

Dr. Bruce Waltke, Psalms, Session 24, Introducing the Messianic Psalms - Psalm 16 20-min. Podcast Audio Overview

BiblicaleLearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Hey everyone, and welcome to another Deep Dive. This time we're taking a look at something pretty fascinating: the Messianic Psalms. Yeah, these are really something special.

We've got a great audio lecture by Old Testament scholar Dr. Bruce Walcombe to guide us, and I'm really looking forward to seeing what we discover. Well, you know, these ancient poems were written long before Jesus, but they actually hold some really compelling clues about his coming. And you know what I think is really interesting? Even if you're not super religious or anything, understanding this messianic approach can really add like a whole new dimension to how you read the Bible.

That's what I love about these deep dives. You know, we always uncover these hidden depths. So let's start with the basics.

What exactly do we mean by Messiah? It's not just a name, is it? Right. It's definitely more than a name. The Hebrew word Mashiach actually means anointed one.

And it's a title; it's packed with significance. And here's something to think about: anointing wasn't only for kings. Prophets and priests were also anointed, you know, kind of symbolizing that they're being chosen by God for a very specific purpose.

So each anointing is like it points to another piece of this big puzzle, revealing God's plan through history. Yeah, exactly. And this messianic idea didn't just appear out of nowhere, right? There must be some kind of buildup, a story that unfolds across the Old Testament.

Oh, you're absolutely right. It's a story with a really, really long arc. You know, think way back to Genesis, to the mention of the seed of the woman.

That's like our first glimpse, just a subtle hint of what's to come. And then as we, you know, journey through the Old Testament, this whole idea of the Messiah gains momentum, kind of like, well, like a composer adding layers to a musical theme. So each generation gets another clue, you know, building this anticipation for the ultimate reveal.

And the Davidic covenant, that plays a big role in this unfolding story, doesn't it? Absolutely crucial. God's promise to David, you know, of this enduring dynasty, it's central to messianic expectations. But here's the thing: no earthly king ever fully embodies that ideal ruler that's envisioned in the covenant.

And that really sets the stage for something, or should I say someone, far greater. It's like the Davidic kings were almost like placeholders, pointing towards a king who could truly fulfill God's promises. And this is where the Psalms come in, right? They weren't just like poetic musings, were they? No, no, not at all.

These were songs that were woven into the very fabric of life in ancient Israel. Exactly. You know, they were sung during coronation celebrations, times of national crisis.

They gave voice to struggles and hopes, anxieties, you know, both personal and communal. Can you imagine that raw emotion poured into these verses, this longing for a king who could actually deliver? I know. It's really powerful.

And this longing, it takes on a whole new dimension after the monarchy ends. All those royal Psalms, you know, filled with hopes for this glorious king. Suddenly they find themselves without an earthly recipient.

It's almost like- it's like this beautifully tailored garment, just waiting for the perfect person to wear it. Exactly. But who could possibly live up to those expectations, you know? Right, right.

This is where the influence of apocalyptic literature comes in. It's crucial here. Ah, apocalyptic literature.

Intense, dramatic visions of these cosmic battles. Yeah. Good versus evil.

Definitely paints a vivid picture of the messiah people were expecting. Exactly. Those stark contrasts you mentioned, the cosmic scale, it all had a deep impact on what people thought the messiah would be like.

Think about the anticipation that was generated, like waiting for a huge blockbuster film; the stakes are just incredibly high, but things get a bit complicated when Jesus actually shows up. You know what I mean? Because he doesn't quite fit the warrior king mold everyone was anticipating. Right.

Yeah. I mean, the Messiah was supposed to usher in this era of ultimate victory, but instead Jesus suffered and died. It's a real theological puzzle, isn't it? It is.

How do theologians even reconcile that? Yeah. The seeming contradiction between what people expected and what actually happened. Well, it all comes down to this concept of already, but not yet.

Jesus inaugurated the kingdom of God through his life, death, and resurrection. Right. The full realization of that kingdom is still to come.

So it's like when you see the first little bugs on a tree in spring; the full bloom is coming, but it takes time to unfold. Yeah. Good analogy.

We see that initial fulfillment in Jesus's life, but the ultimate culmination is still in the future. But how does the New Testament itself interpret and use the Psalms? Right. Especially in light of Jesus.

Well, there are a few fascinating ways they connect the Psalms to Jesus. One approach is what's called proof-texting. Okay.

This involves using specific verses to demonstrate how Jesus fulfilled those Old Testament prophecies. Even if the original writers might not have fully grasped the messianic implications. So even if a psalmist wasn't consciously writing about the future messiah, their words could still be part of this larger divine plan.

It's a reminder that God's story unfolds across generations. He uses human words and experiences in ways we might not always fully grasp. That's such a great point.

And beyond proof-texting, the New Testament also uses the Psalms to teach really important Christian doctrines, you know, about sin, about God's character, redemption. And this helps to ground Christian belief firmly in the Old Testament. Like building a bridge between the two testaments.

Yes. Showing this continuity and this unified narrative. And didn't Jesus and the apostles constantly reference and allude to the Psalms? Oh yeah.

Frequently. It was like their go-to source for understanding God and navigating the world, you know? It shows just how deeply ingrained the Psalms were in their lives and their faith. Okay.

So we've laid some groundwork here, but how do we actually go about identifying a messianic Psalm? Are there any specific signs, clues that point to their messianic nature? Well, Dr. Waltke outlines four categories that can help us unlock these hidden layers. Don't worry, you don't need a secret decoder ring or anything. Okay.

These categories just offer a framework for understanding how the Psalms point to the coming Messiah. So it's like a treasure map. And these categories are our guide.

Exactly. Indirect, typical, prophetic. There's a whole new level of depth here.

Oh, absolutely. But wait, there's even more. There is.

Dr. Waltke digs into Psalm 16 as a really powerful example of how these verses connect to Jesus's life and ministry. Okay. I'm ready for this.

What makes Psalm 16 stand out as, you know, particularly messianic? Well, on the surface, it reads like a personal prayer of David, you know, expressing his trust in God and wanting protection. But when you look closer, you start to see these elements that suggest something much bigger is going on. It's like one of those optical illusions.

You see one image at first, and then a totally different picture emerges. Exactly. And that's what's so cool about it.

What are some of the things that jump out at you? Well, take verse 10, for instance. It says, For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy ones see corruption. Right.

Now, on a basic level, David could just be expressing his hope for deliverance from death. But the New Testament authors, especially Peter in Acts 2, interpret this as a direct prophecy of Jesus's resurrection. Now that's a bold claim.

I mean, how can we be sure they're not just reading their own interpretation into the text? I bet that sparked some debate, huh? Oh, for sure. There's always discussion about interpretation, and different scholars might have different perspectives. But here's the thing.

You've got to remember the early Christians; they knew the scriptures inside and out. They had studied them their whole lives, and they truly believed that Jesus was the Messiah they had been waiting for. So they weren't just making stuff up? No, not at all.

Their interpretations were rooted in their deep understanding of the scriptures and their experience of Jesus. And when we look at Peter's interpretation of the psalm, it fits within the larger context of his message in Acts 2, right? Exactly. He's proclaiming that Jesus is the Messiah, and he's using the scriptures to back up his claims.

It's like he's connecting the dots for everyone. Showing how the Old Testament points to Jesus. Exactly.

And it's not just about individual verses. It's about understanding the overarching themes, those patterns that run through the scriptures. Fascinating.

Isn't it? So when we read Psalm 16, we can see how it foreshadows Jesus's victory over death. But are there other examples of how the New Testament interprets the psalms in light of Christ? Oh, there are so many. Think about Psalm 22, which starts with, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Right.

These are the same words Jesus cries out from the cross. Wow. It's like David's words are echoing through time, connecting his experience of suffering to Jesus's ultimate sacrifice.

Exactly. And the rest of the psalm describes details that align with the crucifixion. The mocking, the piercing of his hands and feet, the casting of lots for his clothes.

It's almost as if David is describing the crucifixion centuries before it happens. And that's how the New Testament authors saw it. They viewed these connections as proof that Jesus was fulfilling the scriptures.

They believed the psalms, along with the rest of the Old Testament, were all pointing towards him. Okay. So how can we learn to spot these messianic elements? We've talked about Dr. Walti's four categories.

Could you give us some examples of how they actually work in practice? Sure. Let's take Psalm 2, for example. It depicts a king who is opposed by the nations, but he ends up triumphing over his enemies.

This psalm fits into the category of a typical messianic psalm because it describes a king who perfectly embodies the ideal of the Davidic covenant. Remember, that ideal was never fully realized by any earthly king. So even though the psalm might have initially referred to a real king, it also points forward to a greater king, the one who could actually fulfill the promises.

Exactly. And when we read the psalm thinking about Jesus, we can see how it prefigures his victory over sin and death, his reign as king of kings. So it's like the psalm is a reflection of the past, but also a prophecy of the future.

Yeah. And that's the beauty of these messianic psalms. They give us this glimpse into God's plan throughout history, showing how he was working through these people and events to bring about his ultimate purpose, which is revealed in Christ.

It's like God was planting these seeds of truth, and they were destined to blossom centuries later. Beautiful imagery. This reminds me of that powerful moment in Luke 24, when Jesus, on the road to Emmaus, explains the Scriptures to his disciples.

Yeah. He tells them that everything written in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms has to be fulfilled in him. That's such a crucial passage.

It's Jesus himself confirming that he is the key to understanding the Old Testament. He's the one all those scriptures are pointing to. Wow.

Jesus says we better pay attention. It makes you want to go back and reread everything with fresh eyes, doesn't it? It really does. It changes everything.

Okay. I'll admit, sometimes I get lost in the details. Why should we care about these messianic psalms? What impact do they really have on our lives today? That's a great question.

You know, I think Dr. Walke would say that understanding the messianic psalms can enrich our relationship with God and deepen our appreciation for Jesus. As we see how these ancient poems point towards Jesus, our faith grows stronger, our worship is inspired, and we can find hope in the midst of our challenges. It's like we're getting this secret message from God written just for us.

You got it. This has been incredibly insightful, and I know our listeners are eager to hear more. I'm sure they are.

But before we move on, I want to leave you with a thought-provoking question, one that Dr. Walke poses. If all Scripture can be read in light of Christ, how does that change how we approach even the passages we think we know really well? Ooh, that's a good one. It's something to ponder as we keep exploring the Scriptures and trying to understand God's big plan.

Definitely something to think about. And you know what? That's something we can all do together. Absolutely.

We can all learn from each other. It's a question that makes you think, doesn't it? Like we've been given this whole new way to look at the Bible. All of a sudden, those familiar stories, well, they take on a whole new level of meaning.

Exactly. It's not just about finding hidden codes or anything like that. It's about understanding the bigger story, you know, God's love for humanity and how it all leads to Jesus.

And the Psalms, with all their raw emotion and honesty, I mean, they become even more relatable. It's like they're not just David's words, you know; they're echoing the heart of humanity. Absolutely.

They give us this language to express our own hopes and fears, our longing for a better world. Yeah, like we can be honest with God, pour our hearts out, knowing he understands. And finding comfort in knowing that God has already answered those desires in Jesus.

Okay. So going back to Psalm 16, you know, Dr. Walke pointed out how Peter in Acts 2 interprets verse 10 as a prophecy about Jesus's resurrection. That's a pretty big leap, wouldn't you say? It is a big leap.

And it shows how important it is to understand how the New Testament writers thought about the Old Testament. They saw Jesus as the fulfillment of the scriptures. And they used passages like this to prove it.

But couldn't someone say that Peter was just, I know, forcing his own ideas onto the text? How can we be sure that's the right way to interpret it? That's a fair question. And, you know, there are always going to be questions about interpretation. Different scholars will have different viewpoints.

But remember, those early Christians, they knew the scriptures backward and forward. They had studied them their entire lives. And they truly believed that Jesus was the Messiah.

So their interpretation wasn't just random. Not at all. It came from their deep understanding of the scriptures and their personal experience with Jesus.

Right, right. And when we look at how Peter interpreted Psalm 16, well, it makes sense in the context of his message in Acts 2. Exactly. He's saying, hey, Jesus is the Messiah.

And he's using the Scriptures to support that claim. It's like he's connecting the dots. Yes.

Showing how the Old Testament leads to Jesus. And it's not just about individual verses. It's about understanding the big themes, the patterns that weave through everything.

OK, so we see how Psalm 16 foreshadows Jesus's victory over death. But are there other examples of how the New Testament interprets the Psalms with Jesus in mind? Oh, tons of examples. Think about Psalm 22.

It begins with, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And those are the same words Jesus cried out on the cross. It's like David's words are bridging the gap between the Old and New Testaments, connecting his own suffering with what Jesus went through. Exactly.

And the rest of that Psalm describes details that align perfectly with the crucifixion. The mocking, the piercing of his hands and feet, even the soldiers gambling for his clothes. It's almost like David was there describing it firsthand.

And the New Testament authors saw these connections as evidence that Jesus was fulfilling those prophecies. They believed the Psalms, along with the rest of the Old Testament, were all pointing to him. So how can we learn to spot these messianic elements? We've mentioned the four categories that Dr. Walke talked about.

Could you give us some specific examples, like how they work in a real Psalm? Of course, let's take a look at Psalm 2. It's a powerful one. It shows the king facing opposition from all the nations. But in the end, he triumphs over his enemies.

This is a classic example of what we call a typical messianic Psalm. Okay, what makes it typical? It has something to do with the Davidic covenant, right? You got it. Psalm 2 describes a king who embodies the ideal ruler that's laid out in the Davidic covenant.

He's strong. He's righteous. He's destined to rule over the nations.

But no earthly king from David's line ever lived up to that ideal. So the Psalm is pointing to something bigger. A king who can truly fulfill those promises.

Exactly. And when we read Psalm 2 with Jesus in mind, we can see how he is that perfect king. His reign isn't about military power.

It's about his sacrifice and his resurrection. So it's rooted in the history of those Davidic kings, but it also goes beyond that history. It's about a kingdom that's bigger than any earthly kingdom.

It's like the Psalm is a bridge connecting the Old and New Testaments, showing us that God's plan has been unfolding all along. Beautifully put. And actually, this Psalm also fits another category.

It's a prophetic messianic Psalm. Okay, what makes it prophetic? Does it give specific predictions? It doesn't give specific predictions about Jesus's life and the way we might think of it, but it does speak prophetically about the victory of God's chosen king. You know, verses like, Ask of me and I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession.

Those point towards a reign that encompasses everyone. And that really aligns with the Christian understanding of Jesus as the King of Kings, right? Exactly. Psalm 2 works on multiple levels.

It speaks to the historical context of David's kingship. It anticipates the reign of a greater king, and it finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Wow, that's amazing.

Are there any Psalms that would be considered indirect messianic Psalms? What would that even look like? Great question. Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd, is often considered an indirect messianic Psalm. Now, on the surface, it's a beautiful expression of trust in God's care.

Yeah, it's a Psalm that a lot of people find comfort in. Exactly. And while it doesn't directly mention a Messiah, its themes of guidance, protection, you know, abundant life, they all resonate with the person and work of Jesus.

He's the good shepherd, the one who lays down his life for his sheep. So even without using those specific messianic terms, the Psalms' themes and imagery still connect with our understanding of Jesus. That's it.

And it shows how important it is to read the Psalms and really all of Scripture with a discerning heart, you know, to look for those echoes of cries, those subtle connections. I love those echoes of cries. It makes you want to reread the Psalms with fresh eyes, doesn't it? Absolutely.

It's like a treasure hunt. And what a treasure it is. As we explore the Psalms, we not only learn more about Jesus, but also gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and our relationship with God.

Couldn't have said it better myself. Dr. Waltke has given us a lot to ponder, but before we wrap up, I want to revisit that thought-provoking question you asked earlier. If we can read all of Scripture with Christ in mind, how does that change our approach to even the most familiar passages? It's a question that can revolutionize the way we read the Bible.

It challenges us to go beyond simply reading for information or moral lessons and to really seek a deeper understanding of who Jesus is and what he's done for us. It's like we're being given a new perspective, a new way to see the world. Exactly.

And as we do that, the scriptures come alive. They become a source of endless wonder, drawing us closer to God. It's a journey that never really ends.

This has been so enriching, and I'm sure our listeners are excited to keep exploring. But let's take a moment to think about the practical side of all this. We've talked about how the Psalms point to Jesus, but how does that actually impact our lives today? What difference does it make? That's the key question, isn't it? And I think one of the most important things is that it gives us hope.

You know, the Messianic Psalms remind us that even when we're going through hard times, God is working things out. They show us that there's a future where everything will be made right, where Jesus's reign will bring peace and justice and healing. So it's not just about history or theology, right? It's about our everyday struggles, our hopes for a better world.

Right. And these ancient poems, they not only give us hope, but they also challenge us to live differently. When we see how they foreshadow Jesus's life and ministry, we're inspired to follow his example, to be more loving, compassionate, and just.

It's like a call to action, isn't it? To put our faith into practice. It is. The Messianic Psalms are all about discipleship, about becoming more like Jesus.

They invite us to be part of his kingdom, bringing hope and healing to the world. This deep dive has really opened my eyes to the power of the Psalms. I'm starting to see how they're not just ancient poetry, but a vital part of God's revelation, pointing us towards Jesus and challenging us to live for him.

I'm so glad to hear that. It's been a joy exploring these ideas with you. I hope our listeners feel inspired to dive into the Psalms themselves and see what treasures they find.

And remember, this isn't the end of our journey. We want to hear from you, share your own discoveries, your insights, and keep the conversation going. Absolutely.

We can all learn from each other. Keep seeking truth and keep diving deep. It's amazing to think about, you know, how these Psalms can be so personal.

And yet at the same time, they're pointing to something much bigger. It's that combination that makes them so powerful, isn't it? They capture the whole spectrum of human emotion, but they always connect it back to God. No matter what we're going through, we're not alone.

And as we've been talking about, they also point us to the one who truly gets it, you know, Jesus, who experienced all of it. Exactly. Jesus is the key.

He unlocks the full meaning, not just of the Psalms, but of the whole Testament. He is the answer to all those hopes and longings that are woven throughout those ancient texts. It's like the Psalms are individual instruments in an orchestra, and Jesus is the conductor.

He brings it all together into this beautiful symphony, something that transcends, you know, time and culture. I love that analogy. And it reminds us that we can't just look at isolated verses or stories.

It's about the whole narrative. You know, it's God's love story for humanity, and it all leads to Jesus. You know, Dr. Waltke talked about reading the Scriptures with this messianic lens.

Do you have any practical advice for how our listeners can actually do that? Well, one thing that can help is paying attention to the themes, to the patterns that run through the texts, like looking for passages that talk about suffering and redemption or victory over enemies or the hope for a righteous king, you know, those kinds of things. So even if a verse doesn't say Messiah outright, right, it might still be part of that bigger picture pointing towards Jesus.

Exactly. And another good tip is to get familiar with how the New Testament writers use the Old Testament. I mean, they were experts at connecting the dots, showing how Jesus was the fulfillment of everything.

It's like they're giving us the cheat sheet. Yeah, in a way, they're highlighting those connections so we don't miss them. And the more we see those connections, the more we'll start to recognize them on our own.

That's really cool. And, you know, it's important to say reading with that messianic lens doesn't mean we ignore the historical context, right? We still have to understand what the text meant to the original audience. Oh, absolutely.

Context is key. Yeah. But we also have to remember that the scriptures have this deeper meaning in light of Christ.

He's the one who brings it all into focus. We're looking out over this vast landscape, you know, and Jesus is the lens that helps us see everything clearly. Exactly.

He makes sense of it all. And that reminds us that the Bible isn't just some ancient book. It's a living word.

It speaks to us today. It gives us guidance and wisdom and hope. As we're wrapping up, I'm struck by just how powerful these messianic psalms really are.

They're not just beautiful poetry. They're a window into God's heart. They show us his plan to redeem humanity through Jesus.

And they call us to action; you know, they invite us to be part of that plan, to bring hope and healing to the world, just like Jesus did. This deep dive has been incredible. Thank you so much for sharing your insights.

I hope our listeners are feeling inspired to dive into the songs themselves and see what they discover. It's been my pleasure. And remember, the conversation doesn't stop here.

Keep exploring, keep asking questions, keep sharing what you're learning. That's right. We're all on this journey together.

So until next time, happy diving, everyone.