

## Who Is God And What Is Man?

### Psalm 90

**Introduction: 1)** “The same yesterday, today and forever.” (Heb. 13:8). “For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away” (James 4:14).

Two profound, yet very different statements: One, the first, is appropriately applied to our God who is described in Psalm 90:1 as “from everlasting to everlasting.” The second, is appropriately applied to man, concerning whom v. 3 say is returned to the dust. God is forever. Man is “dust in the wind.” Puts things in perspective does it not?

2) – Psalm 90 is the first psalm of book 4 of the Psalter (Psalms 90-106).

– Kidner notes that Book I (1-41) tends to be personal, Book II (42-72) and Book III (73-89) tend to be national, and Book IV (90-106) and Book V (107-150) are more liturgical.

– In book IV, the name Yahweh or Jehovah is prominent.

– Most of the psalms are anonymous, though Ps. 90 is attributed to Moses, and Pss. 101 & 103 to David.

– Psalm 90, written by Moses, is the oldest psalm. Moses also wrote at least 2 other songs: Ex. 15:1-18 and Deut. 32:1-43.

– This psalm inspired Isaac Watts to write “Our God, Our Help in Ages Past.”

– It is a psalm of praise (1-2), lament (3-12) and prayer (13-17).

#### **I. Remember that the Lord is eternal. 90:1-2**

- The psalm begins with a majestic affirmation of the awesomeness of our God, our Lord (*Adonai*) the word means Master.
- It comes from Moses, described in the superscription as “the man of God.”

#### **1) Let the Lord be your refuge. 90:1**

- Generations come and go, but God remains constant in His concern and care for His children.

#### **2) Trust in the Lord forever. 90:2**

- The reason the Lord can be a refuge in all generations is explained in v. 2. He has always existed. He is always there.
- You are the one who reveals Himself in Jesus who is “the same yesterday, today and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

## **II. Remember that man is temporal. 90:3-6**

Verse 3-6 and 7-12 will not make you feel good about yourself. They do not fit well into a man centered philosophy or prosperity theology that says you should seek “your best life now” and “become a better you.” Such a message may give hope, but it is a false hope and a pipe dream destined to disappoint.

### **1) Do not forget you have a date with death. 90:3**

- With echoes of Gen. 3:19 ringing in our ears (“From dust you are, and to dust you shall return”), we are reminded of our frailty and finiteness.
- We are weak and we are brief. We are only a moment. A vapor, dust in the winds of time. Death is certain. God is forever and we are not.

### **2) Do not forget you have a limited time of life. 90:4-6**

- From the Lord’s eternal perspective, a thousand years is like a single 24 hour period that quickly passes and is gone. (v.4).
- No, it is less than that. It is like “a watch in the night” (v.4), a short 3 hour period of time.” V. 5: “You [God] carry them away like a flood.” Suddenly without warning we are gone and we sleep the sleep of death.
- Vs. 5-6: we are like morning grass that sprouts quickly and looks so vibrant, but by evening “it is cut down & withers”, gone forever without memory or a second thought. Amazingly many don’t get it. We are like the fool of Luke 12:16-21.

## **III. Remember that man is sinful. 90:7-12**

- Sometimes I am asked, “is it normal to fear death, especially for the Christian?”
- I believe the answer is yes, because death was never our divinely intended destiny. It is an un-welcomed intruder into human history. It is an un-desired, but well deserved antagonist.
- Why is there death? Human sin and divine justice are the answers.
- Verses 7-12 flow naturally and theologically from vs. 3-6. Three aspects of our sinfulness are brought to light.

### **1) God will judge our sin. 90:7-8**

- Why is there death and eternal judgment? Because the wrath of God, His steady and constant opposition to sin, consumes us.
- Further, He sees and knows all our sin, down to the very last one.
- Further still, our secret sins, the things we do in the privacy of our thought life and personal life are in plain view in the light of His “countenance” (*NIV, NASV*, “presence”).

- Sin's penalty required God to crush His Son (Is. 53:10). God takes sin seriously. He will judge our sin.

**2) God will measure our lives. 90:9-10**

- These verses develop the theme of vs. 3-6. Our days are quick, even shortened, because of God's judgment on sin. They simply "pass away." Our years come to an end like a "sigh" or "moan" (*NIV*).
- Moses notes that a normal life can be measured to about 70 years, and an extended life about 80. What is 70 or even 80 years in comparison to "forever?"

**3) God will teach us wisdom. 90:11-12**

- The brilliant American theologian Jonathan Edwards (1703-58) in his resolutions said:
  - Resolved, Never to lose one moment of time; but improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can.
  - Resolved, To live with all my might, while I do live.
  - Resolved, Never to do any thing, which I should be afraid to do, if it were the last hour of my life.
  - Resolved, To think much on all occasions of my own dying, and of the common circumstances which attend death.
  - Resolved, That I will live so as I shall wish I had done when I come to die.

Such a perspective on life grows out of a biblical and spiritual wisdom whereby God: 1) teaches us to number our days and 2) enables us to gain a heart of wisdom.

**IV. Remember that the Lord is merciful. 90:13-17**

- This 4<sup>th</sup> and final stanza is a prayer for the Lord's mercy, His *hesed* (v. 14), His unfailing love and covenant faithfulness.

**1) We should long for His mercy. 90:13-15**

- Building on God's compassion, we can request His mercy or "unfailing love" (*NIV*). Here we receive a triple blessing: 1) satisfaction, 2) rejoicing, and 3) gladness. Such joy and gladness and satisfaction will accompany us "all our days" (v. 14), even in those days when the Lord has "afflicted us" (v. 15) and "we have seen evil" (v. 15). Here is the anticipation of Rom. 8:18-30.

**2) We should look for His glory. 90:16**

- That which is done for self will perish. That which is done by God in us will last and...reveal the glory of God in and thru and to His children. His work of salvation, sanctification, glorification will redound to His praise and glory, not ours.

- It will be God’s best life now and forever. Now that is a life worth living. Oh to see God’s works and His glory put on display rather than our iniquities and secret sins (v. 8). That is a picture show I will gladly go and see.

### 3) **We should live for His beauty.** **90:17**

- Verse 17 builds on v. 16. “His works...His glory...His beauty.” His works are made visible in our works, what our text calls “the work of our hands” (repeated for emphasis).
- “Beauty” could be rendered “favor.” (*NIV, NASV*). Life lived only under the sun (*Ecclesiastes*) may be vanity. Life lived under the Lordship of God, of Jesus Christ, has purpose and meaning. Amazingly what is temporal can become eternal.

#### **Conclusion:**

“Our God, Our Help in Ages Past”

By Isaac Watts, 1674-1748

1. Our God, our Help in ages past, Our Hope for years to come,  
Our Shelter from the stormy blast, And our eternal Home!
2. Under the shadow of Thy throne, Thy saints have dwelt secure;  
Sufficient is Thine arm alone, And our defense is sure.
3. Before the hills in order stood, Or earth received her frame,  
From everlasting Thou art God, To endless years the same.
4. A thousand ages in Thy sight, Are like an evening gone,  
Short as the watch that ends the night, Before the rising sun.
5. Thy word commands our flesh to dust: “Return ye sons of men!”  
All nations rose from earth at first, And turn to earth again.
6. Time, like an ever-rolling stream, Bears all its sons away;  
They fly forgotten as a dream, Dies at the opening day.
7. Like flowery fields the nations stand, Pleased with the morning light;  
The flowers beneath the mower’s hand, Lie withering ere ‘tis night.
8. Our God, our Help in ages past, Our Hope for years to come,  
Be Thou our Guard while troubles last, And our eternal Home!