

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

PSALMS 90-95

The book of Psalms is actually five books. And there's an interesting theory behind their division... Hebrew rabbis related the books of the Psalms to the Pentateuch - the first 5 books of the Bible.

A casual glance reveals that the lengths of these sections of psalms are similar in proportion to the length of the five books of Moses.

Let me elaborate a bit on this idea ...

Psalms 1-41 correspond with *Genesis*. And they're called, "the creation psalms." Many of these psalms refer to God's glory in nature, and mankind in general. The major author within this section of Psalms is King David.

Psalms 42-72 shadow *Exodus*. They're called, "the deliverance psalms." The major authors are David, and the sons of Korah.

Psalms 73-89 link to *Leviticus*. The dominant author here is Asaph - a Levite and a worship leader. These are called "the sanctuary psalms."

Psalms 90-106 track with *Numbers*. They're "the journey psalms." And Numbers recounts the 40 years the Hebrews wandered in the wilderness. It's no accident this section of Psalms begins with a song of Moses.

The fifth and final book, **Psalms 107-150** fit with *Deuteronomy*. They're known as "the prophetic psalms." They're attributed to David and to a fellow named "Anonymous." It's an interesting theory to consider...

Tonight we begin with **PSALM NINETY**. A psalm attributed to Moses.

It was probably written shortly before his death - near the end of Israel's 40 years in the desert. This would make it the oldest of all the psalms.

Next to Job, Psalm 90 is probably the oldest passage in the Bible.

The psalm begins, "LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." The word "dwelling place" could be translated "den."

I love this picture. God has been our den. When we were kids mom didn't want us playing in the living room. It was a cold, formal place.

When we got hyper or started to rough-house we were sent to the den.

A den is where you relax, be yourself, and let your hair down. It's the cozy place. God wants us to relax and have fun in His presence.

"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God."

God is "from everlasting to everlasting." He has no beginning. He has no end. The Hebrew word "everlasting" means "vanishing point." God is beyond the vanishing point. Think back as far as you can - 10 years, 10,000 years, 10 million years, and God is there. Think ahead until the timeline fades into the distance, and there is God.

The Christian theologian *Augustine of Hippo* was the first person to think of eternity not just as infinite time, but as a place outside of time.

Augustine reasoned that time was an entity created with the rest of creation. Thus, God was not part of time, but separate from time.

Modern physics, and Einstein's theory of relativity, have validated Augustine, but his conclusions were drawn from the Scriptures.

Christianity is the only religion that ever spawned serious scientific inquiry. Animism taught an enchanted world. Rivers and rocks were inhabited by spirits. Nature was controlled by goons and gremlins.

Then the polytheistic religions came along with their pantheon of gods. Storms and lightning bolts were attributed to the whims of the gods.

Only Christianity postulated an ordered universe with predictable laws, subject to reason and examination. Often today Christianity and science pitted against each other. This couldn't be further from the truth.

There would be no such thing as science without Christianity.

Verse 3 "You turn man to destruction, and say, "Return, O children of men." For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night." Did this verse inspire Peter?

He says in 2 Peter 3:8, "with the Lord one day is as a

thousand years, and a thousand years as one day...”

Apparently, a timeless God views time much differently than we do. God’s perspective is not our own.

Around 1000 AD the first crusade was launched, the feudal system was at its zenith, the Chinese invented gunpowder... 1000 AD was 300 years before the compass was invented – 400 years before the printing press – 500 years before Columbus. Think of the advancements and rulers and discoveries. So much has happened, yet to God its like yesterday.

No wonder our impatience has so little effect on God.

“You carry them away like a flood; they are like a sleep. In the morning they are like grass which grows up: in the morning it flourishes and grows up; in the evening it is cut down and withers.” To God 1000 years is as a day. In contrast, humans possess the longevity of grass. Life is short.

“For we have been consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath we are terrified. You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your countenance. For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; we finish our years like a sigh.” Hear verse 9 in the OKJV, “All our days are passed away in Thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.”

In other words, our lives are like a re-run. At the end of the day there is nothing new. Our *secret sins* are in reality *common sins*. The culmination of our lives is “a sigh” We caused a yawn. A God-less life is utter futility.

“The days of our lives are 70 years; and if by reason of strength they are 80 years, yet their boast is only labor and

sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” Psalm 90 was written around 1445 BC. Moses expected the average person to live to 70. Avoid danger and you might hit 80.

Today, the average American lifespan is 73 for men - 79 for women. It’s a surprise that 3500 years of medicine has bought us an extra 3 years.

But compared to eternity our lifespan is a puff of breath on a cold day.

Think of a 70 year lifespan as a 16 hour day... If you’re 20 it’s already past noon – its 12:34 - at 30 it’s 2:51 – at 40 it’s quitting time, 5:08. At 50 years old you’ve just finishing the nightly news, it is 7:25. At 60 the kids are going to bed, it’s 9:42, and then finally, at 70 it’s midnight.

Verse 11 asks God, “Who knows the power of Your anger? For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

Several years ago the oldest person on earth was a woman in Arles, France named Jeanne Clament.

On her 120th birthday someone asked her, “What kind of future do you expect?” She replied, “A short one.” She spoke for us all. Life is short.

Another older lady was asked about her plans for the future. She responded, “Honey, at my age I don’t even buy green bananas.”

Let’s redeem our time – number our days - use our time wisely.

Ben Franklin once asked, “Do you love life? Then do not squander time, for that’s the stuff life is made of.” As the poet

puts it, “Only one life will soon be past. Only what’s done for God will last.”

“Return, O LORD! How long? And have compassion on Your servants.

Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days!” So many of us came to know Jesus later in life, but how much better it is to know Him from an early age. You’re spared great heartache, and you’re able to experience a lifetime of satisfaction.

DL Moody came home from a meeting and his wife asked how it went.

He said “Two-and-a-half people were saved.” She said, “O, *two adults and one child.*” He corrected her, “No, two kids and one adult. The kids brought a whole life to Jesus. The adult had wasted a large portion.”

“Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us, the years in which we have seen evil. Let Your work appear to Your servants, and Your glory to their children.” Notice Moses has the children in mind.

He asks God to show His glory to the children – the next generation.

“And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.”

Though we’re not told, **PSALM NINETY-ONE** is believed to be another psalm of Moses. Deuteronomy 33:27 provides the

outline Moses might've used for Psalm 91. "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." The verse in Deuteronomy sums up Psalm 91...

Verse 1 "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Fellowship with God is a secret place. It can't be seen by the material world. It's an invisible refuge.

We talk about God's love, and peace, and glory, and power – and people look at us as if we were describing little green space men.

I love Colossians 3:3, "Your life is hidden with Christ in God."

There is a secret place... *under the shadow of the Almighty.*

"I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust." Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence."

Before shotguns birds were caught in a snare. Here the psalmist praises God for springing his trap.

"He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler." Like a mother hen who shelters her chicks, God is a shield to those who trust Him.

During His last week, Jesus stopped while walking up the Mount of Olives. He looked out over the city, and cried, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!

How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not

willing!”

African inspectors were going through the debris after a terrible forest fire. They found a mother bird sitting on her nest. Her body was scorched and charred. The inspector heard a noise and kicked over her corpse...

To his surprise he found baby chicks... Despite the heat and the flames the mother had stayed faithful to her brood. She died saving them.

This is what Jesus has done. Under His wings we find refuge.

“You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you.

Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked.

Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling...” God provides us strong protection.

Verse 11 “For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.” In Matthew 4 Satan took Jesus up to the pinnacle of the Temple, and tempted Him to prove His deity with a dare.

Throw Yourself down... Then he adds, “For it is written: ‘He

shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Satan quotes these verses.

The temptation was to showboat. Create a scene. Do the spectacular.

Jesus countered Satan's suggestion with God's Word. He quoted Deuteronomy 6:16, "You shall not tempt the LORD your God..."

God isn't a trick dog - you teach to roll over whenever you give the command. God doesn't respond on demand. He doesn't do a dare.

Verse 13 "You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot." The psalmist describes *God's protection* – but this isn't *God's permission* to invite danger.

Snake handlers in backwoods Kentucky quote this verse to justify their dance with death. But their flirtation isn't *faith* – it is *foolishness*.

In the normal course of life we face unavoidable danger - God promises us protection, but He doesn't guarantee He'll save us from our stupidity.

Mark 16:18 promises God's protection those who travel to exotic places to preach the Gospel. Jesus says His disciples, "will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them..."

This happened when Paul was shipwrecked on the Maltese Island. He was collecting firewood when a poisonous viper bit

him. He shook it off in the fire, and went on about his business. The people were astonished.

The miracle provided Paul a platform to preach the Gospel.

Verse 14 "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation." Psalm 91 is a song of protection for believers in trouble!

PSALM NINETY-TWO is entitled, "A Song for the Sabbath day."

It begins, "It is good to give thanks to the LORD, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; to declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night..." The *stillness of the morning* – the *quietness of the night* – is both great times to focus in and seek the Lord.

If you're a *night owl* or an *early bird* the psalmist has you covered!

He praises God "On an instrument of 10 strings, on the lute, and on the harp, with harmonious sound." This 10 stringer was a very expensive instrument. You had to rob a bank to buy one. It's called "the lute."

"For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands. O LORD, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep." It goes without saying, God is a deep thinker.

Isaiah 55:9 reads, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

And this should not surprise us. If a finite mind like yours or mine could figure God out He wouldn't be much of a God – *not a God worthy of our worship*. The fact I can't explain Him is one more reason I praise Him.

The French scientist, Pascal, made profound statement. "I love God because I know Him. I adore God because I cannot comprehend Him."

"A senseless man does not know, nor does a fool understand this.

When the wicked spring up like grass, and when all the workers of iniquity flourish, it is that they may be destroyed forever."

The psalmist views the wicked the way I feel about my lawn. The grass springs up only to be mowed down. I'd be better off paving my yard. The psalmist compares the wicked with the grass – they exist to be cut down.

"But You, LORD, are on high forevermore. For behold, Your enemies, O LORD, for behold, Your enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. But my horn You have exalted like a wild ox; I have been anointed with fresh oil. My eye also has seen my desire on my enemies; my ears hear my desire on the wicked who rise up against me.

The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." The wicked are like the grass, while the righteous are like a palm tree or cedar tree. Both are

pictures of stability and permanence.

A palm is a picture of *blessing* - every part of a palm is used – from its bark to its fruit to its leaves. Cedar trees are a picture of *strength*. The cedars in Lebanon grow 120' tall, and have a 40' in circumference.

Do you want to be a tree - or a worthless pile of grass clippings?

I like verse 13, “**Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.**” Have you sunk roots in God’s house? Have you gotten connected with God’s people - involved in His work?

The National Institute for Health Care Research performed a decade long study on 2700 folks, to discover what social factors lowered mortality rates. In the end only one influence was statistically significant... **church attendance**. Being a part of a church is not only biblical, but healthy!

Humans are made for community. That’s why the world has clubs, and gangs, and Facebook... we need a place where we can belong, and connect. God’s plan is to meet this need through His church.

He continues, “**They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.**”

Some companies may have a mandatory retirement age, but God doesn’t set you down at 65.

God wants us still bearing fruit in old age... 70, 80, 85 can be the most spiritually fruitful time of your life. God keeps us “**fresh and flourishing...**”

Remember Moses didn't begin his ministry in Egypt until he was 80.

I love the folks who've gotten older in age, but are still young at heart. Their relationship with God is fresh, and current, and active, and fruitful.

PSALM NINETY-THREE along with Psalms 95-100 are called "**The Royal Psalms,**" or "**Coronation Psalms.**" They reign over the earth.

When the second Temple was rebuilt the Jews chose these royal psalms to be read in the Temple – one each day of the week.

Psalm 93 was sung on Friday – the day before the Sabbath. Friday was the culmination of God's creative work – which is the subject of Psalm 93.

And notice the psalm doesn't open, "*The LORD will reign,*" but "**The LORD reigns...**" This very second God is on His throne in heaven.

Yes, the world is in revolt. But God remains in charge. Apparently, He's chosen to be patient with man. But one day soon He'll return to judge.

"He is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed, He has girded Himself with strength. Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved.

Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting."

From creation on... there has never been a day when God was not enthroned as King. Even the day when the crown He

wore was a crown of thorns – and His throne was a cross – Jesus still remained the King.

“The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, than the mighty waves of the sea.”

Psalm 93 praises God - *His majesty, His strength, His eternity*. God is stronger and mightier, than the ocean waves, and tides, and floods.

Yet even more impressive is God’s Word. Verse 5 closes, “Your testimonies are very sure; holiness adorns Your house, O LORD, forever.” God’s works are awesome, but His Word is “very sure.”

Psalm 93 - then 95-100 - are the **Regal Psalms**. They highlight God on His throne. *God rules... but man rebels...* And inserted in between these Royal Psalms is a reminder of the wicked, God is forced to judge.

It’s interesting, **PSALM NINETY-FOUR** was sung in the Temple on Wednesdays – what we call “**Hump Day**.” It’s the middle of the week.

Sometimes the evil and frustrations we’re called on to face day in and day out get us down. By Wednesday we’ve had enough. Psalm 94 comes to the rescue. Rather than call down fire and brimstone on our boss and co-workers this psalm reminds us that vengeance belongs to the Lord.

Psalm 94 is another of the “**Imprecatory Psalms**.” The word “**imprecate**” means “**to curse**.” And nobody has been better at

fashioning curses than the Jews. Let me read you a few of the very best rabbinical curses...

May the worms hold a wedding in your belly and invite their relatives.

May all your teeth fall out – except one, so you can have a toothache.

May your enemies get leg cramps when they dance on your grave.

May your teeth get angry, and chew off your head.

May your corns grow higher than Mount Sinai.

May your bones be broken as often as the Ten Commandments.” The Hebrew curses can be vile and bitter, but not Psalm 94...

The psalmist’s desire is righteous. He sees people rebel against God and asks Him to right the wrongs. “O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongs - O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth!

Rise up, O Judge of the earth; render punishment to the proud.”

The psalmist resists the urge we all have to take matters into our own hands. Instead he trusts in God to render punishment as He sees fit.

“LORD, how long will the wicked, how long will the wicked triumph?

Psalmist knows God will judge the wicked, but he wonders what is God waiting on? Hey, *“Now that I’m saved why doesn’t He go ahead and fry all the other sinners!”* I hope you recognize what’s wrong with that sentiment.

Before we were regenerated, the patience of God was our salvation – now afterwards the patience of God is a bothersome inconvenience.

We want to get on with redemption. What about those around us who need Jesus. God's patience should be our opportunity to reach out.

“They utter speech (literally, the belch or spew), and speak insolent things; all the workers of iniquity boast in themselves.”

They break in pieces Your people, O LORD, and afflict Your heritage.

They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.

Yet they say, "The LORD does not see, nor does the God of Jacob understand." The wicked *ravage people* and they *ridicule God*.

Here's the proud man's arrogance – he thinks he's pulling the wool over God's eyes. He's pulling a fast one on God. “The LORD does not see...”

I love how the psalmist responds, “Understand, you senseless among the people; and you fools, when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see?”

Only a fool would suggest the creator of the eye can't see Himself.

The human eye is the most complex piece of engineering known to man. Here's a description. “The eye contains tens of

millions of electrical connections. It can handle one and a half million messages at once.

When we look at an object, light passes through the lens of the eye and is brought into correct focus on the retina. Covering less than the space of an inch, the retina contains 137 million light-sensitive receptor cells...

The tiny eye muscles move about 100,000 times a day to focus. A man would have to walk 50 miles a day to give his legs similar exercise!

Charles Darwin once said, "To suppose that the eye... could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest degree." He went on to try and reason it out, but knew the notion was silly.

In other place Darwin wrote to a friend, "To this day the eye makes me shutter." No pun intended. Even Darwin knew it was too complex to evolve.

Verse 10 "He who instructs the nations, shall He not correct, He who teaches man knowledge? The LORD knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile." The psalmist could've been thinking of Darwin. "Futile" means "breath." God knows man's thoughts and theories are nothing but hot air.

Verse 12 "Blessed is the man whom You instruct, O LORD, and teach out of Your law, that You may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit is dug for the wicked. For the LORD will not cast off His people, nor will He forsake His inheritance." God is faithful!

When the great reformer, Count Zinzendorf, was hauled to

trial before Fredrick the Great, the Prussian king asked him, “Give me one infallible proof for the inspiration of the Scriptures?” the Count replied, “*The Jew.*”

For 1950 years the Jews lived dispersed across the planet – objects of hatred and persecuted – even genocide. A people without a home, a land, a Temple, or a language – yet God insured their survival. He didn’t “cast off His people.” In fact, one day a pit will be dug for Israel’s enemies.

“But judgment will return to righteousness, and all the upright in heart will follow it. Who will rise up for me against the evildoers?

Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?

The psalmist has grown tired in His stand against evil. He’s a weary warrior. He’s been mocked, laughed at, and constantly challenged.

He tells us what sustained Him. Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul would soon have settled in silence. If I say, “My foot slips, “Your mercy, O LORD, will hold me up. In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul.” When you slip God will hold you.

As Paul said to the Galatians, “Let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” Hang in there.

Verse 20 “Shall the throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law, have fellowship with You? They gather together against the life of the righteous, and condemn innocent blood.

But the LORD has been my defense, and my God the rock of my refuge. He has brought on them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; the LORD our God shall cut them off.”

In the preface to **PSALM NINETY-FIVE** the author is anonymous, but Hebrews 4:7 quotes and attributes this Psalm to David.

This psalm is also one of the Royal Psalms and also used in the dedication of Temple after the Jews had returned from Babylon.

Psalm 95 is in two parts. Verses 1-7a is *worship*. Verses 7b-11 is a *warning*. God’s people were both *praising God* and *provoking God*.

“Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. For the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the heights of the hills are His also. The sea is His, for He made it; and His hands formed the dry land.” Understand the scope of God’s dominion.

It extends from the tallest mountains to the ocean depths. Moses went on top of the mountain to see a bush that burned but wasn’t consumed – and He found God. Jonah was thrown overboard in the middle of the ocean – was swallowed by a fish – and even there He found God.

Both the sea and the dry land belong to the one, true God.

“Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.” What comforting words. The pasture belongs to us. Our contentment is the Shepherd’s goal. He wants us to graze...

But we’re to only chew in God’s pasture. There are other pastures and sometimes the grass looks greener. Understand the greener grass will make you sick to your stomach. We’re the “people of His pasture.”

Notice also the contrast in verses 5 and 7.

The same hands that formed the dry land now feed and tend His sheep. Our *mighty Creator* is also our *gentle Shepherd*.

Verse 7 “Today, if you will hear His voice: “Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me; they tried Me, though they saw My work.”

The Hebrew word translated “rebellion” is “Meribah” - and “trial” is the word “Massah.” And it was at the waters of Massah and Meribah that the Hebrews grumbled and complained – and tried God’s patience.

The Lord quenched their thirst with water from the rock, but He also took note of their contentious attitude. Eventually a whole generation of grumblers was sentence to die outside the Promised Land.

Verse 10 “For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, ‘It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and

they do not know My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.' "

Because of their unbelief the generation of Hebrews that exited Egypt died in the wilderness. A two week **trip** turned into 40 year death march.

The writer of the NT book of Hebrews uses these verses in an intriguing way. Hebrews 4 points out that here in verse 7 David says, "Today, if you hear His voice... you can enter God's rest." Emphasis on "Today..."

This proves the OT Hebrews under Joshua never entered God's rest.

Even though the second generation entered Canaan they didn't taste of God's restfulness – the peace and prosperity He had planned for them.

If they had, David living 450 years later wouldn't have said, "Today..."

The writer's point is that the rest of God is still available – and not just in David's day – but to anyone in any age that ceases from his own toiling and starts trusting in Jesus' work for him and the Spirit's work in him.