

Waltke, Psalms, Session 10, Resources from Notebooklm

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

1. Abstract of Waltke, Psalms, Session 10, Psalm 8, A Psalm of Praise, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Bruce Waltke **expounds** on Psalm 8, a hymn of praise. He **analyzes** the psalm's structure, **examining** its inclusio and use of parallelism, and explores its **theological** implications. Waltke **discusses** the psalm's themes of God's majesty in creation and redemption, and man's role in subduing creation and overcoming evil. He connects the psalm to **broader** biblical themes and uses various literary and philosophical concepts to **interpret** its meaning. The lecture also **includes** a reflection on the nature of man and the significance of praising God.

2. 12-minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Waltke's, Psalms, Session 10 – 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 main themes and important ideas from the provided lecture excerpts by Dr. Bruce Waltke on Psalm 8:

Briefing Document: Dr. Bruce Waltke on Psalm 8

Source: Excerpts from "Waltke_Psalms_EN_Lecture10.pdf"

Date: 2024

Subject: Exposition of Psalm 8, a Psalm of Praise

Introduction

Dr. Bruce Waltke's lecture provides a detailed form-critical and exegetical analysis of Psalm 8, emphasizing its structure, theological themes, and significance within the broader context of the Psalter and biblical theology. He highlights the hymn-like nature of the psalm, its role as the first praise psalm, and the relationship between its themes of creation and redemption. Waltke also delves into the psalm's language, exploring the meaning of specific Hebrew words and phrases. He integrates philosophical concepts and scientific knowledge into his analysis, offering a robust and insightful understanding of the text.

Main Themes and Ideas

1. Psalm 8 as a Hymn of Praise:

- Waltke categorizes Psalm 8 as a "hymn of praise," noting that it's the first such psalm in the Psalter (after introductory Psalms 1 & 2 and the laments that follow).
- He emphasizes the call to praise, exploring the imperative to praise God, the enthusiasm that should accompany it, and who should do the praising. "What does it mean for God to command us to praise? The enthusiasm with which we ought to praise, who actually did the praising, choirs, all of Israel."
- He highlights the importance of learning theology through the people of God celebrating the attributes of God. "We saw what a wonderful way to learn theology. It's from the people of God who are celebrating the attributes of God, the God of history, giving it back to God."

1. **God's Attributes (Incommunicable and Communicable):**

- The lecture explores God's incommunicable attributes such as aseity, eternity, omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience. These are attributes humans cannot participate in or attain. "We noticed that it celebrates his incommunicable attributes, his aseity, his eternity, and what Hirsch calls the under competence, his omnipotence, his omnipresence, his omniscience, all of which we depend upon, but we cannot participate in."
- It also addresses God's communicable attributes: mercy, faithfulness, grace, and love. These are attributes that humans can reflect and participate in. "But on the other hand, there are his communicable attributes, namely his mercy, his faithfulness, his grace, and love."
- The balance between these two sets of attributes are crucial. God is both powerful and merciful. "So, it's just this beautiful combination of the incommunicable and the communicable attributes."

1. **Incomparability of God:**

- Waltke argues against an evolutionary view of religion and emphasizes the uniqueness and incomparability of Yahweh. "God is incomparable to everything humans can imagine and that everything they imagine is only an illusion."
- He stresses that God is not just one god among many, but the true and living God, different from idols and delusions.

1. **Shift in Dispensation: From Old Testament to New Testament:**

- In the Old Testament, people came to God through Israel and the temple. The Gentiles came to Jerusalem. "In the Old Testament for the Gentiles to come to God, they had to come to Abraham. They had to come to Israel. They had to come to the temple."
- In the New Testament, believers are called to go out into all the world and preach the gospel to all nations. "Now you have to go into all the world and preach the gospel. We're to tell all peoples about the mediatorial kingdom, about the mediator."
- The moment the Gentiles came to Jesus, it signaled the time for his death and the subsequent global mission. "When the Gentiles came and they said, we would see Jesus, he said, now my hour has come."

1. **Structure and Inclusio:**

- Psalm 8 exhibits an "inclusio" with the declaration, "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth" at the beginning and the end of the psalm. This makes it a declaration of praise rather than a call for praise.
- The psalm's theme is developed in two stanzas, using alternating parallelism. These stanzas move from the splendor of God in creation to the order of redemption in history, back to the details of creation (night sky), and finally to the dominion given to man. "So, it's the splendor of God in the creation and the splendor of God in history and how he eliminates to eliminate the enemy and the avenger at the end of verse three."

1. **Importance of Praise:**

- Waltke makes the radical statement, "If we don't praise God, he will die." He clarifies that this is not an ontological claim (God's being is not dependent on us) but an epistemological one (how we know God). If we don't acknowledge and praise him, he is, in effect, dead to us. "Ontologically, God exists, but what good is it if nobody knows it? You see, if nobody knows it, he doesn't exist for any practical purposes."
- However, he also notes that God will always have a people to praise Him – if humans don't praise, "the stones will cry out."

1. **Splendor in the Heavens:**

- He interprets the phrase, "You who have set your splendor upon the heavens," as meaning that God's glory is displayed through the celestial bodies. He thinks it should be interpreted as "upon", not "above" the heavens. "So, I think it's more likely that as you look up in the next one, it's the moon and the stars that reveal his handiwork and his greatness."
- He discusses how the ancient near eastern view was a solid sky, a "dome" above the earth that holds back water.
- He uses modern scientific discoveries (Hubble telescope, speed of light, expansion of the universe) to emphasize the unimaginable vastness and complexity of God's creation. "I mean, it just absolutely addles your mind, the size of this whole thing."

1. **Fine-Tuning of the Universe:**

- Waltke connects the precision and fine-tuning of the universe (with reference to the anthropic-cosmological principle) to the existence of a creator. He cites scientists like Steven Weinberg and Roger Penrose. "Everything had to be so precise to bring into existence a human being, a thinking creature."
- He notes the extreme precision required for physical constants to allow life to exist. "The precision is as if one could throw a dart across the entire universe and hit a bullseye one millimeter in diameter on the other side."

1. **Children and Nursing Infants:**

- He analyzes the phrase, "From the mouth of children and nursing infants, you have laid the foundation of strength," as a metaphor for the humility and weakness of those who rely on God. It is the petitions and praises of the weak and humble that establish strength. "Luther rightly interprets the children and nursing babies as a figure, I would say a metaphor and hyperbole to describe the kingdom of God's unique character of humility."
- The strength established is a citadel or protection that is invincible.

1. **Spiritual Battle:**

- The psalm assumes a spiritual battle of faith versus force, where the protagonists praise God, and the antagonists avenge themselves. "So, we're engaged in a battle, a spiritual battle of faith versus force." The church depends on God to right wrongs, not on their own strength.

1. **God's Care for Mortals:**

- The psalm transitions from the prayers of the meek to God's visitation of them. He states, "What is a mere mortal that you are mindful of him?" highlighting the contrast between God's majesty and human frailty. He moves to the idea of the Lord stooping down to visit mortals. "He's talked about the heavens and now specifically to the moon and stars housed in the heavens. And now from the elimination of the enemy to the rule over the earth."
- Waltke discusses several Hebrew words for "man," (enosh, adam, ish, gebor) showing how the psalmist uses "enosh" to emphasize human weakness.
- "Mindful" and "care for" indicate God's active involvement and commitment to humanity, remembering his mandate for humans to rule the earth. The Hebrew

word for care for is “pakad,” which includes both noting the situation and acting appropriately.

1. **Crowning of Mortals:**

- Waltke explains that humans are crowned with glory and honor, made "a little lower than heavenly beings" (Elohim can be interpreted as angels or heavenly beings). “You made him lack a trifle from heavenly beings.”
- He interprets the "crowning" as symbolic of all humanity, needing God’s grace to fulfill the responsibility of rule.
- This crowning commissions humanity to rule over creation, which he explains as a poetic expression of the cultural mandate in Genesis 1.

1. **Rule and the Cultural Mandate:**

- He discusses the cultural mandate and its physical and spiritual aspects. We are to subdue the world and also conquer evil. “There are two parts to the cultural mandate as I would see it. One is to subdue the physical world, the fish, the oxen, everything, as I said, the oxen to plow and the horse to pull and so forth. But I think it also includes the spiritual world because in Genesis 3, we meet the serpent and they should have brought the serpent under their feet.”
- He notes that while humans have achieved great things in the physical realm, their spiritual progress has lagged. “The result is physically we have done the mandate, but spiritually we have failed miserably.” The good things humans do are often turned to evil purposes.
- The "ruled creatures" (flocks, herds, wild animals, birds, fish, and the Leviathan) encompass both life and death. He sees the Leviathan as representative of evil. “The one that swims the path of the sea, I think is Leviathan, the evil, the symbol of evil.”

Conclusion

Dr. Waltke's exposition of Psalm 8 highlights the majesty and glory of God in creation and redemption, the importance of praise and humility in the life of the believer, the significance of humanity's role in God's plan, and the ongoing spiritual battle that shapes our existence. His use of linguistic, historical, and scientific insights provides a comprehensive and enriching understanding of this foundational psalm. The lecture emphasizes the dual nature of humanity as both incredibly significant in God's plan yet dependent on his grace and power to live it out.

This briefing document should provide a solid foundation for understanding the core themes and ideas presented in Dr. Waltke's lecture on Psalm 8.

4. Psalms Study Guide: Waltke, Psalms, Session 10, Psalm 8, a Psalm of Praise

Study Guide: Psalm 8 - A Psalm of Praise

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to Waltke, what are the two main categories of God's attributes, and why is the combination of both crucial?
2. How does Waltke explain the difference in the Old and New Testament regarding how Gentiles come to God, and what key event marks this change?
3. What role does the concept of "inclusio" play in understanding the structure of Psalm 8, and how does this relate to the psalm's theme?
4. How does Waltke define the Hebrew word "Adir" and why is this an important concept in understanding Psalm 8?
5. What is the difference between ontological and epistemological knowledge, and how does this distinction relate to the idea that if we do not praise God, He would die?
6. How does Waltke interpret the phrase "from the mouths of children and nursing infants" in Psalm 8, and what does this reveal about the nature of God's kingdom?
7. According to Waltke, what is meant by the phrase, "you have set your splendor upon the heavens," in the context of the psalm, and how does the Hubble telescope enhance this concept?
8. What does Waltke say about the earth being a stage and why is this stage important for understanding the relationship between God and humanity?
9. How does Waltke differentiate the different Hebrew words used for "man" in the psalm, and why is this differentiation important?
10. What does Waltke mean when he says that the cultural mandate includes both the physical and the spiritual realms, and what is his assessment of man's current success in fulfilling each mandate?

Answer Key

1. Waltke distinguishes between incommunicable attributes (like aseity and omnipotence) and communicable attributes (like mercy and love). The combination of both is crucial because God must be both powerful and merciful to avoid being a despot or powerless.
2. In the Old Testament, Gentiles came to God through Israel and the temple, while in the New Testament, believers are commissioned to go into the world and preach the gospel. The coming of the Greeks to see Jesus marks a turning point, indicating the atonement is made for the whole world, thus requiring the gospel to be preached to all.
3. Inclusio refers to a literary device where a theme or phrase is repeated at the beginning and end of a section. In Psalm 8, the phrase "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth" forms an inclusio, declaring that all the earth is praising God.
4. Waltke defines "Adir" as mighty or splendor in power, and uses examples from the Red Sea, his dominion over storm and sea, and God's right hand. The concept is important because it reveals God's powerful name to defeat His enemies, which is a theme in the psalm.
5. Ontological knowledge refers to the way things actually are (absolute and certain), while epistemological knowledge is how humans know (relative and incomplete). Waltke argues that if no one acknowledges God's existence, He would cease to exist in a practical sense, but this is paradoxical since God's existence does not depend on humans.
6. Waltke interprets this phrase metaphorically, suggesting it represents the humility and dependence of those within God's kingdom, like children who rely on their parents. It shows that strength comes from the weakest when they turn to God and do not rely on their own power.
7. Waltke states that the phrase refers to God's royal splendor displayed in the heavens, seen through the moon and stars. The Hubble telescope amplifies this by revealing the vastness of the universe, providing even more evidence of God's glory.
8. Waltke argues that the earth is a stage where the spiritual struggle between right and wrong, justice and injustice, etc., is being played out. This emphasizes the

significance of humanity's role in this spiritual drama and its importance despite the earth's infinitesimal size in the universe.

9. Waltke points out four words for "man": enosh (weakness), adam (generic human), ish (individual), and gebor (strong man). This is important because these words describe varying aspects of humanity that the psalm touches upon when talking about humanity's relation to God.
10. Waltke explains that the cultural mandate includes subduing the physical world (nature) and the spiritual realm (evil), both of which are equally important. He points out that humanity has had great success in the physical realm, but has utterly failed in the spiritual realm, as our achievements have turned against us in many ways.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Develop a well-organized essay for each of the following questions using the source material.

1. Analyze the literary structure of Psalm 8 as outlined by Waltke, and discuss how this structure contributes to the psalm's overall message about God and humanity's relationship to Him.
2. Compare and contrast the Old Testament and New Testament perspectives on the relationship between God and the nations as presented by Waltke, and discuss the implications of these changes for understanding the nature of God's kingdom.
3. Evaluate Waltke's claim that God's existence, in a practical sense, is tied to human praise, and discuss how he resolves this apparent dependence of God on humans within the context of Psalm 8.
4. Discuss Waltke's explanation of Psalm 8's description of humanity's relationship with creation, paying particular attention to the cultural mandate, and how humankind has succeeded and failed in this commission.
5. Examine the significance of Waltke's analysis of the Hebrew words for "man" in Psalm 8, and explain how these terms shape our understanding of humanity's unique role in creation and relationship with God.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Aseity:** God's self-existence; He is not dependent on anything else for His existence.
- **Incommunicable Attributes:** Characteristics of God that humans cannot possess, such as omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience.
- **Communicable Attributes:** Characteristics of God that humans can participate in, like mercy, faithfulness, grace, and love.
- **Inclusio:** A literary device where a theme or phrase is repeated at the beginning and end of a section to frame it.
- **Tetragrammaton:** The four Hebrew consonants (YHWH) that form the divine name of God, often rendered as Yahweh.
- **Ontological Knowledge:** The way things actually are, absolute and certain knowledge.
- **Epistemological Knowledge:** The way humans know, relative and incomplete knowledge.
- **Metonymy:** A figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated.
- **Hyperbole:** Exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally.
- **Cultural Mandate:** The command given by God in Genesis for humans to subdue the earth and have dominion over all creation.
- **Merism:** A literary device that uses two contrasting parts to describe the whole.
- **Elohim:** A Hebrew word that can refer to God, gods, or heavenly beings.

5. FAQ on Themes from Dr. Bruce Waltke's Psalms Lecture

FAQ on Themes from Waltke's Lecture on Psalm 8

1. **What is the significance of Psalm 8 being a hymn of praise, and how does it fit within the broader structure of the Psalms?**
2. Psalm 8 is the first true hymn of praise in the Psalter, following the introductory Psalms 1 and 2 which set the stage for themes of righteousness and the coming king. It marks a shift from the initial laments and distress expressed in Psalms 3-7, introducing a focus on God's majesty and glory. The structure of the Psalter has an intentional ordering where this psalm of praise is strategically placed to celebrate God's greatness before more Psalms of distress and lament are explored, making its position in the Psalter especially significant. It shows that the appropriate human response to the God of the Psalms is praise.
3. **What are the "incommunicable" and "communicable" attributes of God, and why is the balance of these attributes important?**
4. Incommunicable attributes are those aspects of God that are unique to Him and cannot be shared with or participated in by humans. These include aseity (self-existence), eternity, omnipotence (all-powerful), omnipresence (everywhere present), and omniscience (all-knowing). Communicable attributes, on the other hand, are aspects of God's character that can be reflected or imitated by humans, such as mercy, faithfulness, grace, and love. The balance is essential because if God were only all-powerful without mercy, He would be a despot. Similarly, if he were only all grace without power, he could not bring about good. The combination of these attributes makes God both just and compassionate.
5. **How does Dr. Waltke approach the creation account, and how does it relate to the concept of God's incomparability?**

Dr. Waltke emphasizes that the biblical writers used the myths of their time, such as accounts of chaos and creation, to illustrate that the God of Israel is the true God who conquered chaos. This demonstrates the superiority of Yahweh over the false deities of the surrounding cultures. For Dr. Waltke, the idea that religion progresses from polytheism to monotheism is incorrect. Rather, while people might worship false idols, there is only one true God, the Creator of all things. The writers of Scripture use these myths figuratively to show that God is the true Creator. Dr. Waltke believes there is a theological statement that there is no other God, but a religious statement recognizes people do worship false gods or delusions.

1. **How did God's relationship with the world change between the Old Testament and the New Testament concerning evangelism?**
2. In the Old Testament, God's relationship with the world was mediated through Israel. Other nations came to Israel and Jerusalem to see and worship God as demonstrated by the Queen of Sheba and others. Israel did not actively go out to evangelize other nations but served as a beacon to draw people to God. In the New Testament, however, believers are commanded to go out to all the world to preach the Gospel, reflecting a significant shift. This occurred after the atoning sacrifice of Christ made possible for people from all nations to come directly to him. In the New Testament, the focus shifts from drawing nations to Israel to going out and bringing the Gospel to the nations.
3. **What does it mean that God set his splendor upon the heavens? What are the implications of this verse?**

When the Psalm says that God set his splendor upon the heavens, it suggests that the order and beauty of the cosmos are a reflection of his glory and power. The heavens are not just a physical entity but a testament to his magnificent design and craftsmanship. This includes not only the immediate sky and sun but also extends to include all that is known through the Hubble telescope—the vastness of the galaxies and the intricacy of cosmic structures. The immense scale and order of the cosmos, especially as seen through scientific advancements, further highlight God's immeasurable majesty and power. The author's phenomenological lens highlights that while God's glory can be seen in the heavens, its significance in the spiritual battle that is happening on the earth is where he has placed humanity as rulers under his authority.

1. **How does Dr. Waltke interpret the phrase, "from the mouth of children and nursing infants you have established strength?"**

Dr. Waltke emphasizes that this phrase should not be taken literally. He sees it as a metonymy, where "mouth" represents the petitions and praises offered to God. The children and nursing infants metaphorically symbolize those who are weak and humble, depending solely on God for their strength. This interpretation highlights the unique nature of God's kingdom, where power is manifested through humility and where the "stronghold" is not built through worldly might, but through faith in God's power. The weakness of those who offer up their faith becomes a bulwark or place of protection against evil. It represents the principle that only when we rely completely on God can we find true strength and ultimately conquer the enemy and the avenger.

1. **What is the importance of humanity's position as rulers of creation according to Psalm 8, and what are the implications of this for how we live in the world today?**
2. According to Psalm 8, God made humanity just below the heavenly beings, bestowing upon them the responsibility to rule over all of creation. This mandate involves subduing both the physical world, such as animals and resources, and the spiritual realm, including overcoming evil and falsehood. The earth, in this context, is depicted as a stage where the battle between good and evil is played out, with humanity as God's agents, ruling under his authority. This implies that humanity has significant importance in the grand cosmic scheme of God's plan. It also means that as stewards of the earth, people have a duty to manage resources responsibly and to work towards a more just and righteous world. While humanity has accomplished much in the physical realm, the spiritual battle requires an acknowledgement that it can only be won through dependence on God.
3. **How does Dr. Waltke define "ontological" and "epistemological" knowledge, and how does this distinction help explain the importance of praising God?**
4. Ontological knowledge refers to the way things truly are, which is known absolutely by God alone. Epistemological knowledge, in contrast, refers to how humans perceive and understand things, which is always incomplete and relative. While God's existence is an ontological reality, if no one knows of him, he does not exist for any practical purpose. Therefore, praising God is essential because it acknowledges His ontological existence and brings Him into the realm of human experience, allowing Him to become relevant in our lives. While God is not dependent on human praise, He has chosen to be known through the praises of his people. Even if humanity stops, creation itself will praise Him, because God will always have a people to praise Him.