

Is Dust Our Final Dwelling Place?

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[0 : 0 0] Well, we're looking at Psalm 90. Psalm chapter 90.

Psalm 90.

And if these five books of Psalms correspond with the five books of the Torah, then book four, which Psalm 90 is the beginning of, corresponds to Numbers and Moses and the Israelites' wilderness wandering in Numbers.

And really it reflects on exile and longing for home. So, Psalm 90. A prayer of Moses, the man of God.

The oldest psalm in the book. Let me read. You return man to dust and say, return, O children of man.

[1 : 5 3] For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it's passed, or as a watch in the night. You sweep them away as with a flood.

They're like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning. The morning it flourishes and is renewed, and the evening it fades and withers. For we are brought to an end by your anger.

By your wrath we are dismayed. You've set our inequities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. For all our days pass away under your wrath.

We bring our years to an end like a sigh. The years of our life are 70 or even by reason of strength 80. Yet their span is but toil and trouble.

They're soon gone and we fly away. Who considers the power of your anger? And your wrath according to the fear of you?

[2 : 5 7] So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. Return, O Lord, how long. Have pity on your servants.

Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love. That we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us.

And for as many years as we have seen evil. Let your work be shown to your servants and your glorious power to their children. 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. Amen. Amen.

Well, where do you call home? When you think of the word home, what do you think of? There was a TV show that I used to watch.

[4 : 0 0] Maybe you've seen it. Maybe you've not. It's called Grand Designs. Kevin MacLeod is the host. I used to watch this show, and they would follow different people who were building their own dream home, and they would follow that process from start to finish.

Now, nearly every time, if you've not seen this, nearly every time the project costs way more than anticipated. And it usually goes way over schedule.

It takes far longer and costs far more to build this dream home than they anticipated or planned for. And a single episode of this TV show can take anywhere between one to five years to film, because they're filming the start of it and then seeing it through to the end of it.

Kevin MacLeod returns to visit them, and they're still not in their home yet. What is going on? What's happened? What's the delay? Now, I was thinking about this, and I was thinking, imagine Grand Designs.

Imagine one project took so long that one of them died before they got to move in. Now, how ridiculous would that be?

[5 : 12] Imagine they were so committed to this project, with no other home to live in but the camper van outside, and they would see it through no matter how long it took. And Grand Designs were so committed to each episode that they would see it through no matter how long it took.

And so this couple were building this house, and it took 40 years to build. So committed to it, Kevin MacLeod makes a guest appearance after being retired for 30 years, and the frail presenter visits this site, and he's now in a wheelchair, discovers that the house is still not complete, and Kevin asks, Where's your wife?

She passed away 20 years ago, I'm afraid. It was just taking too long. That's project. But we're going to see it through.

We're going to get there. Eventually, the house is completed after 40 years, and the man moves in, yet he finds that it's not the dream home that he expected.

It's a really nice place, but it's not home. For it to have been home, his wife would have had to have been there. I mean, how ridiculous does that sound?

[6 : 34] It sounds like the saddest episode of Grand Designs ever. It's a ridiculous thought, isn't it? But that's just one aspect of what we see in this psalm. It's that home is not merely geographical.

Home is relational. Home is relational. Where do you call home? Now, for Moses, for his first 40 years of his life, his home was perhaps one of the best grand designs in the world.

Pharaoh's palace was his home in Egypt. He lived as a prince. Nothing was unavailable to him. He had it all. He had everything that most people want.

Imagine that. Moses has got it all. He's living in the best home in the palace, the best position as a prince. Doesn't have that responsibility of Pharaoh, but he's got all the blessings.

But was it really home? Was it home for Moses? Then for the next 40 years after that, his home was the countryside in Midian. You could say he lived on a farm in the countryside, away from all the delights and dangers of Egypt.

[7 : 44] And if home is relational, well, now Moses has a wife and children. But was this home? Was this home to Moses? Now, both of these experiences that Moses has would have been a dream for most people.

Most people would like this kind of life. Yet he leaves each of them behind to walk with God. Now, is he thinking to himself that the promised land will be better than those?

Promised land's going to be better than living in the palace as the prince. Promised land's going to be better than a quiet life on the farm with his wife and children. Is that what his thought is? Is that why he leaves?

Because he thinks it's going to be better in the promised land? Probably not. So, the question is, what can this promised land, what can this life with God offer that he hasn't already experienced either in the palace or in Midian?

What does it have to offer? What does the Christian life have to offer anyone in this world? especially people who do have the experience of a palace or everything they ever wanted.

[9 : 00] You see, when I first came to Christ, I wasn't at a point of crisis. I had, to myself, I had everything that I wanted. What is the Christian life?

What does it have to offer? What does the promised land, what does walking with God have to offer Moses that he's not already had before? You see, the truth is, he comes to know what it offers without even going there.

He spends time walking through the wilderness with a rebellious and grumbling nation only to find out that he's not even going to make it to the promised land. He finds that out later.

Moses is not going to make it. And in fact, most of the people, there's over a million people, most of them are not going to make it to the promised land. And he's been leading over a million Hebrews out of slavery towards this grand design, the promised land.

The land of promise. The journey should have taken 11 days. It's an 11-day project in grand designs, but it's went over schedule. Went over schedule by 14,589 days.

[10 : 08] 40 years over schedule, and most of them die before even making it. Now, is that just a waste? Is that such a waste? Why even build the project if they're not going to make it?

If it's going to go that far over schedule? What about Moses? Is it all for nothing? He left the palace. He left countryside. Did he leave it all for nothing?

If he's not even going to make it to the promised land, is he going to miss out? Is this home, promised land, is that home?

You see, the truth he realizes is that our home is not merely some place, and our home is not bound up in a dying world. You see, his reflection is that God has always been their dwelling place.

Not here or there. God has always been their dwelling place. In all generations. He's not just limiting this to the wilderness wandering. In all generations.

[11 : 11] When Abraham was wandering about, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, people in slavery, Israelites in wilderness, all generations.

Lord, you have been our dwelling place. Think of that first line. How profound is that? Lord, you, you have been our dwelling place.

And then he says, in all generations, not just us, in all generations, before the mountains were brought forth. Now, think about this in the wilderness.

Now, I've walked in the Sinai Peninsula. I've seen the mountains there. It's beautiful. When you look at a mountain, you look over the city towards Glasgow and then you see the mountains behind it and you think, they mountains are way older than the city.

They mountains have been around a lot longer. Yet, Moses says, before the mountains were brought forth. Longer than the mountains. Or ever you had formed the earth.

[12 : 17] Look at the earth. And the world. Yeah, what does he have to say about God? From everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

Lord, you have been our dwelling place. And from everlasting to everlasting, you are God. Now, I think that's something that we should reflect on.

Meditate on that the next few days. Just that. The first two lines. Lord, you have been our dwelling place. You have been our dwelling place. In all generations. Think of the oldest people in the Bible.

Who's the oldest man in the Bible? Methuselah. What age? 969. Nearly a thousand years old. Wow.

You see, his reflection is that God has always been our dwelling place. In all generations. In Methuselah's day, in Adam's day, in Abraham's day, in all generations.

[13 : 17] Lord, you have been our dwelling place. And when God is your dwelling place, from everlasting to everlasting, he is God. When he's your dwelling place, your home is not subject to change or decay.

Isn't that good news? I think that's good news every time I need to cut the grass or every time I need to, you know, redo the bath or, you know, something needs done. There's always something that needs done. When God is your dwelling place, your home's not subject to change or decay.

And your home is not subject to danger or destruction. Now, we like home. We like our house, our comforts. They give us comfort. But we quickly realize whenever sickness or death or something comes in, that these things are subject to danger and death.

We can't escape. Nowhere on earth can we escape these things. But when God is your dwelling place, your home is not subject to change or decay or danger or death.

Your home is eternal. What is it Jesus says in John 17? This is eternal life. That you would know God, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he sent.

[14 : 32] It's a relational. When you're connected with life itself, the center and source of all life, the one who brought all things into being, when you're connected with him, your home is eternal.

Moses' reflection on this is in light of the reality that we all experience. You see, he's contrasting this with the next line.

You return man to dust and you say, return, O children of man. Is that not our experience? From ashes to ashes, dust to dust? Unlike God, we are from dust and we return to dust.

Whether you're a Christian or not, it doesn't matter who you are, we know this. Man is dust and returns to dust. We don't last. In fact, our life is short.

It's like a dream. To God, a thousand years is like a day or even just a watch in the night. Now think of all that's happened in the past thousand years. Think of all that happens.

[15 : 34] I mean, even one day can seem like an eternity if we're having a bad day. To God, a thousand years is just like a night shift. It's nothing to God.

Think of our perspective in our life when we make decisions and we think we have a good idea that this is good. I'm going to do this. I'm going to make this decision. Think about our own wisdom.

And sometimes it's not until tomorrow or next week or next year that we realize the consequences and think, oh, it wasn't really that good, this decision. Sometimes we live a life and we never see the consequences of our actions.

Think about God who sees a thousand years in a day. It's His perspective. It's His judgment on things not greater than ours. You see, we are short-sighted by the fact that we are mortal and limited.

God, when we think about what He does, when we think about what He allows or what He doesn't allow, what He says yes to, what He says no to, think about all that God does or doesn't do.

[16 : 41] But when He sees a thousand years like a watch in the night, He knows far better than us how things will work out. Surely His judgment is far better in that regard alone.

Never mind the fact. Never mind the fact that He is also righteous and holy and just and good. of course He knows better. Think of those who lived before the flood.

We mentioned them. Methuselah and friends. Their lives nearly reaching a thousand years. Yet Moses' point here is even for them, even for Methuselah, even if you and I were to live for a thousand years, it would be nothing to God.

Nothing. If our lives were a thousand years and not so short like seventy or eighty, if our years were a thousand years, it would still just be like a watch in the night.

Still be just like yesterday. It would come and it would go in a flash. See, even if we lived a thousand years, our life would still be short and it would still come to an end.

[17 : 50] That's Moses' point. Doesn't matter how long it's coming to an end. It's short. God is from everlasting to everlasting. Even if we could outlast the mountains, our life is short and it comes to an end.

Why is this? We would still be frustrated no matter how long it was. We would still feel short-changed. We would still be asking, where is our home? Is this our life?

Can we really be satisfied with this? Moses goes from reflection on God as dwelling place, on God as eternal, to the reality that man is not, to the reality of thinking about our brevity.

And he moves from this reality to the reason. Why is this? Why do we feel this? Why do we experience this? Why is this our reality? Well, folks, don't believe that death is merely a part of life.

Death is a very different thing from life. Death is the wages of sin. Life is the gift of God. Death comes from sin.

[19 : 03] Life comes from God. The reason for our reality is not merely a natural thing. It's not merely part of being human. It's because humanity is under judgment because of sin.

That's the reason for our brevity. The reason for our short reality of trouble and toil and death in the end, short years, is because we are living under wrath.

Even when a thousand years is like a day to God or a watch in the night, a few hours, our lifespan is like a sigh. It's like a sigh. And apart from God, our life has as much meaning as a sigh.

See, Moses is perhaps writing this coming to the end of his time in the wilderness. Perhaps he's already seen his sister die. Perhaps he's already seen his brother die.

He's definitely seen many, many, many people die in the wilderness. And he's reflecting this. Why is this the case? Is this what we've come out of Egypt for?

[20 : 14] This is a big question. It's not just about having nice years here. What is the point of the redemption? What is the point of Exodus?

I mean, the people said it themselves, if you brought us out into this wilderness just for us to die. What is the point of God's great act of redeeming his nation from Egypt? Just for them to waste away like a sigh in the wilderness?

What's the point of our coming to Christ in this life if it still just ends in death? Does Paul not say that? Does he not say that about our hope and our faith?

That if we still die in our sins, then if there's no resurrection, then what? What does he say? If there's no resurrection, then we, above all people, are to be pitied.

Their faith is futile. Moses is reflecting on all this. And he's got this question. I think this is a question in this psalm.

[21 : 18] You return man to dust and you say, return, children of man, swept away as with a flood, like a dream, like grass that's renewed in the morning. It flourishes and is renewed, and the evening it fades and withers.

We're brought to an end by your anger, by your wrath, we're dismayed. I think a question in this psalm is, and in Moses' mind, is dust our final destination?

Is that our hope? That dust is our final destination? What hope do we have? Because we can't say when we get to this bit, God is right.

We can't say that he's not right to judge. We can't say that we don't deserve this death. We can't say that there's any other right for humanity other than what we have.

We can't complain about being under his wrath, but is that the end of it? Is that the end of it? Is dust our dwelling place?

[22 : 22] Paul says in Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says the first man was from earth, a man of dust. The second man is from heaven.

As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of dust. And as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have born the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

That's what he says about those who put their trust in Christ. Christ is the man of heaven. Just as we, all of humanity, have born the image of the man of dust, we who believe in Jesus, the man of heaven, shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. I tell you this, brothers, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body, now who feels like they've got a perishable body?

I do. This perishable body must put on the imperishable. This mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin. Sin is the thing that brought death. The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

[24 : 14] But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. You could add, so that dust is not our final dwelling place. No, those who believe in Jesus will be raised like him to eternal life. We have hope that dust is not our final dwelling place. You see, the fact that man returns to dust, the fact that there is death, the fact that we are brought to an end, is, is a demonstration that God is keeping his word. You need to know that even in this, even in the things that look like that, is proof that God is keeping his promise. For when God said that as soon as you eat of the fruit of the tree that you're forbidden to eat it of, and that day you will surely die. When he says that that will be the result of sin, this is what, this is what, I think it's

Athanasius says, that it would be a monstrous thing for God to go back in his word. When God says something, for it not to happen would be an unthinkable thing. And so the fact that people die, the fact that we know our own brevity, is proof that God is keeping his word. Humanity is under judgment. We're experiencing the thing that God said we would experience. But this should be encouraging, because God always keeps his promises, and that's not the only promise he made. It's not.

God always keeps his promise, and there's a greater hope, and there's a greater promise, and there's a greater home than death and dust. And it's found in Jesus Christ, God's only Son. And God's not slow, it feels like it's sometimes God's not slow to fulfill his promises. You see, Moses says here, how long? Return, O Lord, how long? Peter says in this letter that he writes to elect exiles, thinking about this psalm, he says, do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is a thousand years, a thousand years, and a thousand years are as one day. The Lord's not slow to fulfill his promises. The only time that it says that God's slow is in his anger. The Lord's not slow to fulfill his promises, as some count slowness, but he's patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. You see, when Moses asks, how long? How long,

O Lord? In Numbers, which this book corresponds to, in Numbers, it's God who's asking, how long? How long, you people? How long do I have to deal with a rebellious people? How long are you going to grumble? How long? How long? God is not slow. He's doing something far greater and far grander that is beyond just us. And so Peter calls us elect exiles, just like those in the wilderness wandering.

The Lord is our dwelling place, not this earth, not this land, not this body. Our home and our sanctuary is the eternal God through Jesus Christ. It's a greater reality.

[27 : 47] You know, this we see as our reality, death, trouble and toil and death, 70 or 80 years in this life, gone like a vapor. But there's a greater reality, greater reality that there is a God who is from everlasting to everlasting, and that God can be your dwelling place. What a wonderful thing.

What is it Jesus would be called, Emmanuel, God with us? What is it the hope that they had of the promised land? What was the hope of the promised land except that God would dwell with his people?

It's not that it's going to be a lovely place with lovely buildings, but that God would dwell with his people. And yet Moses, even in the wilderness, realized it's not about a land. God is always and has always been our dwelling place. To know that, to know that reality.

You see, the thing is, the people have been looking forward to the promised land, they've been looking back to Egypt, sometimes looking back in the wrong way. Oh, to have the cucumbers of Egypt again when we're out here in the desert. Looking forward, looking back, looking at the present situation, when all the time they should have been looking up.

That's what Moses is saying. I don't need to get to the promised land. God is my dwelling place. To look up. That's what it means. So teach us to number our days. Teach us to number our days.

[29 : 29] That isn't the invention of a calendar. That we may get a heart of wisdom. What is a heart of wisdom? What is it to number our days? Is it merely just to have death in mind so that you live every day the best way you can?

Or is it to realize, in light of our brevity, that there is one who is eternal? That there is a home that goes beyond this world. There is a home that will not be destroyed.

Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. What is a wisdom? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Does Jesus not say in Matthew 10, don't fear those who can kill the body only.

Fear the one who can kill the body and the soul. Fear God. The beginning of wisdom. To number our days to fear God. Is that not what Solomon said?

After all his attempts to satisfy himself in all these things in Ecclesiastes. When he says all these things are meaningless.

[30 : 45] They're futile. Vanity. But then he talks about trusting God in your youth. It's all about looking to God. He is the one who has life.

Jesus and John's gospel. In him was life. The life was the light of man. Just as the Father has life in and of himself, so he's granted the Son to have life in and of himself.

John 17. The Father has given the Son authority to give eternal life to all that he's given him. Where do we get our life from?

When we're connected to Jesus, our home is eternal. When we're connected to the source of life, we have everlasting life. Return, O Lord, how long have pity on your servants.

Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love. Abide in my love. Is that not what Jesus says? Abide in my love. Nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ.

[31 : 52] Make us glad for as many days. That we may rejoice and be glad all our days. As many days as you've afflicted us. As many years as we've seen evil. It's not just going to balance it out.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians, present sufferings are not worth comparing. They cannot be compared to the eternal way of glory that's to come.

What is it? What is it to have a heart of wisdom? Well, Paul writes this in Colossians.

Chapter 3. Where is your home? Paul says, if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above.

Where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things that are above. Not things that are on earth.

[33 : 00] For you have died. Your life is already hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

See, you look forward and hope, yes. Consider your present circumstance. You look back. But look up. Lord, you have been our dwelling place.

Your life is hidden with Christ in God. Seek the things that are above. Set your mind on things that are above.

Think about your home in heaven. What does Moses mean when he says, let the favor of the Lord be upon us.

Establish the work of our hands upon us. Establish the work of our hands. The gospel of Jesus.

[34 : 01] The power of God to those who believe. We see it in each other. We see transformed lives. We see what Jesus has done, is doing, and will do from before the world began into eternity.

We have that perspective. Then our day-to-day work and activity will be for the glory of God. When we work with a heavenly perspective, with eternity in mind, Peter writes this.

Peter writes this. He's not talking about this life.

Moses doesn't need to make it to the promised land. We don't need to have all things sorted out in this life. We look up. God is our dwelling place. Always, always has been, always will be.

Look up. Seek the things that are above. All of this found in the shelter of Jesus, the Lamb of God, the righteous King, who took the wrath that was due to us.

[35 : 23] We find our satisfaction in Him. For in Him we see the love of God. In Him we see the life that is given from God. And in Him we experience our home.

Did He not say that? Those who love me and keep my word, we will come and make our home with Him. Your home is in Christ. And He will establish you.

This redemption is not just for a better life here. This redemption is for an eternal home there. Jesus is our eternal dwelling place.

Amen. Let me pray. Heavenly Father, we give glory to You and we give thanks to You for Jesus Christ. We thank You for the truth that we get from Moses, that You are from everlasting to everlasting, that when we think about our own brevity, we can look to You, the eternal God, and find our home in You, that You have made a way for us, sinful though we are.

You have made a way for us, though we pass away, though we are swept away in judgment, You have made a way for us, that dust is not our final dwelling place, but through Jesus Christ, who faced wrath on our behalf, He can be our home.

[36 : 54] He has prepared a place for us. And so bless us now and evermore in each day until that day comes when we see Him face to face and we experience what it is to be home.

For while we were in the body, we are away from the Lord. We are not at home. But when we are away from this, then we will be home with the Lord. God, we thank You that You have given us a home in You and that we can experience that now today and we can have the hope of that to come.

We give You thanks in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.