

## Dr. Bruce Waltke, Psalms, Lecture 7

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This is Dr. Bruce Waltke in his teaching on the book of Psalms. This is session number seven, Hymns, Cause for Praise, Hymn Theology.

Prayer: We thank you for all the means of grace, the blood of Christ that died for our sins and cleanses us from all sin, cleanses our hands from our misdeeds, cleanses our lips from our poor speech and wrong speech.

Thank you that you forgave us in Christ. So, our sufficiency in our ministry today is not of ourselves, but it's all of your grace. Thank you for your Spirit that inspired your word.

And now we pray that your Spirit will illuminate your word. I pray that you'll give me the grace to handle it with integrity, grace and intelligence. That is not of myself, for I know how sinful I am, but of you.

I pray for every student who listens to this course. Some are lowly and discouraged. May they be encouraged.

And some are proud and feel self-assured. May they be humbled unto your word. It's the same word, but we'll minister to each student differently.

May your Spirit apply it appropriately in Christ's name. Amen. All right.

We're considering different approaches to the book of Psalms. Our intention is not to develop the theology of the Psalms per se, or the spiritual life that we may gather from the Psalms, but rather to give us all the students tools for a lifetime of study in the Psalms. I could be helpful, I think, in this course in considering different approaches by which we can mine the Psalms for its theological and spiritual truths for our edification.

So, one approach was a historical approach in which we accept the superscripts that give us the authorship of the Psalm. In many cases, 73 of them are by David. I made the case against most of academia, that indeed those superscripts are trustworthy.

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.

That enabled us to explore more broadly that the King is a very dominant person in the Psalms. The Psalms often speak of the King, even of those that are not by David.

So in Psalm 84, which is a pilgrimage Psalm, when they arrive in Jerusalem, they pray for the King because he's the one that represents the kingdom.

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.

Jesus is the son of David. And so, therefore, they speak of him. The New Testament interpretation is not something imposed on the Old Testament.

It grows naturally out of the trajectory of the development of God's revelation of himself. And we also know that the church today, you and I, as we're in the church, that we are in Christ and that we are the seed of Abraham. Therefore, we are in Christ and he prays for us and we are praying in Christ.

So that when we pray, we are praying in conjunction with Christ. We pray in the name of Christ in unity with the son of God and the son of David. So that I think it has profound implications.

Another approach is the form approach, understanding the kind of literature with which you're dealing. We began that on the broad concept of poetry. So, we went into how do you read poetry? We saw poetry has three aspects to it in Hebrew poetry at any rate.

All poetry is terse. It's like a slideshow, prose is more like a motion picture. So, you get a very defined picture with each verse.

You sort of have to put together how the verses go together as they develop. So, it's terse and it's a very heightened style. It's full of figures of speech.

It shows us that God himself is very aesthetic. But the fundamental idea of poetry is parallelism. You say a line and then you say a, not a restatement, but a related statement that gives you another angle on it.

So, we said, for example, Psalm 2, he will rebuke them in his wrath. He will terrify them. He will rebuke them in his anger.

He will terrify them in his wrath. So obviously you have the parallelism between anger and wrath and rebuke and terrorize, but then rebuke and terrorize they're parallel, but they're not the same thing. That rebuke is what God does and the terrorize is the result of the rebuke.

And 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.

And at the same time, how do they differ? And that enters into all sorts of rich insights into the word. So we did that at the end of the last hour on form. We looked at a given poem and tried to, we did Psalm 23.

One of the aspects of poetry is, of course, figures of speech. The whole Psalm is a figure of speech of a sheep and a bastion land. It shows us in Psalm 23 that the Lord provides for his flock.

The Lord restores his flock. The Lord protects his flock. It's all done through this imagery, imaginary language.

So the flock is, therefore, the provision is feeding on the, well, in the Greek, in Hebrew there's different words for grass. The Desha is the very finest grass, not St. Augustine grass, but the golf course grass, the very tender grass. And the restoration is by the quiet waters.

He restores the sheep because the sheep can't take too much. Then the sheep comes back. Even though it's through the darkest of ravines, the sheep doesn't fear for God is with him and he has the weapons to destroy the enemy.

And then it changes the image. Now we're in a sheik's tent. So when he gets back, it wasn't so good an idea to end up in a sheepfold.

So instead of being in a sheepfold, we're in this Psalmist's tent and the same truths are being presented because now in place of grass, you have a table and it's a cup running overabundant. And it's replaced with the watering hole. We now have oil anointing the head to refresh it.

And the protection is all of this is in the presence of my enemies. So, he's saying the same thing again, but with another image of the, from sheep, which is wonderful, better the sheik's tent and a host. But then he ends climatically with the last scene, which is the truth of the psalm is the temple.

I will return to the house of the Lord, which is the temple. And there, he tells us what this provision protects, if you want to put in prose and abstract it, what I'm talking about is God's goodness and his faithfulness to us. So, you get the literal interpretation of what it's all about at the end of the psalm.

But the point there is I've tried to use the psalm to illustrate this is figurative language. The truth is, whenever we talk about God, where God is spirit, anything we

say about God is figurative, it's metaphorical. And we can only describe God in these metaphors.

I refuse to change metaphors about God. So, if God presents himself as a father, and that's a metaphor for representing his relationship to us, I cannot change that image to mother. But when I did that, I fundamentally changed my way God is understood.

So, I have to stay with its own metaphors in the midst of it. We move beyond poetry into more finesse with the psalms. And now we were talking about different forms of psalms.

This is when I gave a whole background yesterday to form criticism, its strengths and its weaknesses, and how it came about as a result of higher criticism. But in any case, we saw that the concern of form criticism, which comes out of Germanic scholarship. So they talk about it, and I'll use the German words because this is what's used in the literature.

And so as you're reading, you're going to see these terms. You're going to see *sitz im leben*, which means setting in life. Where did the psalm originate? Now those originally, the Gunkel form of criticism, they had dismissed Davidic authorship.

They needed historical context. And so, they asked, what was the setting in life where this was circulated, where this psalm originated? I think some psalms, such as the Psalms of Him that we're going to be looking at and the songs of grateful praise, did originate in the temple, probably with guilds of singers. I think they originated also with David who designed the temple, and looked forward to the temple.

And I suspect he composed hymns in anticipation that there would be a temple. He had laid aside all the money for the temple, all the reserves for the temple. He had given the design for the temple.

He was the poet laureate who wrote the dedicatory song, Psalm 30 for the temple. And so, I would imagine he also prepared hymns for the temple. So, he could well be the author of hymns that were intended for the temple.

I'm really not sure whether his petition psalms were in his mind originally intended for the temple. I don't know that, it's not clear to me. But what I do know is that eventually his poems of great anguish and pain and protest and struggling with God's justice, they eventually ended up in the temple worship because they were handed over for the director of music, which meant now what was personal to David is now applicable to all of us.

That gives us the license to use these psalms for ourselves because they were handed over to the director of music. So, his petitions and his praises were intended

for our use, our petitions and our praises for the whole community in connection with their king. So that begins to give you a different way of looking at these psalms.

Now I'm looking at, and then I've said they're grouped, Gunkel grouped them by common words, common mood, common motifs, and so forth. He ended up with five basic types of psalms. These were the hymns, which were songs of praise.

I think wrongly, unfortunately it's too strong a word. He limited the royal psalms to 10 psalms that mentioned the king. So, Psalm 2, for example, I've set my king upon Zion, my holy hill.

He called that a royal psalm. Psalm 18 of the king's victories, Psalm 20, where the king goes out to battle and the priest and the people pray for the king as he goes out to battle. Psalm 21, the king returns victorious from battle.

Psalm 45 is a wedding song for the king. Psalm 110 is a coronation liturgy. I have set, he's a king like Melchizedek and that's about the king.

So, you have 10 Psalms that explicitly mention the king, but they're not all grouped together, just kind of sprinkled through the psalter because the whole psalter, the eye is basically the king. These happen to mention the king on specific circumstances. So that's the second category.

That's a category that I don't, it's too restricted for me. The third group is after hymns. His third group was, he called them complaint psalms.

They go by different names. They can be called complaint. They can be called lament.

They can be called petition. As we'll see, these psalms have distinct motifs and the psalms that we may call petition, they have within them, as one of the motifs, they have lament or they have complaint. And so therefore you can either call them by the one motif, which is petition.

They almost all except Psalm 63, to my knowledge, have petition. Or they have lament and you can say lament or complaint because sometimes they're lamenting their situation in which they find themselves, or they're protesting that it's unjust that we're in this situation. And there you can call that a complaint.

That distinction is not normally made in the literature, but it's a worthwhile distinction. But so, therefore, he grouped them all together and he called it complaint. I say complaint, lament, petition, and different names are used in the literature.

I'm partly for your students, I'm doing this so that when you read commentaries and you read this kind of language, you know what the words mean and where the writer is coming from. So, so far, we've talked about there's a praise psalm, a hymn, and there's a petition psalm. And then there's a third one and that is grateful praise, a todah.

A grateful praise differs from praise in general. In the praise in general, you're talking about God's attributes, his being, his essence, his communicable attributes, his eternity, his omnipotence. And you're talking about his work in Israel's history broadly.

It is not specific. So, you trace through the history of Israel and what God did for his people broadly throughout history. That's the praise.

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. So legitimately a distinct type. There are 15 songs of grateful praise.

There are 50 songs of petition. In your notes, I give you all the psalms, whether they're hymns of praise or not. I didn't do that.

Gunkel did that. I mean, I may have talked about that. Yes, it's a massive piece of work and typical Teutonic German way, every detail, it's just, it's an amazing piece of work.

I don't know that he ever really himself praised God. Maybe he did, but I don't sense it. When he finished, he was praising God.

Pardon? When he got through with that big work, he was praising God. He didn't though he died. Yeah, he killed him.

Well, in any case, and so, and he divided it between community lament and individual lament. Whether the whole nation was lamenting as in a drought or in defeat or an individual lament like David's lamenting against the enemies of either the Saulide period or the Absalom Revolt period and so forth. So those were the broad categories.

I was saying that it happened at the time I was reading Gunkel that I was reading the Chronicle. I was struck, bowled over really by 1 Chronicles 16.4, where David appointed the Levites to petition Lehasia, Lehadot to give thanks, Lehalel to praise. Right there, the Chronicle told me there were three kinds of psalms.

There were to petition, there was to praise, and there was to give thanks. It didn't distinguish between the individual and the community. Part of it is because it's a very distinct, a very difficult distinction because the eye is the king who represents the people, who are concerned for the people.

And that's why when we look at Psalm 4, he says, many are saying all that one would show us good, which we said bent rain. And then he says, fill my heart with great joy when their grain and new wine abound. So he identifies with the community and this constant back and forth.

So, it is Christ praying for us, for our good. And he rejoices when our needs are met by his grace. So, then we got into, we're in the midst of hymns, Psalms of praise.

So, we're looking at that one particular form and our method is to look at the Psalter broadly. So, we have a feeling for the Psalter. Then I will pick out one or two isolated psalms and deal with them in some depth.

So we can savor what we've learned broadly from the whole mass of psalms. So that's where we are. We're on page 55 of our notes and the middle of it, we have the hymn.

In this part, in this lecture, six and seven, we divided it into three parts. The first part was to distinguish between these two types of praise psalms, the hymns, and the thanksgiving, the songs of grateful praise, and specific answer to prayer. I also commented that there is no word for thanksgiving in Hebrew.

We don't have a better translation. I tried to explain that because in thanksgiving, on Thanksgiving Day, we say, thank you. That's not Hebrew.

Hebrew is on Thanksgiving Day, you would stand up and say, let me tell you what the Lord has done for us. And you be very specific. You don't say, thank you, God.

You tell it's public. Let me tell everybody what God has done for me. And it's public praise.

It's grateful praise. So, it's not some private exchange between you and God. It's a praise because the word Thanksgiving is todah, which means to confess.

It can be used for confessing sin, but it's also a statement of praise that I confess God did this for me and it's not an accident. So you publicly confess what he has done for you. That's what we mean by grateful praise.

That's the distinction I'm making on the two types of Psalms at the top of the page. Then we have the general praise. We deal with the hymns as we've discussed it.

Then at the end, on page 72, I have there a little section on songs of grateful praise. So, I start with noting there are two types. Then I develop the one type and then I develop the minor type.

So that's how the lecture is laid out. Now let's look at the hymns. My outline got a little bit mixed up here, but there are five points I want to make about hymns.

The first one is the motifs of the hymn. The second one is the performance who actually performs and sings the hymns. That's a bit down here.

I should have put down the page where that's for. Yeah, well, page 55 and I'm trying to find the next one. By performance.

Yeah. Where? 54, 64. Yeah.

Okay. That's the performance. 64 is the, yeah, that's the performance.

Then the C is the theology of what do they praise about God? What's the content of praise? The theology of praise. Then I talk about a subtype of praise psalm. That is the Songs of Zion, which is on page 71, where you celebrate where God lives, Songs of Zion.

Then finally, I mentioned briefly, but didn't develop it. I just call attention, there are so-called enthronement psalms. I think it's a misnomer.

It's somewhat of a misnomer, but it's in the literature and everybody will talk about an enthronement psalm. Anyone dealing with integrity and scholarship and reading is going to read about an enthronement psalm, Songs of Zion. So, it's appropriate that on a seminary level, that it's my responsibility to orient the student to the literature, to introduce the student to the literature, to introduce concepts.

Since so much literature is academic literature is written from presuppositions that are non-evangelical that as an evangelical professor, I'm interacting and appraising all the time, sifting what is good and what I think is bad and evaluating it. So to guide the student through it. So that's what we're up to.

All right, going back then to page 55 under the hymns, I begin by discussing what are the motifs of the hymn. There are three. They're the call to praise, the introduction.

And then there's the cause for praise. Interestingly enough, I like to think of it as the call to praise is the match that ignites the fire. The cause for praise is the fuel that is lit up.



What are you praising? So, one is the match. The call is the match that ignites the fire. Then you have the fuel that is the fire itself.

That's the call. Then it ends often with a hallelujah, praise the Lord. You go back to a renewed call to praise.

So those are the three types that we get, the conclusion. As I illustrated it on page 56, by the shortest psalm, there you have the call, praise the Lord, all you nations, extol him, all you peoples. And now you have the cause, great is his love toward us and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

And then you have hallelujah, praise the Lord. That's as short as you can get. Profound, absolutely profound.

You're asking the pagan nations to praise the Lord because of what he did for us. Think about that. Isn't that incredible? You want the world, the nations to praise Israel's God for what he did for them and what he means to them.

That demands a little bit of exploration, I think. And that's what we will be looking at, what we're talking about here. Then yesterday we looked at the whole Psalm 33, which is a much more normal and extensive hymn of praise.

Then we got back, and we're on page 57. Now I begin to develop those motifs. So I begin by discussing the motif, the introduction of the call to praise.

Then I'm going to develop on page 62, the cause for praise, and then the conclusion on page 64. So, you can see we have quite a few pages here, almost five pages where I'm going to, where we are reflecting on the introduction and the call to praise. And so, there are several points I'm making about the call to praise that I find worthy of reflection.

And I'm really much taking this out of Gunkel, but there are three. First of all, the fact that it is an imperative mood. You're being called upon and in an imperative mood told to praise the Lord.

And that's worth thinking about. Gunkel in his finesse, Germanic way, he divides it up into second person, third person, and first person. And so you have, you praise the Lord or let people praise the Lord, or I will praise the Lord.

Let me praise the Lord. He's very finessed. But the point is, it's in the imperative mood.

And I raised the question yesterday with C.S. Lewis, is God narcissistic? Does God need to be? Is he insecure? Why is God telling us to praise me? We would be

offended if anyone ever said, praise me, look how great I am. I mean, we don't like these sports athletes who go dancing around and praise me and look at me. Something's psychologically wrong here.

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. So, he likens it to a painting, a great painting.

He says, what do we mean when a painting is admirable? We mean by that, it is so great it's worthy of praise. And if you don't praise it, there's something wrong with you and you're dead if you don't see it. Therefore, it depends if you're talking to somebody who is rebellious and you say, praise the Lord.

That's one thing that's admonitory, admonishment, and correction. Praise the Lord because you're not praising the Lord. Well, I think more often it's more like a cheerleader who is igniting the fire and helping the whole congregation to get involved.

And the expression I hate is sing like you mean it. Well, I hate that expression. Sing because you mean it and so forth.

But we all understand the good intention of that. So, in other words, and then that's where we ended up. We had that on page 58.

And so he said about God, here's the object to be admired. And he likened a person who doesn't see it at the end of that sentence, the incomplete and crippled lives of those who are tone deaf, never heard a sound, have never been in love, never known true friendship, never cared for a good book, never enjoyed the feel of the morning air on their cheeks. They're faint images of people who have never seen God in all of his splendor and could praise him and admire him.

They're tone-deaf. They're blind to great art. So, I find that I used to be, I was a bit bored by theology, but in my secular age where there's a defamation of God and neglect of God, I find thinking of God's attributes totally refreshing and healthy.

And it's missing, just missing. So, thank God for that we can come to church and praise him. In our daily lives, we can praise him.

And we read at Psalm 95 that we are to praise him in all circumstances. And he says, come and praise the Lord. This is on page 58, come and praise the Lord.

And then in verse six, he said, do not harden your hearts as you did at Merivah, as you did that day at Massa in the wilderness when they were lacking water and they complained instead of praising God. So, instead of complaining, and there's a place

for that, but let's make sure we move on beyond the complaint and we should give honest expression to our feelings. But let's move on beyond that and praise the Lord.

Okay. Page 59, another consideration is the mood of enthusiasm. It's not tepid.

God likes us either hot, you're going to be either hot or cold. He wants us to be like Melanie. I think that Melanie, she's all there.

So, she's not lukewarm. She's all there. And that's what God wants.

He wants a fervent spirit, somebody who's all there. So, this is typically Gunkel analyzing everything. The form of the performance illustrates it.

It's done with music, singing, song, musical instruments, and music accompanies it and expresses our enthusiasm. It's performed with movement. They enter before him and his gates, there are actually processions.

They clap their hands. They praise the Lord. They lift up your hands.

Well, this is a quote, praise the Lord, all you servants of the Lord who minister by night in the house of the Lord, that would be the servants of the Lord are the Levites, the priests. So, they stand all night and all day and night. They are praising the Lord, lifting up their hands in the sanctuary, and praise the Lord.

He's exhorting them against formalism. It has to be with enthusiasm to please God. So, the main words, which are C. 3, the main words, that are accented through their position in the hymns, designate the mood.

It's rejoice, exalt, be happy. And that is really often the point of the psalm itself is to rejoice and celebrate God. Now it used to be, it was offered up with a sacrifice.

The praise went up with a sacrifice, an animal sacrifice. But with the coming of the New Testament, which was before the destruction of the temple and the sacrifice of Christ, now in the writing offer up the sacrifice of praise. So, as we offer up our praise, it is like a sacrifice being offered up to God.

It's a sweet savor to God, but without the animal. So, without the animal, we're still carrying on the praise of God today, when we offer up our praise to God in prayer. That's a sweet savor to God.

It's for our good. We're expressing that we are alive to reality. We're not serving a dead God.

And so, therefore, we're not dead. If God is living and we praise him, we're going to be fully alive to reality. We'll behold people in the midst of it.

And hallelujah, that begins and ends the psalm that gives some expression to enthusiasm. So, look at reflecting on this call to praise. The first thing is to note, it's an imperative to do it and to do it with enthusiasm.

The third question is who does this? Who performs it? It's done by choirs and or the congregation. So in ancient Israel, they had choirs. These were the Levitical guilds.

So, you have psalms by the sons of Korah, the Korahite psalms, the Asaphic psalms. These were different guilds in Israel, Levitical guilds. Some were singers, some were gatekeepers in the temple.

They had different functions in the temple so that the Korahites were also gatekeepers, I think. And so, they were also temple singers, which was a high honor to be that. So, and it was a whole congregation.

And seemingly when it says, give thanks to the Lord, who is saying that? And we may assume there was a choir director of some sort. So, Gunkel calls attention to Miriam. Miriam, the prophet, Aaron, his sister, took a timbrel in her hand and all the women followed her with timbrel and dancing.

Then Miriam sang to them and they were all singing after the leadership of Miriam, who was leading them in this dance of praise. These choirs and congregations are mentioned frequently. You can see Gunkel analyzes it.

You have all the verses. He didn't have a computer. He just analyzed everything.

So, I just scanned his book and this is what you have here, modified it a little bit. Those who praise him receive all kinds of names of moral honor. He does not want praise.

He doesn't want people who live adulterous lives to be singing Amazing Grace. That doesn't please God. He hates it.

You have people who are not living right and they sing gospel songs and they praise Jesus as a literary genre. These people are on drugs and they're leading young people astray morally. They're singing songs of praise and quartets are singing songs of praise.

God doesn't want that. He hates it. It's an abomination to him.

That's what the point of this is. So, you read, I am pious ones. They should praise the righteous, the upright, the upright in heart, those who fear God, those who love his name, those who love his salvation, those who seek him, and those who hide themselves in him.

Those are all adjectival expressions, modifiers of those who praise the Lord. So that gives you some insight of how to evaluate what we're hearing in gospel music. I'm sure there are very wonderful people, but they're not all.

We should evaluate it. I'm troubled when we make praise entertainment and it's theatrical. Psalm 115, not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory.

Yet we celebrate these different singers. We praise these different singers. I have problems with that.

Not to us, not to us, but to your name. You never give praise to the psalmist. He never calls for praise.

He wants God to get all the praise. So I think some of these reflections are well worthwhile that Gunkel was giving to us. I gave you there that Psalm 50, which is a Psalm of Asaph.

It's a prophetic word and it's calling for praise and sacrifices of praise. God wants it, not that he needs it, but it's appropriate. It's fitting.

It's right. But then after saying, for example, on 14, yes, sacrifice, thank offerings to God. That is, he's answered your prayer.

You could see a specific, fulfill your vows to the most high that when you were in distress, you knew the appropriate response would be that you would go to the temple and you would tell everybody what God had done for you. You would have a total sacrifice in which everybody or your friends and community would eat with you as you give your thanks to God. They call on me in a day of trouble.

I will deliver you and you will honor me. But to the wicked person, God says, what right have you to recite my laws? I'll take my covenant on your lips. You hate instruction, cast my words behind you.

When you see a thief, you join with them. You throw in your lot with adulterers. You use your mouth for evil, harness your tongue to deceit.

You sit and testify against your brother and slander your own mother's son. When you did these things and I kept silent, you thought I was exactly like you, but I now

arraign you and set my accusations before you. Consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you to pieces with no one to rescue.

Those who sacrifice thank offerings honor me and to the blameless, I will show my salvation." So, he doesn't want the wicked to have no right to recite his word. It's hypocritical. Thank God for my salvation in Christ.

Who could stand apart from God's grace? How often I've sinned with my mouth and said wrong things. We all have. Yet God's grace is greater than our sins.

Let us take heart and be encouraged. He wants all the world to sing. This is what's interesting.

You see, he wants everyone to praise him. All the world, here's all the data, all the world. This is on page 61.

You've got all the world. He gives you all the verses there. The earth, the many islands, the ends of the earth, all the inhabitants of the world, all flesh, all that breathes, the families of nations, all peoples and nations, the kingdoms of the earth, all kings and princes, even the enemies of I Am.

He wants everyone. So, in other words, this motif that the Gentiles should praise him is not a minor motif. You could see all these verses that are calling on it.

So, what's going on here? Well, I think what's going on is going back to Genesis 12.1-3. God said to Abraham, separate yourself from your land and from your country and from your people, which Abraham found very hard to do, to cut ties with his pagan family and to step out by faith with God alone. And he was very slow to do it. As many people are in many cultures, they are slow to step out and separate themselves from their culture, their traditions, and their history.

But to become a Christian, you have to step out. Furthermore, for the Christian, there is baptism that separates you when you're baptized and the whole world knows I've identified with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We're not saved by baptism, but it's a very necessary public proclamation that I belong to the one who died for me and rose again from the dead.

I've died to my old life and I'm raised to my new way of life. So that's a very important step in our identification as Christians where we separate ourselves and we join a new community. That's a decisive moment.

In Judaism, you're not a Christian unless you're baptized. In Chinese cultures, you're not a Japanese. You're not a Christian unless you're baptized.

It's when you're baptized, that's when they will disown you. That's the distinctive mark. I'm just saying, that's how it would be.

Leave your family and community. Did I really leave my family? Well, I'll tell you, were you publicly baptized? I'll tell you whether or not you left your family. You made your new identification with Christ.

Then he says, separating, then he says, I will bless you. Remember what I said about blessing? I'll fill you with the potency for life to reproduce. As a result, you will be victorious.

The two ideas to bless, I will make you fruitful and multiply, and you will subdue the earth. So the two ideas are to multiply and be victorious. As I said, when you get to the New Testament and Jesus blesses, and breathes on his disciples, he blesses them.

He's not blessing them to reproduce physically. He never had children. He never married.

He's blessing them to reproduce spiritually. So, the church will grow and be victorious. So, we need to pray for his blessing on us that we may reproduce spiritually as fruit.

We may be victorious to establish the kingdom of God, which is a kingdom of love and grace and truth and all that's beautiful and wonderful. Well, that's what he set apart. God's going to bless them.

Then he says to Abraham, and you will be a blessing. In other words, you're going to make other people fruitful and victorious. You will be a blessing.

Now, how does that come about? What's going to come about, God says, if they curse you, then I will curse them. There are two different words for curse in Hebrew here. The one is, if they curse you, the Hebrew word is qalal.

It means, qalal means to be light. If they treat you as insignificant, as just another human being, just another man, that's what the word curse means. They denigrate you and you're no different from anybody else.

That's exactly what they want to do with Jesus. They want to get the historical Jesus. They wanted to get away that he's just another human being.

Yes, you're a fine person, but he's just another human being. They are cursing Jesus because they're not recognizing who Jesus really is. They're just treating him as another human being.

That's the curse. That's qalal, to treat the person lightly. God said, whoever does that, I will curse.

Now that is arah, that's a different word. That's the opposite of blessing. They are going to end up in death and they're going to be sterile and they're not going to be victorious.

That's what I see happening in America today. We have treated Jesus indifferently. The result is we're not, the church is not reproducing the way it should reproduce itself.

It's not as victorious as it should be. But in any case, whoever treats you lightly, insignificantly, I will curse. But whoever blesses you, which means in this case, recognizes you as the source of blessing.

Therefore, whoever blesses you, that is, they want you to increase. Whoever wants you to increase and be victorious, I will bless them and make them be fruitful, be increased, and be victorious. That's how it comes about.

So what the psalmist is saying, Gentiles bless us and you will be blessed. That's what it's about. All nations should, in effect, know that I am, this is the great one Psalm 100, know that the Lord I am, he himself is God.

And know that, that we are his people. We are his, we are the sheep of his pasture. Acknowledge that and enter into his blessing and praise the Lord.

That's what we're talking about here. It's really a missionary hymn book, trying to get nations salvation through the mediation of the mediatorial kingdom. Now, today that is realized not in unbelieving Zionism and Jews.

That's not how it is. They've said no to Jesus. They've treated him insignificantly.

They've cut themselves off. I believe they're going to come back if I read Romans 11, but presently that's not the kingdom of God. Who is the seed of Abraham? Who is the one that gives blessing? It's Jesus.

He is the son of Abraham. He is the one who is perfect. So for us today in the new dispensation, it means bless the Lord Jesus Christ.

Know who he is. He's the one of salvation and there's no salvation apart from him. So, own him, bless him that he may increase and be victorious.

And you in turn will be increased and victorious. So, who is Christ today? Well, it's us. It's you and me, an amazing grace of God.



I think it's worthwhile looking at two verses that make that point to understand who we really are. We are the people of God. He chose us.

He's our shepherd. So, Galatians chapter three would be one verse. I'd have you look at Galatians 3 and the end of the chapter.

It's good to have a Bible with some book headings on it to find my way around. Now chapter three, verse 26. So, in Christ Jesus, you are all called children of God through faith.

And he's talking to the church at Galatia until they represent all the church. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female.

For you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. You are the people of God.

You are Abraham's seed. All too often we think it's the Jews who are the Abraham's seed physically, but they'd be cut off. The seed of Abraham, the spiritual seed of Abraham is you and me.

Whoever blesses you as representing Jesus will be blessed. And you talked about the Gideon, the man who led your father to Christ through the Gideon Bible. You see, he blessed you.

And then you multiplied. That was the blessing. Or again, take another verse of Scripture, 1 Peter chapter two, verses nine and 10.

Now Peter is talking to the church abroad just as Paul was talking to the church at Galatia, Gentile church when he said that. And he said, there's neither Jew nor Greek. If you're in Christ, you are the seed of Abraham apart from your ethnic identity.

1 Peter chapter two, verses nine and 10 to those that are scattered abroad of the church most of them Gentiles. And then he says, verse nine to them, but you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. And that's why you were called is to give praise to God.

And as you give praise to God, then others will bless you and you in turn will be blessed. So all the world should praise the Lord. We'll be looking at the psalm later on.

Shout for joy to God, all the earth, sing the glory of his name. But notice all the earth, sing the glory of his name, make his praise glorious. Say to God, how awesome are your deeds.

So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you. All the earth bows down to you. They sing praise to you.

They sing the praises of your name. So not only the congregation and Levitical choir sings praise, all the earth sings his praise and all the earth gives praise to him. When you just look at, Oh my Lord, my God, how great thou art.

And when I look at it, I see the rolling thunder and I see the mountains and so forth. All of that is giving praise to God. I mean, when I look at the creation, it's just beyond comprehension and it gives tremendous praise to God.

What a God is this that made such art as this, the beauty of it. And, you know, the computer is just fantastic. We can see all over the earth.

You get these pictures from people, the mountains, the rivers, the streams. Just now I just sent out a whole bunch of pictures that just overwhelm me, birds singing and the little insects. It's just all of them.

It's just beyond comprehension to me. The whole creation is praising God. The people looking at it don't praise him.

It is incredible. It's incredible. And not only that, but the last one is I will, myself will sing his praise.

Gunkel counts about a hundred forms. He didn't list them all. One time he didn't list them.

He didn't give all a hundred. But here's the famous one. Praise the Lord, my soul, all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits. The fact we're here is his benefit. We owe our very lives to him.

We owe our very breaths to him. If he takes his breath away, we die. His benefits are everywhere.

We go out and have these great dinners and wine and so forth. Praise the Lord, all my soul, for all your benefits to us. All right.

Now we come to the main body, the cause for praise. Here I'll jump immediately to point C, the theology on page 64. The theology, what is the cause for praise? Now you can write a whole theology out of this.

What I want to do is I'm just trying to give you a feel for the Psalter at this point. I certainly can't give you all the content, but on the other hand, I feel that we have to have a smorgasbord of feeling for the total book and what the fuel of praise is, what they're praising. So that's what we're doing.

We're going to divide this into 10 parts. The first point I'm making, is the theology of the people themselves. Their theology, as I said, their words of praise becomes God's word to us.

So we're learning theology through their words of praise. So they offered their praise in the temple. It's written in inspired Scripture.

Today we read their words of praise that was such a sweet saving to God. We're learning theology in the midst of enthusiastic praise. What a wonderful way, appropriate way to learn theology.

So instead of having theology as dry discourse, scientific analysis that you get in systematics, you're learning theology in the enthusiasm of praise. I think that's authentic. That's how it should be.

I doing this, to some extent, I feel I bastardize this wonderful material by just addressing it in this analytical way. But I think it's helpful to see what the attributes of God are. So that's the first point.

Gunkel makes the point that in the Babylonian and Egyptian parallels, you rarely get pure praise. It's almost always attached to petition, which gives you the suspicion that there's an underlying motive of being apart from really praising God. Well, now to page 65.

Having said that, he now sketches a powerful image of God's incommunicable attributes. Now theologians distinguish, I think properly, between God's incommunicable attributes and his communicable attributes. His incommunicable attributes are attributes we cannot share.

They cannot be communicated that we participate in them as we have the same attributes. The communicable attributes are those that we also can have by our relationship with God. So, the incommunicable attributes would be his aseity, his eternality, his omniscience, knowing all things, all-powerful.

Those I cannot participate. I can admire, I can praise them and they're absolutely necessary, but I cannot participate in that. That's not me.

On the other hand, his communicable attributes are his grace, mercy, truth, and justice. Those are communicable attributes that I can mirror with God. So, he makes rightly so, theologians all do this.

They make a distinction between the incommunicable and the communicable to help us understand God better. Now the communicable attributes are, first of all, his aseity that's in the first paragraph. By aseity, that's a Latin word.

The "a" means from and the "seity" means self. That means he exists from himself. That is to say, God is not derivative.

No one made God. He's not dependent upon anything. Everything depends upon him.

So, therefore, he's from himself and something is. The human mind cannot understand that. Everything we know has a beginning and an end, but there is an is.

What is the is? The materialist says, matter is, it's eternal. It always has been. The Bible says God created matter.

God is, spirit is, that's a fundamental divide in philosophy. What is and what is reality? Is matter reality, the whole reality? I would argue matter is brilliantly organized by laws or it wouldn't exist. In other words, there are laws within the whole creation.

Laws assume intelligence. Somebody may have a law by which it all operates. It seems to me.

So, at least that's a rational thought about what really matters is that the Bible says, everything depends upon him. To me, it's also rational that whatever is, that it is life. It is truth.

It is justice. Everything else apart from what Jesus is, the son of God, who is the image of God and represents what Jesus is, everything that is not like Jesus is a delusion. It's a counterfeit.

It leads us astray. Christ is the word who was always there. The best way you could say it is from the beginning, but Christ is, the Trinity is, and that's real being.

Everything else is ephemeral and everything is dependent upon that first cause. That's what we're talking about. That's what the Psalms are saying.

This is, I'm quoting Gunkel. He has Yahweh, or I would say I am, quoting from the Psalm. You remain God forever.

And you have been from before the mountains were born before the earth and the world were brought forth. A thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when they are past. Again, you founded the earth before time.

The heavens are the work of your hands. These will pass away, but you remain. They all fall away like a garment.

You change them like a robe, but you remain the same and your years have no end. Lord, how many are your works? The earth is full of your creatures. He spoke and it happened.

He commanded and it stood there. They all wait on you so that you offer food at the right time. You give it to them.

They harvest it. You open your hand and they are satisfied with goodness. You hide your face.

They cover. You take their breath and they expire and turn back to their dust. Everything depends upon God.

But that's great. How could you say it better than in poetry? What a wonderful, I mean, I am so blessed that God called me to do what I do. I am dealing with the greatest literature ever written.

It's totally aesthetically satisfying. It's intellectually challenging and always wonderful. It's like listening to Bach.

You always hear something new in his fugues and whatever. There's no end to it. It's such a spiritual blessing.

How privileged we are that we have the word of God like this and we have truth. What a privilege. Bless the Lord, O my soul, that we have a class like this.

We have biblical training like this, that we could spread it and enjoy it and learn how to read and minister to the word. Bless God for Bill Mounce and so forth. Okay.

Closer related to that on the next one is God is eternal. We've already touched about that and not only eternal. You see, I just scanned Gunkel's introduction on all the verses.

He's holy and awesome, highly exalted over all the world, majestic and magnificent, powerful beyond measure, great in works and deeds, unending in knowledge, and incomparably wonderful. So, this is his incommunicable. No one has his power.

No one has his wisdom. No one can be on the present and so forth. Okay.

So those are his incommunicable attributes that we're learning through the enthusiastic praise of his people. That's the best way to learn theology, I would think. Now powerful images of his communicable attributes and his major communicable attributes are given, say, for example, in Exodus 34:6. You might want to turn there because those are the five fundamental attributes, Exodus 34:6. This is in the scene of the golden calf and Israel has sinned egregiously.

They've changed their glorious God that we've been speaking of into the image of a bull who eats grass. And if you don't mind my saying it, shits. Can you imagine? Defecates and you worship that.

How could you possibly do that? And how could you possibly change the lovely Lord Jesus Christ and praise people who are adulterers, fornicators, deceitful? How could you substitute and praise people and praise the place of Jesus? And how could you substitute mammon and money that's so unstable, fleas away, sex appeal, your own pride. How can you praise that compared to Jesus? It's so irrational and wrong-headed to me.

But here's the communicable attributes, Exodus chapter 34:6. And Israel, I got off the background, they had committed the golden calf and substituted this grass-eating bull for their glorious God. And they, in a kind of a voodoo, in the pagan religions, they imitated the fertility of the gods. And so they had a sex orgy.

Can you imagine it at the base of the mountain? When Moses comes, God is furious. And if he weren't, there's something wrong with God. If you don't have moral indignation, there's something wrong with you.

When you see evil and you're not indignant against it, you're dead. And God has moral indignation. If he didn't, he's not worthy of worship.

So, he has moral indignation and Moses doesn't have it either until he comes down the mountain and he sees it and he smashes the stone tablets. But now what's going to happen? What will happen with God's people? Is it going to die? And God says we'll start over with you, Moses. We'll make a new people out of you, out of the seed of Abraham.

Moses says, no, that's not what you said. And Moses, a very humble man, what an honor if the whole world went back to Moses. No, that can't be it.

And then God says, plan B. Well, we'll have an angel of the Lord go before you. He'll show you the way. Moses says, no, I'm not going to go.

I want you. You have to be with me in my presence. And so the question is how can God be present with this unclean people? Of course, they have a sacrificial system, but then Moses says, show me your glory.

And his glory is his grace that the perfect God can live with an imperfect people. And so God, he says, show me a glory. And in Exodus chapter 34, verse six, and the Lord passed in front of Moses proclaiming the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.

So, there you have it, his compassion, his, well, abounding in love is fine. It includes his Rachamim, Hananim, Erech Apayim, Hesed Ve 'emet. I can think better in Hebrew sometimes.

So let me think in Hebrew here. The first word is Rachamim, which means his mercy. It's the word that derives from the womb.

It's what a mother feels toward a helpless child who cannot feed itself, cleanse itself, bathe itself, has total compassion, mercy. And Hananim, grace bestows kindness where it's undeserved. Erech Apayim means long face, totally patient with the people, not fretting.

I'll talk about hesed and Erech Ve 'emet faithfulness and failing love. These are his attributes. And that's why we exist in spite of our sin.

He's gracious. He does not hold his anger against us and he's free because Christ has paid the price for us. So, God is just.

But he goes on to say that yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished. Well, how can that be? He's just forgiven all the guilty and now we have the guilty unpunished. The best I understand that is if you don't accept his grace, you're still in your sin and you're guilty.

But if you accept his grace and his sacrifice and his forgiveness, then you're forgiven. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those. And he forgives all of our trespasses.

That's his grace to us. However, wicked we may have been, whatever skeletons are in our closet, they'd be moved from us as far as the East is from the West because God is gracious and his grace is greater than our sin. That's why he can live with us and be in our midst. Those are his communicable attributes.

This is Dr. Bruce Waltke in his teaching on the book of Psalms. This is session number seven, Hymns, Cause for Praise, Hymn Theology.