

Psalms 138:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth.

Analysis

All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth. This verse transitions from David's personal testimony (vv. 1-3) to prophetic vision of universal worship. The scope expands dramatically: "all the kings of the earth" (kol-malkhei-eretz, כָּל־מַלְכֵי־אֶרֶץ) encompasses every nation's leadership, not just Israel's king. Kol (כָּל, "all") emphasizes totality—no exception, no rival remaining. This anticipates messianic prophecies where nations stream to Zion (Isaiah 2:2-4, Micah 4:1-3) and kings bow before Messiah (Psalm 72:10-11, Isaiah 60:3).

"Shall praise thee, O LORD" (yodukha YHWH, יוֹדוּךָ יְהוָה) uses yadah (יָדָה), meaning "to thank, praise, confess." Kings who currently ignore or oppose God will acknowledge Him publicly. YHWH (יְהוָה)—the covenant name—emphasizes that these pagan kings will recognize Israel's God specifically, not merely generic deity. This represents triumph of God's purposes: those who knew Him not will worship Him (Isaiah 55:5).

"When they hear the words of thy mouth" (ki shamu imrei-phikha, כִּי שָׁמְעוּ אִמְרֵי־פִיךָ) identifies what prompts their praise. Shama (שָׁמַע, "hear") implies not just auditory reception but understanding and response—they hear and believe. Imrei (אִמְרֵי, "words") are God's spoken revelations. Peh (פֶּה, "mouth") anthropomorphically represents God's direct communication. Kings will praise God when they encounter His revealed word—promises fulfilled, prophecies accomplished,

character displayed through His actions in history. The gospel itself is "the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16) that brings nations to faith.

Historical Context

David's vision reflects God's promise to Abraham that "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). Throughout Israel's history, Gentiles occasionally came to faith in Yahweh—Rahab (Joshua 2), Ruth (Ruth 1:16), Naaman (2 Kings 5:15), the Ninevites (Jonah 3:5-10). These were preview instances of eventual widespread Gentile inclusion. Prophets expanded this vision: Isaiah foresaw nations streaming to God's house (Isaiah 2:2-3), Gentiles seeking the Lord (Isaiah 11:10), kings seeing and arising (Isaiah 49:7), and the Servant bringing salvation to earth's ends (Isaiah 49:6). The psalm's confidence that kings will praise God reflects covenant certainty—God will accomplish His purposes globally, not just nationally. The New Testament records this beginning fulfillment as the gospel spreads to Gentile nations (Acts 13:47-48, Romans 15:9-12).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does the vision of 'all kings of earth' praising God challenge nationalistic or ethnocentric views of God's purposes?
2. What 'words of God's mouth' have you heard that prompted praise, and how can you share these with others who don't yet know Him?
3. How does this verse encourage missionaries and evangelists working in nations where Christianity is currently marginal or opposed?

Interlinear Text

יִדּוּ וְיִבְרָכְךָ	יְהוָה ! הָאֵל	כָּל	מַלְכֵי	אֶרֶץ	כָּל	שָׁמְעוּ וְיִבְרָכְךָ
shall praise	thee O LORD	H3605	All the kings	of the earth	H3588	when they hear
H3034	H3068		H4428	H776		H8085
אֲמָרֵי	פִּיךָ:					
the words	of thy mouth					
H561	H6310					

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 102:15 (Kingdom): So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.

Psalms 72:11 (Kingdom): Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.

Psalms 22:27 (Worship): All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

Psalms 22:22 (Resurrection): I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

Revelation 21:24 (Kingdom): And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.

Revelation 11:15 (Kingdom): And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

Isaiah 49:23 (Kingdom): And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

Isaiah 60:16 (Kingdom): Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

Psalms 102:22 (Kingdom): When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

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