

## Waltke, Psalms, Session 8, Resources from Notebooklm

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

### 1. Abstract of Waltke, Psalms, Session 8, Hymns–Theology, HeseD, Creation, Kingship, Temple, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt from Bruce Waltke's Psalms course explores the theological significance of hymns within the Psalter. **Waltke analyzes the structure of hymns**, focusing on calls to praise, reasons for praise, and the participants involved. He then **examines key divine attributes**, contrasting incommunicable and communicable aspects, emphasizing God's *hesed* (lovingkindness) and covenant faithfulness. Further, **he addresses the use of ancient Near Eastern mythological imagery in Psalms**, arguing that these are poetic devices used to illustrate God's power over chaos and establish the unique nature of biblical history. Finally, **he connects themes of creation, kingship, and temple** as intertwined concepts within this context.

**2. 27-minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Waltke's, Psalms, Session 4 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Psalms → Waltke).**



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### 3. Briefing Document: Dr. Bruce Waltke on Psalms, Lecture 8

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

#### Overview:

This lecture focuses on the form of a Psalm called a hymn, exploring its key elements: the call to praise, the cause for praise, and the renewed call to praise. Waltke delves into the theology of praise, God's attributes, the concept of *hesed*, and how the Psalms use ancient Near Eastern myths to portray God's power and sovereignty. He also emphasizes the uniqueness of the biblical view of history.

#### Key Themes and Ideas:

##### 1. Structure of a Hymn:

- **Call to Praise:** This is the "match to ignite the fire," an imperative to praise God, not because He needs it but because it's fitting, right, and good for us. "It's totally fitting and appropriate. It's for our good."
- **Cause for Praise:** This provides the "fuel," focusing on God's person and works.
- **Renewed Call to Praise:** A repetition of the imperative, reinforcing the importance of glorifying God.
- **Praise and Sin:** Waltke notes that God does not desire praise from sinners. He says, "He doesn't want praise from sinners. It's an abomination to him."

##### 1. Theology of Praise:

- **Learning Theology Doxologically:** The Psalms offer a unique way to learn about God through the praises of His people. "We are learning about God's theology through the praises of his people to God...Their words to God of praise are coming back to us in the word of God, teaching us theology."
- **Inspired Word:** The words of praise become the inspired word of God to us. "So, in fact, they become the inspired word of God to us in these words of praise."

## 1. Attributes of God:

- **Incommunicable Attributes:** These are attributes that are unique to God and not shared by humans. He uses "aseity" to express the fact that God is self-existent; "He is of himself. He derives from no one and everything derives from him."
- **Communicable Attributes:** These are attributes that God shares with humans, such as mercy, grace, long-suffering, unfailing love, and fidelity. Waltke emphasizes the significance of these attributes in light of the golden calf incident, noting, "those attributes provide for the grace of the sacrificial system, the grace of Jesus Christ so that his grace is greater than all of our sins."
- **Incomparability of God:** God is incomparable in holiness, power, wisdom, and grace. While the Psalms may mention "gods," this does not imply polytheism, but rather highlights God's uniqueness in contrast to idols. Waltke argues against henotheism, asserting, "The theological statement in Deuteronomy 4.39, it says, that there is no other god. The religious reality is that people worship what are no gods."
- **God's Exalted Dwelling:** Descriptions of God's throne in heaven are figurative, representing his rule and omniscience within the understanding of the biblical worldview (tripartite cosmos of heaven, earth, and water below). "Whenever we talk about God, there is an as if."

## 1. God as Creator and Preserver:

- **Sustainer of Creation:** God sustains all things, and without his sustaining power, creation would cease to exist. Waltke connects this concept to Colossians 1 where it is stated that Christ sustains all things.
- **New Creation:** Every new life is a testament to God's creative power. "When you send forth your spirit, they are created and you renew the face of the earth."
- **God's Manifestation:** Creation is a manifestation of God, with aspects like light, wind, and mountains being symbolic of His power and presence. "The whole thing is a manifestation of his creation. Light is God's coat. The clouds, his chariot, wind and flames, his messengers."

## 1. Divine Sovereignty and Love:

- **Combined Attributes:** God's incommunicable and communicable attributes must be understood together to avoid misconceptions. His power ensures his mercy is effective, while his faithfulness assures he will not be a despot. "You have to have

the two together because faithfulness guarantees us that God is not a despot. On the other hand, that he's all-powerful assures us that he's able to carry through his grace and his mercy."

- **Hesed (Unfailing Love):** Hesed involves a strong party helping a helpless one out of love and kindness, not for personal gain. Examples of Joseph and Ruth illustrate this covenant loyalty. "The word hesed means help to the helpless out of whatever it is in the person that's kind, and loving."

#### 1. Use of Ancient Near Eastern Myths:

- **Chaos Kampf:** Psalms use motifs of the "Chaos Kampf" (struggle against chaos) from ancient Near Eastern mythology (e.g., Enuma elish) to illustrate God's power over chaotic forces (represented by water, sea monsters, etc.). These myths are not taken literally but serve as poetic devices to exalt God.
- **Demythologized Creation:** Unlike the Babylonian myths, the Genesis creation account demythologizes the chaos into a formless void and deep which God overcomes through his creation.
- **Figurative Language:** The use of figures like Rahab and Leviathan (sea monsters representing chaos) are poetic personifications rather than literal deities. "These mythological illusions occur only in poetry and add vividness and color to the poem. They also function as a polemic against the pagan gods."
- **Polemic:** The Psalms use this language as a polemic against pagan gods, affirming that it was the Lord who overcame chaos and not pagan deities.
- **Creation, Kingship, and Temple: Indissoluble Triad:** In the ancient Near East, creation, kingship, and temple were seen as an indissoluble triad. The victory over chaos enabled the victorious god to establish a kingdom and temple. Waltke explains that "creation, kingship, and temple thus form an indissoluble triad."
- **God's Triumph Over Chaos:** The Psalms highlight God's victory over the sea (representing chaos) as proof of his continued power and reign. He uses the example of Psalm 93 to show this triadic relationship.
- **Adaptation of Pagan Hymns:** Psalms like Psalm 29 may adapt hymns originally used for pagan gods like Baal, demonstrating how the Israelites took these themes and reapplied them to their monotheistic view of God.
- **Biblical View of History: Unique Perspective:** The Bible uniquely views history as a linear progression with a beginning, end, and a climax, which contrasts with the

cyclical view of history held by pagan cultures. "In the pagan literature, there's no idea of history going anywhere. Their whole idea is to recreate the earth annually, but there's no sense to any meaning of history."

- **Eschatological Hope:** The Psalms celebrate Israel's history and look forward to an eschaton where righteousness will prevail, which is unique to biblical thought. "The Psalms celebrate the history of Israel, looking to an eschaton when the Lord will reign universally and righteousness will prevail."

### **Concluding Remarks**

Dr. Waltke emphasizes that while the Psalms use common images and ideas present in the ancient Near East, the theological underpinning is distinctly monotheistic and purposeful. He encourages deeper analysis of the Psalms, recognizing their poetic nature and the use of figurative language to comprehend the greatness of God. He points out that while there may be superficial similarities to pagan religious thought, there is no foundational theological connection. He concludes saying, "...there's no umbilical cord connected to the theology of the Bible with the pagan literature. It has an outward form, but a very different theology."

## 4. Psalms Study Guide: Session 8, Hymns–Theology, Hesed, Creation, Kingship, Temple

### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. What are the three main motifs of a hymn, as outlined in the lecture?
2. Why is the act of praising God considered fitting and right?
3. According to Waltke, who should be offering praise to God?
4. How do we learn theology through the Psalms, according to Waltke?
5. What is the significance of God's aseity in relation to praise?
6. How do the incommunicable and communicable attributes of God work together?
7. What is the meaning of the Hebrew word *hesed*, and what are two examples from the Old Testament that illustrate it?
8. What is "Chaoskampf," and how does it relate to the creation accounts?
9. Why does Waltke believe the Psalmists use imagery from pagan myths in their poetry?
10. How do the Psalms demonstrate the relationship between creation, kingship, and temple?

### Quiz Answer Key

1. The three main motifs of a hymn are an introductory call to praise, the cause for praise, and a renewed call to praise. The call to praise is the match, and the cause for praise is the fuel.
2. Praising God is considered fitting and right because God is praiseworthy, and not to praise Him is to be like a tone-deaf person. It is appropriate, and it is for our own good to praise what is praiseworthy.
3. According to Waltke, the people of God, not sinners, should be offering praise to God. He believes that praise from sinners is an abomination to God.
4. We learn theology through the Psalms because the pious and honest people of God are celebrating God's person and works, and their words of praise become God's word to us, which is inspired and teaches theology.

5. God's aseity, meaning He is of Himself and derives from no one, is the reason why He is worthy of our praise. Because everything derives from Him, He is the source of our lives and the one upon whom we are dependent.
6. The incommunicable attributes, such as aseity, and the communicable attributes, such as mercy and grace, work together because God's omnipotence allows Him to exercise His mercy and faithfulness, and His mercy and grace prevent Him from being a despot.
7. *Hesed* means help to the helpless out of love and kindness. Two examples from the Old Testament include Joseph's request for his bones to be buried in his homeland and Ruth's loyalty to her deceased husband's family.
8. "Chaoskampf" is the concept of a battle between a heroic god and a monster representing chaos, from which creation arises. In the Psalms, this is reflected in the language of God overcoming chaotic forces, though these pagan myths are used poetically, not literally.
9. Waltke believes the Psalmists use imagery from pagan myths as a way of showing the greatness of God, demonstrating that it was not the pagan gods who created, but the Lord God. It also functions as a polemic, contrasting pagan beliefs with the true God.
10. The Psalms demonstrate that creation, kingship, and temple are an interconnected triad. The containment of the sea is proof of God's continuing kingship and the validity of his house/temple, establishing order out of chaos.

### Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the motif of praise in the Psalms, explaining how it functions as a theological framework and its implications for the believer.
2. Explore the relationship between God's incommunicable and communicable attributes, as presented in the lecture. How does this dual understanding of God impact the human relationship with Him?
3. Analyze the concept of *hesed* in the Old Testament, providing examples to illustrate its multifaceted nature and its role in the covenant relationship between God and his people.
4. Explain the use of pagan mythology in the Psalms, focusing on the "Chaoskampf" motif. How does the poetic use of these myths serve to magnify God's power and nature, while distinguishing Him from the false gods of the ancient Near East?

5. Discuss the theme of God's presence with His people in the Psalms, particularly in relation to the Exodus and settlement of the land. How does this historical emphasis in the Psalms differ from the cosmological focus of other ancient Near Eastern literature?

### **Glossary of Key Terms**

- **Aseity:** God's self-existence; He derives from no one and is the source of all being.
- **Communicable Attributes:** Attributes of God that humans can share, such as mercy, grace, and love.
- **Incommunicable Attributes:** Attributes of God that are unique to Him and that humans cannot possess, such as aseity and omnipotence.
- **Doxological:** Relating to or expressing praise or glory, especially to God.
- **Henotheism:** The belief in or worship of one god while acknowledging the existence of other gods.
- **Hesed:** A Hebrew term representing loyal love, kindness, and faithfulness, especially in a covenant relationship where one is in need.
- **Monotheism:** The belief that there is only one God.
- **Polytheism:** The belief in or worship of more than one god.
- **Chaoskampf:** A term of German origin that describes the mythological battle between a god and the forces of chaos from which creation emerges.
- **Theom/Tiamat:** In ancient Near Eastern myths, a cosmic sea monster or the primordial deep. In the Bible, "tehom" refers to the watery chaos prior to creation.

## 5. FAQ on Psalms and Theology

1. **Why does the Bible command us to praise God, and what does it mean to praise Him?**
2. The Bible commands us to praise God because it is inherently fitting and right, not because God needs our praise. Praising God acknowledges His praiseworthy nature and our dependence upon Him. To not praise what is praiseworthy is likened to being tone-deaf. Furthermore, our praise is ultimately for our own good, reflecting a right understanding of our relationship with the Creator. Genuine praise is also contrasted with lukewarm or insincere praise, suggesting it should be fervent.
3. **How does the Book of Psalms teach us theology?**
4. The Psalms uniquely teach theology through a doxological context. We learn about God's character and works not from formal theological treatises, but from the heartfelt praises of God's people. Their words of adoration and celebration of God's attributes and actions become, in turn, God's word to us, revealing truths about Him. Thus, the Psalms function as inspired words teaching us theology from the experiences of pious and honest believers.
5. **What are some key attributes of God emphasized in the Psalms?**
6. The Psalms highlight both God's incommunicable and communicable attributes. Incommunicable attributes include God's aseity (He is self-existent and derives from nothing), while communicable attributes, which we can share in some measure, include His mercy, grace, long-suffering, unfailing love (*hesed*), and faithfulness. It is emphasized that both sets of attributes must be seen together. God's power ensures His mercy is effective, and His faithfulness means He will not act as a despot.
7. **How does the concept of "*hesed*" feature in the Psalms, and what does it mean?**
8. "*Hesed*," often translated as "unfailing love" or "loyal love," is a central attribute of God emphasized in the Psalms. It describes God's loving, loyal action on behalf of those who are in desperate need and cannot help themselves. *Hesed* is not motivated by self-gain, but by love and kindness. Examples include Joseph's request to be buried in his father's land and Ruth's loyalty to her deceased husband's family, showcasing a dedication that goes beyond obligation. God's

hesed to humanity is rooted in His covenantal promises, assuring us of His continued faithfulness.

**9. What does it mean when the Psalms refer to God as "King of kings" and "Lord of lords"? Does it imply the existence of other gods?**

10. While phrases like "King of kings" and "Lord of lords" might seem to imply the existence of other gods, the theological position of the Bible is monotheistic. These expressions function to emphasize God's incomparable supremacy and rule over all. The Psalms do not endorse polytheism, instead they highlight that even if others are called "gods", they are not real gods; they are merely idols. The reality is that people may be worshiping other "gods," but this does not negate the theological truth that there is only one true God.

**11. How do the Psalms use imagery of God's throne in heaven and His actions in creation?**

12. The Psalms often depict God as seated on a throne in heaven, surveying the world below. This is not a literal depiction of God, but a figurative way to represent His rule, omniscience, and transcendence. God is spirit, and our descriptions of Him are limited by our human experience and understanding of the world. The imagery of God's throne, the seas, and other cosmic elements draw on the cosmology of the ancient world and help convey profound theological truths.

**13. Why do the Psalms utilize ancient Near Eastern myths and images, like battles with sea monsters or chaos, in describing God's creative acts?**

14. The Psalms often utilize imagery from ancient Near Eastern myths, such as the battle against chaos and sea monsters, to highlight the power and glory of God in creation. These are not endorsements of the pagan myths, but rather poetic and polemical tools to demonstrate that the true God, Yahweh, is far greater than the gods of those myths. This use of figurative language was a way to engage the worldview of the time and clearly proclaim that the creator God of Israel, and not pagan gods, conquered chaos and established order.

**15. What is the significance of the historical element in the Psalms and how does it differ from ancient Near Eastern literature?**

16. The Psalms uniquely incorporate a sense of history, focusing on God's actions in leading and dwelling with His people throughout the Exodus, conquest, and settlement. This contrasts sharply with ancient Near Eastern literature, which generally lacks a linear view of history. Pagan cultures saw time as cyclical with no

clear beginning, end, or grand purpose in history. The Psalms, in contrast, look to the past, and more importantly, to a future eschaton when God will reign universally and righteously. The Bible's historical perspective provides meaning and purpose to events and points to a ultimate triumph of righteousness over evil.