

All Nations Under God

Psalm 65 January 22, 2025

Monday was the inauguration of a new president and with him a new administration with the promise of new policies, new priorities, and new public servants to effect change in our nation.

Some greet this new term with excitement and hope. Others, just the opposite. Setting aside emotion for sensibility, everyone knows that *some* things will change, but a lot will stay the same. Some promises will be kept, many will not. That's the way it goes. No matter how you feel about this new administration, it will be constantly racing against the hour glass. In a few years, it will give way to the next, which will come roaring in with its own policies, priorities, and people.

When David was finally installed on the throne over all Israel, it was a time of unrest and upheaval. A years-long civil war had been raging. There were assassinations, deep partisanship among the tribes, and historic culture shifts. A lot going wrong and a lot of problems to solve.

David brought many changes to the nation of Israel. His dynamic administration touched just about every aspect of Israeli life. But he knew he couldn't solve every conflict or predict every problem. His ultimate hope was never in his managerial genius, his battlefield prowess, or his own inventiveness. He was all too aware of his own weakness, failure, and imperfections.

David knew the all the world's problems would ultimately be answered and solved by the arrival of a forever King, Whose administration is perfect and *never* comes to an end. Psalm 65 sets our minds and our hopes on the forever King and His perfect administration so that we will put our hope in Him and direct the attention of our hearts and lives toward Him.

Psalm 65:Superscript-1 - For the choir director. A psalm of David. A song. ¹ Praise is rightfully yours, God, in Zion; vows to you will be fulfilled.

The song looks forward to the Millennial Kingdom of Christ on the earth.¹ But as Christians, we know that we are citizens of His Kingdom even now. We're passing through this world, on our way to our forever home. As servants of the King, this song gives perspective on this life and excitement as we remind ourselves once again of the greatness, goodness, and generosity of our Savior.

There was a lot of hub-bub because they moved the Inauguration ceremony indoors this year. People had a lot of opinions about the location. What was the reason? What did it mean?

Why does God establish His throne in *Zion*, which is Jerusalem? Why *that* spot of all places? Why make an earthly kingdom at all when He *could* create a whole new universe to rule on?

¹ John Phillips *Exploring Psalms, Volume 1*

There are so many reasons, but first, the throne being in Zion proves God's kindness. In Deuteronomy 7 we read:

Deuteronomy 7:7 - ⁷"The Lord had his heart set on you and chose you, not because you were more numerous than all peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples.

That text goes on to say that God did what He did out of love. Of course, God's design wasn't *only* to save the children of Abraham. He picked Abraham as the line through which *all the world* would be blessed. But this work of God shows His incredible, compassionate kindness.

The throne in Zion proves God's faithfulness. The Old Testament is story after story of man's rebellion and God's redemption. The city that failed so many times is still the apple of His eye.

And the throne in Zion proves that the Lord keeps *all* His promises. When you look up how many promises American presidents keep, it's not a strong showing. But our God keeps *every* promise.

The verse opened with an interesting phrase: "Praise is rightfully yours." Your version may say, "praise is awaiting You." The words can be translated, "To You, silence is praise."²

The psalms always instruct us about the way we worship. You *can* worship God in silence. Or with singing. Or with stringed instruments. Or with cymbals. Or with the raising and clapping of hands. Worship flows from a heart that acknowledges the truth of God and offers adoration and thanksgiving to Him.

Psalms 65:2 - ²All humanity will come to you, the one who hears prayer.

One day, all humanity will flow to the Lord in obedience and worship. Micah tells us that the nations will stream to the mountain of God and say, "Let's go to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us about his ways so we may walk in his paths."³

Today, sadly, most people do what's right in their own eyes. Many proudly reject the God of the Bible. But all humanity still *can* approach the Lord today. No matter who you are, no matter what you've done, no matter what you've thought or said in the past, today you can have an audience with the King of the universe. In fact, the Bible says that He stands outside the door of your heart knocking, hoping that you will let Him in so He can dwell with you.

But then look at the wonderful second half of the verse: Yahweh is "the One Who hears prayer." God hears your prayer. It seems impossible to finite beings like us - we can't listen to even two people talk to us at once. But God hears the prayers of your lips, the prayers of your heart.

² Robert Alter *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation With Commentary*

³ Micah 4:1-2

Not only can He *hear* them, He *invites* us to send them! The Bible *commands* us to “pray without ceasing.”⁴ Jesus taught a whole parable to teach us to pray always and not give up.⁵

Not only does He hear us *and* invite us to pray, God also *assists* us in praying. He gives guidelines and examples and sends the Holy Spirit to intercede on our behalf and pray *for* us when need be.⁶

Psalm 65:3 - ³Iniquities overwhelm me; only you can atone for our rebellions.

We come weighed down with guilt and shame. Where David says his iniquities overwhelm him, it means they are too strong for him.⁷ Our sin is an opponent we can never defeat on our own. The *only* hope we have is for God Himself to *atone* for our guilt.

Perhaps you’ve heard that the word atone means “to cover.” But don’t let that give you the wrong connotation. God’s atoning work doesn’t mean He swept it under the rug in a cover up. No, in the Bible atonement means to purge away sin.⁸ It means to ransom or buy back a life.

Sin separated us from God and from each other. And God alone can build a bridge over the gap. He did so by offering His own Son to die in our place as an atoning sacrifice. The blood of that sacrifice will purge your sin if you are willing to put your faith and trust in Him. Only by kneeling before Christ can we be freed from the weight of our guilt. If you try to go through life carrying that guilt on your own, you will be overwhelmed. You will be defeated. You will die in your guilt. But if you come to Jesus, the Savior King, He will *free* you and cover You with His love and grace.

Psalm 65:4 - ⁴How happy is the one you choose and bring near to live in your courts! We will be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple.

Is David saying God only chooses *some* to be citizens of His Kingdom? By that logic, we’d have to look at verse 2 and conclude God is a universalist. David’s point in this verse isn’t to teach us how a person gets saved, but rather the incredible blessings of *being* a citizen of God’s Kingdom.

But, who *can* dwell on the Lord’s holy mountain? That’s what Psalm 15 is all about. Anyone who acknowledges the truth in their heart and walks in righteousness. In Isaiah 1, God said to the people, “Your sins are as scarlet, but I’ll make you white as wool if you are willing and obedient.” He says, “Come, let’s settle it. Leave your rebellion so that you don’t have to be judged.”⁹

But one might say, “Hey, it says the one You choose.” God *chooses* His covenant people. He offers the new covenant to *everyone*. Some scholars make the case that the One being chosen here is *not* you and me, but is Christ Himself and that we are hidden in Him when we’re saved.

⁴ 1 Thessalonians 5:17

⁵ Luke 18:1

⁶ Romans 8:26-27

⁷ J.J. Stewart Perowne *Commentary On The Psalms*

⁸ James Smith *The Wisdom Literature And Psalms*

⁹ Isaiah 1:18-20

As partakers of the new covenant, the question is: Are we *satisfied* with the agreement? Is God's administration over our lives *enough* for us? Are we willing to accept what God decides is good - meaning what is *best* for us? That's what goodness means: the *best* things.

We humans struggle with that satisfaction. Adam and Eve didn't think God's administration of their lives was enough. Same with the children of Israel after the exodus. And the tribes of Israel demanding a human king like the other nations. Same with Naomi and her husband. Achan at Jericho. Jeroboam. Jonah. The Pharisees in the very presence of Jesus. Their hearts weren't satisfied with what God wanted for them.

God administers your life with the goodness of His house. The *best* things. Is that enough? Or do we demand more? Do we refuse to follow along, thinking we have a better way forward?

Psalm 65:5 - ⁵You answer us in righteousness, with awe-inspiring works, God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the distant seas.

The God of the Bible is the hope for *all* the earth. We see here His rule reaches every corner, every place. He not only *hears* our prayers, He *answers* them with awe-inspiring works.

Psalm 65:6-7 - ⁶You establish the mountains by your power; you are robed with strength. ⁷You silence the roar of the seas, the roar of their waves, and the tumult of the nations.

All the rumbling troubles of earth are under God's sovereign authority. The tumult of the nations - the agitation and commotion- the God of the Bible is the final answer and the only true hope.

Don't put your hope in man! Man will *always* fall short, always eventually let you down, and make mistakes. Psalm 146 says outright, "don't trust in nobles who cannot save you!"

Don't get me wrong - if I had my choice I'd *rather* have Hezekiah as king than Manasseh. One is definitely better than the other, but both bring their failings and their limitations, both are subject to the same laws of time, death, and chance that we are. So, it's ok to have a preference, but our *hope* must be in Christ and *His* transformative power for our lives, for our nation, for the world.

Psalm 65:8 - ⁸Those who live far away are awed by your signs; you make east and west shout for joy.

Sometimes when public figures show up to an event, they're met with cheers, sometimes with jeers. Hulk Hogan was recently surprised with an arena full of boos when he expected applause.

One day, when the Lord establishes His Kingdom, rebellion will be replaced with rejoicing. Today, many still jeer at Him, scoff at His word, mock the idea of His coming. But we know the truth. And so, we can choose to do now what *will* be done later. We *rejoice* at the glory of our King.

As the song closes, David paints a series of beautiful garden images.

Psalm 65:9-10 - ⁹**You visit the earth and water it abundantly, enriching it greatly. God's stream is filled with water, for you prepare the earth in this way, providing people with grain.**
¹⁰**You soften it with showers and bless its growth, soaking its furrows and leveling its ridges.**

We see the return of the forever King to the earth He created, which we ruined - to a people who so often rejected and reviled Him - and what is His response? He comes to restore and to *work*. Christ watering. Christ enriching. Christ preparing. Christ providing. Christ soaking the world with His tender generosity.

It's not just a vanity project. It's not just a photo-op. His whole purpose is to nourish His people. He is cultivating the world so that His people can overflow with the blessings of His provision.

The Sahara desert is steadily growing across 11 different countries. Soon it will cover even more. Right now it's gobbling up 30 miles of Mali every year.¹⁰

In the Lord's Kingdom, the whole earth will be a thriving, fertile garden, with soft, rich soil.

It will be exciting to live in a world like that one day, but *today*, the Master Gardener still wants to accomplish this work. Today He does it in the garden of your heart. Jesus, of course, compared your heart to a field full of soil. God's desire is to soften our hearts, to water them, to smooth out the rough edges, and to bear fruit through our lives. God's design is that our soil be soft but strong - nourished and bountiful. Our Gardener calls us to work with Him to remove the thorns, root out sin, make the rough places smooth. Watered by the Word, growing in the Spirit, reaping harvests.

Psalm 65:11-13 - ¹¹**You crown the year with your goodness; your carts overflow with plenty.**
¹²**The wilderness pastures overflow, and the hills are robed with joy.** ¹³**The pastures are clothed with flocks and the valleys covered with grain. They shout in triumph; indeed, they sing.**

God can bring overflowing life and bounty *even from the wilderness pasture*. We can't overstate how much David wants us to be thinking of overflowing goodness here. In fact, where he says "your carts overflow with plenty," the words mean, "your cart track drips fatness."¹¹

The idea is that God's cart is so overflowing with goodness and grace, that as He passes through it just spills off the top. It's like when your kids get the load of laundry out of the dryer.

¹⁰ https://earth.org/data_visualization/the-past-present-and-future-of-the-sahara-desert/

¹¹ Derek Kidner *Psalms 1-72*

But notice that God's Kingdom is not just about making a good looking land. It's always land *and* people. John Phillips reminds us that Christ is our Kinsman Redeemer who rescues both people *and* property.

The whole earth will be covered with His grace, His goodness, and His generosity. See it here: Valleys and hills, pastures and wildernesses. The soundtrack of every place will be a thriving, thanking, triumphant song of praise and rejoicing.

And so, we see our Lord has been shown to us as the Source of life, the Sustainer, the Shepherd, the best Steward, the Sovereign, and the Savior. What is not to hope in? What is not to praise? Perhaps that's why the first word of the song is praise and the last word is sing. And how fitting that we start and end our services on Wednesday nights with singing.

But, as we close, not only is the goodness of God our future hope, it is our present reality. Though we wait for the *full* fulfillment of these things, so much of it has already been made true for us. Hasn't Christ provided the Bread of life? Living Water? Spiritual growth? A flock to walk with under the Good Shepherd? Hasn't He poured out His grace and goodness on us, even now?

Life has its struggles and difficulties, but the King of the coming Millennium is the King of our hearts now. His goodness spills from heaven in the tracks of this path He's leading us on. And so, let us go forward in joy, in rejoicing, in thanksgiving, and praise, as we go to Him, keep our vows to Him, pray to Him, put our hope in Him, and be satisfied in Him.