

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

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Psalm 65 — From Silence to Singing

1.0 Introducing Psalm 65

- Since Psalm 56 there has been a growing crescendo of praise.
- Psalm 65 could be a harvest hymn at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-43; Numbers 29:12-39) that follows closely the observance of the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16; cp. Psalm 65:3).
- Five out of 11 references to vows in the Psalter occur in Psalms 56–66 (56:12; 61:5, 8; 65:1; 66:13-15).
- Psalm 65:2 and 5 continue the universal theme identified in our study notes for Psalm 64.
- Psalms 62–65 employ “A Psalm of David” in their headings.
 - ✓ The addition of “A Song” to the heading links this Davidic psalm to the next two psalms (Psalms 66 and 67), which are non-Davidic.
 - ✓ Psalm 68 (Davidic) has the same addition in the heading.

2.0 Reading Psalm 65 (NAU)

65:1 A Psalm of David. A Song.

There will be silence before **You**,
and praise in Zion, O God,
And to **You** the vow will be performed.

65:2 O **You** who hear prayer,
To **You** all men come.

65:3 Iniquities prevail against me;
As for our transgressions, **You** forgive them.

65:4 How blessed is the one whom **You** choose and bring near *to You*
To dwell in **Your** courts.

We will be satisfied with the goodness of **Your** house,
Your holy temple.

- 65:5** By awesome *deeds* **You** answer us in righteousness, O **God** of our salvation,
You who are the trust of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest sea;
- 65:6** Who establishes the mountains by His strength,
Being girded with might;
- 65:7** Who stills the roaring of the seas,
The roaring of their waves,
And the tumult of the peoples.
- 65:8** They who dwell in the ends of *the earth* stand in awe of **Your** signs;
You make the dawn and the sunset shout for joy.
- 65:9** **You** visit the earth and cause it to overflow;
You greatly enrich it;
The stream of **God** is full of water;
You prepare their grain, for thus
You prepare the earth.
- 65:10** **You** water its furrows abundantly,
You settle its ridges,
You soften it with showers,
You bless its growth.
- 65:11** **You** have crowned the year with **Your** bounty,
And **Your** paths drip with fatness.
- 65:12** The pastures of the wilderness drip,
And the hills gird themselves with rejoicing.
- 65:13** The meadows are clothed with flocks
And the valleys are covered with grain;
They shout for joy, yes, they sing.

For the choir director.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 65

3.1 Outline

- I. God Provides Forgiveness (vv. 1-4) [Savior]
- II. God Provides Fortifying (vv. 5-8) [Sovereign]
- III. God Provides Fruitfulness (vv. 9-13) [Sustainer]



3.2 Notes

- v. 1 “There will be silence”
 - As in Psalm 62:1 the same word refers to the silence of patient anticipation.
 - Maimonides observed that silence may be the best praise to offer to God, since there is no end to the praise He deserves. Therefore, “adding praises is really a form of disparagement, because it implies that one is bringing the list nearer to completion.”—see Amos

Hakham, *Psalms with The Jerusalem Commentary*, 3 vols.,
Koschitzky Edition (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 2003), 2:51.

- **v. 1** “the vow will be performed”
 - Vows in the Old Testament referred to promises of thanksgiving offerings or songs of praise to God.
 - See Psalm 66:13-15.

- **vv. 1, 2** “praise ... prayer”
 - In the Hebrew these two words have an assonance that ties these verses together: *tehillah* and *tefillah*.
 - Both words occur in Psalms 35 (*tefillah*, v. 13; *tehillah*, v. 28), 102 (*tefillah*, heading, vv. 1, 17; *tehillah*, v. 21), and 109 (*tehillah*, v. 1; *tefillah*, v. 7), but only in 65 in back-to-back verses.

- **v. 3** “Iniquities”
 - Literally, “words of iniquities” or “matters of/concerning iniquities.”
 - NET Bible: “record of sins”; NRSV: “deeds of iniquity.”

- **v. 3** “You forgive them”
 - Literally, “You cover them” or “You atone for them.”
 - The personal pronoun (“You”) is emphatic—God alone can forgive transgressions.
 - Atonement is mentioned only 3 times in the Psalms (here; 78:38; 79:9).
 - ✓ The same verb occurs 15 times in the description of the Day of Atonement: Leviticus 16:6, 10, 11, 16, 17 (2x), 18, 20, 24, 27, 30, 32, 33 (2x), 34.

- **v. 4** “How blessed”
 - The beatitude is tied to the forgiveness of sins.
 - See Psalm 32:1-2; Romans 4:7-8; Revelation 22:14.

- **v. 4** “bring near”
 - God’s chosen people are forgiven and provided the privilege of His presence in their midst.
 - Some expositors understand verse 4 to be a reference to the Temple. That creates difficulty for the claim in the heading that the psalm was composed by David.
 - ✓ Mt. Zion and the Tabernacle (2 Sam 5:7; 6:12-19; cp. 1 Kgs 8:1-4).
 - ✓ The Tabernacle has a “court” (Exod 27:9).
 - ✓ Tabernacle = “Your house” (Pss 5:7; 26:8; cp. “house of God,” Judg 18:31; “house of the LORD,” Exod 23:19, 1 Sam 1:7, 2 Sam 12:20).
 - ✓ Tabernacle = “Your holy temple” (Ps 5:7; cp. “temple of the LORD,” 1 Sam 1:9 and 2 Sam 22:7).

- **v. 8** “shout for joy”

- This concludes the second and third sections of the psalm.
- The psalm begins with “silence” and concludes with shouting for joy and singing.
- **vv. 9-11** “You”
 - Note the repetition of “You” and “Your” in this psalm.
 - Praise is about God—Who He is and what He has done. True worship is theocentric (God-centered).
- **v. 13** “yes, they sing”
 - The Hebrew verb is from the same root as the noun “Song” in the heading of the psalm.
 - The psalm ends as it began—with a song.

4.0 Singing Psalm 65

The God of Our Salvation Hears Tune: “He Leadeth Me”



The God of our salvation hears
The groans of Zion mixed with tears;
Yet when He comes with kind designs,
Through all the way His terror shines.

On Him the race of man depends,
Far as the earth’s remotest ends,
Where the Creator’s Name is known
By nature’s feeble light alone.

Whole kingdoms, shaken by the storm,
He settles in a peaceful form;
Mountains, established by His hand,
Firm on their old foundations stand.

Seasons and times obey His voice;
The evening and the morn rejoice
To see the earth made soft with showers,
Laden with fruit, and dressed in flowers.

The desert grows a fruitful field,
Abundant food the valleys yield;
The valleys shout with cheerful voice,
And neighboring hills repeat their joys.

Thy works pronounce Thy power divine;
O’er every field Thy glories shine;
Through every month Thy gifts appear;
Great God, Thy goodness crowns the
year!

— Isaac Watts (1719)

5.0 Praying Psalm 65

- Thank You, Lord, for hearing my prayer. [v. 2]
- Praise God! My sins are forgiven! [v. 3]
- Thank You for the sunrise and sunset. [v. 8]
- Father, Thank You for the rain. [vv. 9-10]
- Lord, keep me singing Your praise all my life. [vv. 1, 13]



6.0 Applying Psalm 65

- God is the focus of all proper praise and worship.
- Thanksgiving and blessing begin with forgiveness of sins.