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Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.

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Abide in the Safety of God's Presence

Seasons of time producing considerable destruction through storms, plagues, droughts, famine, floods, extreme heat, and war are not new. Historically, the 21 days from the 17th of Tammuz until the 9th of AV (Tisha B'Av) on the Jewish calendar have brought notable times of destruction and bitterness for the Jews. Tisha B'Av is a day of mourning; this year it falls on July 28th.

For example, on the 17th of Tammuz, it is said that Moses smashed the tablets of the Torah at Mt. Sinai. On this day, daily sacrifices ceased. On the 9th of AV, in 1200 B.C., Israel was told by God in the wilderness that that generation would not enter the Promised Land. In 586 B.C., the Babylonian army destroyed the Holy Temple (Solomon's). In 70 A.D., Titus and the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem and The Second Temple. In 136 A.D., Rome began to build a pagan city in Jerusalem. The first crusades began on this date in 1290. In 1492, all Jews had to be out of Spain by July, on the 9th of AV. In 1914, declarations for World War I began. In 1941, "the Final Solution" to exterminate the Jews was put into effect. In 1942, Jews began being deported from the Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka extermination camp...and The Holocaust began. In 2005, Jews were expelled from Gaza and terrorists set up camp. In 2006 the Lebanon War broke out.

Jewish Rabbis attributed the destruction to a demon they called "Ketev," meaning destruction/bitterness. Others attribute this destruction to a spirit named Basilisk.

Now if you're like me, you never even heard of Basilisk. This was the name given to the serpent of fire, or serpent of the sun, or "royal serpent" in Greek. It was identified with Moloch, and was regarded as a great Seven-crowned serpent, a king, and royal. In the OT the basilisk is also translated "viper," "cockatrice," or "asp." (See Isaiah 59:5; Psalm 91:13; Proverbs 23:32; Isaiah 11:8; Isaiah 14:29; Isaiah 30:6; Jeremiah 8:17.)

7/1/2012



It was said of this Basilisk that the power of death existed in its breath or even in a glance of the eyes. It bites and spreads poison (Proverbs 23:32; Jeremiah 8:17). The word “basilisk” is a derivation of *basiliskos* in Greek, meaning “kinglet” or “king.” It was said to be a reptile hatched by a serpent from a cock’s egg, thus cockatrice or adder.



In Palestine, this viper is said to be the cerastes or “horned viper,” a very poisonous serpent. The Cerastes would hide itself in the sand and bite the feet of travelers as they passed by.



Some say it was more like a lizard, the king of the serpents. It was said to have a crest, or comb upon its head, giving it a crown. It was produced from the egg of a cock hatched under toads or serpents. In myths, the species burned up whatever it approached.

In Shakespeare’s *Richard the Third*, Lady Anne responds to Richard’s compliment of her eyes, “Would they were basilisk’s, to strike thee dead!” (*Richard III*, Act 1, Scene 2)

The Roman naturalist Pliny describes this creature: “He does not impel his body, like other serpents, by a multiplied flexion, but advances lofty and upright. He kills the shrubs, not only by contact, but by breathing on them, and splits the rocks, such power of evil is there in him.” It seems, too, that rue was the only plant that could not be withered and that the weasel could overcome it. Hanging the basilisk was said to be a remedy against spiders. Thus it was suspended in the temple of Apollo and in the temple of Diana.

To tread upon the serpent or viper means to triumph over the most malicious and dangerous enemies. The bite of the serpent contains a poison that diffuses throughout one's whole system. The poison of the Basilisk or horned viper is said to cause the blood to start from the veins. Nevertheless, Isaiah 11:8 says the weaned child shall put his hand on the den of this viper.

As the wicked increase and their words, counsels, and plans increase in evil, as the eggs of the Basilisk, and as ensnaring as the spider's web (Isaiah 59:5), so lawlessness breaks out, crooked paths, darkness, defilement, perversity. (Isaiah 59:1-8)

What do we think in such times? Ancient leaders perceived that there were times of such trouble that **the righteous should hide in the secret place of the Most High.** (See Isaiah 26, Zephaniah 2:3, e.g.) During those times when we find ourselves groping for the wall like the blind, stumbling at noonday, growling like bears, moaning sadly like doves, find ourselves as "dead men in desolate places," looking for justice but finding none and for salvation but it seems allusive, then we are to confess our sins, ask God for repentance, intercede, and trust. Isaiah 59 goes on to describe the situation:

In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the Heart words of falsehood, justice is turned back, and righteousness Stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.
Isaiah 59:13-15

We are in such a time as this. Instead of dwelling in the midst of deceit and refusing to know the LORD (Jeremiah 9:6), we are to dwell in the shadow of the Almighty. **If ever there was a time when believers in Jesus Christ need to love truth and peace, to acknowledge truth and repent, it is now.** Such truth and peace are to be found in Christ.

Compromise and spiritual error are opening the door for this serpentine spirit called Basilisk. In Isaiah 59, the Lord looks for someone to intercede. His own Arm (Jesus) brought salvation for Him, and His own righteousness sustained Him. We are exhorted to trust in God's covenant:

As for Me, says the LORD, "this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, Shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth Of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' Descendants," says the LORD, "from this time and forevermore."
Isaiah 59:21

As deep darkness covers the people, we are to trust that the Covenant Lord will arise over us, that His glory will be seen upon us. As calamities threaten existence, we are to intercede and tread upon the serpent and the scorpion (Luke 10:19). But no one should enter the devil's territory without the clear command of God, and to clearly hear that command will require dwelling in the secret place of the Most High.

The question then becomes: Where will we live and find our existence? Will we find it in the shelter of the Most High or in the dwelling place of deceit? Psalm 91 encourages us to make the right choice.

Satan knows his time is short. He doesn't want you to look for God, to confess sin to God (even little things), to study God's Word, to pray, to discover the truth, to have you witnessing to anyone, to find you dedicated to serving the One True and Living God, to really rely on Jesus alone to "save" you. He likes division among the saints and looks for every opportunity to gain permission to attack, bring tribulation and persecution, bring sickness, deceive, etc. He encourages disobedience and rebellion against the true God, encourages complaining, whining, murmuring, and anything that will hurt the communion you have with the Godhead and with other believers. He wants you "out of bounds," not enveloped in Christ's cords of love.

But Satan cannot annihilate the people of God or stop the Word of Truth because the Word of God is not chained. (2 Timothy 2:9) Satan cannot touch what God protects, protect the believer from God, win the war, stop his time in the pit from coming, or penetrate what is fortified by the Blood of Jesus Christ.

Every believer can know the certainty of the Lord's protection and experience His deliverance from every disaster by meeting the conditions of Psalm 91.

1. Abide in the secret place. This settling down in the secret place of God Most High means time with Him in prayer, trusting His provision for life. You can abide in the Lord's most exalted position, living in union through Christ. You can live in that place of consecration, the Holy of Holies, where the Lord dwells in glory, by a constant reliance on the Blood of Jesus Christ and His righteousness imputed to you.
2. Abide in the shadow of Shaddai. Shade and shelter are precious in the Middle East. El Shaddai, the Mighty One, the Source of all life and blessing, protects and shields from incessant oppression.
3. Make the Lord of the Covenant your Refuge and Fortress. Declare Him to be so. He is God Most High, not the creation. He is the Mighty One, not some powerless idol. He is Yahweh, the unchanging Lord of the Covenant, bound by covenant oath. He is a refuge and fortress, a place of safety and protection. He is Elohim, the real God.
4. Trust Him. Put the totality of your life into His hands, even when the relationship is tested. (Job 13:15)

And why should you trust Him? Here are some reasons:

1. He will deliver you from the lure of the ambush, from the lethal pestilence (Psalm 91:3); from the plotting of men and from the scourge of nature. God makes everything beautiful in its time (Eccl. 3:11). Do not fear evil. (Psalm 23)
2. With His feathers He will enclose you, and under His wings, you will trust. His truth will be your shield and your tower for defense (Ps 91:4). Satan cannot penetrate the truth of God to harm one who has been redeemed from sin by the Blood of Jesus Christ and knows it.
3. You will have no fear for the terror by night, for the arrow that flies by day; for the plague that stalks in thick darkness, for the destruction that devastates at noon day (Ps 91:5, 6). As the object of God's electing love, you need not fear.
4. A thousand will fall at your side, a horde at your right hand; but it will not even come near you. Only with your eyes will you behold; the recompense of the wicked you will see (Ps 91:7, 8). Your destiny in Christ is such that tragedies that befall others do not befall the believer who in meekness seeks the LORD and his righteousness as He will hide you in the day of His anger (Zeph. 2:3). The avenging wrath of the Lord has been propitiated by Jesus Christ (1 John 2:2).

These reasons become reality in our lives when with the psalmist we firmly set the Covenant Lord as God Most High our dwelling place. Jesus modeled this kind of trust, and encourages us (Hebrews 2:12-14). Jesus trusted through every trial, persevering in faith to the end. Even when His destiny was the cross, He didn't put His Father to the test. Then,

5. You will never suffer evil; and a plague will not come near your tent (Ps 91:10). Even if you have no abiding place and find yourself living in a tent, God is your abiding place. No permanent harm can come to you.
6. God will solemnly charge His holy angels about you to keep you in all your ways; in their hands they will lift you up so that you will not bruise your foot against a stone. (Ps 91:11, 12) Stumbling stones are all over Israel every day, I know this personally. God commissions holy elect angels to protect trusting believers from everyday calamities.
7. On the lion and the cobra you will tread; you will trample the young lion and the snake (basilisk) (Ps 91:13). When Satan challenged Jesus to "test" the truth of this promise, he pulled it out apart from the rest of the psalm. Jesus tread on that old serpent when tempted to seek the crown apart from the cross by quoting the Word that spoke truth into the situation.

When we focus our desires on the true and living God, when we have known His Name, we will find God responding.

We will find ourselves in dialogue with Him. As we trust, opening our hearts to God, God will open His heart to us.

8. “Because he has focused his desire on Me, I will rescue him;
9. I will make him inaccessible because he has known My Name. (Ps 91:14)
10. He will call on Me, and I will answer him.
11. I will be with him in distress;
12. I will deliver him and honor/glorify him.
13. With long life I will satisfy him; and
14. I will make him see My salvation. (Psalm 91:15, 16)

Psalm 91, the “Pilgrim’s Psalm” and the “Trench Psalm,” has touched saints of every age. During WWI soldiers found all their experiences in it—wire entanglements, poison-gas, bombs, shells by night, trench fever, mass destruction. God remained their defense.



#1: Kobarid Trench WWI photo by Steve Maraspin; steve.maraspin.net

#2 photo by Centaur 169

Divine grace will lead us to glory as we trust in God’s goodness and love for us. Let us keep our focus and let us guard ourselves from idols. It’s time to hide in Christ in God.

*As you have received Christ Jesus as Lord,
So continue to walk in Him.
Colossians 2:6*

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