

## **Commentary on Psalm 90:1-12 & Psalm 90:13-17**

### **By L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.**

The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Series*) for **November 14, 2010**, is from **Psalm 90:1-12**; in addition, I have added to the *Bible Lesson Forum* a commentary on **Psalm 90:13-17**, to complete the Psalm. Five **Questions for Discussion** follow the *Bible Lesson Commentary*. The **International Bible Lessons** can be read at: <http://internationalbiblelessons.com/>; new *International Bible Lessons* are also published each Saturday in [The Oklahoman](#) newspaper.

### **Psalm 90:1-12**

#### **1 Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

This prayer of Moses reminds us of God's creation of the world and the Book of Genesis and Exodus. Our lives depend totally upon God moment-by moment. Only God is self-existent and only God does not depend on anyone or anything outside of his own being to exist or have needs met. Moses saw how Abraham and his descendents in faith depended on God, and how they lived their lives in the understanding that God was in a covenant relationship with them.

#### **2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.**

Moses also affirmed in his prayer that God existed before the world began. God created and formed the earth and all creation. Whereas the world had a beginning, God had no beginning and has no end. Whereas the world is ever changing and God has promised a new heaven and a new earth, God is the everlasting God whose character and nature will never change.

#### **3 You turn us back to dust, and say, "Turn back, you mortals."**

Here, Moses reminds us that Adam was made from the dust of the ground, and to the dust he returned. We are alive outside the womb only because God breathed the breathe of life into us. Because Adam and Eve sinned and were driven from the garden and the tree of life, they, along with all of their descendents would physically turn back to dust. Moses did not know that Jesus would come and give eternal life to all who believe in Him as Lord and Savior.

#### **4 For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night.**

Time, and the measurement of time, is almost insignificant when compared to God and the fact that God is everlasting, whereas our physical bodies will return to dust after a brief time. A thousand years of human history may seem to us as a long time, but compared to eternity it is like yesterday to us in God's experience.

**5 You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning;**

God sweeps the years away. Time passes and does not stand still at the command of God. Each moment and every passing year depends totally on God for continuation. God did not wind up the world like a clock to run independently of Him. God makes the years pass by in time in a way similar to us as the passing of a second hand as it sweeps by in an analogue watch. A year passes as a dream and a new year begins. As time passes by for us, time seems to move by more quickly.

**6 in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.**

Moses wants us to pray with a serious consideration of how short our life is physically on this earth when compared to God, Who in the context of everlasting life has the years pass so quickly that they become almost insignificant to Him, but they are vastly significant to us because our time is so short. We must remain amazed that God does care for us, each one individually, and how we use our time.

**7 For we are consumed by your anger; by your wrath we are overwhelmed.**

The wilderness wandering of the Hebrews began when they did not trust God enough to enter the Promised Land according to God's perfect timing. God decided that the rebellious would perish in the wilderness, which they did (most of them continued rebellious as the history shows). Moses wrote of God's just punishment as God expressing His anger and wrath when the people rebelled and God punished them.

**8 You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your countenance.**

God sees us sin when we sin. We may think we sin in secret when no one sees, but God does see us sin even when we think the sin is hidden and known only to us. God holds us accountable for our sins, and that is one reason believers need to turn to Jesus when they sin. God judged Moses' sin (in a way that may seem extreme to us) of striking the rock to bring forth water when God had told him to speak to the rock, because Moses sinned openly before all the people; therefore, God judged and punished Moses openly. God showed that He would not give special treatment to leaders by allowing them to sin without accountability to God.

**9 For all our days pass away under your wrath; our years come to an end like a sigh.**

These words show us our need of a Savior. Our days on Earth pass away under the just judgment of God. Without a Savior, we will end our lives with a sigh of regret. Moses did not know all that the prophets who followed him would teach and all that Jesus would reveal. Living apart from God, those living in rebellion against God, live under the just judgment of God.

**10 The days of our life are seventy years, or perhaps eighty, if we are strong; even then their span is only toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.**

Though Moses lived to be 120 years old, and led the people out of Egypt at the age of 80; in general, human life span in his time was between 70 and 80 years old. Many feel blessed to live that long in various parts of the world where daily hardships are the normal way of life. Moses wanted us to live with due consideration of how long we may live. If we read our daily newspaper or watch the news on television, almost everything we learn about our world is an illustration of the truth of Moses' words. It seems the news reporters focus on events and forebodings designed to make us fearful and worry. People fly away at death, but the world's troubles will remain until Jesus returns.

**11 Who considers the power of your anger? Your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you.**

Before we sin, do we consider that God is a just God and King and Judge, and God has the power to exercise any just punishment that befits our crimes? When we consider God's power to punish and His justice that is always incorruptible, He deserves our fear, respect, and reverence.

**12 So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.**

Considering how long we may have to live should motivate us to live a physically healthy life to get the best out of the years we have on Earth. Also, we should seek to live wisely (applying rightly our knowledge of what is true and right), and gain more wisdom over the years (from our experience, history, and the experience of others in the light of the Bible) so we will be morally and spiritually fit and prepared to meet God.

**Psalm 90:13-17**

**13 Turn, O Lord! How long? Have compassion on your servants!**

*The Uniform Lesson ended with verse 12; however, Moses' plea or prayer request rightly follows Psalm 90:1-12 and should be considered as part of the context. Moses' requests that God turn from the expression of His just judgment and punishment and have compassion on and forgiveness toward His servants. Moses' prayer is for God's servants; for those who have committed themselves to serve God. God does express His compassion supremely through His Son.*

**14 Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.**

Each morning, God's servants turn to God for the blessing of being able to serve God and live faithfully before God by the grace of God. Each morning, we can experience God's steadfast love for us in our hearts and experiences. God's servants do not need to live under God's anger, but can rejoice in God each day and find their happiness in God.

**15 Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us, and as many years as we have seen evil.**

All of God's servants experience days of affliction, suffering, and the testing of our faith. These days prove our love and loyalty to God and others, and we can rejoice in God in spite of our days of trouble on Earth. We can pray that God will make us glad each day in our relationship with Him and His people, and we can look forward to the joy of everlasting life and fellowship with God, made possible for God's servants through Jesus. Because of Jesus, the joy of eternal life will far exceed any earthly affliction or sorrow.

**16 Let your work be manifest to your servants, and your glorious power to their children.**

Once again, the joyful promises of these verses of hope exceed the sober warnings of Psalm 90:1-12. We pray for God's work in our lives to be obvious; if not to others at least to us as we look at times of faithful service to God. We also want our children to see God's glorious power in us so they will follow God with faith and joy.

**17 Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and prosper for us the work of our hands — O prosper the work of our hands!**

In a sharp contrast to the anger of God in the earlier verses of Psalm 90, the favor and blessing of the Lord can rest upon God's faithful servants, and we can be conscious of His favor upon us each day. We can pray that our work of service will prosper under God's steadfast love, faithfulness, guidance, and power.

**Five Questions for Discussion**

1. What does it mean to you to think of God being your "dwelling place"?
2. Think of your nation, city, or home as your dwelling place. What blessings do you receive from these dwelling places? What responsibilities do you have in these dwelling places? What blessings and responsibilities do you find from dwelling in God?

3. What attributes of God does Moses mention in this Psalm? What attributes of human beings does Moses mention? If you can, read Psalm 90:13-17 (the concluding verses of this Psalm), what more do you learn about God's character from these verses?

4. What reasons does Moses give us not to commit sins? What reasons does Moses give us that we can use to "reason with ourselves" when we are tempted to sin?

5. Do you find Psalm 90:1-12 depressing? Why? Do you find Psalm 90:13-17 more joyful? Why? What could you tell someone about Jesus that would help them if they were sadly contemplating Psalm 90:1-12 and felt discouraged?

*Copyright © 2010 by L.G. Parkhurst, Jr. Permission Granted for Not for Profit Use.*