

Psalm 121:1-8. Q. Who will help you in 2017?

I will lift up my eyes to the hills—

From whence comes my help?

² My help *comes* from the LORD,

Who made heaven and earth.

³ He will not allow your foot to be moved;

He who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴ Behold, He who keeps Israel

Shall neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵ The LORD *is* your keeper;

The LORD *is* your shade at your right hand.

⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day,

Nor the moon by night.

⁷ The LORD shall preserve you from all evil;

He shall preserve your soul.

⁸ The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in

From this time forth, and even forevermore.

Introduction

Today is the 1st day of a New Year. Last night, today and over the next three days, millions of Japanese people will visit temples and shrines during this holiday period.

Most of the people who visit these places are going there to ask for help in 2017. They want help for their health, wealth, and work during the coming year. Some people want to find a wife or husband, pass an important exam or get a new job or promotion in their job. There are a big variety of reasons for their visits.

The question I would like to ask is who are they praying to and what kind of help are they expecting to get?

I expect that many people today are going to the temples and shrines out of tradition and habit. Perhaps they have been taught by their parents and it has become a tradition. It is just like a luck charm.

True Story

The story is told of a Missionary who went to live in an Asian country.

He noticed that lots of people worshipped at shrines and places where idols were set up.

Mainly these people went for protection and help against the challenges of life. There were lots of robbers and thieves in the area.

The missionary wondered how he would reach them with the truth about the Bible, Jesus, and God who created this world.

He observed their idol worship, trying to understand their mind-set.

He decided to go and buy a dog which was made of bronze.
He bought it from the local market. He left it outside his front door.

People used to pass his house and they noticed that he had this “Bronze Dog” at his front door. One man stopped and asked him why he kept this “Bronze Dog” outside his home.

The missionary told the man it was there for his protection.
The man laughed and then walked off.

For over a week everybody in the village would walk past the missionary home, point to the dog and laugh and then walk by.

After the week was over the missionary decided that it was his time to act and share about the God of the Bible and the truth about Jesus Christ.

At the first home he visited he explained to the person that he had not put the “Bronze Dog” outside his home for his protection but as an illustration for what he wanted to share with the people of the village.

He explained that their visits to idols and shrines to pray for protection was as bad as having a “Bronze Dog” outside his home.

The dead idol could do nothing to help them and their worship at these places, although for them was genuine, could not help them.
It was like the missionary trusting in a bronze dog to protect his home.

So with this introduction in mind, let us proceed to discover some truth from Psalm 121.

Psalm 121 is a song which was sung by Jewish people as they travelled along the road to Jerusalem in order to celebrate important festivals.

As the pilgrims got near to Jerusalem they looked up to the hills to observe all the shrines and places where other people worshiped.
The Jewish Pilgrims knew that lots of other people in the land had made idols and they were looking to their own gods to ask for help.

In v.1 the Jewish people asked a rhetorical question.
They looked to hills and observed the places that other people went for help and asked the question, where do I go for help?

The rest of the Psalm describes the help that is offered to people who put their faith and trust in the God of the Bible.

I would encourage you in 2017 to put your faith and trust in the God of the Bible.

The writer of this Psalm points out several reasons why we should put our faith and trust in the God of the Bible and not in idols or the imagination of other people's ideas or religions.

Reason No. 1 – The God of the Bible is a creator God

The Psalmist tells us that the God of the Bible created the "Heavens" and the "Earth"
Have you got any idea how big the "Heavens" are?

Another name for the "Heavens" would be "Universe"

I want you to come with me on a "Space Ship" aircraft for a moment.
We are going to go on a journey.

We are going to travel very fast so please put your seat belt on tightly.
We will travel at the speed of light.

At the speed of light, you can circle the earth 7 times in 1 second.
How did you enjoy your trip?

We will pass the "Moon" in 2 seconds, the planet Mars in 4 minutes and the planet Pluto in 5 hours.

Travelling at the same speed it is going to take us 4.3 years to reach the closest star.

Each second of these 4.3 years you will travel 300,000 kilometres.
The nearest star is 40,682,300,000,000 kilometres away.

The stars that we see at night in the sky are part of a large family of stars called the "Milky Way Galaxy"

If we travelled at the speed of light it would take 100,000 years to cross this galaxy from one side to the other.

There are an estimated 100 billion galaxies in the universe.

Wow, isn't the Heavens and Universe really big.

Well the God of the Bible created all this by Himself with no help from man or machines.
We may not understand much about the universe but we do understand something about the earth we live in.

Scientists and Geology students have been studying the earth for thousands of years.
They tell us that it is an amazing place.

(Put up a slide of trees and flowers and nature)

Man has advanced in his technology in an amazing way but he will NEVER be able to create something from nothing.

God created this unique world from NOTHING. He is an amazing God.

Reason No. 2 – The God of the Bible protects His people

The wonderful thing about the God of the Bible is that He offers you a personal relationship with Himself.

When you are in a right relationship with Him you are assured of His protection. I will explain later how that can be a reality for you today.

The Psalmist tells us that God protects His people in a number of ways.

a) The God of the Bible offers 24 hour care.

We are told that God does not sleep. God has created us to need sleep so we can't imagine what it is like to not need sleep.

God is able to protect your life 24 hours in every day.

While we are sleeping in Japan, people in England are enjoying their afternoon and evening. If God could not offer 24 hour care then that would not be fair to people in other parts of the world.

b) The God of the Bible can protect you from the sun during the day and the moon at night.

Q. What is that all about?

This Psalm/Song was written for people who lived in Israel in the Middle East. It is a very hot country from April to November.

If you sleep in the open at night, the moon can affect your eyes. It can cause damage.

Also we know that the sun's rays can be harmful.

God is saying to His chosen people that they will be protected from the harmful effects of the sun and the moon.

c) The God of the Bible can protect you from all evil

There will be a lot of evil around in 2017.

God is able to protect His chosen people from the evil things in our world.

Every Christian believer has to die one day, but God will decide when that happens and not evil men and women.

d) The God of the Bible is able to look after your soul for eternity.

This is the most important point of the whole Psalm.

Often we are more concerned with our physical life than with our spiritual life. God is concerned with both, but this year we do need to take care of our spiritual life.

Conclusion

This Psalm does not promise trouble free experiences as we go into 2017.

However, it does rejoice that we live under the umbrella of God's protective guard, and we can be confident of His help.

Application

Psalm 121 is a wonderful Psalm of promise to all believers at the start of a "New Year"

However, what if I am here today and I am not a Christian.

Where do I get my help from in 2017?

The simple answer is, you need to have a personal relationship with the God of the Bible and then you will be assured of His help in 2017.

You can do this today by believing in your heart 3 important things.

1. I was created by the God of the Bible for a relationship with Him. However, my ancestors, Adam and Eve, the first created people, disobeyed God and this brought "Sin" into our human nature. Because of their actions we have all sinned and continue to offend a Holy God.

Quote Romans 3: v. 23. And Romans 6: v.23.

2. God in His love and mercy had to find a way to save His created people without compromising His Holiness or letting his created people escape punishment.

Sin must be punished by a Holy God.

The answer was to send His Son into this world to take our punishment and therefore mend the broken relationship.

Quote John3: v. 16.

3. The third thing is to say sorry for offending a Holy God.
You may not be able to see the God of the Bible but He is definitely here by His Holy Spirit.

Once you admit your sin and say sorry to God and believe that Jesus died for YOUR SIN too, then the way can be opened up for a personal relationship with the God of the Bible and you too can know His care and protection, not just for 2017, but forever.

AMEN.