

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 Sam 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 Abasalom
- 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 Melichizedek
- 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