

Dear Friend/Colleague/Brother/Sister

Greetings in the Mighty Name of Lord Jesus Christ, HAPPY NEW YEAR

It is a special event in our lives. We are in 2018. All over the world people are greeting each other saying "Happy New Year". Others are saying, "Congratulations you have been chosen again". Some are saying, "We are fortunate to enter into year 2018"

Every January 1st in the past we have been in the same joyful mood welcoming a new year. This has become such a routine that we do not recognize the mystery of "year out, year in". In a marathon several tens, hundreds or even thousands of people take positions on the "Start Line". However, not all of them cross the "Finish Line". Some drop out of the race along the way for one reason or another.

On January 1st 2017 billions of people were on the "Start Line" of the 2017 marathon. According to United Nations estimates about 7.6 billion people reached the "Finish Line of the 2017 marathon". The World Health Organization estimates that about 56 million people died in 2017. That was an average of 153,424 deaths each day. You are one of the 7.6 billion people who finished the marathon in 2017 and entered the year 2018.

If about 56 million people could not finish the race in 2017 that implies the marathon was long and tough. There must have been lots of challenges, problems, hurdles, falling down, failures, disasters, sickness, accidents, ruthless murders etc. which prevented other people from finishing the race. Sometimes numbers when applied hypothetically help us to picture the magnitude or the wider scope of an issue under consideration:

1. In 2 Peter 3:8 we read, ***"But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."*** We lived through 365 days in 2017. In the invisible (Godly, spiritual) world we therefore lived 365,000 years. That is a long time.

2. For most adults the normal healthy resting heart rate is 60 to 80 beats per minute. So your heart made 525,600 to 700,880 beats in 2017. Those were lots of beats.

3. The average cruising speed for a passenger jet is 925 km/h. If you boarded a passenger jet and that jet "were able" to fly every minute from January 1st 2017 then on December 31st 2017 at 2400 hours (midnight) you would have flown 8,103,800 kilometers (5,034,967.68 miles). That is a lot of flying distance.

The above numbers help us to appreciate the magnitude of the long journey we travelled in 2017. If about 56 million people did not see the year 2018, does it mean that it was our knowledge, our skills, our experience, our wisdom, our education, our wealth, our strategies, our techniques, our strength, our power or any other internal or external resource which qualified us and enabled us to reach the year 2018? The short answer is a big NO!

Bible readers know that the Lord subdued the Philistines who had waged a battle against the Israelites. After that victory we read in 1Samuel 7:12, ***“Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, He named it Ebenezer, saying, ‘Thus far has the Lord helped us’”***

Today I want to say to each one of us **“EBENEZER”**. People may have all kinds of theories which they think facilitated our entry into 2018, but as for me I say, **“Thus far has the Lord helped us”**.

And just in case you are worried about the year 2018 or have questions about the New Year, I have good news for you. This is what the Lord is saying to us in Genesis 28:15 ***I AM WITH YOU AND WILL WATCH OVER YOU WHEREVER YOU GO, AND I WILL BRING YOU BACK TO THIS LAND. I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU UNTIL I HAVE DONE WHAT I HAVE PROMISED YOU*** I believe that the Lord who helped us live through the year 2017 will also help us live through the New Year 2018 and that He will not leave us until He brings us to year 2019.

I do not know how old you are, but I have some news for you. In Genesis chapter six verse three God is saying something to us. He says, ***“My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal. His days will be a hundred and twenty years.*** I believe every word that God says. I believe every promise which God gives us. God says we will live for a hundred and twenty years. If we really change our ways and our actions, live holy lives and do the will of God, then we will go to the promised age of a hundred and twenty years.

CONGRATULATIONS UPON THE GIFT OF LIFE THAT GOD HAS GIVEN YOU AND NOW HE HAS EXTENDED IT TO THE YEAR 2018

Be blessed abundantly,

Zakaria David Mandara