

Dr. Bruce Waltke, Psalms, Lecture 19

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This is Dr. Bruce Waltke and his teaching on the book of Psalms. This is session number 19, Liturgical Approach, Cultus slash Ritual.

We're down in the lovely home of Darlene Bridges in Sugar Land, Texas, a suburb of Houston, Texas. And now welcome to my home in Redmond, Sammamish area, a suburb of Seattle. I must say, it's just a sheer delight to welcome you and to continue these reflections and studies in the book of Psalms.

I think it would be good to review where we have been by looking at the calendar on page three of your notes.

So, I invite you to look at page three of our syllabus and to orient where we are in the course. Our attempt has been toward entering into the mind of the inspired psalmist, mostly David himself. In addition to the historical critical method of interpreting his words against the historical background, we've been looking at other accredited methods or approaches within the church's history for a better understanding and entering into the mind of the psalmist.

So, on page three of the calendar, after the introduction to the course, I talked about hermeneutics, the art of interpretation. The principal point there is to the approach fundamentally we must have a spiritual approach to the book of Psalms because ultimately the author is God and God is spirit. We do not encounter God through a scientific method.

We encounter God through spirit, through faith, hope, and love, all of these, the expression of God's own spirit, the Holy Spirit. Also, we said, we have to come with sympathy with the human author if we're to understand him. So, we enter into his world and into his history of Israel's covenants and his faith in the God of those covenants.

We share that with him. Unless we do share that common spirit and that common faith, we will err in our interpretation of the Psalms. But in addition to God and the human author, there is the text and that requires a scientific approach.

That's where we focus in academics. We focus on that scientific approaches of methods of interpreting the text. So one of the approaches is, number three, was the historical approach.

We enter into the life of David, but the important point we were making there is that the author is a king. There is a royal interpretation of the psalm. It's a royal hymn book.

It's the songs of the king who's gone through sufferings and through triumphs. The royal element is far more extensive than the 10 Psalms that mention the king. So it permeates, we argued, the entire book, which will alter the way we think of it.

That has profound implications for our Christian faith because they indirectly at the least speak of Christ, who is the King of kings and Lord of lords. With each approach, I've tried to exegete with some detail. I've given a few psalms, one or two.

And so, we actually enter into the psalm and see the reality or the helpfulness of that approach to that particular psalm. In the case of the historical approach, we looked at Psalm 4. In preparation for moving into looking at psalms and grouping them according to forms, the broadest form category of looking at it from a formal viewpoint is that it is poetry over against narrative and prose. We tried to expound on what Hebrew poetry is.

We spent a lecture on that. After that broad categorization, we've looked at what is known as form criticism, grouping of psalms into distinct genres. This included understanding the historical background in which they originated, as well as looking at their various, Gattung, the German word, Genre, the French word, Form, the English word.

And we began by noticing the broad category of hymns. These were songs in praise of God. Basically they praise God as the creator and as the redeemer, as the Lord of creation and the Lord of history.

It looks at God broadly, not specific answers to prayer. That's the other kind of praise that we dealt with. That's called grateful praise.

That is, you prayed to the Lord for a specific need and God answered that need. Then you have a specific song of praise. For the hymn, we looked at two psalms.

We looked at Psalm 100 and we looked at Psalm 8. For the Song of Grateful Praise, we looked at Psalm 92 and we could have seen that's David's Psalm 51. It's also a song of grateful praise, but we handled that in connection with his lament, and confession of sin. The largest category of psalms was lectures 11 and 12, which dealt with the lament psalms.

This is 50 of the psalms as we know, third of the psalms, the psalmist is in crisis and he looks to God in his need. But we also noted that there is no psalm that you come

to God in your need without praise. Even though perplexed, as in Psalm 41, we are slaughtered all day long for your sake with no explanation.

It began with praise of God. This is the difference between the psalmist and Job. Job complained of his sufferings without praise, and that was displeasing to God and he had to repent.

The psalmist complains too, and also laments. We noted the difference between lament and complaint. Lament is when you're suffering and you're innocent and no, you're suffering.

But a complaint is that when you're suffering and it's unjust you wonder where God is in the midst of it because you have not violated any law. It's undeserved sufferings. In undeserved sufferings, you hear a complaint about it.

Lament can be any kind of suffering, including deserved sufferings, which would be confession of sin. So we looked at individual lament, such as Psalm 3, the very first psalm after the introduction of David, when he had to flee from Absalom. Then we also looked at a Messianic psalm, which we'll talk about later in a later lecture.

We'll talk about the Messiah particularly, but specifically Messianic psalm that Jesus took upon his lips upon the cross is Psalm 22. We looked at communal laments. I had hoped to do Psalm 90, but it turns out we didn't have time to do that.

But we looked at Psalm 44, which I just mentioned. A derivative of the lament psalms are songs of trust because as we noted, these different genres have distinct motifs. One of the motifs of the lament or petition psalms is there's always, or normally a section of confidence.

So, they move from lament to petition through confidence because they remind themselves of who they are, or more importantly, who God is and what he has done for his people. In that new milieu of hope and faith and confidence, we hear the petition that comes out of it. We're now up to lecture 17, which is called the liturgical approach.

So, I invite you to turn in your notes to page 256, where we are going to be handling liturgical psalms. But before we jump into the new material, I think it's fitting that we should begin with prayer together.

So, Father, we begin our lecture looking to you with praise to you for revealing yourself and giving us means of grace, the grace of your word. And we would not approach it without having prepared our hearts. And we ask you, we would pray as the liturgy has it, most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in

thought, word, and deed by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart.

We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry. And we humbly repent.

We ask you to have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, and strengthen us in all goodness. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, keep us in the way of eternal life. And we're confident Lord, that as you have promised that when we confess and renounce our sins, we are forgiven and we are made fit to enter the holy place because we're clothed also in the righteousness of Christ. And with that confidence, we enter into the psalms further in Christ's name. Amen.

The liturgical approach is also a derivative of the form critical approach. We said that the form criticism has two parts to it. One is that you look at the setting in life. And the other one, as you look at the way the psalm is composed, its mood, its vocabulary, its motifs that make it either a hymn of praise or a grateful song or a lament.

We're looking at the setting of the psalm, but we're going to look at it so extensively that it's worthy of separate thinking of it as a separate approach. In other words, it's so quantitatively more than what we've done. It actually becomes qualitatively another approach.

And so, we're looking at the liturgical approach. This approach in the literature is normally called the cultist, the cultic approach. That's a difficult term because for the average English speaker, a cult means a small group of people who hold to some kind of religious idea or practice that the majority regard as strange or even sinister.

That is obviously not how it's used in academic literature. The cultist in academic literature refers to the external expression of religion. And so, we're going to be looking at in this lecture, first of all, we're going to define it.

And then we're going to see the setting in life where it occurs and other aspects. And we're going to look at how does the cultist function? And then we're going to be looking at aspects of it, such as sacred sites, sacred calendar, sacred personnel, sacred actions, sacred objects, and so forth. But let's begin with a definition.

Two of the main thinkers about the cultists in the history of the interpretation of the Psalms are Eichrodt and Mowinckel. I give you the definition of Mowinckel first. Sigmund Mowinckel was a Scandinavian-Norwegian scholar.

He wrote mainly between his major work, his first major work was 1904. And then his magnum opus came out in the 1920s. He defines it this way.

He uses another word, ritual. Cult or ritual may be defined as the socially established and regulated holy acts and words in which the encounter and communion of the deity with the congregation is established, developed, and brought to its ultimate goal. So, it deals with holy acts and words that establish a relationship between God and the worshiper.

Eichrot put it in these terms. The term cultist should be taken to mean the expression of religious experience and concrete external actions performed within the congregation or community, preferably by officially appointed exponents and in set forms. So officially appointed exponents would be like Israel's priests and his set forms would be like the Psalms or in sacrifices and so forth.

Kurt Goldhammer comes at it differently. He looks at it as to quote him, structured experience, symbolic, meaningful activity. It's quote, pattern of facts, that have a reasonable connection with each other in the mind and attitude of the person who stands within it.

So we all engage in an external expression of religion, and moving from the religion has two aspects to it. It's the inner spiritual experience and feelings and emotions and thoughts that find expression in external actions. As soon as you have two people worshipping together, you're going to have some kind of form.

Namely, you're going to have a place where you meet and a time that you meet. So immediately there is some kind of external form that has to be imposed upon congregational worship. But when we're in that worship, for example, where we're used to a certain pattern, normally we will begin with an invocation, inviting God and trusting Christ to be in our presence.

In some communions, they actually carry the cross into the congregation as symbolic of Christ taking his residence upon the songs of praises and being present with his people. Sometimes the Bible is held up and carried into the congregation. We invoke God's presence and we will sing his praises.

We will bring our prayers before him. At some point, there'll be a reading of Scripture, prayer for illumination, the reading of Scripture, the preaching of the Scriptures, and a response. In some communions, the highlight of the sermon is an invitation, more evangelistic.

And the highlight of the sermon is for people to make a decision. In other congregations, the highlight of the worship is the participation in the Lord's Supper in which they receive a gift, trusting God's forgiveness and participating in his presence through the supper and through the words that accompany the supper. In any case, it's all part of this external expression.

So, I write in conclusion on page 256, that it's the material over against the purely inward and spiritual feelings with which we're thinking in this lecture. It's the regulated or set forms over against spontaneity. Some people worship better with spontaneity, with less form, and others worship better with strict form.

It's not a matter of right and wrong. It's a matter really of what best suits the individual. I think one of the strengths of the New Testament is that it has very little on-set forms.

Christianity is able to adapt itself to a number of cultures because unlike the Old Testament, which is a very strict form in many ways, in the New Testament, there's less form to it. It's the congregation over against the individual and it's integrated structures, we said, over against ideational approach of simply data and reflection. So that is activity that has meaning to it.

On page 257, I apply this to the Psalter quoting a verse from Bab. In the use of this literature, that is the Psalms, the individual became one with his group and shared the spirit, which moved it. Whether the mood of the moment was contrition, trust, or glad thanksgiving, he, and I would add she, found themselves, and they also found the God of their soul's desire through their unreserved participation in the acts of communal worship, whereby the rich resources and aspiring traditions of this people's history were made available to them.

I think that's a very useful quote. I am not defining the cultus in Hegel's term. Hegel thought of it that you have infinite reality, you have God, he's the ultimate reality.

It's the finite through the cultus entering into that infinite reality. That would be misrepresenting the Bible that you do not barge into God's presence. You come into his presence through covenant structures.

Namely, that's why we began with a confession of sin. We do not barge into his presence. We find his forgiveness for we realize that we have broken the law by not loving God with all of our hearts and not loving neighbors as ourselves.

So, therefore, we need to confess. We have no right in sinfulness to come into his presence. The presence of God entering into his presence demands an entering it through the provisions of the covenants.

We saw in Psalm 1, before you get into the book of Psalms, it's the man who keeps the law, the person who keeps the law and finds delight in his law that enters into the worship of the Psalms. It says, in the Israelite cult, the God-man relation is not natural in the sense that it is a given. There is a requirement for decision.

Laws are the creeds. Threats and promises support allegiance. In a personal way, God and man stand confronting each other.

We must be right with God through the mediation of Jesus Christ in order to participate in this external expression of religion and the use of the Psalms within it. Well, I hope now you have an understanding of what is meant when I speak of cult. I mean, this congregational, external participation in religion.

We then take up the *sitz im leben*, where is the setting of this worship. We notice that the Psalms originally not necessarily originated in the temple. They originated with David in his wilderness experience, where he was being prepared for kingship, where he was learning a life of faith.

And so, in his contesting against Saul and later on against Absalom, even Psalm 3 is composed away from the temple. Psalm 42 and 43, the psalmist is in exile somewhere around Mount Hermon. Psalm 137 is written in the Babylonian exile.

So, they were composed apart from the temple in some cases. Some were composed for the temple. The Grateful Songs of Praise were composed for this temple.

The hymns of praise were composed for the temple. But even those that were composed away from the temple often had the temple at heart. Like Psalm 3, he's still playing towards God's holy place.

Psalm 42 and 43, he's looking forward to be able to return to the worship at the temple. In any case, the Psalms were handed over to the chief musician for the use in the temple. So, the principal site of the Psalter is the temple itself.

So, I've developed that. Now what I've developed next on page 257 is the understanding of the cultus by the historic critics. The historic critics are those basically who reject the Bible's own claims about its state and authorship among other things.

They debunk the superscripts and what I think to be also postscripts, but they see them as trivia, irrelevant. It is great work on the introduction to the Psalms, massive. At the very end of it, Gunkel adds a little chapter, maybe two or three pages about the superscripts saying they're worthless for all points.

By superscripts, you mean like the first line before the psalm? Thank you. I mean, what's written above the poem itself. So, you have like a Psalm of David, or you have, I think, a postscript to the chief musician.

So, it's that prose section. Unfortunately, in the English Bibles, it's in italics and you get the impression it's not part of the psalm. When I discussed the historical approach, I argued they are a very important part of the psalm.

But Gunkel uses what we call the literary analytical approach in which basically you accept the Wellhausen hypothesis. To understand the critic, you understand most of the academia, you have to understand that they do not think of Moses behind the Psalter. They think the material that is attributed to Moses is a forgery.

I mean, Wellhausen says that it's a forgery by the priests in the exilic or post-exilic period. So, for them, there is no Mosaic regulation. Therefore, it turns the Bible on its head.

So, you have no real Moses. The material attributed to Moses is actually dated a thousand years later and wasn't available to David. Yeah.

Okay. So, you're talking about the Pentateuch, not the Psalms with Moses. Well, what I'm saying is that we understand the cultists as we're going to see, we go back thinking of the priestly material and the regulations for the tabernacle.

But I'll get to that. Well, for Gunkel, he recognizes that the Psalms, their forms and all go back to the first temple. He recognizes the temple and the cultists.

But for him, the Psalter itself, because of his Wellhausen background originates in the post-exilic period. So it's imitating the poets in the post-exilic material period or imitating the temple material. But they're actually writing prayers for the synagogue, not for the temple.

They're using the forms from the temple, but they don't really believe, he doesn't really believe they were written at the time of the temple. They were written much later because he just does away with superscripts and that would fit the Wellhausen evolution of religion. So that's where Gunkel is coming from.

So, he says, they're rooted in the cultists, but much of the Psalter reflects democratization. That is, there is no priest any longer. There is no king any longer.

So now it's just the common people of the cult and dated to the exilic and post-exilic epochs employing imagery, such as the king and his battles of the pre-exilic period. So, you can see it's just the military language of the Psalter is simply imagery for the problems of the person in the post-exilic period who is suffering usually from illness. I made a comment that in his mind, these sufferers to some extent are psychotic and they see the whole world against them.

It's really a bit, if I'm not too strong, diabolical in my mind, what's happening here. So, the extent Psalter for Gunkel is from the synagogue consisting of writings by private individuals and they're unconnected with the cultists. That's Gunkel's view.

You can't be in academia, and this is an academic track in biblical training. You can't be in academia and not run across Gunkel and his thinking. He's the fundamental thinker in our field.

I think you should understand what he's saying and where he's coming from. Now, Mowinckel was Gunkel's student and Mowinckel recognized they come from the temple. So Mowinckel interprets the Psalms, not by David, but from the temple worship period, from the pre-exilic period.

He reconstructs what is called an enthronement festival. Now, as I'm saying, you have to understand that he doesn't have Moses in the background at all. So where is his source of understanding? Well, he looks at pagan literature, pagan cultures.

For example, in Babylon, Marduk, the god who conquered chaos, Marduk was enthroned annually because in the pagan religions, they didn't have a sense of history with a beginning and an end and a meaning to history. Their concern was cyclical of recreating every year annually, bringing back spring, bringing back life out of the death of winter. Marduk was the god who conquered the abyss and chaos.

So, they reenacted the creation annually. And for Mowinckel, therefore, he holds that Yahweh, the God of Israel was enthroned annually. He actually builds himself on his tutor, his teacher, Gunkel.

Gunkel held that the expression Adonai Malach meant Yahweh or the Lord has become king. He understood that he was crowned annually as king at an enthronement festival. That expression occurs in five Psalms, Psalm 47, verse eight in English, verse nine in Hebrew, in Psalm 93.1, in Psalm 96.10, I think.

And then again in 97.1 and 98.1. You could see that there's might be worth a while to look at it in the text. I'll just take those last ones in Psalms 93 through 99, which are called enthronement Psalms. But you see how Psalm 93 begins, the Lord reigns.

Gunkel and Mowinckel would translate that, the Lord has become king. And they would say annually, the Lord has become king. You'll see it again in Psalm 96 and verse 10, say among the nations, the Lord reigns, or the Lord has become king.

Again, 97.1, the Lord reigns. And Psalm 99.1, the Lord reigns. And these other songs basically are celebrating God's reign.

The Psalms 93 through 99, therefore are called enthronement Psalms. And what they mean is that Yahweh was enthroned annually in a temple ritual. And these are called enthronement Psalms.

I write that here the view is that in a fall festival, they felt that this was in the fall renewal, in the latter reigns, in connection with the proclamation, Yahweh has become king. And they're influenced by what is known as the Akitu festival where Marduk was enthroned annually. We also find now, of course, Gunkel and Mowinckel didn't have the Ugaritic texts.

They're writing around 1900, 1925. And the Ugaritic texts weren't discovered until 1940. But we find these very similar notions in the Ugaritic myths where now it's not Marduk, but it's Baal, the God of reign.

And whereas Marduk was defeating Tiamat, the goddess of chaos in Ugaritic myths, it's Baal, the God of life-giving reign versus either Mot, which in Hebrew means death, or Yam, which means sea or Nahar river. But it's what is known in the literature as a chaos kampf, a battle between the creating God over against the gods of death, sterility, a chaos. And according to Gunkel on page 237, the cultist functions to re-enact and to re-actualize the creation of the world and of Israel.

In other words, they believe that God reigns, but this was a necessary part, almost like sacraments. It's almost like the Roman Catholic view of the mass, where you sacrifice Christ in the mass. And so, they are similar to that kind of view of the mass of the re-sacrificing of Christ through the ritual, they are recreating both the creation and Israel's history or Israel's redemption.

Now, as I say, Gunkel limited himself to just these five Psalms. For Mowinckel, almost the entire Psalter belongs to this ritual. It's a whole reinterpretation of the book of Psalms.

He's very influential in academia. And again, you can't read far in the literature of academia, the university, without hitting the name of Mowinckel. On page 258, trying to explain further the enthronement of the Psalms, he interprets, therefore, Yahweh reigns to be Yahweh has become king.

And it's derived as the background in the myths of the chaos comp, I said, of the creation. And so applied to Israel, it's the re-enactment and the, yeah, of the creation and of the celebration of the Exodus from Egypt and the victory at the Red or the Reed Sea. And so, it's both creation and redemption being reenacted within the cult.

And Yahweh's coming at the enthronement festival sets the world aright again and crushes every onslaught that the enemy might make on the city and the people. And as they see it, normally Yahweh is represented by the king, and the king is regarded

as the God who enters into the city in triumph. So, he sees this, as I say, in number six, it's sacramental that through this ritual, you're entering into participating in this re-creation of nature and of history.

It aims to discover the interconnections between Psalms showing what the congregation was experiencing and feeling through acts and words of the cultus. Now I quote from Mowinckel, the power inherent in the act is also concentrated in the word. The Holy Word is effective and creative.

Or again, this is a new quote, in remembrance and re-enactment of the cultus, the historical facts of salvation are turned into effective reality. And again, we shall have understood neither the Psalms nor its place in actual life, its cultus situation and its aim until we have connected it with the festival in question and with its ideas and cultic forms. So, you can see this alters the whole way you think about the Psalms.

What's my evaluation of it? Well, for some positive evaluations, I think probably the fall festival under monarchy became the primary festival, just like in the church's calendar. It was the Passover and Pentecost. So, I think that under kingship, the fall festival became the dominant festival in Israel's calendar of the Passover and Pentecost.

And then the fall festival, which consisted of Sukkot, New Year, Day of Atonement, and so forth. He says, for example, Kings tells us that the dedication of the temple occurred at this time and in this way. All the men of Israel came to Israel, all the men of Israel came together to King Solomon at the time of the festival in the month of Adonai, the seventh month.

And there are your verses. And we're told that when Jeroboam set up a rival cultus that Jeroboam instituted a festival on the 15th day of the eighth month, like the festival held in Judah. So evidently that was the principal festival in the north.

And of course, Jeroboam's cultus is totally a bastardization of the Mosaic cultus. So, the sacred, well, enough David, the sacred site is no longer Jerusalem. It's Dan and Bethsheba.

The symbolism of God is no longer the ark and the covenant, but it's a bull and so forth. Well, Hosea speaks of on the day of the festival of our King, the princes are inflamed with wine. And again, probably the day of our King is this fall festival, which probably also celebrated the house of David and the election of Zion as the city of God.

This would explain why we're told in Kings under Josiah's reform, not since the days of the judges, nor through the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah had any such Passover been observed. It seems as though the Passover was eclipsed in

favor of the fall festival. So, I think there's some element of truth that the fall festival was the dominant festival in Israel during the time of the monarchy.

Against some, I would argue that it is grammatically possible to translate Adonai Malach by that Yahweh has become King. In my mind, either one is a viable option. And there's a third value that some Psalms are written in light of that chaos comp.

They're using that imagery, not that theology, but they're using that imagery for God's creative activity. In the myths, there are three essential elements. There's the protagonist who is the creating God.

There's the antagonist, that's the God who is restraining creation. And then after the creating God is victorious over the hostile, restraining God, then he's worthy of a temple and they build a temple in his honor. Those are the three dominant ideas, or they celebrate his temple because he's the victorious God.

Now look at Psalm 93 and see how these three elements come into play. And I think unless you understand these three elements, it's almost an unintelligible psalm. We read, the Lord reigns.

He is robed in majesty. The Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength. Indeed, the world is established, firm, and secure.

Your throne was established long ago. You or your throne are from all eternity. The seas have lifted up, Lord.

The seas have lifted up their voice. The seas have lifted up their pounding waves, mighty than the thunder of the great waters, mighty than the breakers of the sea. The Lord on high is mighty.

Your statues, Lord, stand firm. Holiness adorns your house for endless days. You see, there you have these three elements.

In a way they'll put it against this background to me, sort of destroys it. Yet, if we can have a second naivety, and come back to it again, we can understand it better. But you notice that the Lord is robed with strength and is in connection with his creating the world.

So, he says, the Lord reigns. He is robed in majesty. A double metaphor of the robing of him is a double figure, meaning a metaphor of his wearing a garment.

The majesty is a metonymy for the majesty he accrued from his victory, as it were, at the creation over chaos. He is robed in majesty. The Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength.

Indeed, the world is established and firm and secure. But you see he reigns, but it's not thought of as annually. It's been accomplished.

Notice how he puts it that I think it gives the meaning that the Lord reigns, rather than he becomes king. Your throne was established long ago. You or your throne are from all eternity.

There's nothing here about an annual reenactment. He's there from the beginning and from the beginning of when he created the light over the darkness, the land over the sea, for example. But now note the adversary is represented by the sea.

The sea is symbolic of death in the Old Testament. They hadn't gone through the Romantic period of sea landscapes. The sea was again hostile to Israel.

You could grow nothing in it. You could drown in it. They saw nothing good in it.

The seas have lifted up the Lord. The seas have lifted up their voice. The seas have lifted up their pounding waves.

They're representing all that's evil, but mightier than the thunder of the waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea, the Lord on high is mighty. And he has a house that endures forever. But that house is characterized by holiness and by his covenant statutes.

Your statutes Lord stand firm. Holiness adorns your house for endless days. So I'm saying this mythic imagery helps us in our interpretation.

In fact, John Levinson says, and I'm perhaps too extreme, in his *Sinai and Zion*, very fine book, that unless you understand this, you don't understand some of the Psalms. Maybe, I think it does help us understand Psalm 93 and what's going on there amongst others. But negatively, the problem is it looks to ancient Near Eastern pagan religions to reconstruct the festival, not to the Mosaic law.

For them, it didn't exist. It participates in the inherent heterodoxy of historical criticism. Two, all reconstructions of the festival are hypothetical, lacking clear scriptural warrant.

The variety of views calls into question the method. Gunkel himself rejected Mowinckel's reconstruction on such a large scale. He says it's pure imagination.

There's no restraint. So, he limps himself to just the five, but he began it seminally within the festival for these five. Today, largely it's rejected.

It's acknowledged there are these enthronement psalms, but the whole reconstruction to a large extent is rejected. That's why I hesitated even to get into Mowinckel's enthronement psalms. But it seems to me a person educated in the Psalms should be aware of this material.

Weiser, as I say, there are other interpretations. Weiser sees a fall festival in his excellent book in the Old Testament Library Series. His is one of the best commentaries, I think.

But he thinks of the psalms all fitting in a fall festival, but he thinks they all celebrate the covenant, the making of the Sinai covenant. Again, it's a universalism that's too broad a brush. So, I don't buy into interpreting all the psalms against one festival.

To me, I go, what's the plain sense of the Psalter? To me, the plain sense of the Psalter is that we should accept the superscripts. That would mean a Psalm by David, for example, the 14, when he fled from Absalom. In that case, many psalms began as private prayers.

This is a reversal of Gunkel. Instead of being from the temple and then private prayers, they started as private prayers and then they became part of the temple worship. As I said, some psalms are obviously composed away from the house of God, but other psalms are composed for the temple.

One of those questions you have, there are some psalms that are wisdom psalms. We're going to be looking at those later on. And exactly how did Psalm 1, for example, fit into temple worship, or did it fit? Maybe it's just for the synagogue and meditation.

But how did the wisdom Psalms, what was the setting in life for Psalms 49, for example, that we'll be looking at, which deals with theodicy and the problem of evil? Exactly how did that fit into temple life? That's more debated. I think it fits into it, but we'll get back to that.

I'm going to jump now into the function. How does the cult function? I'm going to look at it more generally, and then I'll apply it to the Psalms. We'll see that they are composed against the temple liturgy and worship.

I suggest there are four uses of the psalms, four or five. They are symbolic on page 259. They are typical.

They function typically. They function sacramentally. And fourth, they function as artistic propaganda that is advocating a point of view, not in a way as in Nazi propaganda, which was based on lies, but based on truth.

First of all, symbolic. It's a visible form that profoundly portrays the living stuff of religion. In other words, you have religious experience and now you give it concrete expression in external actions of man toward God from the inner spiritual reality to outward actions and offered up toward God.

The ascending smoke, for example, would represent the prayers going up to God. The raising of the hands would symbolize offering up gifts to God and receiving his grace or of God to man. Now it's true that the individual could not enter into the Holy of Holies and only the high priest could enter there once a year.

But there was no mystery about it. It was clearly revealed for all Israel. So, they lived by imagination.

They could imagine what the high priest was doing within the Holy of Holies. And in the Holy of Holies, it was all very symbolic. Carved on the walls were palm trees and all forms of trees.

It represented the Garden of Eden and eternal life. At the very center of the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant. In fact, if you went into Solomon's temple, all the doors are becoming more narrow, the main door, the entranceway, and then into the Holy of Holies, that it's all focusing.

The roofline is dropping. So, the whole focus is on the Ark of the Covenant. There's nothing like that.

It's covered in gold, but there's nothing like that in pagan religions. In pagan religions, it was a nature deity. It would have been a statue of the sun or the moon and that could be manipulated.

But here at the heart of it all was the transcendent moral rule of God. It was ethics. It was a way of living.

There's nothing like that. That's at the heart of Israel's religion is the transcendent moral will of God. It's ethics.

Then the 10 commandments were in the Ark of the Covenant. Over it was the mercy seat with the blood that made atonement, that made it possible for sinful worship, for sinful people to enter into God's presence. Over the lid were the cherubim.

They were sphinx-like figures that guarded the sanctity and preserved it. So that just as the cherubim protected the garden of Eden, so sin could not enter its presence. So, the cherubim protected the sanctity of God's holy place.

All of that is communicating. Then outside of it, you had the light that was penetrating the darkness. There was the showbread whereby you could eat in fellowship with God.

Then outside of that, there was the altar of incense symbolizing prayer. So it all was symbolic teaching through symbolism theology. I think take Psalm 73.

I'll read the whole Psalm, but let's take this and read it. Notice what happens. See, it's in the sanctuary.

I gather he sees the symbolism that his crisis of faith is resolved. This is now Psalm 73, usually referred to as a wisdom Psalm. But he begins with, again, he's got profound questions, but he couches it all in praise.

He doesn't really doubt God's goodness. He calls it into question, but he affirms his faith straight away. Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.

He's confident. That's the reality. Whatever complaint, whatever questions he has, his bedrock faith is God is good.

And he upholds his covenant. But nevertheless, here's my problem because his experience conflicts with his faith. So, what he does is he actually begins, he says, but as for me, my heart, my foot had almost slipped.

I nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I considered the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles.

Their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from common human burdens. They are not plagued by human ills.

Their pride is their necklace. They clothe themselves with violence. From their callous hearts comes iniquity.

Their evil imaginations have no limits. They scoff and speak with malice, with arrogance. They threaten oppression.

Their mouths lay claim to heaven. Their tongues take possession of the earth. Therefore, their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance.

They say, how would God know? Does the Most High have knowledge, know anything? This is what the wicked look like, always care, free of care. And they go on amassing wealth. Surely in vain, I have kept my heart pure.

I've washed my hands in innocence. All day long I have been afflicted and every morning brings new punishments. If I had spoken out like this, I would have betrayed your children.

When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply till I entered the sanctuary of God. Then I understood their final destiny. Surely you place them on slippery ground.

You cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors. They're like a dream when one wakes.

When you arise, Lord, you will despise them as fantasies. When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant. I was a brute beast before you.

Yet I'm always with you. You hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel.

And afterward, you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you and earth have nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Those who are far from you will perish. You destroy all who aren't faithful to you. But as for me, it is good to be near God.

I've made the sovereign Lord my refuge. I will tell of all your deeds.

This is Dr. Bruce Waltke in his teaching on the book of Psalms. This is session number 19, Liturgical Approach, Cultus slash Ritual.