

Waltke, Psalms, Session 7, Resources from Notebooklm

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

Dr. Bruce Waltke's lecture on Psalms explores various approaches to interpreting the book, focusing on **form criticism** and the identification of different psalm types like hymns, complaint psalms, and songs of grateful praise. He emphasizes the **importance of understanding the historical context** and the literary features of Hebrew poetry, particularly parallelism and figurative language. Waltke connects the Psalms to **Christ and the Christian faith**, demonstrating how they relate to the King and ultimately to Jesus. The lecture also **examines the theological implications** of the Psalms' calls to praise, focusing on God's attributes and the role of the worshiper.

2. 17-minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Waltke's, Psalms, Session 6 – 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).



Waltke_Psalms_Session07_Hymns_Cause

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 the Psalms:

Briefing Document: Dr. Bruce Waltke on Psalms - Lecture 7: Hymns, Cause for Praise, Hymn Theology

Overview:

This lecture focuses on different approaches to studying the Psalms, with a special emphasis on *Hymns* – songs of praise. Dr. Waltke emphasizes not only understanding the literary forms but also the theological and spiritual implications of the Psalms, particularly as they relate to the person and work of God and their relationship to the King, both earthly and divine. He also gives significant attention to the work of form criticism and particularly to the insights of Gunkel.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Approaches to Studying the Psalms:

- **Historical Approach:** Dr. Waltke defends the trustworthiness of the superscriptions in the Psalms, particularly the attribution of many to King David. He argues that understanding the "I" in many Psalms as the King (David and ultimately Jesus, the Son of David) has profound interpretive implications.
- *"And that indeed, as the New Testament recognizes as well, David indeed authored these Psalms. And we made that case as best we could. That had profound implications for the way we understand the Psalms because we now understand that the I who speaks in the Psalms is the King."*
- **Form Approach:** This approach involves understanding the literary genre of the Psalms, primarily as poetry. Key aspects of Hebrew poetry include:
 - **Terseness:** Like a slideshow, each verse provides a distinct image.
 - **Heightened Style:** Full of figures of speech, reflecting God's aesthetic nature.
 - **Parallelism:** Presenting two related statements that provide different angles of a single truth.

- *"So, as you read Hebrew poetry, what you do is you look at the stereophonic way you're hearing truth. You're getting two aspects to it. And you think about how are these two lines related and that's profitable."*
- **Form Criticism and *Sitz im Leben*:** Dr. Waltke introduces the concept of "*sitz im leben*" (setting in life), originating from Germanic scholarship, which explores the historical context in which a psalm was created and used. While he acknowledges Gunkel's work, he is critical of the dismissal of Davidic authorship.
- **Gunkel's Form Categorization:** Gunkel grouped Psalms by common words, mood and motifs into five types: Hymns (praise), Royal Psalms, Complaint/Lament/Petition, Grateful Praise, and Individual/Community Lament. Dr. Waltke also takes a more biblical approach based on 1 Chron. 16.4 to the three basic categories of Psalms: Petition, Praise, and Grateful Praise.

1. The Significance of the King:

- The "I" in many psalms represents the King, both earthly (David) and ultimately the Messianic King (Jesus).
- *"And with that royal interpretation, we understand ourselves in the King and the son of David, quintessentially, is more than the son of David. He's the son of God. So the Psalms speak of him either directly or indirectly, but they're about the King and therefore, the Davidic house."*
- The king is a representative figure who speaks for and identifies with the community.
- The New Testament's interpretation of the Psalms, especially their application to Jesus, is not imposed but is a natural trajectory of God's revelation.

1. Hymns of Praise:

- **Two Types of Praise Psalms:** Dr. Waltke distinguishes between general praise (Hymns) and songs of grateful praise (Todah)
- **Hymns:** Focus on God's attributes, His being, and His work in Israel's history broadly.
- **Todah (Grateful Praise):** Focuses on specific answers to prayer and specific acts of deliverance by God. It's a public declaration, not a private exchange.
- *"The grateful song is specific answer to prayer. It's not broad. It's God, I asked you for deliverance and you delivered me. That's a song of grateful praise."*

- **Structure of Hymns:** Typically include three motifs:
- **Call to Praise (Introduction):** An imperative to praise God, often using enthusiastic language.
- **Cause for Praise (Body):** The reasons for praising God, based on His attributes and actions.
- **Renewed Call to Praise (Conclusion):** Often a repetition of praise or a concluding "Hallelujah."
- *"The first one is the motifs of the hymn. The second one is the performance who actually performs and sings the hymns... Then the C is the theology of what do they praise about God? What's the content of praise? The theology of praise. "*

1. **Call to Praise:**

- **Imperative Mood:** God calls for praise, but not out of insecurity, rather it's because God is worthy of praise, similar to admiring great art.
- *"So why is God saying, praise me, praise me? And that's the question C.S. Lewis is raising. And C.S. Lewis addresses it by saying, there are some things that are admirable and it's wrong not to praise."*
- **Enthusiasm:** Praise should be fervent, not tepid, and expressed through music, singing, and movement.
- **Performers:** Performed by choirs (Levitical guilds) and the entire congregation.
- **Moral Integrity:** God desires praise from those who live righteous lives, not from the wicked.

1. **Cause for Praise (Theology of Praise):**

- **Learning Theology Through Praise:** The words of praise in the Psalms become God's word to us, allowing us to learn theology through enthusiastic worship.
- **God's Incommunicable Attributes:** Emphasizes attributes that belong to God alone:
 - Aseity (self-existence)
 - Eternality
 - Omniscience

- Omnipotence
- **God's Communicable Attributes:** Attributes that we can mirror:
- Compassion (Rachamim)
- Grace (Hananim)
- Patience (Erech Apayim)
- Abounding love (Hesed)
- Faithfulness (Emet)

1. **The Universal Scope of Praise:**

- The Psalms call for all nations, the entire earth, and all of creation to praise God.
- This universal call reflects God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, that through him all the families of the earth would be blessed. This blessing extends through Jesus, the seed of Abraham.
- Christians are now considered the spiritual seed of Abraham and are called to give praise so that others will be blessed.
- The true kingdom of God is now through the Lord Jesus Christ, not through unbelieving Jews.
- The church, as described in Galatians 3 and 1 Peter 2, is called to declare the praises of God, who has called them out of darkness into his light.
- *"So, in Christ Jesus, you are all called children of God through faith...If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise."*

Implications:

- Understanding the various approaches to interpreting the Psalms enriches the study and allows for a deeper engagement with the text.
- Recognizing the significance of the King (both David and Jesus) in the Psalms illuminates their Christological dimension.
- Paying attention to the literary forms of the Psalms enhances our appreciation of their artistic and theological depth.
- Understanding the structure, components, and theology of hymns allows for richer worship and a more profound connection with God.

- The call for all people and creation to praise God underscores the universal scope of His kingdom and the church's role in declaring his praises.

Conclusion:

Dr. Waltke's lecture provides a rich framework for understanding the Psalms, especially the hymns. His emphasis on historical context, literary form, and theological implications provides tools for a lifetime of meaningful study, leading to deeper praise and worship of God. The importance of both God's incommunicable and communicable attributes is explored, as well as the universal call to praise Him, which stems from his blessing and grace.

4. Psalms Study Guide: Waltke, Psalms, Session 7, Hymn—Cause to Praise, Hymn Theology Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. According to Dr. Waltke, what is the significance of recognizing David as the author of many Psalms?
2. How does Waltke describe the nature of Hebrew poetry in the Psalms?
3. Explain the concept of "sitz im leben" and why form critics sought this when studying the Psalms.
4. What are the five basic types of psalms identified by Gunkel?
5. How does Waltke distinguish between "praise" and "grateful praise" (todah)?
6. What are the three motifs of a typical hymn in the Psalms, according to Waltke?
7. Why does Waltke bring up the question of God being narcissistic for asking to be praised?
8. According to Waltke, who are the ideal people to praise God?
9. How does Waltke interpret Genesis 12:1-3 in relation to the Psalms calling for all nations to praise God?
10. Explain the difference between God's incommunicable and communicable attributes, as discussed by Waltke.

Answer Key

1. Recognizing David as the author of the Psalms is significant because it establishes that the "I" who often speaks in the Psalms is the King, which then allows for the royal interpretation of the Psalms, wherein the psalms speak of the king, and that king points to Jesus. This creates a richer understanding of the royal trajectory within the Psalms.
2. Hebrew poetry in the Psalms is characterized by being terse, using heightened language with figures of speech, and relying on parallelism, which provides a stereophonic way of hearing truth and requires reflection on how lines relate to and differ from each other.
3. "Sitz im leben," meaning "setting in life," refers to the historical and social context in which a Psalm originated; form critics sought this context to understand the

original purpose and function of the Psalms, and to dismiss Davidic authorship, for the setting would tell the critic the author and purpose.

4. Gunkel identified five basic types of Psalms: hymns (songs of praise), royal psalms (those specifically mentioning the king), complaint psalms (including lament and petition), grateful praise psalms (todah), and community and individual laments.
5. Praise is a broad form of praise that is directed to God's attributes and his works in Israel's history generally, whereas grateful praise is specific, detailing particular instances of God's answered prayer, focusing on what God has specifically done for the individual or community.
6. The three motifs of a hymn are the call to praise (introduction), the cause for praise (the reason), and the renewed call to praise (conclusion), often expressed with "Hallelujah."
7. Waltke raises the question of God being narcissistic because it seems odd for God to constantly call for praise, but he answers the question by stating that like a painting worthy of praise, God's greatness demands it, and not praising Him indicates a spiritual deficiency or rebellion.
8. According to Waltke, the ideal people to praise God are the pious ones, the righteous, the upright in heart, those who fear God, love His name, His salvation, seek Him, and hide themselves in Him, essentially people of moral integrity who know God personally.
9. Waltke interprets Genesis 12:1-3 as God calling Abraham to separate himself from his family and culture, which in turn, blesses him to be a blessing, and that all the nations should acknowledge, bless, and praise God in order to receive his blessing and be fruitful.
10. God's incommunicable attributes are those that are unique to Him and that cannot be shared, such as his aseity, eternity, omniscience, and omnipotence, whereas his communicable attributes are those that humans can mirror in their lives, including grace, mercy, truth, and justice.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the royal interpretation of the Psalms. How does this interpretation connect to the concept of Jesus as both the son of David and the son of God, and how does that concept impact the way we understand the Psalms?

2. Compare and contrast the form critical approach to the Psalms with the historical approach presented by Waltke. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, and how does Waltke integrate or critique these different methods?
3. Analyze the role of praise in the Psalms, paying special attention to the distinction between general praise (hymns) and specific praise (todah). How do these different forms of praise reflect different aspects of the human-divine relationship?
4. Explain Waltke's understanding of the connection between the Old Testament call to praise among the nations and the New Testament concept of the Church as the seed of Abraham. How does Waltke apply this concept to modern Christian practice and identity?
5. Explore the theological themes present in the Psalms that Waltke emphasizes, such as the incommunicable and communicable attributes of God, and discuss how those attributes are expressed through the psalms and what those expressions teach us about the nature and character of God.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Aseity:** God's attribute of self-existence; that He is not dependent on anything else for his being.
- **Communicable Attributes:** Qualities of God that humans can reflect in their lives, such as grace, mercy, truth, and justice.
- **Form Criticism:** A method of biblical study focused on classifying texts by their literary genre or form and examining their typical structure and setting in life.
- **Grateful Praise (Todah):** A type of Psalm expressing specific thankfulness to God for answering a particular prayer or delivering from a difficult situation.
- **Hymn:** A song of praise focused on God's attributes and general works.
- **Incommunicable Attributes:** Qualities of God that are unique to Him and cannot be shared with humans, such as aseity, eternity, omniscience, and omnipotence.
- **Parallelism:** A structural element of Hebrew poetry where a line is followed by a related statement that offers another perspective on the same thought.
- **Petition Psalms:** A type of psalm that includes complaints, laments, and prayers for help in times of suffering or distress.

- **Royal Psalms:** Psalms that mention the king, focusing on his role, victories, weddings, and coronation.
- **Sitz im Leben:** A German term meaning "setting in life"; the historical, social, and cultural context in which a biblical text originated.
- **Superscripts:** The headings or titles at the beginning of many Psalms that often indicate the author, historical context, or purpose of the Psalm.

5. Frequently Asked Questions about the Psalms

1. What is the primary goal of studying the Psalms according to this lecture?

The primary goal is not to extract theology or spiritual life directly, but to equip students with the tools and approaches necessary for a lifetime of studying the Psalms. This involves understanding the historical context, literary forms, and theological nuances within the Psalms.

2. What is Dr. Waltke's view on the authorship of the Psalms, specifically those attributed to David?

Dr. Waltke strongly supports the traditional view that the superscriptions identifying authors, particularly David, are trustworthy. Contrary to some academics, he believes David authored the 73 Psalms attributed to him. He sees David as a key figure in understanding the Psalms, representing the kingly aspect within them, which ultimately points to Jesus Christ.

3. How does Dr. Waltke describe the key features of Hebrew poetry and how do they impact the interpretation of the Psalms?

Hebrew poetry, according to Dr. Waltke, is characterized by three main aspects: it is terse (like a slideshow), heightened, and fundamentally based on parallelism. Parallelism involves presenting related but slightly different statements that create a "stereophonic" understanding of the truth. Figures of speech and imagery are also crucial, as seen in Psalm 23 with the metaphors of the shepherd and the sheep, then the sheik and his tent, finally resolving in the temple. These poetic elements enhance the meaning and provide a richer understanding of the text.

4. What is "form criticism" in the context of the Psalms, and how does it influence their interpretation?

Form criticism, originating from German scholarship, focuses on identifying the original "sitz im leben" (setting in life) of the Psalms. It classifies Psalms based on common words, moods, and motifs. This approach aims to understand the Psalms within their original liturgical or social contexts. While Dr. Waltke acknowledges its usefulness in classifying, he also notes that it originally dismissed Davidic authorship. He says that form critics grouped the Psalms into five types including hymns, royal Psalms, complaint Psalms, grateful praise and lament psalms.

5. What is the key distinction between "hymns" and "songs of grateful praise" in the Psalms?

Hymns, or general praise Psalms, are focused on praising God for his attributes (such as eternity and omnipotence) and for his general works throughout Israel's history. Songs of grateful praise, or "todah" psalms, are about specific answers to prayer and express gratitude for God's particular acts of deliverance. The focus is not on a general "thank you," but rather a public confession of what God has done for the individual.

6. What are the three main elements that compose a hymn and how does he describe the elements?

Hymns typically include three elements: a "call to praise" (the match that ignites the fire), the "cause for praise" (the fuel that is lit up), and a conclusion, often a renewed call to praise or "hallelujah". The call is an imperative to praise, meant to create enthusiasm. The cause for praise consists of attributes, works of God, and often culminates in a theological understanding of God.

7. Why does the lecture address the idea of God commanding praise and how does it resolve the tension that may cause?

The lecture tackles the question of why God commands praise. The tension arises because praise may seem like an expression of ego or insecurity. Dr. Waltke, drawing from C.S. Lewis, explains that praise is appropriate when something is admirable and that it should be offered with enthusiasm. The call to praise serves as encouragement, not as narcissism, and is a reflection of true appreciation and understanding of God's worth. It also serves as an admonishment when a person is not praising.

8. How is the idea of the nations praising God understood in the Psalms and how does that relate to Genesis 12?

The concept of all nations praising God in the Psalms is linked to the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12:1-3. God calls Abraham to separate from his people in order to be blessed, that is to increase and subdue. That blessing is then extended to all peoples. It is not a simple geographical expansion but rather is connected to recognizing God and his goodness to all people, which now is done by embracing the son of God, Jesus Christ. In effect, the Gentiles were told to bless the Jews so they might be blessed; today, we are to bless Christ so that we might be blessed.