or "at" the sanctuary. But continuing in verse 18, it says:

**18 You ascended on high,  
leading a host of captives in your train  
and receiving gifts among men,  
even among the rebellious, that the LORD God may dwell there.**

That's the part where Paul quotes... So this is Psalm 68. This is where he's going to spend most of his time. If you keep reading (that was verses 15-18), listen to some of the language here. If we read... Let's see where Miller focuses here. Let's read down to verse 22.

**19 Blessed be the Lord,  
who daily bears us up;  
God is our salvation. *Selah***  
**20 Our God is a God of salvation,  
and to GOD, the Lord, belong deliverances from death.**  
**21 But God will strike the heads of his enemies,  
the hairy crown of him who walks in his guilty ways.**  
**22 The Lord said,  
"I will bring them back from Bashan,  
I will bring them back from the depths of the sea,**

"Sea" being obviously a chaos token there. But who is he bringing back? He's not bringing the Israelites back from Bashan. He would be bringing back the people of Bashan. He's bringing them back where? Well, to himself. "I'm going to bring

them back from the depths of the sea.” You keep going, you get to verse 24, there’s a procession.

**24 Your procession is seen, O God,  
the procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary—**

25:00

Then there’s the singers and the musicians and so on and so forth. You get this notion that you have a train, like a train of people, a procession leading up to where the presence of God is. And so you get this description in the psalm. And then you hit verse 31.

**31 Nobles shall come [MH: as part of this procession] from Egypt;  
Cush [MH: Ethiopia or the Sudan] shall hasten to stretch out her hands to God.  
32 O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God;  
sing praises to the Lord, *Selah*  
33 to him who rides in the heavens, the ancient heavens;  
behold, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice.**

We’ll get to other parts of it. But again, you have this procession that includes Gentiles. So Miller discusses this. He draws attention to that last phrase, which again is going to be familiar to *Unseen Realm* readers (“to him who rides in the heavens”). It’s the rider-on-the-clouds thing. This is one of the places where rider-on-the-clouds language occurs. It’s five times total, used of Yahweh four times. And the fifth is the outlier. It’s in Daniel 7. And Miller goes on to discuss Daniel 7, because there’s a relationship between Daniel 7 and the Gentiles because the son of man... In that case, that’s the one who rides on the clouds. And that’s the one who gets the deity epithet of Baal, not the Ancient of Days, who is also in the scene but different than the son of man. In this case, the son of man is the deity figure as well. There are two deity figures. That’s the importance of Daniel 7. But it includes the Gentiles because “unto the son of man is given everlasting kingship of all the nations.” So there’s a direct connection here between the whole Zion thinking when it comes to Gentiles being part of the family and part of the kingdom of God in Daniel 7 and back to Psalm 68. Miller then has a few things to say about Psalm 86. He writes:

Psalm 86 is a prayer set in the context of... David’s thanksgiving uttered after the prophecy of Nathan.

Let me just stop there. Remember David sins with Bathsheba and Nathan the prophet comes to him and gives him this little allegory, and so on and so forth. And “Thou art the man. You’re guilty.” And all that sort of stuff. So that’s the setting. The confrontation there in the wake of David’s sin is the setting for this psalm. And so Miller wants to point that out because certain parts of Psalm 86 are going to indicate that David’s in some kind of crisis and is praying and

needing forgiveness and all this sort of stuff. Let me just read that sentence again.

Psalm 86 is a prayer set in the context of... David's thanksgiving uttered after the prophecy of Nathan.

That God isn't going to kill David or remove the throne and all that.

Jurgen Vorndran has shown how it [MH: Psalm 86] clearly draws on the canonical book of Isaiah, with language taken from Isaiah 2, 7, 25, 51, and 66. Verses 8 and 10 suggest this is a prediction of future events.

Let me just read Psalm 86. And I'll read verse 8-13.

**<sup>8</sup> There is none like you among the gods, O Lord,**

This isn't Psalm 82 or Psalm 89. It's Psalm 86.

**<sup>8</sup> There is none like you among the gods, O Lord,  
nor are there any works like yours.**

**<sup>9</sup> All the nations you have made shall come  
and worship before you, O Lord,  
and shall glorify your name.**

**<sup>10</sup> For you are great and do wondrous things;  
you alone are God.**

**<sup>11</sup> Teach me your way, O LORD,  
that I may walk in your truth;  
unite my heart to fear your name.**

**<sup>12</sup> I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart,  
and I will glorify your name forever.**

**<sup>13</sup> For great is your steadfast love toward me;  
you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.**

So Miller's observation is that there are parts of this that are sort of "now," and then there are parts that sort of look forward to something that's going to happen here. The covenant's going to be preserved, the Davidic covenant is intact. And God's goals that extend from that covenant are thus preserved as well. Things are going to work out the way the Lord wants them to work out. Now this leads to, in Miller's article, the question of, "Why did the biblical writers include this pilgrimage idea?" Again, he said it's unique. He said it's unique in this sort of kingship language, especially Canaanite stuff. Why do it? And Miller writes

something interesting here I think that's really worth pointing out. Just think about this. He says:

Israel was faced with the paradox that to ever grant the Gentiles equality with Israel before Yahweh would negate Israel's election, while to allow no future acknowledgement of God on the part of the Gentiles would put into question the universality of God.

Let me just stop there. It's very evident that Israel is elect. Israel was started from nothing (Abraham and Sarah, but God had to enable her to have children) right after the disinheritance at Babel. So they have a supernatural point of origin. And by definition, that means they're chosen. But in the covenant with the chosen, all the nations of the earth will be blessed. I mean, there's this "universalism..." This isn't universalism, like theologians would talk about it. When Old Testament scholars typically talk about universalism in the Old Testament, it means "inclusion of the Gentiles."

So there's a paradox here. Well, how can a Jew—how can an Israelite—ever grant that the Gentiles had the same standing before God? But if they deny that, then they kind of deny the whole point of this covenant too. So Miller is pointing out, there's a bit of a quandary here. And he continues. He says:

The solution of the Psalter is never subjugation of the nations by Israel, but either to predict an eschatological acknowledgement [MH: of them] (Psalms 72 and 102), or to realize that acknowledgement now in anticipation [MH: of the eschatological fulfillment] (Psalm 66)... Israel is never portrayed as acting to bring this about [MH: in other words, they're not doing evangelistic meetings] – the burden is entirely on God, who is the only 'missionary' in the Old Testament. Israel is nevertheless the instrument of the nations' inclusion. Israel is [MH: Miller's quoting somebody else here] 'a community of actors who embody what God has in mind for all' [MH: in other words, the kingdom of priests idea]... God will draw the nations to himself by drawing them to Israel, and in particular to Zion (Psalms 47 and, in a different sense, 87). In all the places where the nations come to Israel, it is to Zion. Zion is the locus of salvation for all nations just as Abraham has been (Psalms 47 and 72). Psalm 87 (and Zech 8:21–23) envision Zion as the reverse of the Tower of Babel...

That's not Mike talking there, that's another Old Testament scholar, so I'm not making this up when you read it in *Unseen Realm* or hear it.

Psalm 87 (and Zech 8:21–23) envision Zion as the reverse of the Tower of Babel. Israel is the mediator of this action of God. Although not evangelistic [MH: in the Old Testament], Israel's mission also both the witness [MH: to what God wants] and evidence of Yahweh to the nations [MH: of Yahweh's intent to the nations]

(Ps 22:28–29; 67:1–2; 89:31–33); Israel is a herald of Yahweh by guarding the true faith, and by rehearsing Yahweh’s praises, not ‘to’ [MH: the nations], but ‘in the presence of’ the nations (Pss 47:2–3; 65:3; 67:5; 100:1; cf. Pss 96:3–4, 13; 97:1–2; 98:9; 99:1–3)... Israel is also ‘Exhibit A’ in evidence for the loving nature of God (e.g. Ps 117:1).

35:00

So I think that’s really a significant paragraph that orients the Zion Psalms here. You know, Israel... Put yourself in their situation, Old Testament Israel. It’s Israel against the nations. It’s Yahweh against the gods. We know the worldview that emerges from the Babel event. We know about Israel’s election, but we also know that God has made a covenant with his elect. Somebody from the elect (Israel) is going to result in the re-inclusion of the nations—the reversal of Babel. So Israel sort of has to affirm both things. And the strategy for that isn’t being carriers of the Great Commission or evangelism like we think of it in a post-Jesus context (or book of Acts context). Rather, it is to be something that attracts the nations. [laughs] It is to... Yes, Israel is a herald. But telling and modeling... This is probably the easiest way to summarize what Miller just wrote. Israel does have conversations about her God with others. But they more or less serve to model what life is like in Yahweh’s family (or what it should be like). And that should attract the nations. We talk about this a lot on the podcast. It’s a theme in *Unseen Realm*.

But again, the Zion hymns... There it is. They’re this model—this point of attraction—for what God wants. And for today, I just thought, it’s nice to have another scholar affirm this.

Now what he does from this point on is he goes to Psalm 87, which is a summoning of nations to Zion. I’m going to reference Goldingay here, using his Psalms commentary for this point. I kind of like his translation here of Psalm 87:4-6. Goldingay’s way of characterizing this psalm, instead of summoning of the nations to Zion, he has the heading “The Nations as Citizens of Zion,” which I think is a nice turn of phrase there for what we’re talking about. And he has the passage this way. Or I think he... This might be the JPS translation. I don’t know if it’s his own or not, but I’m going to read it to you because I think he did a good job. This is Psalm 87:4-6.

**<sup>4</sup> I mention Egypt and Babylon among those who know me;**

**Philistia too, and Tyre, with Ethiopia [MH: Cush] –**

**‘Each was born there.’**

**<sup>5</sup> Indeed it shall be said of Zion,**

**‘Every man was born in it’;**

**for the Most High himself will establish it.**

**<sup>6</sup> The Lord records, as he registers the peoples,**

**‘This one was born there.’**

Now... Boy, that is pregnant with theology, as I like to say. [laughs] Just those few verses... If you have the Deuteronomy 32 worldview in your head (which ancient Israelite biblical writers did), there's just a lot of theology in there. There's a truckload in there, and Goldingay summarizes points of it and so does Miller. I'm going to read something from Goldingay first here. He writes this in his commentary on the psalm:

The first object of this naming is Rahab [MH: in the text]...

Now his translation (or JPS') has "Egypt." We'll explain that. Because in other passages, Egypt is termed *Rahab*. This is one of the chaos monsters. Let me just pick up with what Goldingay says.

The first object of this naming is Rahab, which is one of the names for a sea monster who embodied and symbolized dynamic powers asserted against God; Egypt can then be thought of as its incarnation [MH: at times, at least] cf. 89:10 [11]; Job 9:13; 26:12; Isa. 30:7; 51:9).

The big one is Isaiah 51:9, because that specifically links Egypt into this. Goldingay says:

It can thus be rather a solemn designation, or it can be used to make fun of Egypt as lacking the dynamic power it pretended to have. Pairing with the old enemy to the south [MH: Egypt] is Babylon as the great oppressor to the north.

So Egypt and Babylon in Psalm 87, that's north and south.

Philistia and Tyre were then among the peoples conspiring [MH: elsewhere] in 83:5–8, so the first four peoples [MH: in this psalm—Psalm 87] might suggest a roster of enemy nations that "has now become a unity of citizenship within Zion." But Sudan [MH: Cush, Ethiopia] is then a slightly odd addition to the list, which makes it questionable whether there is a single rationale for mentioning these peoples.

40:00 I mean, if it was just those four, it's like the four quadrants here... Or you could come up with some sort of logic here. But honestly, Tyre is north just like Babylon is, and Philistia is to the west. What about the east? I mean... Goldingay is saying, the logic here is probably not, like, the four cardinal points or anything like that. So back to Goldingay, he says:

[MH: Including] ... Sudan [MH: or Cush or Ethiopia] is then a slightly odd addition to the list, which makes it questionable whether there is a single rationale for mentioning these peoples. They are not actually a coherent collection of traditional enemies, nor do they represent the points of the compass, nor do they

especially point to one historical period. And the description of Egypt as Rahab suggests that the psalm has other agenda than merely listing enemies... But all [MH: of these nations] feature in the prophecies about foreign nations [MH: the oracles against the nations] in the Prophets, which characteristically speak of calamity to come on them, though they also usually include some elements of hope for these peoples. This [MH: the hope aspect] is the aspect the psalm will take up.

So this psalm essentially collects some of the main objects of wrath in the oracles against the nations and now... Let's go back and read it again. Here's what the psalm says about them.

**<sup>4</sup> I mention Egypt and Babylon among those who know me [MH: this is God speaking];  
Philistia too, and Tyre, with Ethiopia –  
'Each was born there.'**

It's not talking about each individual person—each individual nation. The “there” in the context is Zion.

**<sup>5</sup> Indeed it shall be said of Zion,  
'Every man was born in it';  
for the Most High himself will establish it.  
<sup>6</sup> The Lord records, as he registers the peoples,  
'This one was born there.'**

It lumps them all into the family of Zion. Let me add a thought from Miller. He writes of this passage:

The list of nations, moreover, moves from large 'evil empires' (Egypt and Babylon) to smaller neighboring enemies (Philistia and Tyre), and ends with the alien and distant Ethiopia (Cush, Sudan).

They mark... They're basically surrounding enemies with Zion sort of the center point, even though they're not specific cardinal points. So he thinks it's big and small. Large and small, the enemies of God—the enemies of Yahweh and his people—are going to be included in the family. Goldingay elsewhere in his commentary has this observation. He says:

[T]he psalm is indicating that nations such as Egypt and Babylon will come to be counted as people who were born in Jerusalem, a novel image. The use of the verb [MH: this is the interesting point to me] then fits that in 2:7...

Okay, remember Psalm 2:7, where Yahweh says to the king, “You are my son; today I have begotten you,” (or fathered you)? The verb is *yālad*. It’s the same verb in this psalm.

The declaration is one whereby a man makes someone his son; adoption is spoken of as fathering.

If you go back to Psalm 2, God is speaking to the king. Well, the king is already in existence. The king has already been born. And so “today I have made you my son; today I have *yālad* you (I have made you my son)...” So what Goldingay is saying is, let’s take the language back to Psalm 87. If the language is that whereby a man makes someone his son...

In a similar way, Yhwh declares that each of these nations has been fathered or adopted in Jerusalem so that they become the city’s true citizens.

Again, it’s really unexpected. This is something, if you’re an Israelite, you’re a Jew, reading this in a psalm of the nations.... This is... Honestly. We’ve talked before, for instance, about Jesus’ sermon at Nazareth, where he eliminates the judgment language against the Gentiles from Isaiah 61 and Isaiah 58. And he does it in a half a dozen other places, too, specifically to highlight... And it’s Luke. Luke is a Gentile and he’s writing to a Gentile friend specifically to make the point of Gentile inclusion. And this is one of the factors that offends people in the synagogue at Nazareth as to what he’s saying. It isn’t just the fact that he says, “Today this is fulfilled in your hearing.” That’s audacious enough. But they don’t want to hear that “not only are *we* in exile and in need of atonement, but so are the Gentiles. And we’re all going to be benefactors of the atonement that this guy says he’s bringing, but ultimately that God’s going to bring.” They didn’t want to hear that. It’s not high on the list of things that are going to comfort them. They want revenge. They want liberation and they want revenge. And that isn’t what they’re getting.

45:00

Now I also think... One other thing here, or a couple. We’re not at the very end here, but we’re getting close to where I want to wrap this up. I think the language in verse 5 in Psalm 87 is interesting too. It doesn’t have Yahweh doing this. It has the Most High. [laughs] Go back into Psalm 87:5:

**<sup>5</sup> Indeed it shall be said of Zion,  
‘Every man was born in it’...**

Regardless of whether you’re from Abraham or somebody else, everyone was born in it. “If you’re here, you belong here.”

**...for the Most High himself will establish it.**

Again, this is language that goes back to Deuteronomy 32. You see it in Psalm 82. It's a way of signaling the Babel reversal, and Miller points this out. Other commentators have pointed it out. It's not just me.

Now as far as some New Testament connections... We want to do a little bit of this, as I want this to fit in what we've been doing, even though we're oriented in this case to the Psalms of the Old Testament. Just a few. In the course of his article, Miller brings out some New Testament scholarship on this. So he writes:

In the New Testament, writes Richard Bauckham, the Zion theology 'becomes an exclusively theological kind of geography' [MH: an interesting way of putting it]... [the] imagery thus underlies Matt 8:11–12's statement...

Now catch this. Bauckham is saying, "What's going on here in Psalm 87, where now you get the Gentiles (these nations) being part of Zion, this theological geography going on." He says:

[The] imagery thus underlies Matt 8:11–12's statement that, 'Many will come from East and West and sit with Abraham'...

That's an interesting way to apply it.

Others have found this Zion-Gentiles thinking central to Paul's theology [MH: well that's an understatement]. Arthur Glasser holds that Paul sees Jesus and the Kingdom of God standing in the position of Zion. The image in Gal 4:26 of 'The Jerusalem which is above, is free, and is our mother' [MH: this is Paul writing to Gentiles] builds on Ps 87:1–4. Ps 86:8, 'Among the gods there is none to compare with you', is echoed in Paul's speech to the Areopagus in Acts 17 [MH: and it is—it's an allusion to the Deuteronomy 32 worldview]. [MH: and then of course the obvious one is] Eph 4:8 uses Psalm 68's language of Yahweh ascending to Zion after a victory and receiving gifts to describe Jesus' ascension [MH: later by Paul]...

The consummation of these images in the New Testament is in Revelation – in chapter 21's vision of a redeemed Jerusalem. The seven-headed dragon already having been defeated in chapter 12, Ps 86:9 is quoted in the 'Hymn of Moses and the Lamb' in Rev 15:3–4...

So basically, he's looking at Revelation 21—the healing of the nations. He's looking in Revelation 15:3-4:

'All nations will come and adore you for the many acts of saving justice you have shown'. The rivers of paradise flow from the holy mountain in Rev 22:1–2. And in the New Jerusalem of Rev 21:1, *there is no sea*.

50:00

There is no more chaos. There's a lot in this article. So I recommend it to listeners. It's freely available online. It is a scholarly article, but I think most of you can handle it just fine, especially since you're used to the subject matter from *Unseen Realm*. But I want you to remember the content of this, even if you don't go get the article and read through it. I want you to remember the content of this episode the next time you hear someone say the Deuteronomy 32 worldview is something Mike made up. "He made it up in *Unseen Realm*." Or that there's no concept in the Old Testament of Gentile inclusion. Wrong and wrong.

So for our context, to close this episode, I do want to add one more thing Miller says in his last paragraph that I think is relevant to our own cultural chaos. I recently had a conversation (or maybe it was an interview) about what current events mean for believers. I'm getting this question a lot now. "How should believers think about the times in which we live?" And sometimes people want to steer it to "Are we in the End Times?" That kind of thing. But my answer's basically going to be the same in any regard. My answer to how we should respond to the times in which we live is, "Do your job and leave the rest to the Lord." To me, it's that simple. It's his job to steer things to the time of his return. It isn't mine. It's not our job to obsess about the timing, and "Are we at this point or that point?" Typically, when believers get into this, when they're absorbed by it, they typically don't respond with rejoicing, like, "This is awesome! The Lord's going to come back soon! I can hardly wait! This is awesome! Instead, when they get into this kind of speculation, they respond with fear, like they're waiting for the next shoe to drop. Like, "If you really believe the Lord is coming back soon, why are you so interested in preserving your own life and your lifestyle? I don't get it. That's a disconnect." End Times speculation basically paralyzes the Church, or at best impedes it from doing its job. "Do your job. Let God do his job." So Miller writes this. And his article is about Zion hymns and Gentile inclusion and the mission plan of the Old Testament, for all of this. So here's what Miller writes:

But to be a model society as Israel was in the Old Testament, the Church cannot remain within the task that modern society has assigned it, a religious subsystem that 'is supposed to see to it that a somewhat more festive brilliance lights up the margins of banal daily life', as Norbert Lohfink puts it. It is, he continues, a new society; 'not a better counterpart ... but opposite' society. It is the vision of peace of Pss 46 and 72:6–7 and 76:2. 'God's new society is created by all together. More precisely: it is created by the one Spirit who is pouring out over all and each... That is just what makes this society unique'.

That's how Miller ends his article. Let me just summarize the point I think he's making there. The Church needs to sort of recapture the vision, not of being a better version of the world and the world's society, but something different, something unique. Israel was a kingdom of priests. They weren't just better Canaanites. We need to just think about that. We need to mimic it and mime it. And that's really what he's getting at here. We need to model this and think about

what he's saying. That, I think, is a great point to end on, and so I wanted to share that with you as we wrap up here.

**TS:** Alright, Mike, another good one. Do you have any idea what dots we're going to connect next week?

**MH:** No, it's kind of like last week. I have kind of a bucket full of these, and whichever one sort of hits me as far as good timing... So we'll just continue in this kind of trend.

**TS:** Perfect. I just want to remind everybody, please go vote. Go to the Naked Bible Podcast.com website to vote on the next Bible study. It's going to run for the next four weeks. So go cast your vote. And I'm excited to see what everybody decides on, Mike. And looking forward to it.

**MH:** Yeah, it'll be interesting.

**TS:** With that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.