A CANONICAL READING OF THE PSALTER

Book 1 (Psalm 1-41) – The historical David who suffers in his rise to power

1-2  Introductory Psalms – Covenant Word (1) and Royal Son (2)
3-13  Tied to Saul’s pursuit of David (1 Sam 19-23)
14-22  Trust in God before David’s enemies (15:3; 19:13; 20:6)
18, 22  In the midst of suffering, there is also the confidence that God will deliver
Imagery from the Exodus (18:6-19) and from the Cross (22:12-18)
23-24  Possibly tied to David’s encounter with Nabal; Abigail keeps his hands clean
31:6, 11f, 20  David’s desertion to the Philistines

The emphasis is historical, but eschatology is present – Psalm 8, 18, 22

Book 2 (Psalm 42-72) – The kingdom has come, but is not without trial

42-44  David’s longing for God, trust in his restoration (42-43), petition for intervention (44)
45  God answers and sets David on the throne (45:6; cf. 2 Samuel 7)
46-48  Recount David’s successes on the field of battle and in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5-8)
49-51  Pride of wealth (49); Futility of sacrifice (50); Confession of Sin w/ Bathsheba (51)
52-64  Enemies are reintroduced (cf. Psalm 14); laments due to rebellion of Absalom
65ff  Begins a new section of praise and victory (68; 15f), leads to the end of David’s reign
71-72  David is old and gray (71:9, 17-18); his glorious kingdom (72:1ff) has ended (v. 20)

The kingdom is inaugurated (45) and impressive (72), but still only an adumbration

Book 3 (Psalm 73-89) – Davidic kings fall into sin, break the covenant, until exile (cf 1-2 Kings; 930-587 BC)

73-83  Sin marks the people of God – Asaph fights envy (73), no pleas for innocence (74-76),
YHWH’s faithful + Israel’s sin (78), Jerusalem in ruins (79), Asaph (73-83)
84-89  Godly individuals lament but can’t atone – Korah (84-85, 87-88); David (86); Ethan (89)
89  Covenant is remembered with praise + Israel’s condition is shown – Into Exile they go

History moves from David to the Exile, ends with a need for a greater David

Book 4 (Psalm 90-106) – The focus shifts from David to YHWH and all he has done in Israel’s history

90  Moses Psalm harkens back to the Exodus; New Exodus – “70 years” (cf. Jer 25:11-12)
91  Man is feeble and he will go to dust (90:3), but God is able and he will arise (91:14-16)
93-99  “The Lord Reigns” (93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1), What David can’t do, God can and will do
103  Gives the theological reasoning behind God’s ability to move from curse to blessing
104-06  Three Psalms which recall all God’s works in creation and redemption

Book 4 functions as an interlude from David; it reassures: God Still Reigns.

Book 5 (Psalm 107-150) – God establishes his Davidic Ruler on the throne

107  Solves the problem posed in Psalm 106:47 – 4 stories of redemption (107:4, 10, 17, 23)
108-09  God will judge the nations (108:7-9) and defeat his enemies (109:6-15)
110  Victory will be accomplished by a divine ruler, a royal-priest like Melchizedek
111-17  Universal praise for this glorious warrior-king
118  Summary of God’s Work – The means of salvation is the Day of the Lord (118:18-24)
119  The Davidic King establishes his rule; the Word of God is exalted
120-34  The Psalms of Ascent – The people of Israel sojourn to Zion; this is the New Exodus
132  A Davidic Temple Song – God’s People in God’s Place Under God’s Messianic Rule(r)
133-34  Eternal Shalom in Zion (133) + An Invitation to the Lord’s Temple (134; cf Rev 22:17)
135-37  Praises to God as God (135); as covenantally faithful (136), as finally victorious (137)
138-45  Davidic Conclusion – summarizes Book 5 and the whole Psalter
146-50  A symphony of praise for all that God is, has done, and will do – Sacrifice of Praise

Eschatology continues – these are messianic hopes awaiting fulfillment in Jesus