

Week 6. Book 5 (Psalms 107–150): David's return

Any inspirations or questions before we come to the final book of the Psalms?

What's in Book 5?

The final book covers Psalms 107–150. That's 44 Psalms! Book 5 is the largest. It draws the whole story of Psalms to an overwhelmingly positive conclusion:

- praise (15) Psalms 108; 111; 113-115; 117; 135-136; 138; 145-150
- hymn (15) Psalms 120-134 (Songs of Ascents)
- lament (7) Psalms 109; 137; 139-143
- thanksgiving (3) Psalms 107; 116; 118
- wisdom (2) Psalms 112; 119
- royal (2) Psalms 110; 144

Most psalms in Book 5 are not attributed to anyone, but **fifteen** are titled, "Of David." Given that no son of David was ruling after the exile, that's astounding. The reappearance of David infuses everything in Book 5 with hope.

Even the songwriting reflects the hope of God reconstituting the kingdom. Psalm 108 creates a new song out of two earlier psalms:

Psalm 57:7-11	Psalm 108
⁷ My heart, O God, is steadfast ...	¹ My heart, O God, is steadfast ...
¹¹ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.	⁵ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.
Psalm 60:5-12	
⁵ Save us and help us with your right hand ...	⁶ Save us and help us with your right hand ...
¹² With God we will gain the victory, and he will trample down our enemies.	¹³ With God we will gain the victory, and he will trample down our enemies.

Psalms 57 and 60 were laments from Book 2, where David struggled with enemies. The enemies took over in Book 3. Now the Davidic laments return as a song of praise.

David's voice is back. He's declaring what the LORD has decreed about the kingship:

Psalm 110:title-2 (NIV)

Of David. A psalm.

¹ The LORD says to my lord: "Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

² The LORD will extend your mighty sceptre from Zion, saying,
"Rule in the midst of your enemies!"

The coming king is David's *lord* (master/ruler). The LORD will give him the kingship *in the midst of his enemies*. He will be a priest/king, mediating God's covenant care to his people (110:4).

But they're not living in the restored kingdom yet. They're still under foreign rule, and it's hard to sing Zion songs in exile:

Psalms 137:1, 4, 8-9 (NIV)

¹ By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. ...

⁴ How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land? ...

⁸ Daughter Babylon, doomed to destruction, ... ⁹ Happy is the one who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks.

The violence of these imprecatory psalms is still difficult for us to hear. Just remember they're voicing their anguish to God rather than taking vengeance into their own hands.

Psalms 117, is the shortest, with just 2 verses. The longest is **Psalms 119**: it has 8 verses starting with each of the 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet (8 x 22 = 176 verses). And every verse celebrates the wisdom of *the Torah of YHWH*.

There are several collections within Book 5:

- *Hallel* Psalms (113–118) were used at festivals like Passover and Tabernacles.
- *Songs of Ascents* (120–134) were used as processions to or at the festivals.
- *Hallelujah* Psalms (146–150) begin and end with the word "Hallelujah."

Hallel means "let us praise." *Hallelujah* means "praise Yah[weh]." *Hallelujah* attributes honour to the heavenly sovereign who restores his reign to his people. That calls for celebration. The final psalm calls for the greatest celebration imaginable, effectively, "Bring out every musical instrument we have, and give it all you've got!" (**Psalms 150**).

Your thoughts?

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These psalms from Book 5 are quoted in the New Testament:

- Psalms 109:8 Acts 1:20
- Psalms 110 Matthew 22:44 || Mark 12:36 || Luke 20:43; Acts 2:35; Hebrews 1:13; 5:6; 7:17, 21.
- Psalms 112:9 2 Corinthians 9:9
- Psalms 116:10 2 Corinthians 4:13
- Psalms 117:1 Romans 15:11
- Psalms 118 Hebrews 13:6; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:7; Matthew 21:42 || Mark 12:11; Matthew 21:9 || Mark 11:9 || John 12:13; Matthew 23:39 || Luke 19:38; Luke 13:35
- Psalms 135:14 Hebrews 10:30
- Psalms 140:3 Romans 3:13

We've chosen Psalms 118 and 145 for tonight. **Psalms 118** was really well known, sung each Passover. **Psalms 145** is the final psalm "of David."

Psalm 118: Trusting God's gracious love

Psalm 118 is a “thanksgiving” psalm. Their gratitude calls us to join in:

Psalm 118:1-4 (NIV)

¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; *his love endures forever.*

² Let Israel say: “*His love endures forever.*”

³ Let the house of Aaron say: “*His love endures forever.*”

⁴ Let those who fear the LORD say: “*His love endures forever.*” ...

There are only eight thanksgiving psalms (Psalms, 30, 32, 34, 40, 75, 107, 116, 118).

This one focuses on God's *ḥē·sēd*, his unfailing love, his covenant loyalty.

As usual, we'll listen to what it meant for God's people in Old Testament times first.

For Israel

Everyone knew Psalm 118. Every year at Passover and Tabernacles, they sang this song as they *joined in the festal procession* towards God's house (verse 27).

It begins with a priest calling God's people to celebrate another year of his faithful love for his covenant people (verses 1-4). For each call, the crowd responds:

“His love endures forever” (compare Psalm 136).

Then a new voice speaks:

Psalm 118:5-7 (NIV)

⁵ When hard pressed, I cried to the LORD;
he brought me into a spacious place.

⁶ The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid.
What can mere mortals do to me?

⁷ The LORD is with me; he is my helper.
I look in triumph on my enemies.

This is a leader of God's people, someone who speaks for the community as he leads the procession to God's house. It sounds just like the voice of the king in previous psalms. Compare verse 6 to David's voice in Psalm 56:4:

“In God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?”

During the time of the kingdom, godly kings like Hezekiah and Josiah led their people to worship the heavenly king (2 Chronicles 30, 35). This is what a good king does.¹⁶ But who led the procession after the exile?

As the people returned from exile and rebuilt the temple, Zerubbabel was governor. He was a son of David, and God called him to support the temple while they waited for God to restore the kingship (Zechariah 4:6-10; 6:9-15; 9:9-11). They did keep track of the sons of David who could not reign while they were captive to other nations (Matthew 1:12-16).

In the post-exilic setting, then, we may be hearing the voice of Zerubbabel or his descendants leading God's people in procession towards the house of God's throne. As we saw in Book 4, the focus is, “The LORD reigns,” even though David does not.

¹⁶ Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 2002), 164-167.

In that setting, these words come alive:

Psalm 118:8-9 (NIV)

⁸ It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in humans.

⁹ It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.

So, the son of David who is not king combines his lament and his faith like this:

Psalm 118:10-14 (NIV)

¹⁰ All the nations surrounded me,
but in the name of the LORD I cut them down.

¹¹ They surrounded me on every side,
but in the name of the LORD I cut them down.

¹² They swarmed around me like bees,
but they were consumed as quickly as burning thorns;
in the name of the LORD I cut them down.

¹³ I was pushed back and about to fall,
but the LORD helped me.

¹⁴ The LORD is my strength and my defence;
he has become my salvation.

Wow! The kingship has died: *surrounded on every side* (verse 11) by the nations who *swarm like bees* (verse 12), so the king is *about to fall* (verse 13). Yet even after the nation has fallen, the not-king proclaims the victory the LORD will give to the son of David, his trust that God will yet save his nation—a new exodus (like Exodus 15:2).

By faith, he anticipates the kingship will rise again:

Psalm 118:15-18 (NIV)

¹⁵ Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous:

“The LORD’s right hand has done mighty things!

¹⁶ The LORD’s right hand is lifted high;
the LORD’s right hand has done mighty things!”

¹⁷ I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done.

¹⁸ The LORD has chastened me severely,
but he has not given me over to death.

The kingship has died, but God will raise it up. Verse 18 recalls God’s promise that he would chasten the disobedient kings but not reject them (2 Samuel 7:14-15). The kingship will rise again, to lead the procession to God’s house just as David did (Psalm 24):

Psalm 118:19-21 (NIV)

¹⁹ Open for me the gates of the righteous;
I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.

²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter.

²¹ I will give you thanks, for you answered me;
you have become my salvation.

What are you hearing? How is their faith and hope impacting you?

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In verse 22, the speaker changes from “I” to “us.” The gates have been opened so the people can enter the temple space that is under God’s reign. They respond with faith that God will restore his king (verses 22-24), joyfully calling on the name of the LORD to rescue them (verse 25):

Psalm 118:22-25 (NIV)

- ²² The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;
²³ the LORD has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes.
²⁴ The LORD has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.
²⁵ LORD, save us! LORD, grant us success!

The *builders* think they can throw down the *rock* that God put in place to protect his people. Those who build their own kingdoms (Genesis 10:11) and cities (Genesis 11:4-8) believe they can topple the reign of the LORD and his anointed (Psalm 2:2).

But from the rubble of a fallen Jerusalem, the LORD lifts the *stone* he has appointed, setting him in place as *head* of his global restoration project. The word translated *cornerstone* is literally “head,” like the capstone that holds an arch in place, or the foundation stone that sets the alignment of the whole building.

Their trust—that God would restore them as his people in the reign of the David to come—turns this festival day into a great celebration (verse 24).

“*LORD, save us!*” they sing in joyful anticipation: “*YHWH Hosanna*” in Hebrew/Aramaic. When they see the son of David arriving to reign in Jerusalem, God will have saved his people. This is how the LORD’S reign returns to them: in his anointed, *the one who comes in the name of the LORD*:

Psalm 118:26-27 (NIV)

- ²⁶ Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the LORD.
From the house of the LORD
we bless you.
²⁷ The LORD is God,
and he has made his light
shine on us.
With boughs in hand,
join in the festal procession
up to the horns of the altar.



This festival anticipates the day when the king once again leads his people to God’s house, to recognize their heavenly sovereign as David and Solomon did.

That leads us back to where the psalm began, as a song of gratitude for the LORD’s authority and his faithful covenant love that endures forever:

Psalm 118:28-29 (NIV)

- ²⁸ You are my God, and I will praise you;
you are my God, and I will exalt you.
²⁹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

For us

So when was the hope of Psalm 118 fulfilled? When did the son of David return to reign in Jerusalem? Centuries after the processions of Psalm 118 were established, there was this Passover festival:

Mark 11:7-11 (NIV) || Matthew 21:1-10; Luke 19:28-40; John 12:12-16

⁷ When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.

⁹ Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,
“Hosanna!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

¹⁰ “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!”
“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts.

What connections do you see between this event and Psalm 118?

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What about *the stone the builders rejected*? (Psalm 118:22) Wasn't it likely to be a problem for Jesus to be proclaimed as “king of the Jews” in a city ruled by Rome?

The problem for Jesus was not just the nations that had thrown down the rock God had set in place. The temple leaders betrayed their king to the nations to be killed (Matthew 26:2-4). So it was the temple leaders Jesus confronted:

Matthew 21:42-44 (NIV) || Mark 12:10-12; Luke 20:17-18

⁴² Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

“ ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes’? [Psalm 118:22]

⁴³ “Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.

⁴⁴ Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.”

Inevitably, the city that rejected its God-appointed king would fall:

Matthew 23:37-39 (NIV) || Luke 23:37-39 and 13:35-35

³⁷ “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.

³⁸ “Look, your house is left to you desolate.

³⁹ “For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say,
“‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’” [Psalm 118:26]

This is astounding! While they were preparing to kill him, Jesus opened the door for them to recognize his kingship, the one who came to them *in the name of the LORD*.

Jesus' servants therefore called the leaders of Jerusalem to recognize their king:

Acts 4:11-12 (NIV)

- ¹¹ “Jesus is ‘the stone you builders rejected,
which has become the cornerstone.’ [Psalm 118:22]
¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name
under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

Faith in Jesus means proclaiming him as the leader (king) appointed by God to restore his people:

Hebrews 13:6 (NIV)

So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.
What can mere mortals do to me?” [Psalm 118:6-7]

That's how the New Testament understands and applies Psalm 118. Your thoughts?

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Psalm 145: God's reign restored in David

We're concluding our survey of the Psalms with something very special: the last psalm “of David.” It's a **praise** psalm. God's anointed points his people to their real sovereign, the one who always reigns:

Psalm 145:title-2 (NIV)

A psalm of praise. Of David.

- ¹ I will exalt you, **my God the King**;
I will praise your name for ever and ever.
² Every day I will praise you
and extol your name for ever and ever.

Psalm 145 is an acrostic poem, each verse beginning with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It gives the sense that we're going somewhere.

The preceding psalms (138–144) are all “*of David*.” Now the king shifts his people's gaze to their heavenly sovereign. Every remaining psalm (146–150) then opens and closes with the people shouting, “Let us praise the LORD!” In Hebrew, that's, “*Hallelujah!*”

So, what do you hear in these verses?

Psalm 145:3-7 (NIV)

- ³ Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;
his greatness no one can fathom.



- ⁴ One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.
- ⁵ They speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty—
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.
- ⁶ They tell of the power of your awesome works—
and I will proclaim your great deeds.
- ⁷ They celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.

What is it about the LORD that elicits praise from his people? What do you see?

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From talking about what God does, the psalm moves the spotlight to God's character:

Psalm 145:8-13 (NIV)

- ⁸ The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.
- ⁹ The LORD is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.
- ¹⁰ All your works praise you, LORD;
your faithful people extol you.
- ¹¹ They tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,
- ¹² so that all people may know of your mighty acts
and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.
- ¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all generations.



Do you remember when the nation of Israel first discovered the qualities of God's character described in **verse 8**? (Hint: Exodus 34:6.) Again, "love" is *ḥē·sēd*, God's unfailing loyalty to his covenant people, even when they have been unfaithful. (Their unfaithfulness with a golden calf is the context of Exodus 34).

But God's sovereign love is not limited to the Sinai covenant people.

What is the extent of God's faithful love? (**verses 9-10**)

And what was the role of his kingdom in relation to the nations? (**verses 11-12**)

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Meditate on **verse 13**. What does God's kingdom cover? How much of time and space is included? What is the application of this for those of us who believe that God's kingdom authority has been restored to the earth in his Anointed (the Christ)?

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If you're using the NIV, verse 13 is twice as long as the other verses. The second half reads:

The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises
and faithful in all he does.

The King James Version doesn't have this. The English Standard Version includes it in square brackets, with an explanation: *These two lines are supplied by one Hebrew manuscript, Septuagint, Syriac (compare Dead Sea Scroll).*

Remember, all the ancient manuscripts were copied by hand, so there are differences between them. And something odd has happened at this point of the psalm. It's an acrostic, but the letter N (*nun* in Hebrew) is missing from the poem. Was it left out intentionally? Was it lost in copying? Was it added by a copyist who felt the need to supply something? We really don't know. It makes no practical difference. The statement that "the LORD is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does" is perfectly congruent with God's character, and consistent with his promise to restore the kingdom, whether it was originally part of the psalm or not.

Are you okay with the uncertainty if we can't be sure about some of these things?

Since God is *king* (verse 1) of the whole *kingdom* (verse 13), our heavenly sovereign takes responsibility for the needs of everyone and everything in his earthly realm:

Psalm 145:14-16 (NIV)

- ¹⁴ The LORD upholds all who fall
and lifts up all who are bowed down.
- ¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food at the proper time.
- ¹⁶ You open your hand
and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

This was the responsibility of kings in ancient times. If a famine came and Pharaoh had not prepared to feed his people, he would have been in trouble (Genesis 41). People looked to their kings to keep them safe, and to sort out injustice. Still today, people look to the government for our economic well-being and national defence.

The trouble is that people trust the government instead of trusting God. Then, when something goes wrong like a global pandemic, financial recession, or a war, people blame the government for failing to protect us. This trust in government is unwise. The Psalms warn:

- **118:9** It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.
- **146:3** Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save.

Our faith is in the LORD to provide for us and keep us safe. Instead of trusting human governments, we're participants with God in his governance:

- *The LORD upholds those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down* (v. 14), so we're the agents of God's government, partnering with God in caring for them.

- The LORD provides fresh food in season for all the creatures in creation (verse 15), so he calls us to partner with him in caring for them too—even the ones we think of as enemies (Matthew 5:43-48).
- The LORD opens his hand to *satisfy the desires of every living thing* (verse 16), so we're fulfilling our vocation when care for his creation (Psalm 8:4-9).

When people trust human governments, that's where they invest their energies.

When we trust our true sovereign, that's where we invest our lives:

In the ancient Near East, the role of the king was to provide a safe place of habitation for humanity. That safety included dwelling places, farm land, drinking water, abundant harvests, increase of animals, and fertility within the family (see Psalms 72 and 107).

In our twenty-first-century world, many people do not have the basic elements of safe habitation—whether as a result of poverty, societal violence, disease, or outright neglect. We must, in God's name, support those who are falling, lift up those who are bent down, give food in its time, open our hands, and hear and respond to cries for help.¹⁷

The goal of history is the world back under God's kingship, where everyone is cared for. Is that how you understand your life? How do you spend your life as a contribution to God's government, his kingdom arriving on earth as in heaven through his Anointed?

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If God designed us to image him, it's through his people that the world discovers who God is and what he's like. We aren't God, but we image God's character to creation:

Psalms 145:17-21 (NIV)

¹⁷ The LORD is righteous in all his ways
and faithful in all he does.

¹⁸ The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.

¹⁹ He fulfills the desires of those who fear him;
he hears their cry and saves them.

²⁰ The LORD watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.

²¹ My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD.

Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever.

The psalm concludes with all creation echoing the praise of its Creator. This is where history is headed. When all the wars against God's authority are over, the earth finds peace in its eternal sovereign.

¹⁷ Nancy deClaissé-Walford. *The Book of Psalms*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 994–995.

At this point, David bows out. The remaining Psalms (145–150) focus entirely on the LORD's reign, with unending praise for the eternal sovereign who sets everything right. "The LORD reigns" was the goal of the Psalms, as it is the goal of history. *Hallelujah!*

That's how it will be when God has set all things right. God's anointed will do what no human ruler in history has ever done: give authority back to God:

1 Corinthians 15:24-28 (NIV)

²⁴ Then the end [the goal/outcome] will come, when he [the Anointed] **hands over the kingdom** to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ... ²⁸ When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

So in the end, who has the throne? The one who renewed creation:

Revelation 21:3-5 (NIV)

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"

That's where the Psalms are leading us. Your thoughts?

Response

How do you feel as we draw this series to a close? What has been significant for you? The honest prayers of the laments? The hymns and psalms of gratitude and praise? The royal psalms that focus us on God's anointed? The psalms of wisdom and trust that lead us into life under his leadership? The sense of purpose that traverses the five books with the promise that God is reigning and taking us somewhere?

How do the Psalms enhance your relationship with God? For example, one commentator put it like this. How do the Psalms help you?

We learn much about God and his ways with us as we read these inspired songs. The purpose of the Psalms, however, is not to argue, persuade or convince. Their purpose is to confess a profound faith in and love toward God. The psalmists cry out to God from the context of

their intimate covenant relationship with God and they call on others who know God's love to do the same.¹⁸

Go to the Psalms when you are happy and everything seems right with you. Sing laments to God when your life seems to crumble. When God hears your prayer, don't forget to thank him for his kindness. When you are frightened, be encouraged by the psalms of confidence. Heed the psalms of wisdom. Above all, go to the psalms to be honest with God.¹⁹

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The Psalms have taken us on a journey much bigger than ourselves.

We began with the world ordered by the LORD's decrees (Psalm 1). Enemies try to take over God's world, they're no match for the LORD and his anointed (Psalm 2). Then we realized the enemies were in the family, David's own son (Psalm 3). Books 1 and 2 were filled with laments as David struggled against God's enemies, until David's reign fell in Book 3.

That's when God's people shifted their focus to God's reign. "The LORD reigns!" was the constant refrain in Book 4. Then the hope of the restoration of the LORD's reign through his Anointed makes a come-back in Book 5. The final give psalms reverberate with unmuted celebration as the whole creation comes on-song, with God's people living in praise of the one who reigns forever: *Hallelu-Jah!*

We've covered only twelve psalms.
That leaves 138 for you to pursue.

Keep praying the Psalms, in good times and bad.
Keep praising the King, trusting his leadership.
Keep celebrating our heavenly sovereign whose kingship is restored to the earth in his Anointed.

Together, we'll keep singing in "the reign."



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¹⁸ Tremper Longman III, *How to Read the Psalms* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 62.

¹⁹ Tremper Longman III, *How to Read the Psalms* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 149.