

THREE SCORE YEARS AND TEN?

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I would like today to take a closer look at Psalms 90 and 91.

There is a very common misconception ... that the Bible teaches us that we are limited to “three score years and ten”. Maybe ... occasionally ... four score years — but if so ... we’re really on “borrowed time”.

The question that we are going to look at today ... and hopefully answer ... is ... Does the bible teach that we should expect no more than 70 years? Arrange our plans ... finances ... so that everything winds up neatly at around 70? That our house is in order?

If that is what the Bible teaches ... yes ... it would be wise to make preparations.

But ... there must be a flaw somewhere??

Because ... most people in the Western World live longer than 70! Most!

Here are some averages for certain countries ... but ... many live much longer!

Japan	= 84
Australia	= 83
Canada	= 82
Austria	= 82
UK	= 81
USA	= 79

The Queen is 92. The Duke of Edinburgh is 97. The Queen Mother lived until she was about 103.

The “three score years and ten” comes from Psalm 90.

Psalms 90:1-2 (NKJV) ... a Prayer of Moses ... The Man of God

1 Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.

2 Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever You had formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

This is a prayer of Moses. That will become a key to understanding it. Given at a particular time in Moses' experience. The context is important.

Verse 1 and 2 are a reminder from Moses that God is eternal. Later on ... he compares how temporary man is. Something he wanted Israel ... and us ... to be very aware of.

It is interesting that Moses sees God as a dwelling place ... some translations "place of safety" or "place of refuge".

It is certainly how we should see God ... our place of safety our place of refuge.

Psalms 91:1-2 (NKJV)

**1 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.**

**2 I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress;
My God, in Him I will trust."**

Psalms 91:9 (NKJV)

**9 Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge,
Even the Most High, your dwelling place, (your habitation)**

We can't physically dwell with God (today) ... but the idea is to fellowship with Him. To share His realm ... His thoughts ... principles ... values ... be close. The implication is to "walk" with Him.

If you dwell with someone ... you'll surely know them ... be familiar ... be close?

Our choice. Fellowship with God ... "dwell" with Him? Or ... fellowship with the world?

1 John 2:15-17 (NKJV)

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; **but he who does the will of God abides forever.**

It is our choice to dwell with God ... or think we can play in satan's backyard.

Psalms 90 and 91 encourage us to see many benefits of the former way.

Psalms 90:3-6 (NKJV)

3 You turn man to destruction,
And say, "Return, O children of men."

4 For a thousand years in Your sight
Are like yesterday when it is past,
And like a watch in the night.

5 You carry them away like a flood;
They are like a sleep.

In the morning they are like grass which grows up:

6 In the morning it flourishes and grows up;

In the evening it is cut down and withers.

Man returns to dust. We're temporary.

Whether we live 70 years or 170 years ... it's soon over. We are like the grass of the field ... whereas God is eternal.

Psalms 103:13-17 (NKJV)

13 As a father pities his children,
So the Lord pities those who fear Him.

14 For He knows our frame;

He remembers that we are dust.

15 **As for man, his days are like grass;**
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.

16 **For the wind passes over it, and it is gone,**
And its place remembers it no more.

17 But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting
On those who fear Him,
And His righteousness to children's children,

That's us! We're "time limited"! We have a "use-by-date". This should influence our thinking and how we conduct our lives.

But is that time just 70 years? Maybe 80 for a few? Does the Bible say somewhere we have an appointed time to die? We'll see!

1 Peter 1:22 - 2:3 (NKJV)

22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,

23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,

24 because

“All flesh is as grass,

And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass.

The grass withers,

And its flower falls away,

25 But the word of the Lord endures forever.”

Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

1 ***Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, (put these carnal practices to one side)***

2 as newborn babes, ***desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,***

3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

Using God's Word ... because we're temporary. Don't put things off ... and off ... forever. Our days are limited. 😊

Now is our Day of Salvation.

Methusaleh lived 969 years ... but even he died eventually. His time was still limited ... it still ran out. And by comparison to God ... it's the blink of an eye.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 (NKJV)

10 ***Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.***

While you are alive ... get doing ... “Do it with your might” — you won't in the grave! Make good use of our time.

Ephesians 5:15-17 (NKJV)

15 See then that you walk (*live*) circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,

16 ***redeeming the time,*** because the days are evil.

17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

“Redeem the time”. In many translations: “Make the most of every opportunity”.

Ephesians 5:16 (Voice)

16 **Make the most of every living and breathing moment** because these are evil times.

That’s something we can all think about? Our time is limited ... irrespective of how long it lasts ... so use it wisely.

The New York Times says American adults watch an average of 5 hours and 4 minutes of TV a day.

Compare that to: In the US less than 19% of churchgoers read their Bible daily ... less than 1 in 5. And of those who do ... an average time ... 5-30 minutes every day.

Is that a good use of your time?

Here’s the “3 score years and ten” verses:

Psalms 90:7-12 (NKJV)

7 For **we have been consumed by Your anger,**

And **by Your wrath we are terrified.**

8 You have set our iniquities before You,

Our secret sins in the light of Your countenance.

9 **For all our days have passed away in Your wrath;**

We finish our years like a sigh.

10 **The days of our lives are seventy years;**

And if by reason of strength they are eighty years,

Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow;

For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

11 **Who knows the power of Your anger?**

For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath.

12 **So teach us to number our days,**

That we may gain a heart of wisdom.

God is shown as an angry God ... consuming the people ... whose lives are described as “sorrow and labour”.

This is not a general description of God and His people. It’s a specific time period ... and a particular group of people.

This is a prayer of Moses ... given at a particular time during his life.

Was there a time in Moses’ experience when the Israelites were dying prematurely ... under a curse from God who is angry with them ... suffering a harsh lifestyle of sorrow and labour? The answer is ABSOLUTELY!

Numbers 14:1-10 (NKJV)

1 So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night.

2 And **all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!**

3 **Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims?** Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?”

4 So they said to one another, “Let us select a leader and return to Egypt.”

5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

6 But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes;

7 and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: “The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land.

8 If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey.’

9 Only **do not rebel against the Lord**, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them.”

10 **And all the congregation said to stone them with stones.** Now the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel.

Rebellion!!

Numbers 14:20-35 (NKJV)

20 ***Then the Lord said:*** “I have pardoned, according to your word;
21 but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord—
22 ***because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice,***

23 ***they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it.***

24 But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it.

25 Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valley; tomorrow turn and move out into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea.”

26 ***And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron,*** saying,

27 ***“How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me.***

28 Say to them, ***As I live,’ says the Lord,*** ‘***just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you:***

29 ***The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above.***

30 Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in.

31 But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised.

32 But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness.

33 ***And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness.***

34 ***According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your quilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection.***

35 I the Lord have spoken this. I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. ***In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.’ ”***

The curse ... to be consumed over the next 40 years.

If age 20 at the time ... dead by 60 (guaranteed)

If age 30 ... maximum would be 70 ... but for many ... much less.

If age 50-60 ... then in theory ... they could reach 90 or 100 years old. But Psalm 90 suggests few got beyond 70 ... with 80 about the maximum in practice.

Only those below 20 survived to go into the Promised Land ... so nobody over 60 entered into the Promised Land (except Joshua and Caleb ... and their families?)

But ... THIS WAS A CURSE — FOR REBELLION. It is not stated in scripture as God's desire for all of mankind in all generations.

We can't take this passage from Psalm 90 and apply it as God's plan in general. Hence ... on average ... most people in the developed world actually live to at least 80.

If we had healthier lifestyles ... we might live even longer? (Some studies suggest life-expectancy now starting to fall ... because of junk food diets ... sedentary lifestyles ... drugs ... pollution).

Amplified Bible Footnote to Psalm 90

In Psalm 90, Moses is interceding for the Israelites who are wandering in the wilderness waiting for the older generation to die before entering the Promised Land. Moses says most of them are dying at seventy years of age. This number has often been mistaken as a set span of life for all mankind. It was not intended to refer to anyone except those Israelites under the curse during that particular forty years.

Seventy years never has been the average span of life for humanity. When Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes, had reached 130 years (Genesis 47:9), he complained that he had not attained to the years of his immediate ancestors. In fact, Moses himself lived to be 120 years old, Aaron 123, Miriam several years older, and Joshua 110 years of age. Note as well that in the Millennium (the 1000 year reign of Christ), a person dying at 100 will still be thought a child (Isaiah 65:20).

So ... don't take 70 as a target ... after which you are living on "borrowed time". Certainly in our societies the end will be coming into sight ... but God hasn't set a date — much is up to us.

And wherever we are ... we should be redeeming the days ... taking every opportunity.

Occasionally ... you will have someone say that the Bible teaches that "there is a time appointed for all men to die" ... and they'll imply that is typically no more than 70 ... though God may appoint some to die at 35 ... or 50 ... or 80?

Psalms 90:13-17 (NKJV)

13 Return, O Lord!

How long?

And have compassion on Your servants.

14 Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy,

That we may rejoice and be glad all our days!

15 Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us,
The years in which we have seen evil.

16 Let Your work appear to Your servants,
And Your glory to their children.

17 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.

Does the Bible say that there is a time to die? Well. Here's the verse.

Hebrews 9:27-28 (NKJV)

27 **And as it is appointed for men to die once,** but after this the judgment,
28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

Appointed to die ... but no time is appointed. God doesn't have a pre-determined date. The scripture shows that much is up to us.

Proverbs 3:1-2 (NKJV)

1 My son, do not forget my law,

But let your heart keep my commands;

2 For length of days and long life

And peace they will add to you.

Hebrew: "Years of life" ... they will ADD to you.

Clearly ... no set "appointment with death" ... if you can add years to your life.

Proverbs 3:13-18 (NKJV)

13 **Happy is the man who finds wisdom,**

And the man who gains understanding;

14 For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver,
And her gain than fine gold.

15 She is more precious than rubies,
And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her.

16 **Length of days is in her right hand,**

In her left hand riches and honour.

17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
And all her paths are peace.

18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,
And happy are all who retain her.

Proverbs 4:5-10 (NKJV)

5 **Get wisdom! Get understanding!**

Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.

6 Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you;
Love her, and she will keep you.

7 **Wisdom is the principal thing;**

Therefore get wisdom.

And in all your getting, get understanding.

8 Exalt her, and she will promote you;
She will bring you honour, when you embrace her.

9 She will place on your head an ornament of grace;
A crown of glory she will deliver to you."

10 **Hear, my son, and receive my sayings,**

And the years of your life will be many.

Proverbs 4:10 (Voice)

10 **Hear my words, my son, and take them in;**

let them soak in so that you will live a long, full life.

Proverbs 9:10-11 (NKJV)

10 **"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,**

And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

11 ***For by me your days will be multiplied,
And years of life will be added to you.***

Proverbs 10:27 (NKJV)

27 ***The fear of the Lord prolongs days,
But the years of the wicked will be shortened.***

We can think of a couple of examples in scripture. Ananias and Sapphira in Acts Chapter 5. Then there are those in the church in Corinth who were dying prematurely because they didn't "discern the Lord's Body" at Passover. Or ... Solomon himself ... author of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes ... who probably died in his 50's. That was probably never God's intention.

So ... scripture makes plain that we are appointed to die. But no date is appointed.

We can extend or shorten our days.

By living a righteous life? Or shorten it by being wicked? Commonly by unhealthy lifestyles — smoking ... alcohol ... drugs ... junk food etc.

So you can't take scripture either as showing we have an appointed date of death. Nor that "three score years and ten" is our average allotment.

The average person in the Western World can today expect to live 80 or more years.

But ... irrespective ... we need to number our days ... wherever we are in our lives ... we need to recognise that they are limited. And use our time wisely ... redeeming the time and making the most of every opportunity ... while we can. We haven't got forever.

Let's not be hemmed in by the three score years and ten. It doesn't mean that we shouldn't have some regard to living our lives right ... and making the most of every opportunity.