

## PSALM 118 AND THE ESCHATOLOGICAL SON OF DAVID

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**Abstract:** *While the prevalence of Psalm 118 in the New Testament has been well documented, the rationale for the frequent recourse to this text has not been adequately explained. Perhaps by default, interpreters often gravitate toward historical-critical or form-critical discussions of the psalm's historical or sociological origins, with little consensus. This article employs Matthew 21–26 as a focused test case and models the value of the canonical and wirkungsgeschichtliche approaches as two helpful means of inquiry. A canonical approach to the broader book of Psalms sets Psalm 118 in an eschatological context, and its placement in the smaller “Egyptian Hallel” cluster (Psalms 113–118) sets it in royal, exodus, and new exodus contexts. A wirkungsgeschichtliche study of the psalm reveals its eschatological and Davidic associations in later Jewish writings, along with its popular use at all of the major Jewish festivals. These considerations will all set the stage for a fresh reading of the relevant passages in Matthew 21–26, and will ultimately help explain why the New Testament authors recognized Jesus as the “coming one,” “the rejected stone,” and “the royal deliverer,” set forth in this popular psalm.*

**Key words:** *Psalm 118, Matthew 21–26, canonical, wirkungsgeschichtliche, Wirkungsgeschichte, eschatological, festivals, one who comes, coming one.*

Psalm 118 is a prominent passage in both Jewish and Christian exegesis. For Jews, it is the climax of Psalms 113–118, a cluster often referred to as the Egyptian Hallel because of its exodus themes, and because these psalms were sung at various Jewish festivals.<sup>1</sup> From a Christian perspective, Psalm 118 ultimately finds its climax in the eschatological son of David, Jesus Christ. In fact, this is the most referenced psalm in the NT writings, with allusions or quotations of up to eighteen of its verses in twenty to sixty NT texts.<sup>2</sup> In the Gospel of Matthew alone, Psalm 118 is shouted (*κράζω*) by the people at the entrance narrative, cried out (*κράζω*) by the children at the temple cleansing,<sup>3</sup> quoted by Jesus as a condemnation of the chief

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<sup>1</sup> Although the nomenclature seems to be in dispute, the scholarly literature most often refers to the Psalms 113–118 cluster as the “Egyptian Hallel” in order to draw attention to its connection to the exodus from Egypt, and to distinguish it from the so-called “Great Hallel”—Psalm 136. Jewish sources, however, most often refer to this cluster as the Hallel, without the reference to Egypt.

<sup>2</sup> Differing opinions on what constitutes an allusion or an echo account for the large disparity between twenty and sixty references. See Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101–150* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 245; Andrew C. Brunson, *Psalm 118 in the Gospel of John: An Intertextual Study on the New Exodus Pattern in the Theology of John* (WUNT 2/158; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 4. In that place Brunson cites Ps 118:5, 6, 10–12, 15–26, 28c as passages likely alluded to or directly quoted in the NT.

<sup>3</sup> Matt 21:9, 15; citing Ps 118:25–26.

priests and elders,<sup>4</sup> invoked by Jesus at the end of the lament over Jerusalem,<sup>5</sup> and implied by the evangelist as the last song on the lips of Jesus before he went to the cross.<sup>6</sup> No wonder Luther, who lectured on the Psalms numerous times throughout his career, said of Psalm 118, “This is my own beloved psalm. Although the entire Psalter and all of Holy Scripture are dear to me as my only comfort and source of life, I fell in love with this psalm especially. Therefore I call it my own.”<sup>7</sup>

Many have set out to explain the prevalence of Psalm 118 in the NT. Since the rise of higher-critical methodologies, historical criticism and form criticism have, with their own distinct emphases, focused on the question of origins in the Psalter, with only tentative results with regard to Psalm 118. Prior to Gunkel, historical critics set about the task of “determining” the historical setting of a psalm by attempting to reconstruct its historical occasion, often with a focus on the Maccabean period. As Childs humorously deduced, “this move was basically unsuccessful. As if one could write the history of England on the basis of the Methodist hymn book!”<sup>8</sup>

The form-critical method offered a refreshing twist, as Gunkel asserted that the main task of Psalms study should be to categorize the individual psalms according to genre, and to identify the *Sitz im Leben* from the cultic life of Israel that gave rise to each psalm.<sup>9</sup> As with most interpretive tools, form criticism exhibited strengths and weaknesses as it was applied to the Psalter. A clear strength was the reminder that much of Hebrew psalmody did originate and was subsequently used in a cult setting—i.e. it was connected to actual ritual in the community. Psalm 118 is a case in point, as it begins with a fourfold invitation to praise YHWH, each with the accompanying responsive refrain, “his  $\text{הָשֵׁד}$  (*hesed*) endures forever.”

A weakness of the form-critical approach to the Psalter, however, is with the guesswork involved in the *Sitz im Leben* side of the discipline. In fact, whether scholars are exploring the sociological setting of form criticism or the particular historical setting of historical criticism, the question of origins proves to be slippery indeed. In the case of Psalm 118, we find a number of competing reconstructed original settings: Mowinckel connects its origin to his hypothetically reconstructed New Year’s Festival; Wellhausen and Haupt thought it was sung during the restoration of the temple under the Maccabees; Delitzsch posited that Ezra prayed this psalm as he rededicated the temple; Robinson identified it with a circumcision cel-

<sup>4</sup> Matt 21:42; citing Ps 118:22–23.

<sup>5</sup> Matt 23:39; citing Ps 118:25.

<sup>6</sup> Matt 26:30; referring to the whole psalm.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works* (ed. Jaroslav Pelikan et al.; 69 vols.; St. Louis: Concordia, 1955), 14:45.

<sup>8</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 509.

<sup>9</sup> See Jerome F. D. Creach, “The Psalms and the Cult,” in *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches* (ed. David G. Firth and Philip Johnston; Leicester, UK: Apollos, 2005), 120–21. See also John Barton, “Form Criticism: Old Testament,” *AYBD* 2:838; David J. A. Clines, “Psalm Research Since 1955: I. The Psalms and the Cult,” *TynBul* 18 (1967): 105. For a comprehensive introduction to form criticism of the Psalter, see Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (trans. James D. Nogalski; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998).

ibration; Duhm suggested that it was recited on Nikanor Day; Bittenwieser believed that it was inspired by the appearance of Alexander the Great; Schmidt and Oesterley believed it to be the product of an individual poet who found himself imprisoned and soon to be liberated; Kraus put it into the category of temple-gate liturgies; and May suggested that it was a song of an early Israelite sanctuary near Beersheba.<sup>10</sup> But this is not all; in his monograph on *Psalm 118 in the Gospel of John*, Brunson reports twenty-six distinct theories about the cultic origin of the passage.<sup>11</sup> As Creach charges Mowinckel with letting his proposed festival act as a magnet that attracts virtually every psalm into its orbit, so perhaps we could ask whether many practitioners of the form-critical and historical-critical methods have interpreted with their own proposed reconstructions in mind, at least when it comes to the origins of Psalm 118.<sup>12</sup>

In response to the slippery nature of the question of origins, many interpreters do not want to discount any gains made by historical-critical and form-critical studies of the Psalter, but also want to explore other interpretive methods that promise to offer less hypothetical conclusions, as well as more insight into why the NT authors read a given psalm in a particular way. In the present study, I will explore the prevalence of Psalm 118 in the NT using the canonical approach first. Next, I will explore the text's *Wirkungsgeschichte* or "history of effects in the various Jewish communities in which it was received."<sup>13</sup> In the case of the canonical approach, Psalm 118 will be interpreted in its place in the final form of the Hebrew Psalter.<sup>14</sup> Then, in a survey of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Psalm 118, a simple exploration of its appearances in various Jewish texts and festivals leading up to the NT period will also prove helpful. In fact, both of these methodologies will place Psalm 118 in an eschatological milieu in the minds of biblical readers prior to and during the NT period, and will therefore go a long way in explaining the prevalence of the psalm throughout the NT writings. Although individual canonical and *wirkungsgeschichtliche* studies have been done on Psalm 118, my main contribution will be to combine the two approaches as a primary underlay to help make sense of the way the NT authors interpreted the psalm. In addition, as I interact with the field of study in general I will often offer my own nuance of a given argument.

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<sup>10</sup> See Harry S. May, "Psalm 118: The Song of the Citadel," in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough* (ed. Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough and Jacob Neusner; SHR 14; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), 102–6; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60–150: A Commentary* (trans. Hilton C. Oswald; CC; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 395; Jakob J. Petuchowski, "'Hoshi'ah na' in Psalm CXVIII 25, A Prayer for Rain," *VT* 5 (1955): 267.

<sup>11</sup> See Brunson, *Psalm 118 in the Gospel of John*, 23–26.

<sup>12</sup> See Creach, "Psalms and the Cult," 132.

<sup>13</sup> See Werner G. Jeanrond, "History of Biblical Hermeneutics," *AYBD* 3:440; Mark Knight, "*Wirkungsgeschichte*, Reception History, Reception Theory," *JSNT* 33 (2010): 138.

<sup>14</sup> See James Luther Mays, "Psalm 118 in the Light of Canonical Analysis," in *Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs* (ed. Gene M. Tucker et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 309. See also Christopher Seitz, "Canonical Approach," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer et al.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 101.

## I. PSALM 118 AND THE HEBREW OLD TESTAMENT

In this section I will begin by providing an overview of Psalm 118 and then will move to look at the psalm, as well as the Egyptian Hallel as a whole, through the lens of canonical analysis.

1. *Exegetical overview of Psalm 118: A public thanks for YHWH's deliverance.* According to form-critical categories, Psalm 118 is an individual psalm of thanksgiving<sup>15</sup> voiced by a narrator who experienced battlefield deliverance by YHWH, and who then led a procession of worship back to the temple in Jerusalem.<sup>16</sup> This is a non-superscripted psalm,<sup>17</sup> and it narrates very general events. It would have been an easy move, then, to use it in liturgy or personal prayer for years to come.<sup>18</sup> The psalm is framed with a call to praise/thank YHWH, for his **יְהוָה** (*heseḏ*) endures forever (vv. 1, 29), a refrain that also appears in three other psalms and three other biblical books.<sup>19</sup> In verses 2–4, the psalmist calls on Israel, the house of Aaron, and those who fear YHWH to make this same confession of YHWH's eternal **יְהוָה** (*heseḏ*). The body of the psalm begins with a narrative of crisis and rescue (vv. 5–18) and is followed by a festal gathering of public thanks in the house of YHWH (vv. 19–28). Specifically, the crisis and rescue of verses 5–18 recount a scene of desperation on the battlefield where the psalmist was in anguish,<sup>20</sup> surrounded by the nations, pushed back and about to fall, but was delivered after crying out to YHWH. There is an emphasis in the psalm on the active psalmist (e.g. “in the name of YHWH I cut them off,” vv. 10, 11, 12), as the human means of deliverance (e.g.

<sup>15</sup> See Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas; New York: Abingdon, 1962), xxvi; Richard P. Belcher, *The Messiah and the Psalms: Preaching Christ From All the Psalms* (Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2006), 186; Gunkel adds that this Psalm contains hymnic elements in its beginning, and individual complaint elements as well. See Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms*, 23ff, 121. Barton notes the problem with strict form-critical analysis of Psalm 118: “vv 1–18 are a hymn of praise, but v 19 is a request (‘open to me the gates of righteousness’); v 25 a prayer for deliverance (‘Save us, we beseech thee, O Lord’); v 26 a blessing (‘We bless you from the house of the Lord’); and v 27b perhaps a rubric (‘Bind the festal procession with branches up to the horns of the altar’) in imperative form.” Barton, “Form Criticism: Old Testament,” 839.

<sup>16</sup> Zenger notes three primary readings of the psalm: (1) as an historical account of a victory, where the king leads the nation in thanksgiving; (2) the application of the “I” in the psalm collectively for Israel, and then reading the deliverance into various *Sitze im Leben* where Israel was rescued from enemy threats; (3) the rejection of historical points in favor of an emphasis on the psalm’s liturgical use at the Feast of Booths, the New Year festival, or the YHWH-is-King festival. See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 232–33. Whereas Zenger favors the second reading, I favor the first.

<sup>17</sup> Along with only 34 other psalms in the MT, Psalm 118 lacks a superscription, and is therefore anonymous. Also significant is the fact that the LXX, which adds numerous Davidic superscriptions to non-superscripted psalms, also leaves Psalm 118 (117 LXX) without a reference to its author. Also note that the LXX moves the *hallelujah* from the end of the previous psalm into the heading of this one.

<sup>18</sup> Hals notes that the general nature of the psalm makes it easy for a person to identify themselves with the “I” of the narrator. See Ronald M. Hals, “Psalm 118,” *Int* 37 (1983): 278.

<sup>19</sup> I.e. Ps 106:1; 107:1; 136:1; 1 Chr 16:34; 2 Chr 20:21; Jer 33:11. See Mays, “Psalm 118 in the Light of Canonical Analysis,” 303.

<sup>20</sup> May makes a case that the Hebrew **מַצֵּר**, though interpreted as “out of anguish” by the LXX and as “Angst” by Luther, “comes from the language of actual warfare, suggesting a siege, a fortification, a citadel.” May, “Psalm 118: The Song of the Citadel,” 99–100. This would suggest that the psalm was composed out of an actual battle-scene experience of the psalmist.

“blessed is the one who comes in the name of YHWH,” v. 26), but although means were used, the focal point of thanks is on YHWH who delivered the psalmist (cf. vv. 5, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18). Therefore, the psalm is filled with calls to trust in YHWH and/or confessions of trust in YHWH (cf. vv. 6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 17).

In verses 19–28, the psalmist narrates a victorious procession back through “the gates of righteousness” (v. 19a) where he will enter and give thanks to YHWH (v. 19b). The location of this thanks is later revealed to be the house of YHWH, that is, the temple in Jerusalem (cf. v. 26b). The tone of this latter section is one of public thanks for deliverance, where the psalmist leads (cf. first-person singular pronouns in vv. 19, 21, 28), and then calls on his co-worshippers to join him in song (cf. the first-person plural pronouns in vv. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27). A cluster of verses then reveals more about the deliverance from the perspective of public thanks in the temple courts: the enemies of the psalmist (“the builders”) rejected the psalmist<sup>21</sup> as the one who ultimately accomplished deliverance (“the head of the corner”)<sup>22</sup> for those suffering “the distress” (v. 5); it is YHWH who made this day of salvation, and all are called to rejoice and be glad in it (v. 24);<sup>23</sup> the one who comes in the name of YHWH is blessed from the house of YHWH (v. 26). In other words, the enemies of Israel disregarded the psalmist, but he was sent by YHWH as the means of effecting salvation for the people as a whole (cf. v. 26). It should be added that although it is a stretch to claim overt Davidic associations for this non-superscripted psalm, if it did originate out of a military victory, it is likely that the narrator was viewed as the Davidic king.<sup>24</sup> If this analysis is correct, then the psalm would have originated before the destruction of the monarchy but would have also been used in worship after its cessation.<sup>25</sup>

2. *Psalm 118 in canonical perspective.* Over 1600 years ago, Augustine wrote that “the arrangement of the Psalms, which seems to me to contain a secret of great mystery, has not yet been revealed to me.”<sup>26</sup> Perhaps this interpretive instinct issued from the way the church through the ages had read the Psalter consecutively

<sup>21</sup> The psalmist as the subject of the stone metaphor in this place is supported, for example, by Willem VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 857. I suggest that as the NT writings employ the psalm with reference to Jesus, they also support this reading, interpreting it in a typological (or a typico-prophetic) sense. See, e.g., Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:7.

<sup>22</sup> Cohen notes that although the term may refer either to a cornerstone or a capstone, in both instances the meaning is the same: the most important stone in the structure. See A. Cohen, ed., *The Psalms: Hebrew Text, English Translation and Commentary* (Hindhead, Surrey, UK: Soncino, 1945), 392.

<sup>23</sup> Berlin agrees with this translation as referring to the particular day that YHWH has granted salvation. See Adele Berlin, “Critical Notes: Psalm 118:24,” *JBL* 96 (1977): 568.

<sup>24</sup> See Belcher, *Messiah and the Psalms*, 188–89; Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 725; Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150* (WBC 21; Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 125; Mitchell J. Dahood, *Psalms III: 101–150* (AB 17A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 155. Gunkel agrees, classifying it as an individual poem with sentences (Ps 118:10–12) that are only understandable from the mouth of the king. See Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms*, 104. My canonical, *wirkungsgeschichtliche*, and NT studies will only confirm these royal associations.

<sup>25</sup> See Dahood, *Psalms III: 101–150*, 156; Belcher, *Messiah and the Psalms*, 189.

<sup>26</sup> As cited in Jamie A. Grant, *The King as Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy’s Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms* (SBL Academia Biblica 17; Atlanta: SBL, 2004), 1.

as a single meditation text, beginning at the time of Jesus, and on through church history well beyond Augustine.<sup>27</sup> In more recent times, the canonical approach has not only recovered the Psalter as a single text, but has done so in the vein of Augustine's recognition that the Psalms must have an intentional arrangement, even if it is difficult to determine.

The 1985 publication of Gerald Wilson's dissertation on *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* has especially served to reawaken scholarly interest in the Psalms as a book, and to spur on this new movement of Psalms study.<sup>28</sup> Wilson focused on the macrostructure of the Hebrew Psalter as a whole, and in his wake many have followed who employ his canonical approach in the study of more microscopic clusters within the Psalter, along with key themes that bind the book of Psalms together. According to this view, each psalm does have an original compositional setting, but its later use was to be adapted for a new setting. Then its final redaction into what is now the final form of the Hebrew Psalter bears editorial fingerprints, before its use in the NT offers a fourth interpretive horizon.<sup>29</sup> Since this methodology seeks to uncover what is already there in the canonical shape of the Psalter, the goal is to determine how the book would have been read by believing communities for whom it was (and is) Holy Scripture, including the NT authors. The focus here is at the end of the process of shaping, with a look at the final form of what we now refer to as the Masoretic Psalter.

For Wilson, Book I begins with an echo of the Davidic covenant<sup>30</sup> and is followed by "a very Davidic group of psalms in which the proclamation of YHWH's special covenant with his king in Psalm 2 is matched by David's assurance of God's continued preservation in the presence of YHWH."<sup>31</sup> Book III for Wilson adds a new, exilic perspective, as the Davidic covenant is viewed as being in the dim past and the covenant now broken, failed. The hope of the concluding Psalm 89 is that YHWH will remember his covenant and uphold the descendants of David. For Wilson, Book IV is the editorial heart of the Psalter, answering the problem of the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant, first with a psalm of Moses (Psalm 90), showing that the covenant stretches back before the monarchy, and second with the YHWH-reigns psalms, which for Wilson emphasize that YHWH reigns even if David does not. Finally, for Wilson, Book V of the Psalter answers the pleas of the exiles in Psalm 106 with a message of trusting in YHWH alone, which will result in Torah obedience. For Wilson, then, whereas Books I–III are primarily concerned with the Davidic King, Books IV–V have a much greater emphasis on wisdom and

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<sup>27</sup> See Norbert Lohfink and Linda M. Maloney, *In the Shadow of Your Wings: New Readings of Great Texts from the Bible* (Collegeville, MN: Order of Saint Benedict, 2003), 79.

<sup>28</sup> One thinks of the SBL Psalms Project, with the meetings and publications which have come from it. These projects and others like them began in the wake of Wilson's influence.

<sup>29</sup> See Bruce K. Waltke, "A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg* (ed. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg; Chicago: Moody, 1981), 9.

<sup>30</sup> Ps 2:7–9; cf. 2 Sam 7:14.

<sup>31</sup> Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 210. Much of what follows summarizes pp. 209–228 of this monograph.

a personal approach to YHWH, as even the Davidic Psalms in these latter books show him forth as an example for the individual to follow. Although Wilson recognized that royal psalms are found at the seams of the early books of the Psalter, and his later work left more room for an eschatological rereading of them, he viewed the wisdom psalms at the seams of the later books as evidence of a primarily sapiential agenda for those who gave the Psalter its final shape.<sup>32</sup>

Responses to Wilson have been many, and they have served to reaffirm, re-think, and refine many of his ideas. Significant for our purposes, Howard proposes that since the royal, Davidic Psalm 144 is followed by a psalm that emphasizes YHWH's kingship, interpreters must take this as a sign that the earthly expression of YHWH's reign was clearly meant to be the Davidic king. Therefore, both earthly and heavenly expressions of YHWH's kingdom stand together as messages of hope at the beginning and the end of the Hebrew Psalter.<sup>33</sup> In line with this, Snearly argues that the consistent trajectory of the entire Psalter's storyline is: "Yahweh is king; he has appointed an earthly vice-regent who represents his heavenly rule on earth; the earthly vice-regent and his people travail against the rebellious of the earth."<sup>34</sup> I would add that whereas Wilson thought of the Davidic covenant as having failed in Book III, and therefore fading into the background in Books IV and V, the structure of the book of Psalms speaks rather to a temporary cessation of the house of David in the vein of Deut 30:1–10, along with that same passage's hope of eschatological restoration.

By way of further rethinking of Wilson's proposals, his sapiential interpretation of Book V has been challenged with an eschatological counterproposal, even if proponents of this view also recognize a wisdom subtheme in this section of the Psalter. Although few have followed the specifics of his overall argument, the initial chapters of David C. Mitchell's monograph on *The Message of the Psalter* argue convincingly for this eschatological reading. In this place he points out that the Psalter was shaped within an eschatologically conscious milieu when the house of David was in decline, and therefore a time of growing eschatological hope. For Mitchell, certain psalms (e.g. Psalms 2, 72, 110) seem to be of an intrinsically "ultimate" character in that they describe people or events in such glowing terms that they far exceed the reality of any historical king or battle. Finally, the Second Temple period's inclusion of royal psalms in the Psalter suggest to Mitchell that the editor intended them to refer to a future messiah-king, and the fact that the messianic psalms were placed in prominent positions in the Psalter was a deliberate means of having them "infect" the interpretation of the whole.<sup>35</sup> He notes further that his

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<sup>32</sup> See Gerald H. Wilson, "The Structure of the Psalter," in *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches* (ed. David Firth and Philip S. Johnston; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 233–34; David M. Howard Jr., "The Psalms and Current Study," in *ibid.*, 25–27.

<sup>33</sup> See Howard, "Psalms and Current Study," 26–27.

<sup>34</sup> Michael K. Snearly, *The Return of the King: Messianic Expectation in Book V of the Psalter* (LHBOTS 624; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 1.

<sup>35</sup> In line with my own view, Mitchell views the period of the Psalter's final redaction as prior to the translation of the LXX Psalter. For the heart of this argument in favor of a general eschatological shape

hypothesis is in line with the eschatological interpretation of the Psalms found in Qumranic, NT, rabbinic, and patristic literature.<sup>36</sup>

To build on Mitchell's point about the royal psalms, whereas the post-monarchical redactors could have been tempted to cut out these psalms as irrelevant, instead they chose to locate them in prominent places in order to emphasize eschatological hope in a royal deliverer to come. If Psalm 118 could be called a royal psalm, with the king as its implied speaker, then a strong case could be made for its eschatological, messianic interpretation by those who placed it in its present position in the Psalter. In this regard, Grant has produced a monograph that discusses the law of the king from Deut 17:14–20 and its influence on the shape of the Psalter as a whole.<sup>37</sup> Focusing in on Psalms 1–2, 18–21, and 118–119, he views the placement of kingship psalms alongside of Torah psalms as deliberate by the editors of the Hebrew Psalter: contrary to the very imperfect presentation of the king in the Deuteronomistic history, the psalmists paint a picture of an ideal, Deuteronomistic king to come.<sup>38</sup> And so according to Grant, the shape of the Psalter in its final form was meant to encourage “eschatological hope in a monarch who will be the true ‘keeper’ of the Torah of Yahweh.”<sup>39</sup>

To sum up our findings and continue to build toward an explanation of the prevalence of Psalm 118 in the NT, we note that this psalm is found in Book V of the Psalter. Contrary to Wilson and in line with Howard, Snearly, Mitchell, and others, the appearances of David and other unnamed royal figures in this book most logically point to an eschatological king to come, as the covenant God who promised a royal deliverer would indeed be faithful. In this canonical context, along with the post-monarchical historical context in which the book of Psalms received its final shape, it is easy to see how key phrases from Psalm 118—such as “the coming one” (v. 26) and “the rejected stone” (vv. 22–24)—along with its images—especially a royal figure of salvation who led the jubilant victors into YHWH's presence with thankful song—could have all been cast forward as typologically-prophetic oracles about the coming Davidic Messiah.<sup>40</sup>

3. *The Egyptian Hallel as a literary unit.* Canonical interpreters also recognize that although the final redactors of the Masoretic Psalter had an agenda, they did not start from scratch as they formed their edited volume. Rather, within the canonical Psalter, clusters of older groupings exist that were later incorporated into the larger

to the Psalter, see David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms* (JSOTSup 252; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 82–88.

<sup>36</sup> See *ibid.*, 298.

<sup>37</sup> See Grant, *King as Exemplar*, 1–2.

<sup>38</sup> See *ibid.*, 2–3.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>40</sup> For a more thorough discussion of the identity of the speaker in Psalm 118, see my monograph on *The Multifaceted Saviour of Psalms 110 and 118: A Canonical Exegesis* (Hebrew Bible Monographs 86; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix, 2019).



whole.<sup>41</sup> While the Psalms of Ascent (Psalms 120–134) are one such grouping,<sup>42</sup> the Egyptian Hallel (Psalms 113–118) is another subcollection within the larger book of Psalms. This latter subcollection is especially significant for our purposes, as it is climaxed by Psalm 118. Mays summarizes the themes of this mini-collection:

The cycle begins with Psalm 113 and its praise of the LORD as the God who reverses the fixed arrangements of human affairs by lifting up the lowly, needy, and helpless. Psalm 114 tells the story of the exodus as the manifestation of the LORD's rule in the world. Psalm 115 contrasts the LORD as Israel's help to the nations and their gods. Psalm 116 thanks the LORD for deliverance from death, and Psalm 117 calls on all the nations to praise the LORD. Every one of the first five psalms in the cycle anticipates themes and motifs of Psalm 118.<sup>43</sup>

Zenger adds that the link between Psalms 118 and 116 is strongest, as both are prayers of thanksgiving for rescue by YHWH from mortal danger, and both culminate in a thanksgiving sacrifice in the temple with a great cultic congregation in participation.<sup>44</sup> Further, Zenger notes that in light of the theme of the nations praising YHWH in Psalm 117, the hostility of the nations in Psalm 118 is overcome if and when the nations celebrate YHWH as the God who has revealed his love and faithfulness to Israel and the nations.<sup>45</sup>

As with other portions of the Egyptian Hallel, Psalm 118 contains echoes of the exodus. Specifically, the Hebrew “YH,” which appears five times in Psalm 118 (vv. 5, 14, 17, 18, 19), is rare in the Hebrew OT, with only forty-nine occurrences, including the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:2).<sup>46</sup> Also of interest is the fact that these forty-nine occurrences appear in twenty-five biblical chapters that also contain exodus motifs.<sup>47</sup> A further inner-textual quotation is made with words such as “strength,” “song,” and “salvation” in Ps 118:14 (cf. Exod 15:2a).<sup>48</sup> Further, Ps 118:28 invokes Exod 15:2b, with phrases such as “my God,” “I give thanks to you,” and “I will exalt you.” Mays adds that the motif of the right hand of YHWH (Ps 118:15–16; cf. Exod 15:6, 12), יְמִינִי (*hesed*) as YHWH's motivation (Ps 118:1–4, 29; cf. Exod 15:13), and the theme of the nations being faced with confidence (Ps 118:10–12; cf. Exod 15:14–16), further link this psalm to the Song of the Sea.<sup>49</sup> And so the psalmist's rescue from danger echoed the language of Exodus 15, painting his own battlefield deliverance in exodus-like terms, perhaps even hinting that the entire Song of the Sea may have been in the author's mind when he wrote

<sup>41</sup> See Gerald H. Wilson, “Understanding the Purposeful Arrangement of Psalms in the Psalter: Pitfalls and Promise,” in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. Clinton McCann; JSOTSS 159; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 42; Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 515–16.

<sup>42</sup> See Wilson, *Editing*, 5.

<sup>43</sup> James Luther Mays, *Psalms* (Louisville: John Knox, 1994), 378.

<sup>44</sup> See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 244.

<sup>45</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> See J. W. Rogerson and J. W. McKay, *Psalms 101–150* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 85.

<sup>47</sup> See Brunson, *Psalm 118 in the Gospel of John*, 78.

<sup>48</sup> See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 234.

<sup>49</sup> See Mays, *Psalms*, 378; “Psalm 118 in the Light of Canonical Analysis,” 305.

Psalm 118.<sup>50</sup> As Belcher suggests more broadly, in the Egyptian Hallel the look back propels the exilic community to look forward: “The Exodus event is a paradigm for the deliverance from exile, which becomes the basis for the future deliverance of God’s people.”<sup>51</sup>

To this point we have recognized clear links between Psalms 118 and 119 (cf. Grant), as well as 113–118. In light of this, I suggest that Psalm 118 is a clear linking psalm that performs a double duty, both as a fitting climax to the Egyptian Hallel, and a fitting prelude to the Torah psalm that follows it. In fact, if this minicollection pre-dated the final form of the Psalter, it was likely kept intact as a *bona fide* collection, and partnered with Psalm 119 as a deliberate way of highlighting both the exodus and the kingship themes that Psalm 118 clearly contains. This still supports Grant’s helpful thesis, that Psalms 118 and 119 are linked in order to set the king forth as the ideal Torah-keeper from Deut 17:14–20.<sup>52</sup>

## II. PSALM 118 AND JEWISH *WIRKUNGSGESCHICHTE*

In addition to the canonical approach, a study of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Psalm 118 is an important means of explaining its prevalence in the NT.<sup>53</sup> In fact, there is no shortage of Jewish material in this regard that either comes from the pre-Christian era, or that records traditions that likely originated at that time.

1. *Psalm 118 in various Jewish writings.* Of initial note is that Psalm 118 is quoted extensively in rabbinic literature. Although the *Midrash Tehillim* was compiled as late as the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD, Rabbi Novak points out that its ideas reflected oral tradition from a much earlier period.<sup>54</sup> In fact, it contains sayings from Hillel and Shammai (1<sup>st</sup> century BC), along with R. Johanan ben Zakkai (fl. 1<sup>st</sup> century AD). In other words, many of its contents date to the NT period and the century prior.<sup>55</sup> Of further note, these writings were composed for a readership who knew Scripture by heart, so the quotation of the beginning of a single verse could signal its entirety or

<sup>50</sup> See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 239. From a look back to a look forward, Mays, Kwon, and Zenger have also proposed links between Psalm 118 and a second exodus in the book of Isaiah. See Mays, “Psalm 118 in the Light of Canonical Analysis,” 306–8; Hyukjung Kwon, *The Reception of Psalm 118 in the New Testament: Application of a “New Exodus Motif”?* (Ph.D. diss., University of Pretoria, South Africa, 2007), 56; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 235–36.

<sup>51</sup> Belcher, *Messiah and the Psalms*, 191.

<sup>52</sup> I should mention that Grant argues that the link between Psalms 118 and 119 is strongest, and that the existence of the Egyptian Hallel cluster is more drawn from historical praxis than canonical exegesis. See Grant, *King as Exemplar*, 123–24.

<sup>53</sup> I am indebted to Rabbi David Novak for taking time with me to discuss Psalm 118 in Jewish tradition at his University of Toronto office in the summer of 2013. Many of the ideas in this section were borne from that insightful conversation.

<sup>54</sup> Personal communication. Longenecker agrees: “A major problem in the use of rabbinic materials for the elucidation of first-century practice is, of course, the lateness of the codifications. Yet we are dealing with a religious mentality that took great pride in the preservation of the traditional. And while changes due to development or differing circumstances cannot be denied, this desire to preserve the traditional—barring other considerations—minimizes the severity of the problem.” Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 11.

<sup>55</sup> See William G. Braude, “Introduction to the Midrash on Psalms,” in *The Midrash on Psalms* (ed. Leon Nemoj; trans. William G. Braude; 2 vols.; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959), 1:xi–xii.

even more.<sup>56</sup> The entry on Psalm 118 is interesting, because it connects the psalm to Sukkoth, the exodus, and the vision of the end of captivity for Israel in Isaiah 12.<sup>57</sup> In addition, Brunson summarizes the *Midrash Tehillim* on the Egyptian Hallel as a whole:

R. Judah said, “the Prophets among them ordained that Israel should recite it at every important epoch and at every misfortune—may it not come upon them!—and when they are redeemed they recite it [in gratitude] for their redemption.” . . . Moses composed the Hallel, and with Aaron and Israel recited Hallel the first Passover night. That night Pharaoh declared that Israel were no longer his servants but servants of God, an echo of Ps 113.1, and Israel responded with the Hallel.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, not only is Psalm 118 associated with Sukkoth, the exodus, and the end of captivity for Israel in these writings, but also the entire Egyptian Hallel is given special prominence and viewed by rabbinic writers as an extremely early cluster. Further, a rabbinic passage that gives strict rules about how many people may be involved in reading and translation at public meetings makes this clear: “For the Torah, one can read and only one translate, and for the Prophets only one reads and at the most two may translate. In contrast, as regards *Hallel* and the *Megillah*, even ten may read (and ten may translate). What is the reason? Since the people like it [lit. ‘it is beloved’], they pay attention and hear.”<sup>59</sup> As we have seen from our canonical analysis, it is possible that the (Egyptian) Hallel was compiled as part of an earlier literary unit prior to the final compilation of the Masoretic Psalter, which likely took place around 200 BC.<sup>60</sup> In other words, this unit was likely in regular use for centuries prior to the Christian era.

The Targum also offers an interesting twist on Psalm 118. Whereas the MT of verse 22 begins, “the stone that the builders rejected,” the Targum of verses 22–29 reads as follows:

22) A youth was rejected by the builders. He was among the sons of Jesse and was entitled to be appointed king and ruler. 23) “This was from Yahweh,” said the builders; “This is wonderful for us,” said the sons of Jesse. 24) “This day Yahweh made,” said the builders; “Let us rejoice and be glad in it,” said the sons of Jesse. 25) “We pray you, Yahweh, save now,” said the builders; “We pray you, give success now,” said Jesse and his wife. 26) “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Word of Yahweh,” said the builders; “They will bless you from the temple of Yahweh,” said David. 27) “God, Yahweh, illumine us,” said the tribes of the house of Judah; “Tie the lamb with chains for a festival sacrifice until you

<sup>56</sup> See *ibid.*, 1:xxxiv.

<sup>57</sup> See Nemoy, ed., *Midrash on Psalms*, 1:233, 244, 245.

<sup>58</sup> Brunson, *Psalm 118 in the Gospel of John*, 88–89.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>60</sup> The question of the date of the final compilation of the Masoretic Psalter is a complicated one. Wilson argues unconvincingly for a date after the life of Christ. See Gerald H. Wilson, “A First Century C.E. Date for the Closing of the Book of Psalms?,” *JBQ* 28.2 (2000): 102–10. Since the LXX Psalter shows so many signs of dependence on the MT, I suggest an early 2<sup>nd</sup>-century BC date for the compilation of the MT Psalter as we have it today.

have offered it and sprinkled its blood on the horns of the altar,” said Samuel the prophet. 28) “You are my God and I will give thanks before you, my God, I will praise you,” said David. 29) Samuel answered and said, “Praise (him), assembly of Israel, and give thanks before Yahweh for he is good, for his goodness is eternal.”<sup>61</sup>

However one dates the Targum, we can at least be certain that at some fairly early point Psalm 118 was overtly associated with David in Jewish thinking, beginning with a play on the “stone” (אֶבֶן) and “son” (בֶּן) in verse 22.

2. *Psalm 118 at Jewish festivals.* Also of great significance for the use of Psalm 118 in the NT writings is the fact that the entire Egyptian Hallel (Psalms 113–118) receives special prominence in the Jewish festivals in the centuries leading up to and during the NT period. According to the Babylonian Talmud, the Egyptian Hallel was recited in complete form on eighteen days during the year—“the first day of Passover, the festival of Weeks, the eight days of the festival of Tabernacles [i.e. Sukkoth] and also the eight days of Hanukkah. In the Diaspora the Hallel was recited twenty-one days—on the first two days of Passover, two days of the festival of Weeks, nine days of the festival of Tabernacles and the eight days of Hanukkah.”<sup>62</sup> Therefore, as the only portion of the Hebrew OT that was associated with all three main festivals, many Jews would have known the Egyptian Hallel by heart.<sup>63</sup> This means that any allusions to these psalms in later preaching and literature would have resonated with the people.

Especially significant for our study is the use of the Egyptian Hallel at Sukkoth, which was the highlight festival of the Jewish calendar.<sup>64</sup> With its processional character, the mention of tents in verse 15, the emphasis on light in verse 27, and the mention of a festival and allusion to a procession around the altar with branches in verse 27, the psalm was particularly suited to this festival.<sup>65</sup> In fact, the LXX translation of “Bind the Hag with cords to the altar” as “Order the festival procession with boughs even unto the horns of the altar” may indicate that this translation was made with its role in the festivals in mind.<sup>66</sup> It was sung on all seven days of the festival, and also on the additional eighth day, something the Mishnah considered an obligation.<sup>67</sup> Psalm 118 was the climax of the willow ceremony, which took place on every day of this festival, with a procession from Mosa to Jerusalem

<sup>61</sup> As cited in Brunson, *Psalm 118 in the Gospel of John*, 39. See also Craig A. Evans, “Praise and Prophecy in the Psalter and in the New Testament,” in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception* (ed. Peter W. Flint et al.; VTSup 99; FIOTL 4; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 559; John Goldingay, *Psalms*, vol. 3: *Psalms 90–150* (Baker Commentary on the OT Wisdom and Psalms; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 361.

<sup>62</sup> Solomon Zeitlin, “The Hallel: A Historical Study of the Canonization of the Hebrew Liturgy,” *JQR* 53 (1962): 22. See also James A. Sanders, “A New Testament Hermeneutic Fabric: Psalm 118 in the Entrance Narrative,” in *Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis: Studies in Memory of William Hugh Brownlee* (ed. Craig A. Evans and William F. Stinespring; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 179.

<sup>63</sup> See Brunson, *Psalm 118 in the Gospel of John*, 82–84.

<sup>64</sup> See *ibid.*, 49.

<sup>65</sup> See *ibid.*, 59.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> See *ibid.*, 57.

while singing the Hallel, and with Psalm 118 reserved for the circling of the altar.<sup>68</sup> The festival ended with the imperative cry, הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא (“save, please,” Ps 118:25) and “waving and beating the ground with branches of willow and palm (cf. *m. Sukkah* 4:3–6).”<sup>69</sup> Also significant for our purposes is the highly eschatologized nature of Sukkoth in the rabbinic writings, with the Jews who lived after the destruction of the temple connecting the festival to the exodus,<sup>70</sup> and the lulab portrayed as an eschatological symbol of victory at the judgment, and also a symbol of the coming of the Messiah.<sup>71</sup> In addition, Brunson notes that 1 Macc 13:51 associates the lulab with victory and deliverance, for when Simon Maccabeus entered Jerusalem the Jews celebrated with palm branches. Since this was a festival originally associated with kingship and authority during the monarchy, Brunson suggests further that the people’s longing for a king would have been intensified during Sukkoth.<sup>72</sup>

Although Psalm 118 was prominent at Sukkoth, it was also linked to the fourth cup of wine that was consumed during the Passover Supper,<sup>73</sup> where, according to *m. Pesah.* 10:6–7, families sang Psalms 113–114 before the meal and Psalms 115–118 after it.<sup>74</sup> According to the Hillelites, this was because Psalms 113–114 recalled YHWH’s saving acts in the past, and Psalms 115–118 looked forward to future redemption.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, Psalm 118 was associated with eschatology at this festival as well. We have already noted the inner-textual relation between Psalm 118 and the Song of the Sea, so the connection to the Passover was a logical one. Brunson notes that, “One of the main themes of the Hallel is thanksgiving for national and personal deliverance, and Psalm 118 depicts a royal figure who has emerged victorious in battle against the nations.”<sup>76</sup> For Jews who were waiting for the restoration of the monarchy and the fulfillment of the eschatological promises announced by the prophets, it is easy to see why this psalm rose to prominence.

Finally, the Egyptian Hallel was employed at the Feast of Weeks (i.e. Pentecost, where the harvest was celebrated),<sup>77</sup> and according to *b. Šabb.* 21b it was also associated with Hanukkah, “the Jewish holiday which celebrates the reconsecration of the Jerusalem temple and its altar to the traditional service of the Lord in 165 or 164 BC. It begins on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the month Kislev (the 9<sup>th</sup> month in the lunisolar calendar; it coincides with parts of November and December) and lasts for 8 days.”<sup>78</sup> Interestingly, 2 Macc 1:9, 18 and 10:6 link Hanukkah to the Festival of

<sup>68</sup> See *ibid.*, 58.

<sup>69</sup> Marvin H. Pope, “Hosanna,” *AYBD* 3:291.

<sup>70</sup> See *m. Sukkah* 4:1, 8 as noted in Craig L. Blomberg, “Matthew,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 66.

<sup>71</sup> See Brunson, *Psalm 118 in the Gospel of John*, 59–60.

<sup>72</sup> See *ibid.*, 53–54.

<sup>73</sup> See Evans, “Praise and Prophecy in the Psalter and in the NT,” 557.

<sup>74</sup> See Steven R. Swanson, “Hallel,” *AYBD* 3:30; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 996.

<sup>75</sup> See Brunson, *Psalm 118 in the Gospel of John*, 75.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>77</sup> See James C. VanderKam, “Festival of Weeks,” *AYBD* 6:895.

<sup>78</sup> James C. VanderKam, “Feast of Dedication,” *AYBD* 2:123–124.

Sukkoth, suggesting that “their inability to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles at the correct time led them to observe some of its rites as the first Hanukkah.”<sup>79</sup>

3. *Concluding remarks regarding Psalm 118 and Jewish Wirkungsgeschichte.* We have seen clearly that in Jewish usage, Psalm 118 was associated with the exodus, the end of captivity, and David. We have also seen that along with the rest of the Egyptian Hallel, Psalm 118 was associated with every major festival of the Jewish calendar in the period leading up to and including the composition of the NT writings. Further, these psalms were not only known and likely memorized by most Jews of this period, but they were also loved and treasured. The fact that many of the festivals were associated with eschatological hope further informs our study: would a Davidic “coming one” appear who may begin as “a rejected stone/son,” but who would ultimately lead God’s people in singing this thankful song of victory? The evidence certainly suggests that this reading would have made sense to the popular Jewish mind in the first century AD.

### III. THE USE OF PSALM 118 IN MATTHEW 21–26

With the groundwork we have laid, the work of explaining the use of Psalm 118 in Matthew 21–26 can be done in an efficient manner. In the early 1950s, C. H. Dodd argued that certain blocks of the OT rose to prominence, and these were the passages that the NT authors drew into their writings as the need arose.<sup>80</sup> In his view, the quotation of a single verse was meant to evoke the whole passage from which it had been selected. I suggest further that our canonical and *wirkungsgeschichtliche* analysis has made clear that Psalm 118 should also be associated with the eschatological hope in a Davidic deliverer who would come, gain victory for God’s people, and then lead them in this song of victory. These are exactly the points that the Matthean Evangelist picks up in the final third of his Gospel. We will now explore each appearance in turn.

1. *The entrance and temple cleansing narratives: Ps 118:25–26 in Matt 21:9, 15.* Allison notes that in addition to its abundance of Moses typology, the Gospel of Matthew also contains Davidic resemblances of Jesus,<sup>81</sup> and the entrance narrative is one such example. Although all four Gospels include the entrance narrative, each exhibits its own distinctive features. For the sake of space, however, I will focus solely on Matthew’s account.

In the Gospel of Matthew, this was Jesus’s first recorded entry into Jerusalem since his public ministry began. From the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent his disciples into the village where they would find a donkey that should be brought to him. This is said to be a fulfillment of Zech 9:9, where the eschatological vision has the humble king riding into Zion on a donkey. The royal (Davidic) tone is set, then,

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>80</sup> See C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology* (London: Nisbet, 1952), 28–60, as cited in Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 74.

<sup>81</sup> See Dale C. Allison, “The Embodiment of God’s Will: Jesus in Matthew,” in *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage* (ed. Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Richard B. Hays; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 119–22.

from the beginning, even as the humility with which the evangelist (not the crowd) colors the event, tempers revolutionary (Maccabean, et al.) associations for the reader.<sup>82</sup> The disciples spread their cloaks on the donkey, and then the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Crowds that went before and that followed Jesus are also said to have been shouting words from Ps 118:26a, with the Hosanna from Ps 118:25a bracketing the saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (ESV). The addition of “Son of David” on the lips of the crowd makes sense in light of our canonical and *wirkungsgeschichtliche* analysis. Moreover, Morris notes that “to come ‘in the name’ of anyone was to come in some sense representing him and to come in order to set forward his purposes.”<sup>83</sup> In Matt 21:11, Jesus is also called “the prophet,” an obvious allusion to the prophet like Moses who could come, as promised in Deut 18:15, 18.<sup>84</sup>

Further, Dodd’s theory that the evangelist likely had the whole psalm in mind gains support as Jesus enacts the entrance into the temple from Psalm 118. However, a reversal theme is also present, as instead of leading in a song of victory he cleansed the temple, so to speak. In light of our *wirkungsgeschichtliche* analysis, we might suggest that the actions of Jesus could have been seen to mirror those of the first Hanukkah. This feast celebrated the Maccabean revolt, which started with its own temple cleansing of sorts. We have seen that Psalm 118 was sung during that festival. However, if with his temple-cleansing actions Jesus may have called to mind the first act of the Maccabean revolt, his later victory through suffering and death would dim the revolutionary associations of the Maccabean temple cleansing.<sup>85</sup> The victory of Jesus would come through self-sacrifice rather than revolution.

The temple cleaning was then followed by some healings of the blind and lame, a likely allusion to the hope promised in Isaiah.<sup>86</sup> In response to the temple-healings by Jesus, children (cf. Ps 8:3 MT),<sup>87</sup> who would have heard the cries at the entrance into Jerusalem and would have known the Hallel (which was taught to children),<sup>88</sup> cried out, “Hosanna to the Son of David” (Matt 21:15). This echo of Psalm 118:25a (הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא), which by the first century likely simply meant

<sup>82</sup> See Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 494.

<sup>83</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 523.

<sup>84</sup> See Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 248–249.

<sup>85</sup> In a clear case of the student blessing the professor, I am thankful to Jonathan Cleland for his insightful comments on the possible relationship between Psalm 118, Hanukkah, and Jesus’s temple cleansing in Matthew. These were made during a seminar discussion in an upper-level “Old Testament in the New Testament” course at Heritage Theological Seminary, Cambridge, ON, in February 2019.

<sup>86</sup> These references appear in both so-called First and Second Isaiah—e.g. Isa 29:18; 35:5; 42:7, 16, 18.

<sup>87</sup> I was pointed to this link with Psalm 8 in Michael D. Goulder, *Midrash and Lektion in Matthew* (London: SPCK, 1974), 413.

<sup>88</sup> See *i. Sotah* 6.2–3 as referenced in Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (WBC 33B; Dallas: Word, 1995), 602.

“praise,”<sup>89</sup> is again attached to “Son of David.” Again, our canonical discussion of the psalm has found that its speaker is most likely the Davidic king, and our appeal to the Targum of the Psalms has confirmed that at least one community of Jews thought the same. Also of note is that Jesus let the children in the temple and the crowds at the entrance narrative speak words of praise to him, something that inflamed the religious leaders, as praise should be reserved only for God.

Finally, both our canonical analysis and our analysis of the Jewish feasts have shown that Psalm 118 had an eschatological flavor in the minds of first-century Jews. So even as Jesus enacts the entrance into the temple (cf. Psalm 118), he shows himself as the ideal, Torah-faithful king of Deut 17:14–20 (cf. the pairing of Psalms 118 and 119 in the work of Grant), while he cleanses the temple from the sin of the unfaithful Jewish sellers, chief priests, and scribes. Whereas these ethnic Jews have become the enemies of YHWH who were portrayed in Psalm 118, the faithful Son of David heals disease (cf. Isaiah) and accepts praise. According to Matt 21:9, 15, Jesus is the coming one, the eschatological Davidic king who will accomplish victory for God’s people, even as he enacts Psalm 118 in part, and even as the workers in the temple, along with the chief priests and the scribes, are portrayed as the enemies of God’s people.

2. *The conclusion of the parable of the tenants: Ps 118:22–23 in Matt 21:42.* After the entrance narrative and the cleansing of the temple, the theme of the rejection of the Son by the Jewish leaders dominates through the cursing of the fig tree, the questioning of his authority, and the parables of the two sons and the tenants. The latter parable emphasizes that the ethnically Jewish leaders who are rejecting Jesus are the enemies of YHWH, and this is reinforced by a quotation of Ps 118:22–23 in Matt 21:42. Using the *pesher* “this is that” fulfillment motif,<sup>90</sup> Jesus speaks words about “the stone the builders rejected that has become the cornerstone, and that this is the Lord’s doing and it is marvelous in our eyes.” Once again, these Jewish leaders are “the builders” who are the enemies of YHWH in Psalm 118. Jesus is the stone (or the son of Jesse in the Targum)<sup>91</sup> who is rejected by the enemies of YHWH, but who will become the cornerstone in the whole structure of salvation. If the Zech 9:9 quote began the chapter with a humble king, and the Ps 118:25–26 reference spoke of a victorious son of David in the entrance narrative, the twin themes of humility and victory are combined in this reference to our psalm. Since the use of the psalm in Matthew presupposes the Christian belief in Jesus’s death and resurrection for its first readers, the intended meaning is all the more clear.<sup>92</sup>

3. *The lament over Jerusalem: Ps 118:26 in Matt 23:39.* Later in the Gospel, after his woes to the scribes and Pharisees, and as the climax to his lament over Jerusa-

<sup>89</sup> See W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; ICC; London: T&T Clark, 1997), 3:125; Blomberg, “Matthew,” 65.

<sup>90</sup> See Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 54.

<sup>91</sup> See John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 878.

<sup>92</sup> See M. J. J. Menken, “The Psalms in Matthew’s Gospel,” in *The Psalms in the New Testament* (ed. M. J. J. Menken and Steve Moyise; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 73.



lem, Jesus quotes Ps 118:26a himself this time: “For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’” (ESV). This quotation tempers the reversal motif with the reality that although the Jewish people reject Jesus now, there will be a day, an eschatological day, when they will call him blessed. The passage, then, does double eschatological duty in Matthew, referring to Jesus’s entrance into Jerusalem and also to his second coming, a doctrine that the first Christian readers of Matthew’s Gospel would have certainly read out of the quote. It is as though Matthew is saying something akin to Rom 11:25–27 and claiming that those who welcomed Jesus in the entrance narrative, and who would subsequently reject him, will one day utter the words of Ps 118:26 again in fullness of joy, sincerity, and understanding.<sup>93</sup> As Davies and Allison point out, in the same breath as his proclamation that the Temple is left desolate (Matt 23:38), Jesus quotes from Ps 118:26a, the second line of which reads, “We bless you from the house of YHWH.” If Dodd’s assertion is correct, and the reference to an initial phrase is meant to call to mind the whole verse (or the whole chapter), Jesus is saying that there is a day coming in the eschaton, when the house of YHWH will not be desolate. There is hope!<sup>94</sup>

4. *The last supper: Ps 118:1–29 in Matt 26:30.* Our last reference to Psalm 118 in Matthew’s Gospel is not a quotation, but a clear allusion. In light of our study of the Jewish festivals we know that the Egyptian Hallel was sung as a part of the Passover meal. Matthew’s phrase “and when they had sung a hymn, they went out” is a reference, then, to Psalm 118, the climax of the Egyptian Hallel. Although our point is brief, it should not escape us that according to Matthew, the last song on the lips of Jesus before he went to the cross was this eschatological song of victory. Even as the humble king and the rejected son faced the horror of the cross, he also looked ahead to resurrection victory.<sup>95</sup> If the Passover was a celebration of the exodus, and Psalm 118 shared imagery with the Song of the Sea, Allison notes that this “implies that [Jesus] too suffered exile, endured slavery, and celebrated freedom.”<sup>96</sup> Praise YHWH!

#### IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

How, then, can the extensive use of Psalm 118 in the NT be explained? Our exegesis of the psalm has shown that the speaker was likely set forth as the Davidic king who was giving thanks to YHWH for victory in battle, and doing so publicly, leading the people in procession through the gates of the city and into the temple to sing a responsive song of thanks. Our look at the psalm in canonical perspective has shown the extremely strong possibility that the final editors of the Psalter interpreted it eschatologically: just as its author was mindful of the exodus tradition,

<sup>93</sup> See Blomberg, “Matthew,” 85.

<sup>94</sup> See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 484; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 245.

<sup>95</sup> This perspective is shared by Alexander B. Grosart, “The Hallel and Jesus Singing,” *ExpTim* 1 (1890): 224–26.

<sup>96</sup> See Allison, *New Moses: A Matthean Typology*, 257.

so the shape of the Hebrew Psalter hints at editors who looked forward to a future deliverance, with the Davidic king playing an especially prominent role. Our study of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the psalm has shown that it was associated with both the exodus and the Davidic King. Even as its use at the festivals also brought it into an eschatological milieu, the frequent singing of the Egyptian Hallel with Psalm 118 as its climax meant that this passage of Scripture was on people's minds, hearts, and even lips on a regular basis. Moreover, since it was so beloved, people wanted to come into contact with it. So as the NT authors sought to speak meaningfully about the unique Messiah, Jesus Christ, they did not turn to obscure passages with which the people were unfamiliar but instead frequently appealed to this great psalm which many common, illiterate people knew by heart. No wonder so many NT writers appealed to Psalm 118: they were convinced that Jesus was the "coming one," "the rejected stone," and "the royal deliverer," and they recognized his (typologically-prophetic) reflection in this thankful psalm of victory.