

Dr. Bruce Waltke, Psalms, Liturgical Approach, Psalm 110, Session 22, 6-min. Video Overview

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All right, let's dive right in. Today, we're going to talk about one of the most powerful and influential texts you've probably never even heard of, Psalm 110. I mean, it's tiny.

We're talking just seven verses long. It's basically a brief ancient song that was written for a king. But here's the thing that'll blow your mind.

Despite its size, it's quoted or alluded to over 25 times in the New Testament. That's more than any other psalm. So you have to ask, right? How did this little coronation song for some long-forgotten king become so incredibly important? Well, that's what we're going to uncover.

We're going to see how this short text literally became the theological blueprint for defining the Messiah in Christianity. The whole story of this psalm's power really kicks off with this amazing dramatic showdown where Jesus uses it to completely turn the tables on his sharpest critics. So picture the scene.

The religious leaders are trying to trap him, right? They're throwing these tricky questions at him about taxes, about the resurrection, and he's just answering them all flawlessly. And then, once he's deflected all their traps, he hits them back with a riddle of his own based on this very psalm. And he starts off simple.

He asks the standard question that, honestly, everybody in the room already knew the answer to. And they give him the textbook reply. The son of David.

You know, the Messiah was expected to be a human descendant of Israel's greatest king, David. Simple enough. But then, Jesus pushes them a little further.

So here's the crucial point he makes. If the Messiah is just David's son, his human descendant, why would David, the most powerful king in their history, call his own descendant my Lord? It just didn't make sense. It was a complete paradox they just could not solve.

And boom. That's the whole point. Jesus is using the psalm to argue that the Messiah has to be more than just the son of David.

He must also be the son of God, a divine figure far greater than any earthly king. Okay, so to really understand this riddle, we've got to go back in time. We need to look at the psalm's original context.

What was this thing actually for? Well, scholars like Dr. Bruce Waltke pretty much agree that Psalm 110 was essentially a script. It was a script for a king's coronation ceremony on Mount Zion, kind of like other royal rituals you'd find all across the ancient Near East. Now, what's really interesting here is how this psalm is built.

It's structured like a dialogue, a back and forth. God makes a big declaration, and then a prophet reflects on what it all means. And this pattern happens twice.

That first declaration from God is this incredibly powerful image: Sit at my right hand. And let me tell you, the right hand wasn't just a place of honor. No, it was the seat of the executive.

It meant you were the one with the power to carry out the law. And then you get this line, which is just brilliant. Making your enemies your footstool.

This wasn't just a figure of speech. In ancient Egyptian art, you can literally see pharaohs resting their feet on images of their enemies. It's a symbol of complete, total subjugation.

Your enemies aren't just defeated. They are brought under your absolute control. So, how does this ancient ritual for a human king get applied to the Messiah? Well, the leaders of the early church took this coronation script and saw it as the absolute perfect explanation for who Jesus was and what he had accomplished.

You see it everywhere. Peter uses it in the very first Christian sermon at Pentecost. The author of the book of Hebrews uses it to argue that Jesus is a totally new kind of high priest.

And Paul, again and again and again, uses that seated at the right hand of God image to talk about Christ's supreme authority. It was like their source code for explaining these radical new ideas. But the psalm also has this incredibly beautiful poetic side, like this description of the king's volunteer army.

And you guessed it, the New Testament writers saw this as a perfect metaphor for the followers of Christ. Just think about what dew from the morning really means. It has a heavenly origin.

It comes from God. It's innumerable, like countless little drops of water. It's refreshing and brings new life.

And it's kind of mysterious. It just appears after a long period of darkness. This one metaphor perfectly captured the essence of this new spiritual movement: a huge, divinely sent army of volunteers bringing refreshment to the whole world.

So the influence of this short psalm didn't just stop with the New Testament. No way. Its language actually became embedded in the very foundation of Christian belief itself.

I love this way of thinking about it. Dr. Waltke says that theology was minted in Psalm 110, like stamping a coin, and then it was circulated throughout all of church history. The core ideas were created in this one text and then spent like currency for centuries.

And chances are you've actually heard this yourself without even knowing it. If you've ever recited the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed, you have spoken a direct echo of Psalm 110. That central phrase, seated at the right hand of God, comes right out of verse one.

And that's the whole journey, isn't it? What started as a local political ritual for a human king was transformed into the cornerstone of Christology, the whole study of who Christ is. It became a universal theological statement that has shaped history for two millennia. It kind of leaves you wondering, doesn't it? What other ancient texts out there might be holding the hidden codes to ideas that could change the world?