

Waltke, Psalms, Session 18, Resources from Notebooklm

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

1. Abstract of Waltke, Psalms, Session 18, Psalms of Trust, Psalm 139, Psalm 91 , Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Bruce Waltke **analyzes Psalms 139 and 91**, framing them as "Psalms of Trust." He **examines the complex interplay of voices** within Psalm 91—the king expressing faith, a prophet offering assurance, and God ultimately providing affirmation—and interprets it **allegorically through the lens of Christ's invincibility**. In contrast to Psalm 44's depiction of defeat, Psalm 91 portrays an untouchable king, symbolizing Christ's triumph over evil. Waltke then **explains Psalm 139's exploration of God's omniscience, omnipresence, and omnificence**, culminating in David's plea for personal purification amidst wickedness. Finally, he **connects Psalm 139's themes to his counseling on abortion**, emphasizing God's involvement in conception and the sanctity of life.

2. 17-minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Waltke's, Psalms, Session 18 – 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_Session18_Trust_Psalms

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided lecture by Dr. Bruce Waltke on Psalms 91 and 139:

Briefing Document: Dr. Bruce Waltke on Psalms 91 & 139

Date: October 26, 2023 (Based on the lecture title) **Subject:** Analysis of Psalms 91 and 139 as Songs of Trust

Introduction: This document summarizes Dr. Bruce Waltke's lecture (Session 18) focusing on Psalms 91 and 139, categorized as "Songs of Trust." Waltke examines the literary structure, theological implications, and historical contexts of these psalms, offering insights into their meaning and application, particularly in light of a Christological interpretation. He also contrasts them with Lament Psalms.

I. General Themes & Concepts

- **Psalms of Trust:** These psalms express faith and confidence in God, contrasting with the lament found in other psalms. They are favorites because they express the victories and faith of the people of God.
- **Lament Psalms & Faith:** Waltke opens by sharing a poem by James Russell Lowell that he believes encapsulates the spirit of Lament Psalms, which portray a struggle between truth and wrong, but with the underlying belief that God watches over and protects the faithful. "Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne. But that scaffold holds the future and beyond the dim unknown, standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own."
- **Importance of Questions:** Dr. Waltke encourages questions and values the process of wrestling with difficult interpretations.

II. Psalm 91: Divine Protection and Invincibility

- **Structure & Speakers:** Waltke identifies three distinct speakers in Psalm 91:
- The "I" (verses 1-2): The speaker expresses trust in God as their shelter and stronghold. This "I" is identified as the King.
- The prophet, speaking for God (verses 3-13): Assures the "I" (the king) of God's protection and victory. This section is divided into two halves (verses 3-8 and 9-13).
- *Prophetic assurance often includes promises from God.*

- God (verses 14-16): Speaks directly, confirming his commitment to rescue and glorify the king.
- **Key Themes and Ideas:**
- **God's Names:** The Psalm uses "Most High" (Elion, El Elyon) and "Almighty" (El Shaddai), both emphasizing God's power and sovereignty. Waltke notes that the meaning of *Shaddai* is unknown. The Greeks call it *Pantokrator* which translates as "all-powerful."
- **Protection & Shelter:** God is depicted as a place of refuge, a shelter, a stronghold, and a shield. The image of being under God's "wings" is used.
- **Invulnerability of the King:** The "I" (King) is portrayed as invincible against threats including "terror at night," "arrows that fly by day," and plague and pestilence. Thousands fall around him, but he is untouched. "A thousand will fall at your side, a myriad at your right hand, but it will not come near you."
- **Angelic Protection:** God commands angels to protect the king, lifting him up so he does not stumble. "Surely, he will command his angels for you to protect you in all your ways. Upon the palms of their hands, they will lift you up, lest your foot strike a stone."
- **Triumph over Evil:** The king will "tread" on the lion and cobra, symbolic of victory over evil and enemies.
- **Plague and Battlefield:** Waltke interprets "plague" to be the bubonic plague, a common threat in ancient battles. He suggests that the angel of the Lord used the plague to destroy the Assyrian Army and provides an example where the Philistines created rat idols when afflicted by plague.
- **Christological Interpretation:** Waltke argues that Psalm 91 is ultimately a prophecy about Christ, emphasizing his invincibility and invulnerability until he willingly laid down his life. He uses examples from Jesus' life like healing the leper, walking through a crowd that wanted to kill him, and the fact that no one could touch Jesus until he was ready.
- He rejects the idea that Psalm 91 is universally applicable to all believers, contrasting it with Psalm 44 where the king suffers defeat.
- **Satan's Understanding:** He notes that Satan tempted Jesus with verses from this Psalm during the temptation scene, indicating Satan's understanding of its

messianic application. "If you are the son of God, throw yourself down from here."

III. Psalm 139: God's Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Omnificence

- **Structure:** Psalm 139 has 24 verses, divided into four stanzas of six verses each:
- Stanza 1 (vv. 1-6): God's omniscience; God's penetrating knowledge of David. "I am, you search me and so you know me...Surely before a word is on my tongue, I am, you know it completely."
- Stanza 2 (vv. 7-12): God's omnipresence; God's inescapable presence both vertically and horizontally. "Where can I go to escape your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?"
- Stanza 3 (vv. 13-18): God's omnificence; God's creative power in forming David in the womb. "For you gave birth literally to my kidneys...You wove me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I'm fearfully extraordinary."
- Stanza 4 (vv. 19-24): David's response to God's knowledge, presence and creative acts. David moves from reverie to addressing his enemies, seeking God's validation, and asking for guidance. "Search me, God, and know my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts and see if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting."
- **Key Themes and Ideas:**
- **God's Knowledge (Omniscience):** God's knowledge of David is comprehensive and penetrating, including his thoughts, actions, and words. God's knowledge is both comforting and disquieting.
- **God's Presence (Omnipresence):** God is present everywhere, in heaven and in the grave, in light and in darkness, in life and in death.
- **God's Creation (Omnificence):** God is the ultimate source of life, forming David in his mother's womb. The formation in the womb highlights the sovereignty of God. This has implications for the value of the unborn. "My embryo, your eyes saw. And in your book, all of them were written. My days were fashioned when there was not yet any of them."
- **Personal Reflection:** David's reflections lead to a renewed commitment to God and a desire for moral purity. He seeks God's scrutiny to ensure he is aligned with His will.

- **Honest Prayer:** Waltke highlights the honesty of David's prayer, both in his plea for God to destroy the wicked and in his self-examination for his own purity of heart.
- **Use of Merismus:** Waltke notes the use of Merismus as a poetic device, using opposites to signify "all." Examples include "when I sit and when I rise", and "going out and lying down."
- **Application to Counseling:** Waltke shares that he uses Psalm 139 when counseling women considering abortion, emphasizing that God is involved in the creation of life in the womb and has a plan for every child, adding that "it is not just mother tissue" but "a spiritual being."

IV. Key Theological Implications & Modern Challenges

- **Absolute vs. Relativism:** Dr. Waltke believes that there is a trend in western culture toward a libertine relativism. This contrasts to the absolutes found in many other cultures and religions. In contrast, the youth are looking for some absolutes and are being drawn to such belief systems (i.e. Sharia Law) in an effort to fill this void.
- **Spiritual Warfare:** Waltke emphasizes that believers are engaged in spiritual warfare against "principalities and powers, spiritual darkness."

Conclusion: Dr. Waltke's lecture provides a rich interpretation of Psalms 91 and 139. He underscores the importance of trusting in God's protection and power, especially in the face of adversity. He also emphasizes the sovereignty of God in creation, and the reality of spiritual warfare. His insights into the structure and key themes of these psalms, coupled with the Christological reading, makes for a thought-provoking study on the nature of God and the life of faith. He encourages a deeper understanding of God's attributes and the implications for personal life and relationships.

4. Psalms Study Guide: Session 18, Psalms of Trust, Psalm 139, Psalm 91

Psalms of Trust: A Study Guide for Psalms 91 and 139

Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to Waltke, what is the main characteristic of the Songs of Trust?
2. Although Psalm 139 is considered a Song of Trust, what other type of psalm does it resemble and why?
3. What are the two names for God that are highlighted in Psalm 91, and what do they signify?
4. What is the interpretive challenge in Psalm 91 regarding the use of pronouns?
5. Who does Waltke argue is the "I" in the first verses of Psalm 91 and why?
6. What is the significance of the bubonic plague in Waltke's interpretation of Psalm 91?
7. According to Waltke, what is the significance of God commanding angels to lift up the king in Psalm 91?
8. What are the four stanzas of Psalm 139 about, according to Waltke?
9. According to Waltke, what is the significance of the line, "You gave birth to my kidneys" in Psalm 139?
10. What is the final request of the psalmist in Psalm 139, after reflecting on God's omniscience, omnipresence, and omnificence?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The Songs of Trust are characterized by the expression of faith and trust in God. They are favorites among God's people because they emphasize confidence and reliance on God's promises and power.
2. Psalm 139 resembles a lament psalm because it concludes with a petition and reflects a situation where the psalmist is in a crisis. Despite its overall tone of confidence, the ending points to a moment of need.

3. The two names for God are "Most High" (El Elyon), signifying God's supreme authority, and "Almighty" (El Shaddai/Pantokrator), indicating His all-powerful nature. These names emphasize God's transcendence and power.
4. The challenge lies in the numerous pronouns used throughout the psalm, without clear identification of who "I", "you" and "he" refers to. This ambiguity makes it necessary to decode who the various speakers are and who they are addressing.
5. Waltke believes that the "I" in the first verses of Psalm 91 refers to the king because it describes someone in a position of power who is surrounded by battle, with arrows flying and enemies falling around him. This scenario is not typical of Mr. Everyman.
6. The bubonic plague, in Waltke's interpretation, is not a generic illness but an actual disease, which played a role in destroying the Assyrian army in the past. It serves as a real historical context that clarifies the nature of the battles mentioned.
7. The significance of God commanding angels to lift up the king is the escalation of protection, moving beyond protection under God's shadow. It symbolizes how the king won't stumble, but rather will be carried by divine aid.
8. The four stanzas of Psalm 139 are about God's omniscience, omnipresence, omnificence, and the psalmist's final plea and reflection. They respectively explore God's knowledge, presence, creative power, and the psalmist's desire for personal purity in light of these attributes.
9. The line "You gave birth to my kidneys" in Psalm 139 is not meant to be taken literally, but signifies God's intimate involvement in the creation and formation of the psalmist's emotional structure and being in the womb, showing His care. It speaks to God as the ultimate creator.
10. The final request of the psalmist in Psalm 139 is for God to search his heart, test his anxious thoughts, and reveal any offensive ways so that he can be led in the way everlasting. This follows a reflection on God's attributes.

Essay Questions

Answer each question in a detailed essay format using information from the provided source material. Do not provide answers. Your response should demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the topics.

1. Compare and contrast the themes and structure of Psalms 91 and 139, as presented in Waltke's lecture. How do these psalms, both considered songs of trust, differ in their expression of faith and their focus on God's character?
2. Discuss Waltke's argument that Psalm 91 is ultimately about the Messiah, Jesus Christ. What textual evidence and interpretative choices does he use to support this claim? How does this interpretation affect his understanding of the psalm's relevance for believers?
3. Analyze the different speakers identified by Waltke in Psalm 91. How does he use their contrasting viewpoints and voices to create the psalm's overall message of trust and divine protection, and how does it create an antiphonal format?
4. Examine the concept of God's omniscience, omnipresence, and omnificence in Psalm 139, according to Waltke. How does the psalmist's reflection on these attributes shape his view of God and his relationship with him?
5. Explore the connection between Waltke's interpretation of Psalm 139 and his discussion of the sanctity of life. How does the psalm's description of God's role in human creation inform his view of abortion, and how does that connect to the concepts in Psalm 51?

Glossary of Key Terms

Almighty (El Shaddai/Pantokrator): A name for God that signifies his all-powerful nature, derived from the Greek word “Pantokrator” meaning “the All-powerful.”

Antiphonal: A style of musical or spoken performance in which two or more groups respond to each other, creating a back-and-forth effect, often employed in religious contexts.

Apotropaic: Having the power to ward off evil or bad luck, often used in reference to rituals or objects used in ancient cultures.

Bubonic Plague: A dangerous, infectious disease often carried by rats and fleas, that was historically a significant threat, especially on the battlefield, that Waltke argues is relevant to Psalm 91.

Eschatological Messianic Interpretation: The interpretation of a text that connects it to the end times or to the Messiah; in this case, it refers to the view that Psalm 91 is ultimately about Jesus Christ.

El Elyon: A name for God meaning "Most High," which signifies God's supreme authority and transcendence over all things.

Merismus: A rhetorical device where two contrasting parts are combined to express a whole; for example, combining night and day to mean all the time.

Omnificence: The quality of being all-creating, referring to God's power and activity in creating all things.

Omnipresence: The quality of being present everywhere at the same time, referring to God's ability to be in all places simultaneously.

Omniscience: The quality of having complete knowledge, referring to God's ability to know all things, including all thoughts and future events.

Song of Trust: A type of psalm that expresses faith and confidence in God, often emphasizing the psalmist's reliance on God's promises and power.

Targum: Ancient Aramaic paraphrases or interpretations of the Hebrew Bible; referenced in the text as a source for understanding the Messianic interpretation of Psalm 91.

5. FAQ on Themes from Dr. Bruce Waltke's Psalms, Session 18, Psalms of Trust, Psalm 139, Psalm 91

FAQ: Psalms of Trust - Psalms 91 & 139

- **What are "Songs of Trust" in the context of the Psalms?**
- Songs of Trust are a category of psalms that focus on expressing faith and confidence in God, often highlighting His protection and faithfulness. While some psalms may include lament, the overall theme is one of assurance and reliance on God. Psalms 91 and 139 are prominent examples of this type, though Psalm 139 ends with a plea for God's guidance, and thus straddles both lament and trust.
- **Who is the "I" and "you" in Psalm 91?**
- The psalm has three speakers. The "I" in verses 1-2 is a king, who declares his trust in God as his shelter and refuge. The "you" is the same king, being spoken to by a prophet who is giving him God's assurances. Lastly, God Himself speaks in the final three verses, affirming His protection and promises to the king. It is believed the king in this Psalm is the Messiah.
- **What is the significance of the king in Psalm 91, and why might it be interpreted messianically?**
- The king in Psalm 91 is described as invincible and invulnerable, experiencing God's protection amidst battle and plague. He's not just a general king, this king is untouched by plagues and arrows of battle, and cannot be killed until he gives his life willingly. This makes him a type of the Messiah, particularly Jesus Christ, who demonstrated invincibility and victory over evil during his earthly ministry. This king is described as treading upon evil in the form of lions and cobras as a demonstration of his victory. It is also noted that Satan himself understood the Psalm as referring to Jesus as he tempted him to throw himself off the temple.
- **What role does the "plague" play in Psalm 91, and how does it relate to historical context?**

- The "plague" in Psalm 91 is likely the bubonic plague, a serious threat in ancient times, especially on the battlefield. The psalm describes it as moving stealthily in the darkness, then sweeping across at midday. It acts as a divine instrument of judgment and demonstrates how God protects the king even when surrounded by widespread death. The use of the plague is believed to be similar to how God wiped out the Assyrian army during the reign of Hezekiah. The Philistines also utilized rats and tumors in order to ward off the plague, after taking the ark of the covenant, indicating the bubonic plague was well understood.
- **What are the key themes of Psalm 139?**
- Psalm 139 is broken into four parts: God's omniscience, God's omnipresence, God's creative power, and the psalmist's response to his reflections on those three attributes. It explores God's intimate knowledge of the psalmist's life, His presence in every location, and His role as the Creator of the psalmist in the womb. The psalm emphasizes God's complete awareness and involvement in all of our lives, from conception to the present moment. The psalmist ends with a prayer to see if he has any ungodly thoughts within him, and to then be led in the path of righteousness.
- **How does Psalm 139 connect to the pro-life perspective?**
- Psalm 139 is interpreted as a powerful testament to the value of life in the womb. It emphasizes that God is involved in every aspect of a person's creation, from the weaving of the fetus in the mother's womb to the planning of all of their days. It shows God's intimacy with each human being, as His magnum opus, giving the unborn dignity. This belief is used to make arguments against abortion and to protect the sanctity of life. The psalm states that life is a spiritual being, and not merely the mother's tissue.
- **What is the structure of Psalm 139, and how does it contribute to the psalm's message?**
- Psalm 139 is structured in four stanzas of six verses each. The first stanza focuses on God's omniscience, using the phrase, "You know." The second stanza presents God's omnipresence, questioning, "Where can I go?" The third stanza focuses on God's omnificence, with the statement "You created me." Finally, the fourth stanza describes how the psalmist responds to his reflections. This structured approach helps the psalmist lead the reader to the conclusion that God knows all, is everywhere, and created all; this moves the psalmist to a desire to be aligned with God.

- **Why is it important to recognize the distinctions between Psalms and how they apply to our lives, as shown by the contrast between Psalm 91 and Psalm 44?**
- It's crucial to understand that the promises of invulnerability in Psalm 91 may not apply universally to all believers in the same way they applied to Jesus Christ. Psalm 44 is an example where the king is defeated. Therefore, Psalm 91 is not a prescription for all believers in every context; rather, it is pointing to a specific individual. While believers are under God's protection and have the hope of salvation, they are not immune to suffering. Psalm 91, as related to Christ, can be used as an assurance that, since He was victorious, those in Him will also be victorious.