

Fact Sheet for **“Dust”**  
**Psalm 90:1-17**  
Pastor Bob Singer  
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Someone asked Bernard Shaw what, in his opinion, is the most beautiful thing in this world. **“Youth,”** he replied, **“is the most beautiful thing in this world—and what a pity that it has to be wasted on children!”** We all realize that life is short. But what can we do about it? What should we do about it? Moses points us in a good direction.

<sup>ESV</sup> **A Prayer of Moses, the man of God.**

This same description of Moses is given in Deuteronomy 33:1. That would make this psalm the oldest of the 150. And the 40 years of the wilderness wanderings would seem to be the background for this psalm.

**<sup>1</sup> Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

“Dwelling place” means our protecting shelter.

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

This is the reason God has ever been the protecting shelter for his people of any generation... he is eternal. Man however is transitory in this life. Also the word for “world” is referring to the productive part of the earth.

**<sup>3</sup> You return man to dust and say, “Return, O children of man!”**

The word for “dust” means something pulverized, and is used only here in the OT. This is why the KJV and the NKJV translate this word as “destruction”.

**<sup>4</sup> For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.**

The first part of this verse is what Peter referenced in 2 Peter 3:8. There is no other verse that Peter could be referring to. That verse in Peter has been used, or should I say misused, in an attempt to prove evolution, and even amillennialism. But look again at what the words of this Psalm are actually saying... God is eternal, while we have a short life span in this life! Consider 2 Peter 3:9 in this light. God is more patient than we could ever be because he is eternal. We run out of time.

A “watch in the night” was approximately 4 hours. Look at Psalm 63:6 and David’s words about the watches of the night. Man however is only given a short life span by God.

**<sup>5</sup> You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning;**

**<sup>6</sup> in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.**

This thought appears several places in the Psalms and also in Isaiah 40:6-8. It is picked up by James to remind those who are rich that they too will pass away.<sup>1</sup> The thought of the eternity of God and the enduring quality of his word is picked up by Peter to remind believers that they have been born again

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<sup>1</sup> James 1:10-11.

through the living and enduring word of God.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand human life is transitory because of God's wrath against sin.

- 7 For we are brought to an end by your anger;  
by your wrath we are dismayed.**  
**8 You have set our iniquities before you,  
our secret sins<sup>3</sup> in the light of your presence.**  
**9 For all our days pass away under your wrath;  
we bring our years to an end like a sigh.**

Death entered the human experience with God's curse on Adam.<sup>4</sup> Methuselah lived 969 years<sup>5</sup> and died the year of the flood. God sent the flood because of man's sin.<sup>6</sup>

- 10 The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty;  
yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone,  
and we fly away.**

God initially limited our life span to 120 years.<sup>7</sup> But here in Psalm 90 it is even shorter. Then we fly away. What I find interesting is that Moses probably wrote this long after he had turned 80. Look at what Deuteronomy records about his death. This was God's blessing! This past Tuesday Billy Graham celebrated his 99<sup>th</sup> birthday. George Beverly Shea passed in 2013 at the age of 104. Cliff Barrows died last year at the age of 93. Again, I see God's blessing.

- 11 Who considers the power of your anger,  
and your wrath according to the fear of you?**

Because of God's wrath against sin Moses points us in a good direction of thinking.

- 12 So teach us to number our days  
that we may get a heart of wisdom.**

Look at what David wrote in Psalm 39:4-5. But numbering our days is not an exercise merely to depress us. It is a discipline that will lead us to wise living. Ephesians 6:1-3 is one example. Now Moses implores God to have compassion on his servants. This is one application of this psalm.

- 13 Return, O LORD! How long?  
Have pity on your servants!**  
**14 Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,  
that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.**  
**15 Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us,  
and for as many years as we have seen evil.**

God long had given the people of Israel over to trouble in the wilderness because of their sin. Now Moses pleads for God's love so that God's people can be glad all their days. Moses then finishes his plea to God with this...

- 16 Let your work be shown to your servants,  
and your glorious power to their children.**  
**17 Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us;  
yes, establish the work of our hands!**

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter 1:23-25.

<sup>3</sup> See Hebrews 4:12.

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 3:17-19.

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 5:27.

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 6:5-7.

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 6:3.