

Dr. Bruce Waltke, Psalms, Messianic Psalms, Psalm 16, Session 24, 6-min. Video Overview

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Have you ever stopped to think about how a book of ancient Hebrew poems, the Psalms, ended up being one of the most critical books for understanding Jesus in the New Testament? It's a pretty amazing story, really. A story about history, hope, and a promise that just refused to die out. To kick things off, I want to show you a number that kind of puts everything into perspective.

41%. Get this. Of all the direct quotes from the Old Testament you find in the New Testament, a massive 41% of them come from the book of Psalms.

We're talking 116 out of 283 quotes. That is way more than any other single book. It just goes to show you how foundational these poems were for the very first followers of Jesus.

So that leads us to the big question, right? How did these poems, which were originally written for and about actual historical kings of Israel, get reread hundreds of years later as a blueprint for a future perfect king? Well, let's unpack that mystery together. Okay, first things first. We have to get a handle on the main character in all of this.

The Messiah. The word Messiah actually comes from the Hebrew word Mashiach, and it literally just means the anointed one. It points to this really deep-seated hope for a perfect king who would one day show up and establish this amazing, universal kingdom of total justice and peace.

But what does it even mean to be anointed? You see, anointing with oil wasn't just some empty ceremony. It had three really profound meanings. First, it marked the king as God's special property.

Second, it was a public stamp of approval, validating him as the rightful ruler. And finally, it was believed to come with this divine power-up, an empowerment for the huge job he had to do. So the key takeaway is, being the anointed one was all about being chosen, validated, and empowered by God himself.

And this hope for an anointed one, it didn't just pop up out of nowhere. It was a thread woven through the entire story of Israel. This timeline shows how that hope got more and more specific over time.

It starts way back in the garden with this kind of vague promise of a descendant who would finally crush evil. Then that promise gets focused, like a camera lens, first to Abraham's family, then narrowed down to the tribe of Judah. And finally, it lands right on King David.

God promises him an eternal dynasty, a throne that would last forever. But, and this is wild, this royal line was incredibly fragile. I mean, it was almost wiped out multiple times.

At one point, only one little boy, Joash, was left. As one writer so beautifully put it, it was like all the candles on the birthday cake were blown out, except for one flicker. The entire promise, the whole thing, rested on that one tiny life.

And yet God preserved it. Okay, so now we come to a massive turning point in the story. This is where everything changes.

You see, all these amazing royal psalms, we're talking about classics like Psalm 2 or Psalm 110. They were originally written for real, living, breathing kings. They were sung at coronations and birthday parties.

They were celebrating the guy on the throne right then and there. They were his royal robes, so to speak. But then, catastrophe.

Babylon conquers Jerusalem. The line of Davidic kings is shattered. The throne is empty.

There is no king. So, what happens to all these incredible royal songs? Who are you supposed to sing them for now? Well, this crisis forced a profound shift in how people read these poems. Without a king in the present, they started to look to the future.

The meaning shifted. They weren't just about a historical king anymore. They became about a future, ideal king who was still to come.

The poems became prophecies. And that left Israel with this magnificent collection of royal promises. This amazing wardrobe of kingly psalms just hanging there, waiting for the one true king who would finally be worthy to wear them.

And that, of course, brings us to the New Testament, where the first Christians start shouting from the rooftops that they'd finally found the one who fit the robes. So, the New Testament writers use the psalms in three main ways. First, as proof texts to show that all the shocking things about Jesus' life, especially his suffering and death, weren't an accident, but were part of God's plan all along.

Second, they used them to teach core beliefs about humanity and God. And third, verses from the psalms actually became the building blocks of the early church's worship songs and creeds. Now, to really get this, you have to understand two different ways they saw prophecy working.

Sure, sometimes it was a direct prediction. But a lot of the time, they understood it through something called typology. And this concept is absolutely crucial.

So, what is typology? It's the idea that a person or an event in the past was a divinely intended pattern, a type, that was pointing forward to an even greater fulfillment in the future. So, for example, when King David wrote a psalm about being betrayed by a close friend, he was writing about his own life. He probably had no idea that he was also creating a picture that would find its ultimate tragic fulfillment centuries later with Jesus and Judas.

And look, this wasn't just some clever idea his followers came up with later. Jesus himself signed off on this way of reading scripture. He's the one who said that everything in the Old Testament, including the psalms, was ultimately pointing right at him.

He was the one the wardrobe was made for all along. So, the psalms' big secret is that a national disaster transformed a songbook for kings into a book of hope for the king. And when you look at them through that lens, you see this one incredible epic story unfold.

It really makes you wonder what other stories are just waiting to be seen in these ancient poems.