

Dr. Bruce Waltke, Psalms, Psalm 8, A Psalm of Praise, Session 10, 6-min. Video Overview

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Have you ever just looked up at the night sky and felt, well, completely and totally tiny? It's a feeling we've all had, and today we're going to dive deep into Psalm 8, which tackles that exact feeling head-on. With a little help from the theologian Dr. Bruce Waltke, we're going to explore our place in this universe that's just so awe-inspiring, and honestly, a little terrifying in its sheer scale. Okay, so to really get the weight of the question Psalm 8 is asking, first we have to try, and I mean try, to wrap our heads around how massive the universe actually is.

So let's just start with our own backyard, cosmically speaking. Our home galaxy, the Milky Way. It is a staggering 100,000 light-years across.

I mean, think about that. Even if you could travel at the speed of light, the fastest anything can go, it would still take you 100,000 years just to get from one side to the other. And that, that's just our neighborhood.

Because when you pull the camera back, you find out there are billions, and I mean billions, of other galaxies out there. Get this: scientists estimate there are more galaxies in the universe than there are grains of sand on every single beach on planet Earth combined. It's a number so big, our brains can't really even process it.

And it's that feeling, right? That sense of being completely overwhelmed by the vastness of it all. That's the perfect setup for the huge question at the heart of the psalm. So, you've got this backdrop of absolute cosmic grandeur, and then there's us.

And that's where Psalm 8 presents this incredible paradox. Dr. Waltke has this amazing way of putting it into perspective. He says, if you were at the edge of our own solar system looking back, Earth would be just a single pixel on a TV screen.

And if you were at the edge of our own galaxy, you wouldn't even be able to see it. It's completely invisible. And this right here, this is the central mystery of the psalm.

In this ridiculously immense, sprawling universe, why on Earth would humanity matter at all? Okay, so that's the problem, right? We're tiny. We feel insignificant. But here's where the psalm delivers its startling answer.

And it just completely flips the whole script. So, instead of us being nothing, I mean far from it, the psalm claims that humanity has been given this position of incredible dignity, an almost royal responsibility even. But there's always an "isn't there, this royal job comes with a major twist.

A deep, deep conflict that Dr. Waltke calls a tale of two mandates. And this is where things get really fascinating. And frankly, kind of tragic.

In the physical world, we've been unbelievably successful. I mean, we've developed medicines that save millions of lives. We've traveled to the moon.

We're masters of the physical. But in the spiritual realm, it's a different story. It's like every incredible invention we come up with can be used for both amazing good and terrible evil.

So, given this spiritual failure, how does the psalm suggest we fix it? Well, the answer is completely counterintuitive. It's probably not what you're expecting. The psalm suggests that the ultimate weapon against cosmic evil isn't brute strength or power or force.

Nope. It's something else entirely. Something much quieter.

Now, as Dr. Waltke explains, this isn't talking about literal infants. It's a powerful metaphor. It's about a spiritual battle that's won through the praise and the total dependence of those who seem powerless, those who rely on God instead of their own strength.

And that whole idea leads us to the ultimate purpose of praise itself. And Dr. Waltke illustrates this with a pretty radical idea. Okay, wow.

That's a shocking statement, right? But hold on. He uses this really clever story to explain the deep philosophical point he's making. So, let's break down this story because it's a bit of a brain bender, but it is brilliant.

It all comes down to two big ideas. Ontological reality is about what actually is. The cat exists.

It's real. Epistemological reality is about what is known to exist. To the landlady, the cat doesn't exist simply because she doesn't know about it.

It's a genius way to explain a really complex idea. And that is the mind-blowing connection to praise. Our praise doesn't create God.

He already exists ontologically. But our praise is what makes God's reality known in the world. It's how God's existence moves from just being a fact to being an epistemological reality, something that is seen and known and experienced by other people.

Okay, but hang on a second. This raises a huge theological problem, right? If our praise makes God known, does that mean God's existence somehow depends on us? The source material tackles this question directly. And the ultimate answer is no.

God's existence isn't dependent on us at all. Because if humanity were to fall completely silent, creation itself, the very stones, would just pick up the slack and continue the praise. And what's so beautiful is that the psalm itself ends in the exact same place it began, with this powerful declaration of praise.

It's a literary technique called an *inclusio*, and it works like a perfect frame, bookending this incredible journey from cosmic wonder, all the way to understanding humanity's strange and powerful purpose. So in the end, the psalmist leaves us right here, wrestling with this profound tension. How can we be both an insignificant speck of dust in a massive universe,

and at the same time, a crowned ruler of creation? It's a question that completely redefines our place in the cosmos and the surprising power that we hold.