

Waltke, Psalms, Session 20, Resources from Notebooklm

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

1. Abstract of Waltke, Psalms, Session 20, Sacred Sites, Sacred Seasons and Personnel, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Bruce Waltke explores Psalm 73, analyzing the psalmist's descent into doubt upon observing the wicked's prosperity and subsequent ascent back to faith through reflection within the temple. He uses this psalm to illustrate the broader functions of the temple in ancient Israelite worship, explaining its symbolic representation of heaven, its sacramental role, and its use in artistic and propagandistic communication of religious ideas. Waltke further examines the various aspects of the cultic system, including sacred sites, seasons, objects, and personnel, as depicted in the Psalms, highlighting their significance in understanding the psalms' context and meaning. Finally, he contrasts the defined formality of Old Testament worship with the more undefined freedom found in the New Testament.

2. 23-minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Waltke's, Psalms, Session 20 – 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 the Psalms:

Briefing Document: Dr. Bruce Waltke on Psalms - Lecture 20: Sacred Sites, Seasons, Objects, and Personnel

I. Overview

This lecture focuses on the significance of the "cultus" (the system of religious worship and practice) in understanding the Psalms. Dr. Waltke argues that the Psalms are deeply rooted in the temple and its associated rituals and symbols. He explores how these elements functioned to communicate spiritual truths and facilitate communion with God. He also addresses the individual experience of faith as a journey that sometimes involves a crisis, and that can be overcome through the understanding of God in the context of the temple, and through seeking God rather than defining him by our problems.

II. Key Themes and Concepts

- **The Psalmist's Journey of Faith:**
- **Downward Steps:** Waltke highlights the psalmist's initial struggle with faith, using Psalm 73 as an example. The psalmist's descent is characterized by three steps:
 1. **Keyhole Theology:** Viewing reality based on limited, personal experience, focusing on the prosperity of the wicked. As Waltke says, "He was determining reality by what he could see within the limited horizon of his own experience." This is like a "horse with blinders on."
 2. **Envy:** Making the prosperity of the wicked his god, leading to discontent. Waltke notes, "to envy and make prosperity and our expectation to make that our God is sin because it's no longer being content with God and trusting him."
 3. **Loss of Foothold:** Almost abandoning faith and covenant with God. The psalmist is troubled by the idea that God would reward evil and punish good, thinking "either God is good and allows the suffering or there's suffering and God is not good."
- **Upward Steps:** The turning point comes when the psalmist enters the temple. The following steps are taken back to a renewed faith:

1. **Conscience:** The psalmist's conscience won't allow him to think that God is not good, because that would mean betraying God's children.
 2. **Temple Entrance:** Seeking God in a sacred space, the "sanctuary," rather than turning away. "He entered the sanctuary of God. In other words, he went to a place where he could meet God in his crisis."
 3. **Understanding of Destiny:** In the sanctuary, the psalmist sees the symbols of God which restore his faith and allow him to understand the final destiny of the wicked.
 4. **Self-Recognition:** Looking at things solely through a material lens, he comes to realize that he is not more than a brute beast.
 5. **God's Guidance:** Realizing God has been with him all along, taking him by the hand and leading him to glory, "He realizes that through all his sufferings, God has taken him by the hand and actually strengthened him and leading him to the point of glory".
 6. **Value of God:** The psalmist recognizes that God is more important than material things. As Waltke says, "I'll take the eternal sublime God over temporal riches that rust and fade and can lead us into evil behavior."
 7. **Desire for God:** He finds that his true desire is for God, and that is what makes heaven desirable. "It's Jesus that makes heaven, heaven."
- **The Temple as a Type:**
 - **Copy of Heaven:** The temple is presented as a physical representation of the heavenly realm. "The temple portrayed that reality. It was a copy of the heavenlies."
 - **Type of the Future:** It not only symbolizes heaven but also foreshadows future realities: "the temple is the presence of God and so forth is a type of Christ in whom God dwells in all of his fullness. It's a type of the church that is the temple of God."
 - **Ultimate Consummation:** The temple also points toward the future heavenly reality when believers will be with the risen Christ in resurrected bodies, where, Waltke notes, "We will actually be in a reality that is beyond words for us to express."
 - **Functions of the Cultus:** Waltke outlines four key functions of the cultus:

1. **Symbolic:** The temple and its rituals are symbols that point to deeper spiritual realities. "The temple symbolized eternal truths."
2. **Exemplary/Typical:** It serves as a pattern or model of heavenly realities. "It's a copy of heaven and it's a type of what is to come."
3. **Sacramental:** The physical acts of worship facilitate participation in God's life and forgiveness. Through ritual, one can "actually enter into communion with God."
4. **Artistic/Propaganda:** The architecture and art within the temple are designed to promote an ideology and communicate messages on another level. Waltke speaks of how even "architecture can do that," and relates an experience he had at the age of four where he was impressed by the architecture in Washington, DC, which "spoke of power...authority...endurance."

- **Development of the Cultus:**

- **Mosaic Tent:** The original mobile sanctuary established by Moses.
- **Davidic Transformation:** King David transformed the cultus by adding music and liturgy (the Psalms), making it more dramatic and operatic. "He transforms it into opera. He provides staging of the temple. He provided the libretto and the music in the Psalms."
- **Royal Temple:** The permanent structure in Jerusalem that became the center of worship.

- **Aspects of the Cultus:**

- **Sacred Site:** The temple itself, with particular emphasis on Mount Zion as God's chosen place (not endemically, but by choice). Psalms celebrating Zion are discussed.
- **Sacred Seasons:** Annual, weekly, and special times of worship, including the Sabbath, new moon, and festival days. Psalms were used in these times of worship.
- **Sacred Actions:** Offerings, sacrifices, prophetic oracles, processions, and pilgrimages. The psalms are full of references to these acts, for example, Psalm 26, and Psalm 68, which describes a procession entering the temple.
- **Sacred Objects:** The altar, the cup of salvation, banners, and musical instruments.
- **Sacred Personnel:** Angels, priests, Levites, the king, prophets, and God-fearers.

- **Inside vs. Outside the Temple:**
- **Within:** The sacred, holy, eternal, perfect realm of God's presence. "Within the temple, you're entering into the eternal. You're entering into reality."
- **Without:** The profane, finite, temporal, imperfect realm of the everyday world. Profane "means before the temple, outside of the temple, that is the profane."
- **The Psalms and Covenant:** Entry into the temple is linked to living within the covenant. Psalm 15 is explored, which identifies who is qualified to enter into worship.
- "The one whose walk is blameless, that is, has integrity with total commitment to God and his worship."
- "who despises a vile person, but honors those who fear the Lord."
- "who lends money to the poor without interest, who does not accept a bribe against the innocent."
- **Formality of Old Testament Worship:** The Old Testament worship was very well defined, and the New Testament worship is much more open to the individual. The lecturer relates an anecdote from his ministry in 1955, where the congregants practiced their worship with some liberty, but still kept the Lord's Supper and baptism.

III. Key Quotes

- "He was determining reality by what he could see within the limited horizon of his own experience."
- "to envy and make prosperity and our expectation to make that our God is sin because it's no longer being content with God and trusting him."
- "He entered the sanctuary of God. In other words, he went to a place where he could meet God in his crisis."
- "It's Jesus that makes heaven, heaven."
- "The temple portrayed that reality. It was a copy of the heavenlies."
- "the temple is the presence of God and so forth is a type of Christ in whom God dwells in all of his fullness. It's a type of the church that is the temple of God."
- "We will actually be in a reality that is beyond words for us to express."

- "The temple symbolized eternal truths."
- "It's a copy of heaven and it's a type of what is to come."
- "actually enter into communion with God."
- "architecture can do that."
- "He transforms it into opera. He provides staging of the temple. He provided the libretto and the music in the Psalms."
- "Within the temple, you're entering into the eternal. You're entering into reality."
- "means before the temple, outside of the temple, that is the profane."
- "The one whose walk is blameless, that is, has integrity with total commitment to God and his worship."
- "who despises a vile person, but honors those who fear the Lord."
- "who lends money to the poor without interest, who does not accept a bribe against the innocent."

IV. Implications

- **Understanding the Psalms:** The lecture emphasizes the importance of understanding the temple context when reading the Psalms to grasp their full meaning.
- **Theological Significance:** The temple was a place where God made himself known, and therefore was the central place of Israel's worship. It is a symbol of God's presence.
- **Worship and Practice:** The lecture highlights the intentionality and symbolism embedded within the structure and practice of Old Testament worship.
- **Modern Worship:** We can learn from the Old Testament how we can integrate architecture, symbols, and liturgy into modern worship.
- **Spiritual Formation:** The lecture touches on the journey of faith, reminding us that questioning and struggle are often a part of the process, but we are called to seek God in times of crisis.

V. Conclusion

Dr. Waltke's lecture provides a rich and nuanced understanding of the Psalms within the context of the Old Testament cultus. By recognizing the temple as both a physical and symbolic space, and understanding the various aspects of the cultus, we can better appreciate the depth and significance of these ancient texts. The lecture emphasizes that faith is a journey, and that our ultimate desire should be for God above all else.

This briefing document provides a thorough overview of the key themes and ideas discussed in the provided source material.

4. Psalms Study Guide: Session 20, Sacred Sites, Sacred Seasons and Personnel

Psalm Study Guide: Sacred Sites, Seasons, Objects, and Personnel

Short Answer Quiz

1. According to the source, what was the psalmist's first step down the ladder of faith?
2. How does the source describe the psalmist's second step away from God?
3. What crucial turning point does the psalmist experience that begins his return to faith?
4. What does the psalmist come to understand about the destiny of the wicked, according to the text?
5. How does the psalmist's view of his relationship with God change from his "keyhole theology" perspective?
6. What does the temple symbolize, both synchronically and diachronically, as a "type"?
7. What are three functions of the cultus as described in the source?
8. How did David transform the Mosaic cultus?
9. According to the source, what is the difference between the "sacred" and the "profane"?
10. Give an example of how the Psalms relate to sacred personnel.

Short Answer Quiz - Answer Key

1. The psalmist's first step down is when he observed the prosperity of the wicked and started defining reality based solely on his limited personal experience, which the source calls "keyhole theology."
2. The second step is when he envied the wicked and made their prosperity his focus, effectively making it his god rather than being content with God.
3. The psalmist's turning point is when he enters the sanctuary of God and sees the symbolic representations of God, which restores his faith.

4. The psalmist understands that the wicked, though prosperous in the material world, will ultimately face a negative destiny; this realization moves him beyond a purely material perspective.
5. The psalmist goes from a narrow perspective where he defines God by his problems to a broader understanding where he sees that God has taken him by the hand and is leading him to glory through his sufferings.
6. Synchronically, the temple is a type of heaven, allowing us to imagine and understand it, while diachronically, it is a type of what is to come, fulfilled in Christ and the church.
7. The source describes three functions of the cultus: symbolic (portraying eternal realities), exemplary/typical (copy of heaven and a type of what is to come), and sacramental (a way to enter into communion with God).
8. David expanded the Mosaic cultus by giving it the staging of the temple, music, and the libretto of the Psalms, essentially transforming it into an opera.
9. The sacred is within the temple and is considered holy, eternal, infinite, and perfect, while the profane is outside the temple, finite, temporal, and imperfect.
10. In Psalm 15, David describes who is qualified to enter the temple, referring to those with integrity and whole-hearted commitment to God as the sacred personnel.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the psalmist's journey from perplexity and envy to restored faith, focusing on the role of the temple and its symbolism in his transformation.
2. Explain how the temple and its rituals function as a "type" according to the lecture, and analyze how this concept helps us understand the relationship between the earthly and the heavenly realms.
3. Describe and analyze the various aspects of the cultus (sacred sites, seasons, objects, personnel) as presented in the lecture, and discuss how these elements were integral to the worship experience in ancient Israel.
4. Explore the concept of "keyhole theology" and its impact on the psalmist's faith, and consider how this concept can be relevant to contemporary understandings of faith and spirituality.

5. Compare and contrast the Mosaic cultus with the transformed version under David, highlighting the changes introduced by David and their theological implications.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Cultus:** The system of religious worship and ritual practices, including its rites, ceremonies, and forms.
- **Diachronic:** Relating to the way in which something, especially language, changes over time. In this context, it refers to the way that types relate to their fulfillment in the future.
- **Keyhole Theology:** A term used in the source to describe a limited or narrow view of reality based solely on personal experiences.
- **Profane:** Outside of the temple or sacred sphere; relating to the ordinary, secular, or worldly rather than the sacred.
- **Sacramental:** Relating to or constituting a sacrament, which is a religious rite or ceremony recognized as having spiritual significance.
- **Sacred:** Regarded with reverence, set apart for religious or spiritual purposes; holy.
- **Synchronic:** Concerned with something as it exists at one point in time; in this context, it refers to the way a type exists as a symbol.
- **Theomorphic:** Having the form or likeness of God; in this lecture, it relates to how people and the Temple were made in the image of God to represent Him.
- **Type:** A person, event, or thing that prefigures or symbolizes something greater to come.

5. FAQ on Themes from Dr. Bruce Waltke's Psalms, Session 20, Sacred Sites, Sacred Seasons and Personnel

FAQ: Exploring the Psalms and Temple Worship

1. **What led the Psalmist down a "ladder of faith" and away from God, as described in Psalm 73?** The Psalmist initially stumbled when he focused on the prosperity of the wicked, using a limited "keyhole theology" based solely on his own experience. He envied their success, effectively making it his "god," and then he almost lost his faith, thinking God was rewarding the evil and punishing the good. His mistake was defining God by his problems rather than allowing God to define his problem.
2. **What was the crucial turning point that helped the Psalmist regain his faith?** The turning point for the Psalmist came when he entered the sanctuary of God (the temple). There he saw the symbolisms of God's holiness, mercy, everlasting life, and final victory, which restored his faith. He recognized the ultimate destiny of the wicked and the eternal nature of God's promises. It is at the sanctuary he recognizes that material concerns are not his only concern.
3. **How did the temple function as more than just a physical building?** The temple served multiple functions: It was a symbolic representation of heaven, allowing worshippers to visualize the eternal spiritual reality. It was a type of heaven that pointed to a future fulfillment in Christ and the Church. The temple served as a place where people could participate in communion with God through sacred actions and words, and through art and architecture, communicating on another level beyond just words.
4. **What are the key aspects of the "cultus," both during the time of Moses and the time of David?** During Moses' time, the cultus included a portable sacred site (the tabernacle), sacred objects like the Ark of the Covenant, sacred seasons like Passover, and sacred personnel (the priests). David expanded this into opera, adding the staging of the temple, the music, and libretto of the Psalms. The sacred site was fixed at Jerusalem, and the sacred personnel included the king and prophets. This expansion of the cultus created a more complex and rich experience of worship.

5. **How did the Psalms reflect the practices and experiences within the temple?**

Many Psalms were directly tied to temple practices. They included songs of Zion that celebrated the sacred site, Psalms about who was qualified to enter the temple, Psalms for the Sabbath and other sacred seasons, and Psalms associated with specific actions like offerings and processions. The Psalms also reflect the themes of pilgrimage, worship, thanksgiving, and prophetic oracles given at the temple. They even make references to the sacred objects of the temple.

6. **What is the significance of the concept of the "sacred" vs. "profane" in relation to the temple?**

The temple was a "sacred" space where the presence of God was uniquely experienced. It represented eternity, perfection, and holiness. "Profane," meaning "before the temple," represented the world outside of the temple, which was considered finite, temporal, imperfect, and subject to sin. Entering the temple was like stepping into a different dimension, connecting with the eternal reality of God.

7. **Beyond just a place of worship, how was the temple a metaphor for heaven and what does it teach us about our relationship with God?**

The temple was a copy of heaven, providing a way to imagine and understand its realities through symbolic imagery. The way God interacted with Israel was expressed in the temple and in turn allowed them to understand God more completely. This is a reflection of us being theomorphic, made in God's image. The architecture and structure of the temple, like our own bodies, serve as metaphors to help us conceptualize the divine.

8. **How does the discussion about the formality of Old Testament worship relate to New Testament worship practices?**

Old Testament worship, as described in the sources, had very defined rituals and structures with temple worship at the center. The New Testament, while maintaining core principles, often allows for more freedom and variation in worship practices. This gives freedom to various denominations and cultures to engage with God in ways that honor His teachings while also being culturally relevant. However, even in the New Testament there are echoes of temple imagery used to describe the church and its members.