

## **Waltke, Psalms, Session 4, Resources from Notebooklm**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

### **1. Abstract of Waltke, Psalms, Session 4, Psalm 4 Historical Approach, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

This lecture excerpt from Bruce Waltke's course on Psalms focuses on a historical approach to interpreting Psalm 4. Waltke argues for Davidic authorship, emphasizing that understanding the psalm from the king's perspective—representing the people's relationship with God—is crucial for its interpretation. He examines the historical context, suggesting a drought as a significant crisis, and explores the psalm's linguistic nuances, particularly the translation of "high-born men." Waltke further analyzes the psalm's form and rhetoric, highlighting its structure as a lament and petition, and considers the views of church fathers on its meaning. Ultimately, he connects the psalm's themes to the broader Christian experience, showing how David's struggles prefigure Christ's.

**2. 17-minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Waltke's, Psalms, Session 4 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Psalms → Waltke).**



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### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Bruce Waltke's lecture on Psalm 4:

#### Briefing Document: Dr. Bruce Waltke on Psalm 4 - Historical Approach

##### I. Introduction: The Purpose of the Course

- **Moving Beyond Simple Application:** Dr. Waltke emphasizes that this course goes deeper than typical church teachings, which often focus on direct theology and application. Instead, the course aims to understand *how* the Psalms mean, which then allows for authentic interpretation and application. He states, "unless you know how a text means, you don't know what it means."
- **Multiple Approaches:** The course employs various critical approaches to understand the Psalms, including historical, form-critical, liturgical, rhetorical, and editorializing. This lecture focuses on the historical approach, with anticipatory mentions of the others.

##### II. Historical Approach: Davidic Authorship and Royal Interpretation

- **David as Author:** Waltke defends the traditional view that David authored the 73 Psalms attributed to him, despite skepticism in academia. He argues that the data support this. He notes, "Normally in academia, Davidic authorship is denied... I think the data supports Davidic authorship."
- **The King as the "I":** A key point is the understanding that the "I" in many Psalms refers to the king, who represents the people, similar to how the church is in Christ. Waltke says, "If David is the author, then the eye of the Psalm is the king...Just as the church is in Christ, Israel was in the king. The king was the tree. They were the leaves." This royal perspective is crucial for accurate interpretation.
- **Christological Interpretation:** Understanding the Psalms as royal hymns lays a foundation for seeing them as speaking of Christ. David's experiences of suffering and triumph prefigure Christ's, who, in taking on human emotions, even felt abandoned by God. Waltke points out, "David has taken on every emotion we've experienced. And that is anticipatory of Christ who has taken on all of our sufferings, all of our emotions."

### III. Psalm 4: Introduction and Context

- **Translation:** Waltke emphasizes the importance of precise translation, using the phrase "high-born men" instead of simply "men" in verse 2. This is to indicate that the psalm is addressing the leadership, "This is leadership. This is wealth." He supports this translation by demonstrating that the Hebrew term "bene ish" is elsewhere translated as "high" in contrast to "bene adam," which is translated as "low."
- **Church History:** Waltke stresses the value of consulting historical interpretations of the Psalms from church fathers like John Chrysostom and Augustine. These readings offer a depth of understanding beyond modern perspectives, connecting us to the "universal church".
- **The Crisis:** The Psalm is set in a time of crisis. Waltke explores what this crisis is, focusing on translation, historical context, and form to uncover it.

### IV. Psalm 4: Exegesis

- **Translation of Key Phrases:**
- **"High-born men":** This refers to the leaders of Israel. They are turning the king's glory into shame and away from God.
- **"Love delusions and seek false gods":** This shows a departure from the true God to false gods like Baal. The people are putting their trust in something other than God, turning his glory into shame.
- **"Fill my heart with great joy *when* their grain and new wine abound":** Waltke argues for a temporal interpretation of "when" instead of "more than when". This shows the king's desire to restore the nation's abundance. He supports this by appealing to the normal temporal use of the Hebrew "me'im" in other scriptures.
- **The Crisis Detailed:** Waltke identifies three key crises in Psalm 4:
  1. **Drought:** The lack of rain and harvest is a tangible crisis. The people ask, "O that one would show us good," referring to the produce of the land. Waltke demonstrates this understanding of "good" by citing the parallelism in other Psalms, where the concept of "good" is linked directly with a good harvest.
  2. **Royal Responsibility:** In the ancient Near East, the king was believed to be responsible for the fertility of the land and the rain. The lack of rain puts the

king's legitimacy in question. Waltke uses the boastful claims of Assyrian and Egyptian kings to demonstrate this understanding of royal responsibility.

3. **Unanswered Prayer:** The king's prayers are seemingly unanswered, which casts doubt on his relationship with God. Waltke draws a distinction between the pagan concept of an immediate, name-it-claim-it kind of prayer and the way God's timing often requires us to wait on Him. This waiting, according to Waltke, develops spiritual virtue and dependence on God.
  - **Seven Imperatives to the Highborn:** The king issues seven commands to the high-born leadership to restore their faith. They are structured in the following way:
    1. Know your king (that God has set him apart)
    2. Tremble and do not sin
    3. Search your hearts and be silent
    4. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness and trust in I Am
  - **Form and Rhetoric:** Psalm 4 is identified as a lament or petition Psalm and is structured with motifs such as:
    - Address to God ("my righteous God")
    - Introductory petition
    - A lament ("How long, O high-born men")
    - Admonitions (seven imperatives)
    - Petition from the people ("O that one would show us good")
    - Petition by the king ("Fill my heart with great joy")
    - Implicit praise through confidence and peace of mind ("I will lie down and fall asleep at peace")

## V. Key Theological Ideas

- **God's Righteousness:** God is not static but acts to set right what is wrong.
- **Prayer as Evaluation, Decision, and Intervention:** Prayer involves asking God to assess, decide, and intervene in a situation.

- **Personal Relationship with God:** The psalm emphasizes a personal relationship with God (“my God”), who is both transcendent (Elohim) and covenantal (I Am/Yahweh).
- **The Significance of “I Am”:** Waltke emphasizes the importance of this covenant name, and its significance as a precursor to the revelation of God through Jesus Christ. He notes the Old Testament practice of calling on Yahweh, and how the intertestamental tradition shifted to calling on the name of the Lord, which enabled the church to easily identify Jesus as Lord in the New Testament.
- **The Validity of the King’s Authority:** David's authority came through prophetic anointing, the spirit of God, and his works. This is compared to how Jesus' authority was verified through John the Baptist, the voice of God, his works, and scripture. It is also compared to how believers know themselves to be children of God through the witness of Scripture, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the different way they live.
- **The Need for Authentic Theology:** To avoid hypocrisy, we need to be honest and transparent with God. We need to understand the meaning of words and how to interpret them in their context, or collocation.

## VI. Implications

- **Deeper Understanding of the Psalms:** By taking a historical approach to the Psalms, we gain a richer and more nuanced understanding that moves beyond superficial application to the personal, social, political, and spiritual world in which these Psalms were written.
- **Application to the Present:** By recognizing the personal, national, and spiritual crises in the Psalms, we can apply these same principles to our own lives.
- **Importance of Word Study:** An accurate understanding of the words of Scripture is foundational to theology.

This briefing doc provides a comprehensive overview of the key points from Dr. Waltke's lecture excerpts. His emphasis on historical context, accurate translation, and careful exegesis provides a rich methodology for understanding the Psalms and the God who inspired them.

## 4. Psalms Study Guide: Historical Approach to Psalm 4

### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to Waltke, what is the primary objective of studying the Psalms in a seminary context, as opposed to a church setting?
2. What is the significance of Davidic authorship in understanding the Psalms, according to Waltke?
3. How does Waltke interpret the phrase "bene ish" in Psalm 4, and why is this interpretation significant?
4. According to Waltke, what are the three primary crises that David is facing in Psalm 4?
5. Explain the significance of the phrase, "Let the light of your face shine upon us," according to Waltke's interpretation.
6. How does Waltke interpret the phrase, "fill my heart with joy when their grain and new wine abound," and why does this translation differ from other versions?
7. What does Waltke mean when he says the king is a "shaman figure" in the ancient Near East?
8. What is a "metonymy," and how is it used in Waltke's analysis of Psalm 4?
9. What is the significance of "I Am" in Waltke's understanding of the Psalms?
10. How does Waltke describe the structure of prayer, as it relates to God?

### Quiz Answer Key

1. In a seminary context, the focus is on understanding *how* the text means, using various approaches to ensure authentic interpretation, while in church settings, the focus is typically on direct theology and application. The goal is to ground theological and spiritual claims in accurate textual understanding.
2. If David is the author, then the psalms are viewed from the king's perspective, who represents the people, much like the Church is in Christ. This perspective provides a royal lens, where the king's experiences are meant to mirror Israel's and ultimately prefigure Christ's.

3. Waltke interprets "bene ish" as "high-born men," referring to David's leadership, advisors, and wealthy constituents, rather than just "men," as is typically translated. This translation is significant because it highlights that the crisis within the psalm involves disloyalty among the leadership, and their lack of faith.
4. According to Waltke, the three crises are a drought leading to crop failure and famine; a leadership that is losing faith in the King due to his perceived inability to bring rain; and that the king's prayer seems to be going unanswered, placing the legitimacy of his kingship in question.
5. The phrase "Let the light of your face shine upon us" is a plea from the people for God's favor and provision in the form of rain and a successful harvest. It is an appeal to God to end the drought and restore their well-being.
6. Waltke translates "fill my heart with great joy *when* their grain and new wine abound," emphasizing the temporal link between the joy and harvest. He argues that this emphasizes a desire for the king and people to be fulfilled by God, and not just the literal blessings. Other translations often use "more than," suggesting the grain and wine are less important than the joy, an interpretation that Waltke does not support.
7. Waltke uses the term "shaman figure" to describe the king in the ancient Near East to illustrate that they were thought to be responsible for the well-being of the land, including rainfall and harvest. They were seen as mediators between the gods and the people.
8. A metonymy is when one noun is used to represent another noun; in this case, "good" is a metonymy that represents the rain and harvest because these were seen as signs of God's blessing. This highlights the depth of the crisis.
9. "I Am" is the covenantal name of God, Yahweh, signifying his personal relationship with his people. Waltke translates it "I Am" to be more accessible, and to emphasize that the king, and by implication, Christ, are in relationship with this "I Am."
10. Waltke states that prayer is "to evaluate a case, make a decision, and intervene." In the context of the Psalm, David is asking God to understand the situation of the drought, to decide to act in response to it, and then to act in accordance with his decision.

## Essay Questions

**Instructions:** Answer each question in essay format, drawing upon your understanding of the source material.

1. Analyze the significance of the historical context of Psalm 4, as presented by Waltke, and explain how it impacts the interpretation of the psalm.
2. Discuss the importance of understanding the role of the king in the ancient Near East in interpreting Psalm 4, according to Waltke's analysis.
3. Explain how Waltke uses the translation of key Hebrew words, specifically "bene ish," to arrive at his interpretation of Psalm 4, and discuss the impact of this interpretive choice.
4. How does Waltke's analysis of the relationship between the king, God, and the people contribute to a deeper understanding of the Psalms?
5. How does Waltke use the historical context and his analysis of language to draw a connection between the experience of the Psalmist and that of Christ?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Historical Approach:** A method of interpreting biblical texts by understanding the historical, social, and cultural context in which they were written.
- **Form-Critical Approach:** A method of biblical criticism that analyzes texts based on their literary genre and structural elements.
- **Liturgical Approach:** An approach to scripture that analyzes how texts were used in worship contexts.
- **Rhetorical Approach:** A method of biblical study that focuses on the persuasive techniques employed by the writer.
- **Editorializing Approach:** Examining the role of editors and redactors in shaping the biblical text.
- **Davidic Authorship:** The traditional view that the Psalms attributed to David were indeed written by him.
- **Bene Ish:** Hebrew term translated by Waltke as "high-born men," referring to the leadership class.



- **Bene Adam:** Hebrew term meaning "sons of man" or common people, often contrasted with "bene ish".
- **Baal:** A Canaanite deity associated with rain and storms.
- **Mammon:** A term used to describe wealth or material possessions, often seen as an idol or something that can take one away from God.
- **Apostasy:** The act of abandoning or turning away from religious faith or loyalty.
- **Imperative:** A command or request; a verb form that expresses a command.
- **Crux Interpretum:** A critical point in a text that is crucial for its interpretation.
- **Collocation:** The way in which words are used together in a language.
- **Metonymy:** A figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated.
- **Elohim:** A Hebrew word for God, often used to emphasize God's transcendence and power as creator.
- **Yahweh:** The personal, covenantal name of God in Hebrew, often translated as "I Am."
- **Chassid:** Hebrew word meaning "loyal" or "devout one", often used to describe those in covenant with God.
- **Pusillanimous:** Showing a lack of courage or determination; timid.
- **Fleckless:** Lacking in initiative or strength of character; irresponsible.
- **Aseity:** The attribute of God of being self-existent, self-sufficient, and not dependent on anything outside of Himself for being.
- **Transcendence:** The attribute of God of being beyond and outside the universe.

## 5. FAQs on Waltke, Psalms, Session 4, Psalm 4: Historical Approach [Biblicalelearning.org](http://Biblicalelearning.org) (BeL)

### FAQ: Understanding the Psalms Through a Historical Lens

- **What is the primary focus of Dr. Waltke's approach to studying the Psalms?** Dr. Waltke's primary focus is not simply to teach the theology or spiritual life found in the Psalms, but to understand *how* the Psalms mean. This involves exploring various approaches like the historical, form-critical, liturgical, rhetorical, and editorial approaches, to arrive at a more authentic interpretation that is faithful to Scripture. The goal is to understand the original context and intended meaning to apply it to theology and spiritual lives.
- **Why does Dr. Waltke emphasize the historical approach, particularly the authorship of the Psalms?** Dr. Waltke defends Davidic authorship of the 73 Psalms attributed to him, despite the skepticism prevalent in academia. He argues that the data supports this traditional view and that understanding the Psalms as primarily written from the perspective of the king (David) is crucial. This perspective allows us to see the Psalms as a royal hymnbook, where the king represents the people, similar to how the church is in Christ. This historical foundation opens the door for a Christological interpretation, as the king anticipates Christ.
- **How does the "king" perspective alter our understanding of the Psalms?** When we understand that the Psalms are often spoken from the king's viewpoint, they take on a new depth. The king's experiences, emotions, and struggles become relatable, serving as an analogy to Christ's sufferings. We also understand that the "glory" being turned to shame is not necessarily an individual experience, but is instead the king's glory, which represents God's glory and provision. This lens helps us better understand the references to the king, making the Psalms come alive with Christological significance and a connection to our own spiritual lives.
- **In Psalm 4, what crisis is David facing, and how does Dr. Waltke arrive at this conclusion?** Dr. Waltke argues that David is facing a multifaceted crisis: a drought leading to famine, his leadership defecting to false gods, and the questioning of his efficacy as king due to the lack of rain, which he was considered responsible for. He reaches this conclusion by analyzing the unique nature of Psalm 4 (no mention of enemies), the people's cry for "good" (which he argues refers to rain

and harvest), and the historical context where the king was believed to have influence over natural phenomena.

- **What is the significance of Dr. Waltke's translation of "high-born men" in Psalm 4:2, and how does he justify it?** Dr. Waltke translates "bene ish" as "high-born men" rather than simply "men" as most English translations do. He justifies this by demonstrating that "bene ish" is used in contrast to "bene adam" (low estate) in other Psalms. The term refers to a distinguished class and not ordinary people, identifying David's leadership, including advisors, prophets, and priests, who are losing faith. This reinterpretation changes the tone from general distress to a pointed critique of leadership defection.
- **What are the key components of David's response in Psalm 4 to the crisis he's facing?** David responds by giving seven imperatives to the apostate leaders. He emphasizes that God has set him apart, and this empowers his prayer life. He calls the high born men to tremble and not sin, search their hearts and be silent, offer sacrifices of righteousness, and trust in God. Then the people ask for God to show them good, and the king prays for them to be filled with joy and for a year round harvest. He ends by declaring he will sleep in peace because he trusts God. Through his prayer, he aims to restore the people's faith in God.
- **How does Dr. Waltke explain the concept of prayer as it relates to God's actions in our lives?** Dr. Waltke defines prayer as evaluating a case, making a decision, and intervening. He does not see prayer as a way to control God, but as a means of bringing our needs before God who evaluates them and chooses to act as he wills. God's active attribute of righteousness prompts him to set right those things that have gone wrong. God's delays are a part of his plan for spiritual development. Through prayer, we invite God's righteous nature to respond to our circumstances.
- **Why is understanding the historical context, and the church fathers important to Dr. Waltke's approach to the Psalms?** Dr. Waltke believes understanding the historical context is key to unlocking the meaning of the Psalms. He values the interpretations and meditations of the church fathers, like John Chrysostom and Augustine, because they help provide a deeper connection to the text and to the community of faith that has come before us. These figures understood the Psalms in their own time and offer further depth of meaning when considered in the light of the traditional context. By engaging with both the original context and the historical tradition of interpretation, Dr. Waltke believes we can have a fuller and more authentic understanding of the Psalms.