

Dr. Bruce Waltke, Psalms, Session 22,

Psalm 110 - a Liturgical Approach

20-min. Podcast Audio Overview

BiblicaleLearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

All right, are you ready to dive into some ancient poetry? Let's go! Today, we're looking at Psalm 110. Okay. And it's really had a fascinating impact throughout history.

And you might be thinking, okay, cool, but like, what does a poem from ancient Israel have to do with me? Right. But get this: this Psalm pops up all over the New Testament. It does.

Like a key to understanding how early Christians saw Jesus. Yeah. We're going to be using a lecture by Dr. Bruce Waltke, who is a renowned biblical scholar.

Right. Dr. Waltke, he's like a master codebreaker when it comes to the Psalms. I like that.

What's so fascinating about Psalm 110 is that it's not just poetry. It's what's called a coronation psalm. It's celebrating a king's rise to power.

Think of it as like the ancient equivalent of a presidential inauguration. So a really big deal. Huge, yeah.

Okay, I'm picturing parades and fancy robes. Yeah. But why does a coronation ceremony matter so much in the grand scheme of things? Well, because this particular song goes way beyond just crowning a king.

It lays out this whole vision of power and authority and divine blessing that resonated really deeply with early Christians. In fact, they saw it as a prophecy about Jesus himself. Hold on.

So they're saying Jesus is the king in this psalm. That's right. That's a pretty bold claim.

It is. And it's not just some random theory. Right.

Psalm 110 shows up more times in the New Testament than any other psalm. Really? Yeah. It's woven into these key moments.

Okay. Like when Jesus sparred with the Pharisees about taxes or debated the Sadducees about the resurrection. Both are found in Matthew 22.

So Jesus was using this ancient poem to answer some of the toughest questions of his day. Exactly. That's pretty clever.

And it goes even further than that. Think about the very first sermon after Pentecost in the book of Acts. Okay.

Guess what text they used to kickstart the whole Christian movement? Psalm 110. You got it. Wow.

And then you have the book of Hebrews. Right. Which builds this whole argument around Psalm 110.4. That mysterious line about a priest forever like Melchizedek.

Okay. Now I'm really intrigued. Right.

Melchizedek. Yeah. That name rings a bell.

Yeah. But I can't quite place it. He's a bit of a mystery man, this Melchizedek.

Okay. He pops up briefly in Genesis as a king and a priest, which was unusual, to say the least. Yeah.

And then vanishes. Oh, wow. But that brief appearance is enough to link him to this conquering king in Psalm 110.

Right. Suggesting a priesthood that predates the traditional Levitical priests of Israel. Ah, okay.

So this Melchizedek guy adds like another layer of depth to the Psalm. Yeah. But enough teasing.

Let's actually hear what this powerful poem has to say. Deal with it. All right.

Okay. Verse one. The Lord says to my Lord.

Wait, hold up. Yeah. Two Lords.

Two Lords. Is this like a divine conference call? It's more like a declaration of authority. Okay.

In the original Hebrew, there are two different words for Lord being used here. The first is Yahweh. Okay.

The personal name of God. The second is Adonai, a title used to address someone as master or ruler. So it's like a hierarchy of power.

Yeah. You've got God at the top, and then another Lord who's still worthy of respect and obedience. Right.

And think about who's speaking in the Psalm. Okay. It's likely King David, considered the greatest king of Israel.

Right. If even he acknowledges a Lord greater than himself, that sets the stage for someone truly extraordinary. This is starting to sound less like a coronation and more like a prophecy about someone even more powerful than a king.

Right. Okay. Next line.

Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool. Okay. That's a pretty intense image.

It is. And it was a very real concept in the ancient world. Okay.

Think of it like this. The right hand was always the position of power and authority. Kings would have their most trusted advisors at their right hand.

So when God says, sit at my right hand, he's essentially saying, come, share my power. Let's rule together. Exactly.

And the footstool imagery, it wasn't just about defeating enemies. Okay. It was about complete and utter subjugation.

Wow. We see this throughout history, even in ancient Egypt. Okay.

Tutankhamun, the boy king, had a footstool literally decorated with images of his defeated enemies. Wow. So this Psalm isn't messing around.

Nah. All right. Let's keep going.

Verse two. The Lord sends forth your scepter from Zion. Okay.

So are we talking magic wands here? No magic wands. Okay. But definitely a symbol of royal authority.

Okay. So what exactly is a scepter? Think of it like a king's staff. A symbol of power and rule and Zion.

Well, that was considered the center of the world in ancient Israelite thought. Okay. It was where God dwelt, where his presence was most powerfully felt.

So this scepter emanating from the very heart of creation is going to what exactly? Take over the world. That's the idea. The Psalm envisions an expanding kingdom, one that extends outwards from Zion to encompass all nations.

Wow. And it's not just about military conquest. It's about establishing a new order, a new way of being ruled.

Okay. So how does this conquering king go about expanding his kingdom? Yeah. Does he have a massive army? Actually, verse three gives us a fascinating detail.

Okay. Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power. Okay.

Notice, it's not a conscripted army forced into service. It's a volunteer force driven by devotion and belief in their leader. So more like a spiritual army than a traditional one.

Exactly. These are people who are so passionate about the cause, so inspired by the king that they willingly offer themselves to the fight. Wow.

They are fighting for something greater than themselves. That's a powerful image. It is.

All right. Now we get to the really beautiful part. From the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours.

I can practically hear the harp music swelling, but I know there's got to be a deeper meaning here. Oh, absolutely. You're right.

It's a beautiful line full of imagery. Dr. Waltke points out that the dew has several layers of meaning. First, it comes from heaven, a gift from above.

Second, it represents abundance and renewal. Think about how many dew drops there are covering the earth each morning. Third, it signifies God's faithfulness, just as dew appears faithfully every morning.

So too will God bless his chosen king. Okay. So the dew is like this symbol of divine blessing and endless renewal.

Right. Wow. I never would have picked up on all that just reading it on my own.

Right. All right. Let's move on to the last verse of this section.

You are a priest forever like Melchizedek. Oh. Here comes the theology.

Don't worry. We'll break it down. Remember, Melchizedek, our king-priest from Genesis; this verse links our conquering king to him, suggesting a priesthood that goes way back, even before the Levitical priesthood established later in Israel's history.

Okay. So this king is not just a warrior. He's also a spiritual leader with a deep connection to God.

Right. I'm starting to see how early Christians might have connected this psalm to Jesus. But before we get ahead of ourselves, what stands out to you so far in these first few verses? Well, what strikes me is how Psalm 110 blends these seemingly different ideas.

Okay. Military power, spiritual authority, and divine blessing. It's like a recipe for the ultimate ruler, someone who's both a warrior and a priest.

It's like they took all the best qualities of a king and cranked them up to 11. Yeah. But it's not just a random collection of awesome attributes, is it? Not at all.

Okay. Dr. Waltke points out that Psalm 110 has this incredible structure. Okay.

It's like a perfectly balanced piece of music. The first part is God speaking, going down the law. Right.

And then the second part is the prophet reflecting on what God has said. So it's a dialogue, a back and forth between heaven and earth. Exactly.

And get this. Right. Each half of the Psalm has exactly 74 words in the original Hebrew.

That kind of symmetry and balance points to the order and intentionality of God. It's like every word, every phrase is carefully placed to create this powerful effect. Wow.

So even the structure of the Psalm is telling us something about God's character. Yeah. Okay.

Let's move on to verse six. He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore, he will lift up his head. Oh, okay.

I'm getting some serious Hero on a Quest vibes here. I can see why it's all about perseverance. The brook here isn't like a babbling stream.

It's actually a wadi, a dry riverbed that only fills with water during the rainy season. So picture this warrior king pushing forward through the desert, facing challenges, but then finding this unexpected source of refreshment. So even a powerful king needs a water break sometimes.

Yeah. I love that it shows this human side of leadership. It's not all about being invincible.

It's also about knowing when to rest and recharge. Exactly. And notice the result.

Therefore, he will lift up his head, a sign of renewed strength and determination. This verse reminds us that even when we face difficulties, even when we feel depleted, there are moments of grace along the way that can lift us up and help us keep going. Okay.

We've journeyed through this psalm verse by verse, uncovering layers of meaning and symbolism. I have to ask: how does understanding all of this change how you read or hear Psalm 110? Oh, for sure. It's definitely not just a nice little poem anymore, right? Not at all.

For me, it's become a window into God's heart, a glimpse of his grand plan for the world. Right. And for early Christians, it was a blueprint for understanding who Jesus was and what he came to do.

Which brings us back to that big question. What are the implications of seeing Jesus as the fulfillment of this ancient coronation psalm? It changes everything. Okay.

If we take Psalm 110 as a messianic prophecy, as early Christians did, it reframes the whole story of Jesus. It's not just about his birth, death, and resurrection. It's about his enthronement, his ongoing rule at God's right hand, his ultimate victory over all enemies.

So this psalm becomes like a lens through which we can view all of Jesus's actions and teachings. Exactly. It gives us a framework for understanding his mission and his authority.

Right. But here's the thing. Okay.

Psalm 110 doesn't just tell us about Jesus. It also challenges us to think about how these themes of power, authority, service, and perseverance resonate in our own lives. Okay.

Time to bring this back down to earth. How do regular folks living in the 21st century connect with this ancient idea of a conquering king and a divinely ordained kingdom? Well, the key is to remember that it's not about literal swords and conquering territories. It's about the battle against injustice, against the forces of darkness, both within ourselves and in the world around us.

We are all called to be part of that spiritual army fighting for a better world. So we're all part of the spiritual army, even if we're not wearing armor or carrying swords? You got it. Okay.

Think about the qualities highlighted in Psalm 110. Courage, dedication, perseverance, willingness to offer ourselves freely for a cause greater than ourselves. Right.

These are qualities we can all strive for regardless of our background or beliefs. And if we think back to that dew imagery, the dew of your youth, it's not just about age. It's about that constant renewal, that fresh outpouring of energy and passion for making the world a better place.

Every day is a chance to tap into that source of renewal, to recommit ourselves to the fight for justice and righteousness. Psalm 110 reminds us that even in the face of overwhelming odds, there's always hope. There is.

But where does that hope come from? That's a great question. Is it just blind faith or is there something more concrete backing it up? That's a great question. Yeah.

And one that leads us right to the heart of Dr. Waltke's lecture. Okay. He points out that the Psalm doesn't just offer inspiring imagery and poetic language.

Yeah. It also grounds its hope in a very specific theological claim. Okay.

I'm intrigued. Yeah. Tell me more.

It's the oath. Okay. Remember that line in verse four: the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind.

Yes. This is a powerful statement emphasizing the unbreakable nature of God's commitment. Okay.

It's not just a wish or a vague promise. It's a sworn oath. Right.

And in the ancient world, oaths were serious business. Yeah. They were considered binding and unbreakable.

So the Psalm is saying that God is all in on this plan for a conquering king and a transformed world. Exactly. Yeah.

And that's where our hope ultimately lies. Okay. Not in our own strength or cleverness.

Right. But in the unshakable faithfulness of God. He's the one who sets the king on his throne, equips him for battle, and guarantees his ultimate victory.

Okay. So we've covered a lot of ground here. Yeah.

From ancient coronation rituals to spiritual warfare to finding hope in God's unwavering promises. It's a lot. But before we wrap up, there's one more piece of the puzzle I want to explore.

Oh. It's the question that's been lingering in the background this whole time. I was wondering when you'd bring this up.

You got it. Yeah. If Jesus is this conquering king, destined to crush his enemies and establish God's kingdom on earth.

Right. Then what about all the suffering and injustice we still see in the world? That's the million-dollar question. Yeah.

And it's one that theologians have been wrestling with for centuries. Right. But here's where Psalm 110 offers a surprising perspective.

Okay. Remember that line about God making the king's enemies his footstool? Yes. Well, Dr. Waltke points out that the Hebrew word for until doesn't necessarily imply a sudden shift from struggle to victory.

It can also indicate an ongoing process, a gradual unfolding of events. So even though the king ultimately wins, the battle might be longer and messier than we'd like. Exactly.

And if we apply this to our understanding of Jesus, it suggests that his victory might not look like a sudden Hollywood-style triumph, but rather a gradual process of pushing back the forces of darkness bit by bit until finally good triumphs over evil. Okay. So it's not about instant gratification or wiping out all opposition in one fell swoop.

Right. It's about enduring, persevering, and trusting that God is working out his plan even when we can't see the finish line. Yeah.

And that's where faith comes in, isn't it? It's about believing in that ultimate victory even when the world seems to be falling apart. I think we've officially blown our listeners' minds with enough theological pondering for one day. Yeah, maybe.

But before we sign off, I want to leave you with one final thought-provoking question to mull over. Okay. If Psalm 110 lays out this vision of a conquering king establishing a kingdom of righteousness and justice, then where do we fit into that story? Are we just passive spectators cheering from the sidelines, or are we called to be active participants in this cosmic battle? Now that's a question worth pondering.

It's almost as if Dr. Walke planned it that way, ending his lecture with a subtle challenge, a call to action. He's not just giving us information. He's inviting us to wrestle with these ideas, to let them shape our understanding of the world and our place in it.

And who knows? Maybe that's the true power of Psalm 110. It's not just about an ancient king or even about Jesus. It's about the potential for greatness that lies within each of us, waiting to be awakened and unleashed upon the world.

Beautifully said. Thanks. So, to our listeners, if you want to dive even deeper into the theological complexities of Psalm 110, I highly recommend checking out Dr. Waltke's full lecture.

Trust me, it's a wild ride, but even if you don't, I hope this deep dive has given you a new appreciation for the enduring power of ancient texts and how they can still speak to us today. Absolutely. It really makes you wonder, doesn't it? It does.

If this ancient poem has something to say about our lives today, what does that even look like? Right. Are we all supposed to become warriors or priests? Right. Or is there a different way to fight these cosmic battles? That's the beauty of it.

It's not about fitting into a specific role. It's about embodying the qualities that Psalm 100 highlights. Okay.

Courage, justice, compassion, perseverance. Right. It's about fighting for what's right, even when it's hard, even when the odds seem stacked against us.

So it's more about an inner transformation than an outward display of power. Precisely. It's about becoming the kind of people who reflect God's character in the world.

And remember, it's not a solo mission. This Psalm talks about a volunteer army, people offering themselves freely to the cause. We need each other to fight these battles, to encourage and support one another along the way.

That makes me think of that line about the king drinking from the brook. Even in the midst of a battle, even the strongest leader needs to pause, to refresh and recharge. Maybe that's part of our role in this spiritual army, to offer that kind of support to each other, to create spaces where we can rest and find renewal.

Absolutely. It's about recognizing that we're all in this together. We're not meant to carry the weight of the world on our shoulders alone.

And when we come alongside one another, when we offer a helping hand or a listening ear, we embody that spirit of compassion and unity that Psalm 110 points towards. This is starting to feel less like a battlefield and more like a community, a movement of people working together to make the world a better place. That's a great way to put it.

And remember that powerful image of the dew. It's not just about divine blessing. It's also about renewal.

Each act of kindness, each stand against injustice, each moment of choosing love over hate. It's like a tiny drop of dew refreshing and revitalizing the world around us. Okay, that's beautiful.

But let's be real for a second. What does this actually look like in everyday life? How do we translate these grand ideas into concrete actions? That's the challenge, isn't it? It is. And there's no one-size-fits-all answer, but I think Psalm 110 gives us some clues.

First, it emphasizes the importance of leadership. The king in this Psalm is not just a figurehead. He's actively engaged in the battle, leading the charge against the forces of darkness.

So maybe part of our calling is to step up and lead, even in small ways. To be a voice for justice in our communities, to mentor and encourage others, to use our skills and talents to make a positive impact. And leadership doesn't always mean being in the spotlight.

Sometimes it's about the quiet, behind-the-scenes work, the acts of service that go unnoticed. It's about showing up for others, offering support, and being a source of strength and encouragement. It's like we're all called to be do-bearers, spreading those qualities of compassion, justice, and renewal wherever we go.

I love that image. And remember, it's not about obligation or blind obedience. It's about a heartfelt commitment, a passionate desire to see God's will done on earth as it is in heaven.

So to bring it all back to Psalm 110, it's not just an ancient poem or a prophecy about Jesus. It's a call to action for each of us. It is.

It's an invitation to become part of something bigger than ourselves, to join that volunteer army fighting for a better world. And even though the battle may be long and challenging, Psalm 110 reminds us that the victory is already secured. It's just a matter of time.

Beautifully said. Beautifully said. So as we wrap up this deep dive into Psalm 110, let's carry that vision with us into our homes, our workplaces, our communities.

Let's be those do-bearers, spreading hope and renewal wherever we go. And let's never forget that we're part of a story that's been unfolding for centuries, a story that ultimately ends in victory. And to our listeners, thank you for joining us on this incredible journey.

May Psalm 110 continue to inspire and challenge you long after this episode ends. Until next time, keep diving deep.