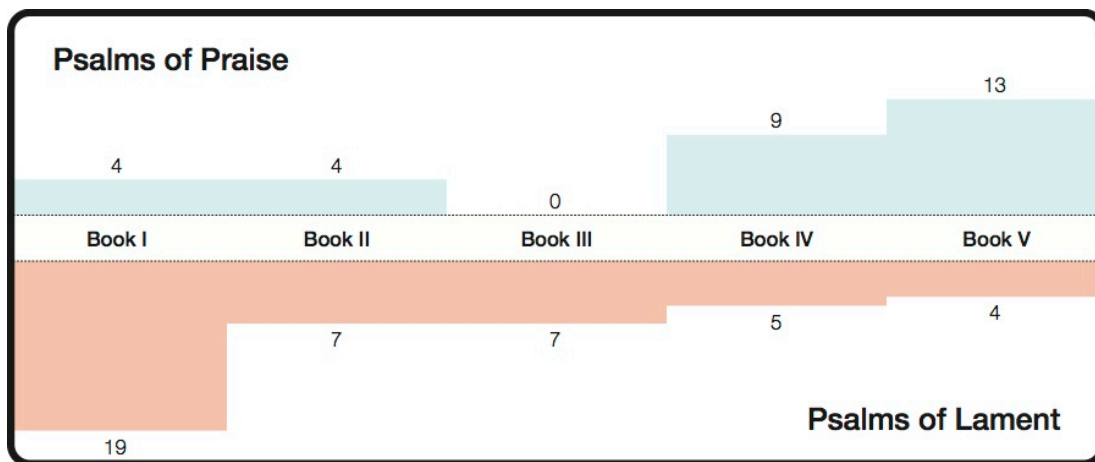


## VI. The Canonical Approach

### A. General features affirmed by all.

1. The Five “Books” (mirroring the Pentateuch) each with a concluding doxology:
  - a. Book 1: Pss. 1–41, doxology Ps. 41:13
  - b. Book 2: Pss. 42–72, doxology Ps. 72:18–19
  - c. Book 3: Pss. 73–89, doxology Ps. 89:52
  - d. Book 4: Pss. 90–106, doxology Ps. 106:48
  - e. Book 5: Pss. 107–150, doxology Pss. 146–150
2. The Psalms do witness intentional groupings.
  - a. Grouping due to attribution:
    - i. Book 1 is almost fully attributed to David, and most of Book 2 is as well; the final statement in 72:20 about the prayers of David being ended suggests that Books 1–2 may have been the first psalter. In the course of canonization, however, non-Davidic psalms were inserted into this group and other Davidic psalms were added later (e.g., Pss. 138–145).
    - ii. Psalms attributed to the “sons of Korah” (Pss. 42–49) who served in the musical service of the temple.
    - iii. Psalms attributed to Asaph (Pss. 50, 73–83), who served the Lord with music abilities during the time of David (1 Chr. 15:17; 25:1–9).
  - b. Groupings due to content, catchword-theme, or cultic function:
    - i. Pss. 42–83 (Book 2 + Songs of Asaph), often called the “Elohistic Psalter,” show a much higher frequency of Elohim over Yahweh, in contrast to the rest of Psalms.
      - (1) Features:
        - (a) Pss. 1–41; 84–150:
          - (i) Yahweh (650x); Elohim (120x)
          - (ii) Yahweh in a-line; Elohim in b-line
        - (b) Pss 42–83:
          - (i) Yahweh (45x); Elohim (245x)
          - (ii) Elohim in a-line; Yahweh in b-line
      - (2) Explanations:
        - (a) All or part of this may have been a distinct collection that shows intentional editorial shaping and a preference for Elohim over Yahweh.
        - (b) Some suggest this unit is part of the chronological development of the divisions mirrors the increasing avoidance of God’s name, but this is questionable.
    - ii. Pss. 93–100 (“Yahweh reigns” 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1)
    - iii. Pss. 111–118 (“Hallelujah”)
    - iv. Pss. 120–134: The “Songs of Ascent”, most likely pilgrimage psalms.
    - v. Pss. 146–150 (“Hallelujah”)
    - vi. Other samples of possible catchword-thematic arrangement: Pss. 23–24; 94–95
  - c. While Lament Psalms outnumber any other psalm genre, there is a noticeable shift from a predominance of laments at the beginning to a predominance of Psalms of Praise / Hymns at the end.

**Fig. 18.4. Movement from Lament to Praise in the Psalter**



Prepared by Jason S. DeRouchie and John C. Crutchfield; adapted from C. Hassell Bullock, *Encountering the Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 125, 139.

### 3. Synthesis and prospect:

- a. Tremper Longman III asserts that the features like those noted above are all one can say regarding the canonical shape of the Psalter (*Introduction to the Old Testament*, 255):
  - i. Regarding the division of the whole into five books, he states: “It is impossible to determine why the books were divided where they were. Certain psalms are grouped together on the basis of similarity in authorship, content, or function. Nonetheless, these groups are occasional, and no overall structure to the book may be observed.”
  - ii. With this conclusion, he further asserts: “Most psalms do not have a normal literary context. Except under rare circumstances, it is inappropriate to exegete a psalm in the literary context of the psalms that precede and follow it.” He also affirms the need to focus on genre analysis, noting, “*The primary literary context for the study of a psalm ... is not the psalms that border it, but the psalms that are generically similar to it.*”
- b. In response to Longman, a number of points are noteworthy:
  - i. Longman identifies the intentional placement of Psalm 1 as introductory, and he also recognizes an apparent intentionality in the placement of more Praise Psalms (Hymns) at the end of the Psalter. He nevertheless still concludes that “no overall organizational structure of the book may be observed” and that “it is impossible to determine why the books were divided where they were” (*Old Testament Introduction*, 255).
  - ii. Longman’s affirmation of intentionality in the structure of the whole begs the question whether he has been too quick to single out genre analysis as the only way to approach the Psalter. A number of contemporary scholars have provided provocative theses that indeed the entire Psalter shows intentional structuring and that individual psalms must be read within their canonical placement within their given books.

### B. Gerald Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (1985) (cf. *Psalms 1* [NIVAC, Zondervan, 2002])

1. Overview of the approach: The Psalter is focused on the Davidic covenant, as is highlighted by most “seam” psalms, which help shape the message of the whole.

- a. *Book 1*: Psalm 2 at the front of Book 1 alludes to 2 Samuel 7 and points to the announcement of the Davidic covenant; Psalm 41 at the end provides a statement of confidence in the Davidic covenant.
- b. *Book 2*: The final Psalm 72 is an enthronement psalm of Solomon and portrays the covenant promises passed on from David to his son.
- c. *Book 3*: The concluding Psalm 89 speaks of the failure of the Davidic covenant.
- d. *Book 4* as a whole provides answer to the dilemma of a failed covenant wherein Yahweh is portrayed as king and a refuge to his people. Yahweh, not the earthly king, is central to Israel's existence.
- e. *Book 5* is an answer to the pleas for help from exiles and exalts Yahweh over all.
- 2. Initial Evaluation:
  - a. Wilson's proposed "narrative" uses only selective psalms to support his theory.
  - b. He does not discuss all the "seam" psalms.
  - c. There are solid reasons to question his view that Yahweh's kingship replaces the hopes of the Davidic covenant. I suggest that the end of the Psalter finds both Yahweh and his anointed reigning side-by-side just as Psalm 2 portrays.
- C. **John Walton**, "Psalms: A Cantata About the Davidic Covenant," *JETS* 34 (1991): 21–31; *The Old Testament Today* (2004), 355–361.
  - 1. Overview of the approach:
    - a. Builds off the work of Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (1985).
    - b. Psalms 1–2 introduce the book, Psalms 146–150 conclude the book, and the superscriptions group specific psalms together for specific purpose.
    - c. Psalms 41, 72, 89, and 106 are seam psalms, each with a concluding doxology of Yahweh. The "seams" advance the themes of the introduction through the book and provide the lens for reading each "book."
    - d. The psalms were editorially arranged to reflect on the history of the Davidic covenant—much like songs in a cantata.
  - 2. Summary of the "content agenda":
    - a. *Introduction* (Pss. 1–2)
      - i. Ps. 1: Ultimate vindication of the righteous
      - ii. Ps. 2: God's choice and defense of Israelite king
    - b. *Book 1*: David's conflict with Saul (Pss. 3–41)
    - c. *Book 2*: David's kingship (Pss. 42–72)
    - d. *Book 3*: Eighth century Assyrian crisis (Pss. 73–89)
    - e. *Book 4*: Introspection about destruction of the temple and exile (Pss. 90–106)
    - f. *Book 5*: Praise/reflection on return from exile and beginning a new era (Pss. 107–145)
    - g. *Conclusion* (Pss. 146–150): Climactic praise to God
  - 3. Support for this proposal:
    - a. *Book 1*: David's conflict with Saul (Pss. 3–41)
      - i. *Seam*: Psalm 41 provides an application of Psalm 1 in David's conflict with Saul, capturing the psalmist's faith in the midst of confusion and the unresolved nature of his circumstances.
      - ii. *Support*: Psalms 3–40 show a significant emphasis on the theme of trouble at the hands of enemies; the Book is full of cries for protection and guidance and affirmations of God's strength and ability to deliver.
      - iii. *Initial Evaluation*: Saul is not the only "enemy" in Book 1. Indeed, Psalm 3, the first attributed psalm, assumes David is already on the throne, running

from Absalom. I wonder if a more general category of “kingdom in crisis” fits this section. Furthermore, Walton simply assumes that the body of the psalms provide *first* the prayers of the earthly Israelite king *for himself* rather than predictively of the Christ.

- b. Book 2: David’s kingship (Pss. 42–72)
  - i. *Seam*: Psalm 72, a psalm of Solomon, is a blessing on the king, wishing for him the very assurance Psalm 2 offered. The final comment that the prayers of David are ended may suggest Books 1–2 are designed to express two stages in David’s life (Book 1: David’s life in exile as enemy of Saul; Book 2: David’s reign on the throne of Israel).
  - ii. *Support*: Psalms 42–71 has a high number of psalms devoted directly to events of David’s reign: David came to the throne with the nation in chaos, which may be pointed to in the national lament of Psalm 44. Psalm 45 indicates a secure throne, and Psalms 46–47 may be hymns commemorating David’s victories. Psalm 48 focuses on Jerusalem, David’s new capital, and Psalm 51 provides penitential reflection on David’s sin with Bathsheba. Psalm 53 repeats Psalm 14, suggesting a return to the “enemies” motif and perhaps reflecting Absalom’s hostilities against David.
  - iii. *Initial Evaluation*: We could read Book 2 as a testament of David’s rise and enthronement that grows out of suffering. However, we can also read it as predictive of Christ’s triumph out of suffering, and both the OT prophets and NT read this section this way.
- c. Book 3: Eighth century Assyrian crisis (Pss. 73–89)
  - i. *Seam*: Psalm 89 recounts the Davidic covenant in the context of crisis, suggesting that Book 3 reflects on a period of jeopardy to the covenant and monarchy (whether the division of the kingdom, threat of Assyrians, or destruction by the Babylonians).
  - ii. *Support*: Psalms 73–88 takes a distinctly corporate turn, reflecting on the national struggles of Israel and God’s preeminence over the nations. Psalm 79 speaks of invasion and defilement of the temple; Psalm 80 seeks restoration; and Psalm 84 finds security and comfort in the temple.
  - iii. *Initial Evaluation*: There is only one Davidic psalm in this unit—a lament (Ps 86), and there are no psalms of praise (on certain counts, but see the “Songs of Zion” in Pss 76, 84, 87). This could suggest we should see Book 3 as focusing on the division, rebellion, and separation from the Davidic ideal. However, to focus only on the Assyrian crisis in the title seems too restricted. Furthermore, recently many scholars have identified not only how Ps 89 addresses the failure of the Davidic covenant but also emphasizes its hope.

- d. Book 4: Introspection about destruction of the temple and exile (Pss. 90–106)
  - i. *Seam*: Psalm 106 is a retrospective look at Israel's history, with a focus on Israel's failures and God's grace; it ends with a petition for re-gathering from the nations and therefore may be read as offering thoughts from exile.
  - ii. *Support*: Psalm 90 opens with a psalm of Moses stressing Yahweh as the ultimate dwelling place of Israel. Psalms 90–105 note God's anger and call on him to relent; they look to God to bring vengeance and forgiveness.
  - iii. *Initial Evaluation*: Following the rebellion of Book 3, Book 4 does appear to witness a refocusing of the people of God back toward faithfulness and realized need. It provides the foundation for the celebration of redemption seen in Book 5. Again, the sense of exile and need for Davidic covenant fulfillment fits well a period without a king on the throne, but David already expressed these realities during his own reign, pinpointing the early realities of Israel's spiritual exile (Ps 14:7; 1 Chr 16:35–36//Ps 106:47–48).
- e. Book 5: Praise/reflection on return from exile and beginning a new era (Pss. 107–145)
  - i. *Seam*: Psalm 145 praises the kingship of Yahweh, capturing both the individual and corporate themes introduced in Psalms 1–2 and elevating God's kingship as a higher priority than the kinship of the Davidic dynasty; its focus could be the post-exilic period where there was no Davidic king and where Yahweh's kingship alone was at the fore.
  - ii. *Support*: Psalm 107 begins with praise that God has re-gathered the Israelites from the nations (107:1–3), potentially suggesting reflection from the period of initial restoration. Psalm 110 anticipates the return of an ideal Davidic king, and Psalm 119 addresses a renewed commitment to the Law. Psalms 120–134 are all songs for pilgrims journeying to Jerusalem for the great festivals, and all would have had an increased poignancy in the context of return from exile.
  - iii. *Evaluation*: While Yahweh's kingship is exalted, it appears to be a kingship that will be manifest through his earthly king. With the heightened use of Davidic psalms and psalms of praise, Book 5 celebrates Yahweh's restoration of his people and the future fulfillment of all his promises regarding the Davidic dynasty. This happens *not* in the period of initial restoration but in the coming of Christ.
- 4. Main message:
  - a. God reigns supreme over Israel and the nations.
  - b. God is both just and faithful.
  - c. God is worthy of praise and receptive to the petitions and laments of the righteous.
- 5. Initial evaluation:
  - a. Walton does a much better job than Wilson highlighting the structuring function of the seams and showing how the content of each "book" can be read to support the proposed theme.
  - b. While seeing a general focus on the Davidic covenant is likely justified, the specific details of the narrative at times seem pressed, and Walton does not address many psalms.
  - c. Walton highlight's the main message of the Psalter to be Yahweh's reign, faithfulness, and worth, which he accomplishes ultimately through his Davidic royal son. I propose the following tweaks to his "main message":
    - i. God reigns supreme over Israel and the nations.

- ii. God reigns through his earthly Davidic king, whose global reign and influence is established only through great suffering.
- iii. God is both just and faithful to his Davidic king and to all finding refuge in him.
- iv. God is worthy of praise and receptive to the petitions and laments of the royal righteous one and the righteous ones identified with him.

**D. Paul House, *Old Testament Theology* (405–407)**

1. Overview of the approach:
  - a. Utilize the five books, highlighting main theological emphases.
  - b. Interpret the psalms according to their literary genres.
  - c. Following Kraus, stress the book's confession about God and only secondarily to what it says about the people or enemies of God.
2. The Structure:
  - a. Book 1 (Pss. 1–41): The God who instructs, elects, and delivers
  - b. Book 2 (Pss. 42–72): The God who establishes and delivers
  - c. Book 3 (Pss. 73–89): The God who rebukes and rejects
  - d. Book 4 (Pss. 90–106): The God who remembers and sustains
  - e. Book 5 (Pss. 107–150): The God who restores and renews
3. Support for this proposal:
  - a. *Book 1* (Pss. 1–41): *The God who instructs, elects, and delivers*. The first three psalms introduce the themes of instruction, election, and deliverance; all but four of the psalms are attributed to David, so the canon makes his life the focal point; high frequency of psalms of lament focus on Yahweh as deliver from trouble; Psalm 19 anchors the nation in God's word.
  - b. *Book 2* (Pss. 42–72): *The God who establishes and delivers*. Israel's history stops with temple worship [Pss. 66, 68]; a high-frequency of Davidic psalms continue with focus on God's deliverance; the last psalm's ascription to Solomon suggest he is on the throne; the promises given to David have begun to materialize.
  - c. *Book 3* (Pss. 73–89): *The God who rebukes and rejects*. Worship continues in Jerusalem/Zion (Pss. 84, 87); only one psalm is attributed to David and the Davidic promise is not highlighted except in Ps. 89 in the context of Jerusalem's destruction; focus is given to Israel's growth in wickedness, with Psalm 78 summarizing Israel covenant failures since the exodus.
  - d. *Book 4* (Pss. 90–106): *The God who remembers and sustains*. Mostly anonymous psalms, with attribution given only to Moses (Ps. 90) and David (Pss. 101, 103), perhaps to highlight how God sustains the faithful; Psalms 90–100 highlight God's power, especially as Creator, and Psalms 105–106 offer a historical summary that ends with prayers for return from exile; no Zion psalms appear.
  - e. *Book 5* (Pss. 107–150): *The God who restores and renews*. Post-exilic celebration of God's steadfast love (107:1; 108:1; 117:2; 118:1) with focus on worshippers returning to Jerusalem for worship (Pss. 120–134); ends with five psalms of unrestrained praise for God who rules the earth and blesses Israel; Israel's praise suggests it has moved from exodus to new exodus, and Psalm 119 anchors this new community in God's Word.
4. Major themes:
  - a. Yahweh's sovereignty over Israel and the rest of creation.
  - b. There is not a psalm that does not in some way reflect Yahweh's supremacy over all and the way his rule encounters the opposition of nations and rulers and people

whose gods and power and autonomy are denied by God's reign (following Mayes).

- c. "Monotheism in the psalms is grounded in daily life by constant confessions that God lives, speaks, acts, helps, sees, hears, answers and saves. No other god does any of these things in the Psalms. Thus whatever name is given God (e.g., Elohim or Yahweh) in Psalms, there is only one God, and this God rules creation" (407).
5. Initial evaluation:
  - a. House helpfully focuses each section on God rather than on David or Israel, but he downplays too much the Davidic/messianic hope suggested in the Psalter's structure.
  - b. House does not focus as intently on the "seam" psalms and therefore offers a more balanced approach that highlights an apparent thematic grouping of the psalms while not requiring the narrative precision of Walton's approach.

#### E. Evaluation of Canonical Approaches

1. The Psalms are intentionally crafted with five "books," each with a concluding doxology, thus focusing due attention on Yahweh as the primary focus of the whole. Psalms 1–2 appear to stand as the introduction to the whole Psalter, drawing attention to both wisdom (*walking*) and eschatology (*waiting*) and focusing on the blessed state of God's Son, the Christ, who walks in God's word and of all the righteous who find refuge in him. Psalms 146–150 provide an apt Yahweh-exalting conclusion (*worship*). While lament psalms are the highest frequency genre, psalms of praise appear intentionally concentrated at the end.
2. With these features, there does appear to be themes that are distinct to each book, but I question the idea that the canonizers intended us to read an overview of Israel's history in the whole. Rather, I think that the "story" focuses on the hope of the Davidic kingdom promises and the anointed one whose suffering would lead to his triumph and to the suffering and triumph of those finding refuge in him. Wilson and Walton's use of the "seam" psalms appears somewhat forced, but they are correct in seeing a redemptive historical flow to the whole. House's more general, Yahweh-focused approach is helpful, but it also fails to account for the messianic dimensions that are clear from the very beginning.
  - a. *Book 1* (Pss 1–41): At stake here is the kingdom in crisis or under threat. The focus is *not* on David's throne but on that of his future offspring, who would be regarded the Son of God. Nearly all the psalms are Davidic and therefore draw attention to the hope of this coming one, whose kingdom God would establish only through the suffering of his Christ. David at times prays for this king (e.g., Pss 14, 20, 21) and other times predictively speaks his very words out of the midst of pain (e.g., Ps 22) or in light of deliverance (e.g., Ps 23).
  - b. *Book 2* (Pss 42–72): Within this section focus remain fixed on the kingship of the Christ in journey through tribulation unto triumph. Almost all the psalms are Davidic, and we find added focus on Christ's kingship and Jerusalem.
  - c. *Book 3* (Pss 73–89): Psalms lament the disgraceful, broken state of the Davidic dynasty, while also reminding the reader of the Davidic kingdom promises. Almost no psalms are Davidic.
  - d. *Book 4* (Pss 90–106): These psalms address the devastation of exile, the need for covenant faithfulness (as echoed in the lives of Moses and David), the sovereign reign of Yahweh, and the hope his past forgiveness gives for the fulfillment of the kingdom promises. Again, almost no psalms are Davidic.

- e. *Book 5* (Pss 107–150): The psalter ends with renewed focus on God’s word and worship in Jerusalem, on God’s promises to David, and with great praise, all in light of God’s sustained kingdom work. The increased number of Davidic psalms heighten hope for the fulfillment of the messianic promises.
3. The Psalter provides the prayers of the Christ and the songs of the saved. His overviews the anointed one’s journey of suffering and exaltation, and it guides the laments, thanksgivings, and praises of all who find refuge in him. The Psalms give a Godward voice in periods of battling and doubting, succeeding and rejoicing, wavering and running, being disciplined and longing, being restored and praising.
4. The conclusion at the end of Psalm 72 suggests that books one and two were a Psalter before the completion of the whole. The whole could have come about progressively as the Davidic kingdom hope rose and fall with Israel’s own history. Some individual(s) in the post-exilic period, living without a king but in light of the kingdom promises, finalized the whole as a messianic song book.

**Fig. 18.3. The Structure of the Psalter: A Cantata of Yahweh’s Reign through His Messiah**

<b>Book 1</b>	Ps 1	<b><i>Walking with the Messiah</i></b> (Kingdom Wisdom)	Introduction
	Ps 2	<b><i>Waiting in the Messiah</i></b> (Kingdom Eschatology)	
	Pss 3–41	Yahweh instructs, elects, and delivers his Christ and his people [Doxology: 41:13] (Kingdom crisis; almost all Davidic; many individual laments and most mention enemies)	Body
<b>Book 2</b>	Pss 42–72	Yahweh establishes his Christ and delivers [Doxology: 72:18–19] (Kingdom rise and establishment; almost all Davidic; mostly laments and “enemy” psalms; keys psalms: 45, 48, 51, 54–65)	
<b>Book 3</b>	Pss 73–89	Yahweh rebukes, disciplines, and gives kingdom-hope to his people [Doxology: 89:52] (Kingdom hope in the midst of loss and rebellion; almost no Davidic; Asaph and Sons of Korah collections; key psalm: 78)	
<b>Book 4</b>	Pss 90–106	Yahweh remembers his people and sustains the faithful [Doxology: 106:48] (Kingdom hope in the midst of initial restoration; almost no Davidic; praise collections: 95–100; key psalms: 90, 103–105)	
<b>Book 5</b>	Pss 107–145	Yahweh restores and renews by fulfilling his kingdom promises [Doxology: Pss 146–150] (Kingdom restoration and hope; increased number of Davidic; Hallelujah collection: 111–117; Songs of Ascent: 120–134; Davidic reprise: 138–145; keys psalms: 107, 110, 119)	
	Pss 146–150	<b><i>Worshipping on account of the Messiah</i></b> (Kingdom Praise)	Conclusion

## VII. The Portrait of the Christ in the Psalms

**A. An Overview:** Royal psalms display a portrait of an unparalleled coming deliverer (Pss 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 101, 110, 132, 144):<sup>5</sup>

1. He is not simply God’s “son” (89:27[H28]) but his “begotten” son (2:7), who belongs to YHWH (89:18[H19]) and remains ever devoted to him (18:20–24[H21–25]; 21:1, 7[H2, 8]; cf. 63:1–8, 11[H2–9, 12]); he is seated at God’s right hand (110:1) and is himself tagged both “God” (45:6[H7]) and David’s “Lord” (110:1); he will experience joy in God’s presence forever (21:6[H7]; cf. 16:11).

<sup>5</sup> Some of this synthesis is adapted from J. Alec Motyer, “Messiah[OT],” in IDB, 2:989.



2. He will receive YHWH's everlasting blessing (21:6[H7]; 45:2[H3]; cf. 72:17), fulfill the Davidic covenant promises (89:28–37[H29–38]; 132:11–12, 17–18), and be the heir of both the nations (2:8) and the Melchizedekian priesthood (110:1–4).
3. The nations and peoples of the earth stand against him (2:1–3; 110:2), but he will, through tribulation unto triumph (18:37–50[H38–51]; 20:1–9[H2–10]; 21:1, 4[H2, 5]; 144:7–8, 11), overcome all of them (45:3–5[H4–6]; 89:22–23[89:23–24]; 110:1, 5–7; 132:18), and declare God's praises among them (18:49[H50]).
4. By YHWH's act (2:6, 8; 18:31–36, 43, 46–50[H32–37, 44, 47–51]; 21:1–13[H2–14]; 110:1–2; 132:17–18), he will establish global rule (2:8–12; 45:17[H18]; 72:8–11; 89:25[H26]; 110:5–6; 132:18) based in Zion (2:6; 110:2; 132:13, 17).
5. He will reign forever (21:4[H5]; 45:6[H7]; 72:5) in peace (72:7) and fruitfulness (72:3, 16), and he will rule in righteousness and justice (45:4, 6–7[H5, 7–8]; 72:2–3; 101:1–8), which will include befriending the poor and defeating the oppressor (72:2, 4, 12–14).
6. Those finding refuge in him will be blessed (2:12; 72:17; 144:15), and under his rule, they will flourish (72:7) and enjoy abundance (72:3; 144:13–15), being both prosperous (72:3) and fruitful (72:16; 144:12).
7. He will possess an everlasting name (72:17), be preeminent among men (45:2, 7[H3, 8]), and stand as the object of unending thanks (72:15).
8. He is Yahweh's son (2:7; 89:27), seated at his right hand (110:1) and is himself divine (45:6).

## **B. The Christ as All-Conquering King**

1. Royal Psalms:
  - a. Psalm 2:
    - i. The imagery of God's Son bearing global rule and demanding global homage portrays a kingdom far more vast than anything experienced by Israel's monarchs, even David.
    - ii. Most likely, therefore, Psalm 2 appears to speak prophetically about the ultimate, earthly, royal deliver through whom Yahweh would establish global justice and peace.
    - iii. The very introduction of the Psalter calls readers to anticipate the global, curse-overcoming work of the Messiah. The rest of the psalter supports this conclusion.
  - b. As noted above, the royal psalms like 2, 45, 72, 110 portray a king and reign far greater than anything experienced in Israel's monarchy. The earthly king can be called "God" (45:7[8]), the "Son" of God (2:7), and the "Lord" of David (110:1), whose reign is both global (2:8; 72:8, 11) and eternal (45:6[7]; 72:5, 7, 17; 110:4).
    - Ps 2:7–8. I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you." <sup>8</sup> Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession."
    - Ps. 45:6–7[7–8]. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; <sup>7</sup> you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.
    - Ps 72:5, 7–8, 11, 17. May they fear you while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations! . . . <sup>7</sup> In his days may the righteous flourish, and peace abound, till the moon be no more! <sup>8</sup> May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth! . . . <sup>11</sup> May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him! . . . <sup>17</sup> May his name endure forever, his fame continue as long as the sun! May people be blessed in him, all nations call him blessed!

- Ps 110:1, 4. The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” . . . <sup>4</sup> The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”
- c. David was a prophet, who wrote about the Christ.
  - i. In Acts 2:30–31, Peter declared, “Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, [David] foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.” Later he asserted that “*all* the prophets” foretold that God’s “Christ would suffer” followed by days of salvation (Acts 3:18, 23; cf. 10:43).
  - ii. 2 Samuel 23 points in this same direction when it records “the last words of David” (23:1), directly following 2 Sam 22, v. 50 of which is cited in Rom 15:9 and applied to Christ.
    - (1) The ESV of 2 Sam 23:1 follows the Hebrew MT, which reads: “The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, *the oracle of the man* who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel.” The phrase “the oracle of the man” occurs in only two other places in the OT, both of which introduce messianic oracles: (a) Balaam’s oracle about the future king who would strike Gog (Agag) and whose kingdom would be exalted (Num 24:3) and (b) Agur’s oracle regarding the one who is the source of all wisdom (Prov 30:1).
    - (2) Where the ESV/Hebrew MT read 2 Sam 23:1 as “the oracle of the man who *was raised on high, the anointed* of the God of Jacob,” the LXX reads differently. Where the Hebrew text has “on high,” the LXX has *epi* “concerning,” which follows an equally valid reading of the Hebrew text without any change to the consonants. When read this way, a messianic rendering rises to the surface: “The declaration of David, son of Jesse, and the declaration of the mighty man raised up—concerning the Messiah of the God of Jacob and the Delightful One of the songs of Israel.” The LXX reading suggests that David viewed his own songs/psalms as pointing prophetically ahead to the Messiah, and this reading is a faithful rendering of the Hebrew consonantal text, though the vowels point in a different direction. The Hebrew Masoretes, working after the rise of Christianity, may have added the vowels in a way to counter this highly messianic but originally intended reading.
    - (3) As David’s “last words,” the oracle itself points forward beyond himself to an expected deliverer whom God foretold in the covenant he made with David (v. 5). This one would rule justly over men in the fear of God and bring with him the dawn of new creation (vv. 3b–4). He would overcome the one of worthlessness who brings with him those who are cursed, and he would do so with a spear of iron (vv. 6–7). David’s hope is in this one, whose identity grows out of the covenant God made with him (v. 5). The images of light and the sprouting of new creation (v. 4) and the destruction of thorns (v. 6) with a rod of iron (v. 7) are all associated elsewhere with the promised royal deliverer (Gen 3:15, 18; Num 24:6–7, 17; Ps 2:8–9; Rev 19:15; 22:1–2, 16).

- d. Later biblical authors interpret the royal psalms messianically.
  - i. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah all read the Psalms messianically (see above). Most explicit is Zechariah, who—while writing in an age without any Israelite king—applied a messianic reading to Ps 72:8, viewing it as anticipating a future ruler: “His rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth” (Zech 9:10).
  - ii. Paul and the author of Hebrews applied Psalm 2 to Christ.
    - Acts 4:24–28. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,<sup>25</sup> who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, “‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain?’<sup>26</sup> The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’—<sup>27</sup> for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,<sup>28</sup> to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.
    - Acts 13:33. God has fulfilled this *promise* to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, “YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.”
    - Heb 1:5. For to which of the angels did He ever say, “YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU”? And again, “I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME”?
    - Heb 5:5. So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, “YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.”
  - iii. Hebrews applies Psalm 45 to Christ.
    - Heb 1:8–9. But of the Son *He says*, “YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM.”<sup>9</sup> “YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS.”
  - iv. Jesus, his opponents, Peter, and the author of Hebrews applied a messianic reading to Psalm 110:1:
    - Matt 22:41–46. Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: “What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?” They said to Him, “*The son of David*.” He said to them, “Then how does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying, ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET”’? “If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his son?” No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question. (Cf. Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44.)
    - Acts 2:34–36. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: “THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, ‘SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.’” Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ — this Jesus whom you crucified.
    - Heb 1:13. But to which of the angels has He ever said, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET”?
    - Heb 10:11–13. Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET.
  - v. The author of Hebrews applied Ps 110:4 to Christ.
    - Heb 5:5–6. So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, “YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU”; just as He says also in another *passage*, “YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.”

- Heb 7:15–22. And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become *such* not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. For it is attested *of Him*, “YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.” For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. And inasmuch as *it was* not without an oath (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, “THE LORD HAS SWORN AND WILL NOT CHANGE HIS MIND, ‘YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER’”); so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

## 2. The Davidic covenant

- a. Ps 89:35–37[36–38] stresses the eternality of the Davidic covenant, even though the following verses highlight how the kingdom’s division, rebellion, and, perhaps, even exile, makes it appear that God has revoked his promise.
  - Ps 89:35–37[36–38]. Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me. Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies.
- b. Beginning with Psalm 90, Book 4 looks back to the Mosaic era and highlights how God forgave in the past, thus giving hope that he could do so again. Paralleling this theme is the highlighting of Yahweh’s reign over all. Then Book 5, includes a heightened number of Davidic psalms and praises in order to give hope that God’s kingdom promises through his Messiah will indeed come to pass.
- c. In Book 5, Psalm 110:4 couches in an oath the declaration that David’s “Lord” is “a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” If God has promised to keep his otherwise unknown oath regarding the priesthood of Melchizedek, certainly he will keep his explicit oath regarding the Davidic throne. Psalm 89 highlighted this oath three times:
  - Ps 89:3–4[4–5]. You have said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: ‘I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.’”
  - Ps 89:35–36[36–37]. Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me.
  - Ps 89:49[50]. Lord, where is your steadfast love of old, which by your faithfulness you swore to David?
- d. In this context, Ps 132 of Book 5 reaffirms God’s promises to the Davidic house. The conditional nature of the promise clarifies the interruption in the Davidic dynasty (i.e., the exile and period of initial restoration), but the promises of God to the Davidic house still stand. The dynasty will not be extinguished, and the editors of the Psalter appear to have real hope in the revival of the Davidic house.
  - Ps 132:1, 11–18. Remember, O LORD, in David’s favor, all the hardships he endured. . . .<sup>11</sup> The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: “One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne. <sup>12</sup> If your sons keep my covenant and my testimonies that I shall teach them, their sons also forever shall sit on your throne.” <sup>13</sup> For the LORD has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his dwelling place: <sup>14</sup> “This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it. <sup>15</sup> I will abundantly bless her provisions; I will satisfy her poor with bread. <sup>16</sup> Her priests I will clothe with salvation, and her saints will shout for joy. <sup>17</sup> There I will make a horn to sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed. <sup>18</sup> His enemies I will clothe with shame, but on him his crown will shine.”

## 3. Conclusions:

- a. The editors of the Psalter appear to read as prophetic all royal psalms and psalms addressing the Davidic covenant. Though darkness had fallen over the Davidic dynasty, they believed Yahweh’s kingdom promises to David still stood, and they

anticipated a day when a new royal deliverer would rise, this time to establish a global kingdom that would never end.

- b. After the conclusion of Book 2 in Ps 72:20, which reads, “The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended,” Books 3 and 4 portray the downfall and loss of the Davidic kingdom and call into question the future of the Davidic covenant. Yet Book 5 sees the initial restoration to the land, and with it comes anticipation that the full kingdom promises would be consummated. The high concentration of Davidic psalms matched with the clear testimony of Psalms 110 and 132 suggests hope in the Davidic king, the ultimate Son of God who himself could be called both David’s Lord and God.

### C. The Christ as Suffering Servant

1. The Psalms present us two distinct portraits of the Davidic king, the first as *all-conquering king* (see above) and the second as *innocent sufferer*.
  - a. As the anointed Son of God, the Davidic king is the one to whom all the nations of the world will bow. As already highlighted, this all-conquering deliverer is depicted as someone far greater than any Israelite king, and therefore the image prophetically anticipates the greater Son of David. The second portrait of the Davidic king is that of innocent sufferer, who only survives because of divine intervention (as seen in the laments and thanksgivings).
  - b. Of the 73 psalms that include “David” in the heading, 13 have titles that give clarity about their context of composition. These historical notes almost all point to problem areas in David’s life that are specifically referred to in 1–2 Samuel (in contrast to Chronicles). Many other “Davidic” psalms that do not include a specific context address similar troubles, wherein a righteous man appeals for help to gain respite from enemies. Two examples:
    - Psalm 7: “O LORD my God, in you do I take refuge; save me from all my pursuers” (v. 1[2]); “Arise, O LORD, in your anger; lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies” (v. 6[7]); “The LORD judges the peoples; judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me” (v. 8[9]).
    - Psalm 18: “The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold” (v. 1[3]); “He brought me out into a broad place; he rescued me, because he delighted in me. The LORD dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me” (vv. 19–20[20–21]); “I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from my guilt. So the LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight” (vv. 23–24[24–25]).
  - c. In light of the fact that first the portrait of David (i.e., conquering king) is clearly viewed messianically both within and outside the Psalter, should we view the portrayal of the innocent sufferer also as prophetic?
2. The conviction that Yahweh will vindicate the righteous and judge the wicked is the key theme of Psalm 1, and in light of its intentional link with Psalm 2, the blessed man of Psalm 1 is none other than the royal Son, against whom the nations rage. The introduction to the Psalter, therefore, calls us to read the two portraits of the royal Son in relation to one another. Significantly, the NT views the hostility of the nations and peoples against God (Ps. 2:1–2) as climaxing at Christ’s death on the cross (Acts 4:25–28), and it views the moment when God’s royal Son becomes “begotten” (Ps. 2:7) as the moment of his resurrection (Acts 13:32–33).
3. Because the Psalm titles make clear that the editors knew the accounts of David’s life in 1–2 Samuel, we are encouraged to compare the psalmist’s voice with the portrait of David in this earlier narrative material. When we read the psalmist’s claims that there is

no wrong in his hands (Ps 7:3[4]) or that Yahweh dealt with him according to his righteousness (18:20[21]), the editors appear to be calling us to see that the historical David did not line up with such claims and that therefore we need to read the innocent sufferer psalms (e.g., Pss 3, 7, 9, 13, 18) messianically.

4. When the portrait of the innocent sufferer is read prophetically as pointing to the Messiah, we gain another pillar (along with texts like Isaiah 53) that clarifies the NT's teaching that the Son of David only inherits his kingdom on the path of suffering.
  - Luke 24:44–46. Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and *the Psalms* must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”
  - Acts 26:22–23. To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.
5. The juxtaposition of the exalted Christ in Psalm 2 with the persecuted Christ in Psalms 3 and beyond can easily be seen to teach that the Christ will only triumph through tribulation. The editors of the Psalter appear to have been reading the psalms this way, and 2 Sam 23:1 can easily be read as suggesting that David actually intended this from the beginning.

#### D. What about “I am a sinner” Psalms?

1. A natural question for my reading is, “What about the numerous times the psalmist himself claims to be a sinner?” Psalm 51, for example, opens, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, and you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight” (Ps 51:1–4).
2. The normal pattern for preachers today is to qualify every statement of the psalmist's innocence before God with statements like, “He is actually not declaring his perfect obedience or righteousness before God but only his innocence as it relates to this matter.” These same preachers, however, then affirm *without qualifying comment* the psalmist's affirmations of his own sinfulness (e.g., Ps 51). I propose the reverse may be more justified, especially in light of how the NT authors unreservedly apply both the perfection and sin texts to Christ. That is, the NT authors affirmed the Anointed One of the Psalms *was* perfectly innocent, and they call us to read all text's where he claims his own sinfulness in light of substitution and imputation. The Christ becomes so identified with his people that he takes on their identity, becoming sin in their place and receiving on himself the wrath of God.
3. An overview:
  - a. **Psalm 6**
    - i. Pss 5–6 are *filled* with allusions to Pss 1–2. The voice we hear in Ps 6 is thus the voice of Anointed of Ps 2, and though he is receiving the anger God promises to pour out on the nations (Ps 2:5; 6:1[2]), the thrust of his cry is, “I am *not* your enemy, yet you seem to be treating me like I am.” In light of this he notes, “The LORD has heard my plea; the LORD accepts my prayer” (6:9[10]), whereas all his enemies “shall be ashamed and greatly troubled” (6:10[11]).
    - ii. Psalm 6 is a psalm of lament, and the NT cites the psalm in two different contexts. Just after the triumphal entry, Jesus pleads for God to deliver him

from his encroaching death (John 12:27) using the language of Ps 6:3–4[4–5]. Then in Matt 7:23 and Luke 13:27, using the king’s charge in Ps 6:8[9], Jesus promises to force all workers of evil to depart on the day people enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus is the innocent suffer of Psalm 6, who views the oppression of enemies as a manifestation of God’s wrath against him.

- iii. This is what John the Baptist meant when he said, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29). And it captures well Paul’s words, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). Out of this context, the psalmist cries, “Turn, O LORD, deliver my life” (Ps 6:4[5]). Just as Psalm 2 is about the Anointed One (capital A), Psalm 6, which alludes to Ps 2, is also about *him*, not David. The pattern set forth here should color our reading of the declarations of innocence and sinfulness that follow.

**b. Psalm 22**

- i. The NT authors cite no psalm more frequently in relation to Christ’s passion than Psalm 22: See Ps. 22:7[H8] in Matt. 27:39; Ps. 22:8[H9] in Matt. 27:43; Ps. 22:15[H16] in John 19:28; Ps. 22:16[H17] in Luke 24:40 with John 20:25; Ps. 22:18[H19] in John 19:24 and Matt. 27:35; Ps. 22:22[H23] in Heb. 2:12 and Matt. 28:10; John 20:17; Rom. 8:29; Ps. 22:24[H25] in Heb. 5:7. It is a psalm of David, yet the words so explicitly predictive that they must be seen as pointing to someone other than David himself.
- ii. Following the MT, the ESV reads Ps 22:1, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?” However, the LXX reads the last part of the phrase differently: “Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of *my transgression*?” The NT authors commonly cite the LXX of Psalm 22 and were therefore likely aware that the psalmist claims himself sinful. Yet the NT authors recognize fully that only of the Christ can it be said that God rescued (Ps 22:21[22]) him who noted, “They have pierced my hands and feet” (22:16[17]). Clearly, David is predicting the one whom Isaiah would declare, “He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:5).

**c. Psalm 31**

- i. In Ps 31:10[11] the psalmist asserts, “For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of *my iniquity*, and my bones waste away.”
- ii. Yet Jesus identifies this psalmist with himself by citing Ps 31:5[6] on the cross: “Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!’ And having said this he breathed his last” (Luke 23:46).

**d. Psalm 38**

- i. In Psalm 38 the psalmist is feeling the weight of Yahweh’s discipline: “Your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me” (38:1[2]). Why is he experiencing this trauma?
- ii. In 38:3–4[4–5] the psalmist says, “There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of *my sin*. For *my iniquities* have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy

for me.” Then in 38:18[19] he cries, “I confess *my iniquity*; I am sorry for *my sin*.”

- iii. In the midst of his affliction, he notes, “My friends and companions stand aloof from my plague, and my nearest kind stand far off [ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἔστησαν]” (38:11[12]). All the gospel writers appear to echo this verse when describing the placement of Jesus’ closest followers at the time of his crucifixion, “And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance [Εἰστήκεισαν ... ἀπὸ μακρόθεν] watching these things” (Luke 23:49; cf. Matt 27:55; Mark 15:40).
- iv. Significantly, the psalmist notes that his foes “hate me wrongfully” and then affirms that “those who render me evil for good accuse me because I follow after good” (Ps 38:19–20[20–21]). The psalmist here appears to identify that he is both a pursuer of good who does good and one who recognizes himself to be a sinner. Does this not adequately describe Jesus in his identification with us?

e. **Psalm 40**

- i. Ps 40:12[13] reads, “For evils have encompassed me beyond number; *my iniquities* have overtaken me, and I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me.”
- ii. The author of Hebrews cites Ps 40:6–8[7–9] and applies them directly to Christ (Heb 10:5–10): “Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’” When he said above, ‘You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings’ (these are offered according to the law), then he added, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will.’ He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”
- iii. The “scroll of the book” likely refers to the Pentateuch, and we know that Jesus stressed that Moses “wrote of me” (John 5:46). The psalmist is the hoped-for deliverer, yet he identifies himself as a sinner. I suggest this is possible only because of the great exchange—our sins applied to him and his righteousness applied to us. He has so fully identified with us in our rebellion that he carries it in himself.

f. **Psalm 41**

- i. Ps 41:4[5] asserts, “As for me, I said, ‘O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for *I have sinned* against you!’” The psalmist then grieves that a close friend has betrayed him, saying, “Even my close friend in whom I trust, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me” (41:9[10]).
- ii. Jesus quotes this psalm on the night of his last supper: “I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me’” (John 13:18).

g. **Psalm 69**

- i. Ps 69:5[6] declares, “O God, you know *my folly*; *the wrongs I have done* are not hidden from you.” This is then followed in vv. 7–9[8–10] by, “For it is *for your sake* that I have borne reproach, that dishonor has covered my face. I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother’s sons. For



zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.” On the one hand the psalmist claims sin, yet he also asserts that he is receiving God’s wrath *for God’s sake*.

- ii. After Jesus cleansed the temple, John 2:17 tells us that the disciples identified his act with the psalmist’s words in Ps 69:9[10]. Even more, Paul identifies Jesus with the psalmist of Ps 69:9[10], when he says, “For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, ‘The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me’” (Rom 15:3). Later, Ps 69:21[22] reads, “They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink,” and this is referred to in Christ’s crucifixion at Matt 27:34, 48; Mark 15:23; Luke 23:36; John 19:28–29. Here the John text is particularly interesting: “After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), ‘I thirst.’” This latter text does not appear to be a quote but a synthesis of fulfillment on 69:21[22]. Finally, we read in Ps 69:25[26], “May their camp be a desolation; let no one dwell in their tents,” which is then cited with regard to Judas in Acts 1:20.

#### 4. The innocence of the Christ

- a. All of the above texts show that the NT authors had no problem applying the words of the psalmist to Christ, even when the context of those words mentioned his sinfulness. In my view, the best way to understand the NT appropriation is that the NT authors saw the Christ as fully identifying himself with his people in their sin, while also fully recognizing his own innocence and praying to God in light of this. “By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:3). “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Gal 3:13).
- b. In 2 Sam 22:21, David writes, “The LORD dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me.” Furthermore, at the end of the psalm, in response to Yahweh’s great deliverance, he writes, “For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing to your name. Great salvation he brings to his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever” (2 Sam 22:49–50). Paul cites this latter text in Rom 15:8–9, when he declares: “For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, ‘Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.’” Paul identifies the figure in 2 Sam 22 (= Ps 18) as the Christ. He is the one who stands before the Lord blameless.
- c. Earlier in the book, Hannah declares, “He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the power of his anointed” (1 Sam 2:9–10). Later the character of this anointed one is then unpacked: “And I will raise up a *faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind*. And will build him a sure house and it shall go in and out before my anointed forever” (2:35). Clearly, the book of Samuel expects the anointed deliver to be one faithful to God, and the story of David’s rise and fall pushes the reader to look ahead to

someone other than David who would sing God's praises to the nations. This person is the Christ.<sup>6</sup>

### VIII. The Portrait of Yahweh in the Psalms

#### A. Yahweh stands in focus through the doxologies concluding each "book":

1. *Book 1: Ps. 41:13*. Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen. Cf. 1 Pet 1:3; 2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3.
2. *Book 2: Ps. 72:18–19*. Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen!
3. *Book 3: Ps. 89:52*. Blessed be Yahweh forever! Amen and Amen.
4. *Book 4: Ps. 106:48*. Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise Yah(weh)!
5. *Book 5: Pss. 146–150*. Praise Yah(weh)! (Pss. 146:1, 10; 147:1, 20; 148:1, 14; 149:1, 9; 150:1, 6)
  - *Ps. 148: 5, 13*. Let them praise the name of Yahweh! For he commanded and they were created.... Let them praise the name of Yahweh, for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven.

#### B. Overview of usage of the name and titles of God:

1. "The LORD" = *Yahweh* (695x); *Yah* (43x)
2. "God" = *Elohim* (365x); *El* (77x); *Eloah* (1x)
3. "Lord, Sovereign" = *Adonai* (67x)
4. "Most High" = *Elyon* (22x); *Shaddai* (2x)
5. "LORD Almighty/of hosts" = *Yahweh Sabaoth* (13x)
6. "My king and my God" = First title other than Yahweh or Elohim (Ps. 52; cf. 2:4; see also "Yahweh reigns" in Pss. 24; 29; 47; 93; 96; 97; 98; 99)

Fig. 18.4. Some Names or Titles of God in the Old Testament

Name/Title	Significance
<i>Elohim</i> "God"	Names the transcendent Creator of all that exists (Gen. 1:1)
<i>El-Elyon</i> "God Most High"	Indicates God's superior position above all the other gods of the nations (Gen. 14:18–20)
<i>Yahweh</i> "the LORD"	Personal name of God; names the ever existent, creator & sustainer of all things (Exod. 3:14–15)
<i>Adonai</i> "Lord, Master, Sovereign"	Reveals God as owner and master of all creation (Gen. 15:2; Josh. 3:11)

<sup>6</sup> The psalmist in 2 Samuel 22 asserts that God has judged him *according to* and not *on the basis of* his righteousness (2 Sam 22:21), which is exactly how Paul says God will assess at the final judgment (Rom 2:6). The psalmist sets forth the principle of God's action as follows: "With the faithful you show yourself faithful; with the blameless you show yourself blameless; with the purified you deal purely; and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous" (22:26–27). Earlier, Hannah had said something similar: "He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail" (1 Sam 2:9). And again, Yahweh declared to Eli through the man of God, "Those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (2:30). The psalmist in 2 Samuel 22 notes that the righteousness according to which God judges is not a self-exalting one but a God-exalting and God-dependent one: "You save a humble people, but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them down. . . . He is a shield for all those who take refuge in him. . . . This God is my strong refuge and has made my way blameless" (2 Sam 22:28, 31, 33). Figures like Noah (Gen 6:9) and Job (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3) are tagged "righteous," and Job asserts his integrity before God (ch. 31; cf. 2:3). With this, the fact that Peter stresses, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Pet 5:5) highlights that true humility before God is possible. Nevertheless, the whole context of Samuel and the Psalter suggests we are referring to a level of integrity that no human other than Christ enjoyed. David's hands, while washed, had been dirty, whereas the Christ's hands were never dirty (Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 John 3:5).

<i>El-Shaddai</i> “God Almighty”	Recalls God’s power in creating & sustaining life (Gen. 17:1)
<i>El-Olam</i> “God Everlasting”	Emphasizes God’s immensity and eternality (Gen. 21:33)
<i>El-Roeh</i> “God, the One Who Sees”	Reveals God’s beneficent omniscience, the God who sees the needs of his people & cares enough to respond with help & deliverance (Gen. 16:13)
<i>El Elohe Israel</i> “God, the God of Israel”	Attests God’s sovereignty & providential watch and care over Israel as his elect people (Gen. 33:19–20)
<i>Yahweh-Yireh</i> “the LORD Our Provision”	Witnesses to God’s ability to sustain the faithful in trial and testing (Gen. 22:13–14)
<i>Yahweh-Sabaoth</i> “the LORD of Hosts”	Designates God as the creator & leader of the angelic armies of heaven (1 Sam. 1:11; 17:45)

Adapted from John H. Walton and Andrew E. Hill, *Old Testament Today* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 73.

### C. Yahweh in the Introduction:

1. Ps. 1. Yahweh, the good **Guide**, **Satisfier**, and **Judge**, who preserves and flourishes those faithful to his Law but who allows the wicked to perish.
2. Ps. 2. Yahweh, the great **Sovereign** over all and **Treasure** of all who take refuge in him—the One who deserves worldwide homage and who promises the destruction of his enemies and worldwide dominion to his earthly king.

### D. Yahweh in the Conclusion:

1. Ps. 146. Yahweh, the great **Creator** of all and **Keeper** of the downtrodden—the constant one, who brings to ruin the way of the wicked and who will reign supreme forever.
2. Ps. 147. Yahweh, the great **Architect**, **Overseer**, and **Provider** of the universe—*our* God, who takes special care of those to whom he reveals his will and who look to him for help.
3. Ps. 148. Yahweh, the **Supreme One**, whose *name* is worthy of praise in all creation because through him all things were created and because he is exalted over all.
4. Ps. 149. Yahweh, the **great King**, who saved a humble people for his own pleasure and their good!
5. Ps. 150. Yahweh, **God over all** (in heaven and on earth, 150:1), whose actions and person (150:2) are worthy of praise from everything that has breath!

### E. Yahweh in the Body—An Overview:

1. The majesty of God’s *name* is seen in the way he’s made the skies and humanity.
  - Ps. 8:1, 3, 5. O **Yahweh**, our **Lord**, how majestic is your **name** in all the earth... your heavens, the work of your fingers... You...crowned [man] with glory and honor.
2. God’s glorious deeds of steadfast love, faithfulness, and power demand that remnant and rebel alike praise his *name*.
  - Ps. 9:1–2. I will give thanks to **Yahweh** with my whole heart; I will recount all your wonderful deeds. I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your **name**, O **Most High**.
  - Ps. 66:1–4. Shout for joy to **God**, all the earth; sing the glory of his **name**; give to him glorious praise! Say to **God**, “How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your **name**.”
  - Ps. 92:1–2, 4–5. It is good to give thanks to **Yahweh**, to sing praises to your **name**, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night... For you, O **Yahweh**, have made me glad by your work... How great are your works, O **Yahweh**!
3. God’s *name* is to be praised, for he is the deliver of the righteous and hears the cries of the needy.
  - Ps. 9:9–10. **Yahweh** is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. And those who know your **name** put their trust in you, for you, O **Yahweh**, have not forsaken those who seek you.

- Ps. 68:1, 3–4, 32, 34. **God** shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered... But the righteous shall be glad; they shall exult before **God**... Sing to **God**, sing praises to his **name**... his **name** is **Yahweh**; exult before him!... O kingdoms of the earth, sing to **God**; sing praises to the **Lord**... Ascribe power to **God**, whose majesty is over Israel, and whose power is in the skies.
  - Ps. 69:19, 29–30, 32–36. You know my reproach, and my shame and my dishonor; my foes are all known to you... let your salvation, O **God**, set me on high! I will praise the **name** of **God** with a song... When the humble see [my salvation] they will be glad; you who seek **God**, let your hearts revive. For **Yahweh** hears the needy and does not despise his own people who are prisoners. Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and everything that moves in them. For **God** will save Zion...and those who love his name shall dwell in it.
4. God's name deserves sustained, eternal praise, for he is God and King, incomparable in his perfections and working amazing reversals.
- Ps. 113. Praise **Yahweh**!...praise the **name** of **Yahweh**! Blessed be the **name** of **Yahweh** from this time forth and forevermore! From the rising of the sun to its setting, the **name** of **Yahweh** is to be praised! **Yahweh** is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens! Who is like **Yahweh** our **God**, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth? He raises the poor from the dust...to make them sit with princes... He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise **Yahweh**!
  - Ps. 145. I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your **name** forever and ever. Every day I will bless you and praise your **name** forever and ever. Great is **Yahweh**, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts... **Yahweh** is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. **Yahweh** is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made... Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom...[**Yahweh** is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works.] **Yahweh** upholds all who are falling... **Yahweh** is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works. **Yahweh** is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth... **Yahweh** preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy. My mouth will speak the praise of **Yahweh**, and let all flesh bless his holy **name** forever and ever.

## F. Summary:

1. *The Truth.* In the Psalms, Yahweh reigns supreme over all creation, from the placement of galaxies (Pss. 8:3; 19:1) to the growth of grass (104:14), from sea breezes (148:8) to the flight of birds (78:28), from the establishment of nations (22:28) to the last breath of individuals (104:29). Yahweh is always faithful and just (89:8, 14), guides through his instruction (1, 19, 119), responds to the pleas and laments of the righteous (6:9; 66:19), and will faithfully vindicate those who seek refuge in him under the rule of his Messiah (2:2, 12; 28:8). His Sovereignty over all demands praise, for he is the Guide, Satisfier, Judge, Sovereign, Treasure, Creator, Keeper, Architect, Overseer, Provider, Supreme One, Great King, and God over all.
2. *The Conflict.* In the Psalms, Yahweh alone is God, and his Word provides the only path for life. Nevertheless, the sustained voice through the Psalms witness that in this world God's supremacy is constantly in dispute. Mays noted (*Psalms*, 34):
 

*Because it is the reign of God whose way in the world is being worked out through one people and one presence and one king and a particular kind of human conduct, the rule encounters the opposition of nations and rulers and people whose gods and power and autonomy are denied by the reign of the Lord. There is not a psalm that does not in some way or other reflect some dimension of this fundamental conflict.*
3. *The Hope.*
  - a. While the presence and promises of God are constantly called into question in life, the Psalms testify to the truth that there is one God and that he is for all who take refuge in him through his Messiah (2:12). Whether from an individual or a community, whether through lament, thanksgiving, or joyous song, the daily-life confessions of the psalmists declare that Yahweh "lives, speaks, acts, helps, sees,

hears, answers and saves” (House, *Old Testament Theology*, 407). No other god does any of the things in the Psalms; therefore, Yahweh alone is shown to be God who rules over his creation, ultimately through his Messianic king.

- b. We must ever remember that such gracious activities from God for his own are just and good only because of the wondrous substitutionary, sacrificial work of Jesus on our behalf (Rom. 3:23–26). May our hearts be moved to great praise, for God is for us in Christ; he listens, and he will save. Praise the LORD!

**IX. Guided Reading for the Psalms:** NOTE: As you read through the “key Psalms,” meditate on the goodness of God and allow yourself to be refreshed by him. Seek his face, and he will be found.

**A. Key Psalms:** 1–2, 8, 19, 22–24, 42–43, 51, 89, 95–99, 119, 136, 145

**B. Questions:**

1. What role did the Psalter serve in the worship of the second temple and synagogues and how many “books” make up the Psalter?
2. Along with Psalm 1:2, we find the challenge to “meditate on the law day and night” only at one other place in the Bible. Using the cross-references, identify this place and answer why the placement of these two injunctions is significant within the three-part structure of the Hebrew Bible.
3. Viewed by many interpreters as one psalm, Psalms 1–2 stand as the introduction to the whole Psalter, which itself operates as the introduction to the Writings, focused on “life in the covenant.” In Deuteronomy 4:1, 5–8 we are told that Israel’s life in the covenant will be sustained and their witness to the world will be realized as they carry out the Law of God, which is the focus of Psalm 1. In this light, what is significant about the response of the nations in Psalm 2, and what does it tell us about the effectiveness of Israel’s witness?
4. In one sentence, summarize the message of Psalm 19 in your own words.
5. Which of the “key psalms” did Jesus quote during his execution (see Matt 27:46 // Mark 15:34)?
6. Which of the “key psalms” appears to be a meditation on Genesis 1, focusing on the glory of God in his world and the purpose of humanity in general and the Christ in particular to reflect God’s supremacy in all things?
7. Which of the “key psalms” celebrates God’s covenant with David?
8. Which of the “key psalms” is clearly a psalm of “thanksgiving” to Yahweh, whose “steadfast love endures forever”?
9. Which two of the “key psalms” (likely one psalm originally) do we find the psalmist preaching to himself with the following words? “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.” This same refrain shows up in the last verse of each psalm.
10. Perhaps the most beloved of all the psalms, Psalm 23 ends with the psalmist’s testimony that he plans to dwell in the house of Yahweh forever (Ps 23:6). Keeping in mind that the placement of the specific psalms in the Psalter appears to be quite intentional, which of the “key psalms” clarifies the type of person who can do such a thing? That is, what psalm answers, “Who shall ascend the hill of Yahweh” and enjoy the presence of the returning “King of glory”? Once you know the psalm, detail the psalmist’s answer to his own question.
11. “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.” In what psalms are these words found?

12. “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.” In what psalm are these words found? In what context does the psalm title suggest these words arose?
13. “The rules of Yahweh are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings from the honeycomb.” In what psalms are these words found?
14. “Oh sing to Yahweh a new song; sing to Yahweh, all the earth! Sing to Yahweh, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the people! For great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared about all gods.” In what psalm are these words found?
15. Which of the “key psalms” presents itself as meditation on the name of God and so recalls numerous characteristics of Yahweh revealed to mankind through his deeds?