



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 65

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- The title of this Psalm is *To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. A Song*
- According to the title, David is the author
- The title indicates, as it was mentioned in previous Psalms, that it was directed toward the *Chief Musician*, whom some suppose to be the Lord God Himself, and others suppose to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph
- This Psalm and the three following Psalms carry the double title Song and Psalm



Introduction

- Song is the older term for a hymn intended to be sung in public worship, Isaiah 30:29; Amos 8:3
- This Psalm centers around describing the great blessings of God
- It begins in the style of a prayer, transitions to a description of God, and concludes with praise to God
- The occasion of this Psalm is not known, but because of its thankfulness and praise that is connected to flocks and grain, many think it was composed for a harvest festival, perhaps the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall season



Introduction

- Some believe David composed the Psalm at the time of bringing up the ark of God to Sion
- In this Psalm, David reminds us of the importance of giving thanks and being grateful to a God who is our redeemer, creator, and provider
- This Psalm stands out more than the other Psalms in its beautiful description of God's care for His creation
- The church prays the first two verses of this Psalm on the Feast of the Cross and Palm Sunday because through the cross, our Lord and savior Jesus Christ opened the door to all to believe in and praise Him



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- Praise Be to the Savior 65:1-4
- Praise Be to the Creator 65:5-8
- Praise Be to God of Prosperity 65:9-13



Praise Be to the Savior 65:1-4

- The Psalm begins with David declaring that praise rightfully belongs to God in Zion
- Zion is the mountain upon which Jerusalem was built, and is also used to identify the city itself
- Zion is also the location of the temple, and the people of Israel thus thought of Zion as the place where God dwells
- He described a wonderful picture, *praise* was waiting to be given unto God in Jerusalem
- The sense is that when God came to meet His people, He would be received in an atmosphere of praise



Praise Be to the Savior 65:1-4

- The word *praise* originally meant standing in awe and silence, which is what people feel when contemplating in God's gifts that surpass all thoughts
- St. Augustine thinks this Psalm concerns the captives of Babylon
- He says that there are two choices before men; either to dwell in Jerusalem, (the vision of peace), or to dwell in Babylon, which means (confusion)
- He says, "These two cities then at particular times were built, so that there might be shown a figure of two cities begun of old, and to remain even unto the end in this world"



Praise Be to the Savior 65:1-4

- He continues and says, “At that time the Lord shall show, when some He shall set on the right hand, others on the left.” Jerusalem on the right hand shall be, Babylon on the left....Two loves make up these two cities: love of God makes Jerusalem, love of the world makes Babylon. Therefore, let each one question himself as to what he loves: and he shall find of which he is a citizen: and if he shall have found himself to be a citizen of Babylon, let him root out malice, implant charity: but if he shall have found himself a citizen of Jerusalem, let him endure captivity, hope for liberty.”



Praise Be to the Savior 65:1-4

- *And to You the vow shall be performed*, The reference here is to the vows or promises which the people had made
- The worshippers at the Temple celebrate God's mercy and His answer to prayer
- They would gather in Jerusalem to thank God for answering their prayers and to give sacrifices and praise in fulfillment of vows made
- The sacrifices and thank-offerings, which the people vowed unto God, in the time of their danger, when they were supplicating deliverance, and other blessings, shall be faithfully paid



Praise Be to the Savior 65:1-4

- The words of verse 2 are more than a reference to a particular answer to prayer
- They proclaim that it is His absolute undeniable attribute, His 'nature' to hear and answer prayer
- Therefore, all flesh are encouraged by His character and nature of hearing all prayers to come to Him
- This Psalm expresses the universal need to come to God
- All people on the earth, not just the Jewish people, must come to God this may be considered as prediction of the conversion of the Gentiles



Praise Be to the Savior 65:1-4

- *Iniquities prevail against me*, David understood his personal struggle against sin, and how he sometimes failed in that struggle
- He also understood that God's answer for *transgressions* is an atoning sacrifice that *God* provides
- David believed in the system of animal sacrifice established by the Law of Moses, but he also looked beyond that system to a perfect sacrifice that God Himself would provide
- He does not say that the animals sacrificed atone for the people's transgressions; but he says that it is God who is covering over the people's sins



Praise Be to the Savior 65:1-4

- In this David looked to the Messiah and His perfect atoning work on the cross fulfilling the promise, *You will provide atonement for them*
- Although the psalmist acknowledges his grievous sin and rebellious transgressions in this verse, he speaks from the standpoint of one who no longer bears the burden of guilt
- God has atoned for his sin—has forgiven him—and that's the final word
- David feels the lightness of one who has carried a heavy burden but has felt it lifted, nevermore to return



Praise Be to the Savior 65:1-4

- So, David reminds us that as we gather for worship, we ought to express thanks and gratitude to God for answered prayers, forgiveness of sins, and daily provisions of creation
- The fellowship, and close relationship God allows us to have with Him, is a great reason to praise Him
- It is quite astounding that God chooses to treat His people as children
- As St. John tells us, “*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!*” (I John 3:1)



Praise Be to the Savior 65:1-4

- And as children, we *dwell in His courts*, and we experience all the *goodness of His house*
- All the promises that God has given to His children, we can benefit from
- *The goodness of Your house* gives the image of God as a host for His people
- St. Augustine comments on *the man You choose* and says, “Who is he that is chosen by Him and taken to Him? Was anyone chosen by our Savior Jesus Christ, or was Himself after the flesh, because He is man, chosen and taken to Him?”



Praise Be to the Savior 65:1-4

- He explains further and says that they, the chosen, are those who abide in the bond of Christ and are His members; He is the Head, and the believers are His body
- St. Augustine asks, “What are the good things of the House of God?” he says, “it is not how abundantly it is furnished, it is not how much the house itself delights us with pictures, marble, ceilings, pillars, recesses, chambers:—all such things are indeed objects of desire, but still they are of the confusion of Babylon. Cut off all such longings, O citizen of Jerusalem, ... if you intend to return home; do not let the captivity confuse you!; ... do not look back; do not linger on the way!”



Praise Be to the Savior 65:1-4

- In remembering the great blessings of God our attention will be directed away from ourselves and places the subject of our worship to God
- It reminds us that we come to worship placing our dependency on God instead of ourselves
- It gives focus and meaning to why we worship, and to whom we are worshipping

Praise Be to the Creator 65:5-8



- The second section of this Psalm describes the power and might of the Lord
- God had answered prayer and provided atonement; David expected such *awesome deeds* in the future also
- He believes that the God who answers prayer, the God of their salvation will answer their prayers with awesome deeds
- *by awesome deeds* may be meant things astonishing, marvelous, and even miraculous
- These deeds will be righteous, in keeping with the nature of God, who is a righteous God

Praise Be to the Creator 65:5-8



- God answers the prayer in a manner fitted to inspire awe in the hearts of His people
- Answered prayer is a great reason to praise God and at times, the answer is *awesome*, even “terrifying” (as the original meaning of this word suggests)
- It may be said also that the deeds of God are indeed terrifying to the sinners, the wicked, and the disobedient; yet they are awesome to the righteous
- They are called *awesome deeds*, or terrifying, because they inject horror and terror into their enemies, and fill them with fear and reverence of God

Praise Be to the Creator 65:5-8



- Are done *in righteousness* in faithfulness to His promises made to His people, as *righteousness* sometimes signifies, as in Psalm 51:14, “*Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.*”
- *God of our salvation*, Not only temporal, but spiritual and eternal
- *You who are the confidence of all*, It is an ongoing confidence in the continuation of God’s goodness
- God is never beyond our reach; He is always at our side, always available to us through prayer

Praise Be to the Creator 65:5-8



- David again lifted his vision from beyond Israel to *the ends of the earth, to the far-off seas*
- He understood that God was and is the God of the whole earth
- According to St. Augustine, the sea here refers to the world where everyone devours the other
- But the children of God have the Savior as their hope to protect them, yet not to isolate them from the wicked; for even in the same net there are the good and the bad together (Matthew 13: 47-49); And on the shore of the eternal life, they will be sorted out
- God's power, as displayed through His Creation, is a great reason to praise Him

Praise Be to the Creator 65:5-8



- The mountains are a symbol of God's strength, firmness, stability and immovability
- They stand up in still and silent majesty; they seem as if they could never be moved
- He who created them must be girded with power, *Who established the mountains by His strength, Being clothed with power*
- As we read in Psalm 93:1, *“the LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty; The LORD is clothed, He has girded Himself with strength. Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved.”*



Praise Be to the Creator 65:5-8

- Other commentators interpret *the mountains* of kingdoms and empires, “*Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, Who destroys all the earth, says the LORD. And I will stretch out My hand against you, Roll you down from the rocks, And make you a burnt mountain.*” (Jeremiah 51:25)
- But these are not set fast, they are not firm and stable, but in a course of time are removed, and give way to others
- Some interpret it as the church of God, “*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD’s house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it.*” (Isaiah 2:2)

Praise Be to the Creator 65:5-8



- And *mountains* may signify the believers; for all that trust in the Lord are like to mountains, Psalm 125:1; they are fastened and rooted in the everlasting love of God, by which their mountain is made to stand strong
- God's continued demonstration of His power is a great reason to praise Him
- God's power is not only seen in the original work of Creation, but also in His continued work within His Creation
- God controls *the noise of the seas* and the *noise of their waves*
- God's might is shown in His ability to quiet not only the oceans but also the noise of the peoples of the world

Praise Be to the Creator 65:5-8



- *still the noise of the seas*, The storm diminishes at His command, and the sea is still
- It was the manifestation of this power which demonstrated so clearly the divinity of the Lord Jesus, when He said to the troubled waves, *“Peace, be still!” And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.*” (Mark 4:39)
- Knowing this great power of God should build our faith when we see the *tumult of the peoples*
- *the tumult* of wicked men, who rage against the people of God, and are like a troubled sea that cannot rest

Praise Be to the Creator 65:5-8



- But God can say to these proud waters, which threaten to go over their souls, Peace, be still
- He can stop their opposition, restrain their wrath, and make them peaceable and quiet; wherefore the believers have no reason to be afraid of them, Psalm 46:2
- Why does David record these events in nature?
- Verse 8 tells us that we are to be in awe of *the signs* of God
- God's authority extended far beyond Israel, to *the farthest parts* of the earth
- These things exist so that we would seek after God

Praise Be to the Creator 65:5-8



- All of it speaks to the power of God
- They also that dwell in the uttermost parts *are afraid of Your signs*
- They see these *signs* - indications of God's mighty power - and are filled with awe
- Some interpret them of the sun, moon, and stars, which declare the glory of God to the uttermost parts of the earth, and make men filled with awe and reverence of Him
- Others of thunder and lightning, which are sometimes very dreadful and terrible

Praise Be to the Creator 65:5-8



- These *signs* might be the terrible phenomena in nature—such as earthquakes, pandemic, tornado, or storm; when they are seen, even the most evil cruel people tremble before God
- However, God's people are not afraid but *rejoice*
- These *signs* bring to His people joy
- The exercise of God's authority over the earth brings rejoicing to the day
- Some interpret this of the morning and evening sacrifices
- Others of the sun that goes forth in the morning, and of the moon and stars that appear in the evening, and both give pleasure and delight to the inhabitants of the earth

Praise Be to the Creator 65:5-8



- And some say the allusion is to the east and the west which include the whole world, and its inhabitants praising the Creator
- According to St. Augustine, “By the morning he signifies the prosperity of the world, by the evening he signifies the trouble of the world”
- The believer, though, having got the light of the Lord, does not care much for the morning of the world; and is not disturbed by the troubles of its evening, for the sake of the Lord
- When man does not find pleasure in the things of the world, he would not be disturbed by its troubles, but will find his pleasure, instead, in the promises of the Savior

Praise Be to God of Prosperity

65:9-13



- In conclusion, David praises God for His bountiful providence with respect to the harvest
- God's providence in supplying the billions of people in the world means of sustenance is a great reason to praise Him
- After Adam sinned, God punished man by cursing the ground man farms, (Genesis 3:17-19)
- But God, in His great mercy, though He cursed the ground, has consistently brought forth rains to water the *furrows*, softening the *ridges*, and preparing the land for *their grain*
- *the earth*, David continues to declare the general providence of God to all men and people

Praise Be to God of Prosperity

65:9-13



- The psalmist presents a portrait of how God, in His care for the whole humanity, visits the earth from end to end
- God seems to come down that He may attend to the needs of the earth; survey the condition of things; arrange for the welfare of the world which He has made; and supply the needs of those whom He has created to dwell upon it
- St. Augustine says, “You have visited the earth, and have saturated it. You have sent Your clouds, they have rained down the preaching of the truth, inebriated is the earth. You have multiplied to enrich it.”

Praise Be to God of Prosperity

65:9-13



- *visit the earth*, This may be applied to the church and people of God in Gospel times, who are the good ground on which the seed falls and is received, and brings forth fruit; and are comparable to the earth that drinks in the rain that comes upon it, *“For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God”* (Hebrews 6:7)
- *The river of God*, may mean the river of God's everlasting love, which is full of the blessings of grace, and which flowing upon His people, makes them fruitful

Praise Be to God of Prosperity

65:9-13



- St. Augustine says, “What is the river of God? The people of God. The first people was filled with water, wherewith the rest of the earth might be watered. Hear Him promising water: ‘If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink: he that believeth on Me, rivers of living water from his belly shall flow’: if rivers, one river also; for in respect of unity many are one. Many Churches and one Church, many faithful and one Bride of Christ: so many rivers and one river. Many Israelites believed, and were fulfilled with the Holy Spirit; from thence they were scattered abroad through the nations, they began to preach the truth, and from the river of God that was filled with water, was the whole earth watered.”

Praise Be to God of Prosperity

65:9-13



- In Scripture water is a symbol of the Holy Spirit in His abundant work refreshing and purifying and so verse 9 has been by many understood to point to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit
- *You settle its furrows*, The rain - falling on them - beats them down, so that the ground becomes leveled
- May also mean humble souls, whom the Lord fills with His good things, and makes them fruitful in every good work
- In seedtime God sends that measure of rain that is necessary, in order to prepare the earth for farming and when the edges are thrown into channels, He makes them soft with showers to make the soil light and open and ready for the seeds

Praise Be to God of Prosperity

65:9-13



- *You bless its growth*, God bless it by causing it to grow richly, thus producing an abundant harvest
- All this may give us a picture of the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing down high thoughts and pride, softening the heart and soul, and fill the heart with good things and causing every holy things to increase and spread

Praise Be to God of Prosperity

65:9-13



- In verse 11 David continues by describing the harvest that people enjoy because God has made the earth profitable
- The year is crowned with a plentiful harvest
- God, by His powerful goodness, enriches and adorns all the seasons of the year with their proper fruits and blessings
- The church sings this verse in the liturgy of the Coptic New Year (Nayrouz); declaring God's favors and goodness; He who fills the church with His goodness
- *Your paths*, The treads or steps of God, when He visits the land with rain, create fertility

Praise Be to God of Prosperity

65:9-13



- According to the scholar Origen, the year crowned by God's goodness concerns the period during which the Lord lived in the flesh on earth
- *They drop*, to let fall gently, as the rain or the dew falls to the earth
- The idea is, that wherever God goes, walking through the earth, fertility, beauty, abundance seems to fall gently along His path
- Wherever God goes or works, He leaves the marks and signs of His mercy behind Him, He bestows rich and significant blessings, and thus makes His paths to shine after Him

Praise Be to God of Prosperity

65:9-13



- St. Augustine says, “The righteous are called “plains” because of their simple nature, and are called “hills” and “mountains” because of their exaltation; as God lifts up the humble in Him. The “wilderness”, on the other hand, are the Gentiles, to whom no prophets were sent; were like a desert through which no one passed, The word of God was not sent to the Gentiles, but the prophets were sent only to Israel. There are two harvests: The first harvest are the Jews to whom prophets were sent to proclaim the coming of the Savior. And there will be another harvest in which the apostle will labor. And, at the end of time, God will send His angels for the ultimate harvest.”

Praise Be to God of Prosperity

65:9-13



- It is not only the farmer's fields that benefit from God's rain
- The prosperity brought by God's rain extends even to the *wilderness and the hills*—bringing great joy
- *the little hills rejoice*: Literally, The *hills* clothed themselves with joy and happiness
- As the psalmist saw hills covered with livestock and valleys full of grain, for him they constitute such strong evidences of God's goodness that he can actually *hear the fields sing for joy!*
- Creation itself shouted for joy and sang to God
- David tries to remind us of how much God gives to the people of the earth

Praise Be to God of Prosperity

65:9-13



- The rain fill the pastures with grass for cattle, and the valleys (which he mentions as the most fruitful places) with corn for the use of man
- *They shout for joy, they also sing,* They are abundantly satisfied with God's goodness, and in their manner sing forth the praises and declare the goodness of their Creator
- What a beautiful image; it expresses well the beauty of nature and describe the goodness of God
- Everything seems to be happy and full of song; and all this is to be traced to the goodness of God



Discussion

- Before launching into a litany of praise, what does the psalmist do first?
- What is the psalmist's heart's desire toward God?
- In this Psalm, what are the specific things for which the psalmist praises God?
- According to the psalmist, who are the blessed ones?

Discussion



- What do those who are living far away fear? How can people be joyful from the morning's dawn until the evening fades? (8)
- How does God prepare the land to produce grain for His people?
- How does God crown the year? How is the abundance of His blessings on desert, hills, meadows and valleys described? When you look back at the last year, what can you say about the grace has God bestowed on your life?