

## PSALM SIXTY-FOUR AND SIXTY-FIVE

*sharpened swords*—as envenomed *arrows*. But even slanders must be made colourable; and so, to give effect to the *bitter word*, there must be invented a *wicked thing*. A plausible story must be worked out of incidents false and true: the unsuspecting object of envy must be entrapped unawares into sayings and doings which can easily be made to appear suspicious; and so the *bitter word* is let fly as part of a *plot*. Sayings and doings are interwoven with sufficient cunning to fit the story to do fatal damage; until, by God, they are suddenly exploded, and the slanderers are held up to infamy. Such decisive victories of truth have many a time—in David's history, in Israel's history, and in our own—made *righteous men glad in Jehovah*, and sustained in just *glorying the upright in heart*.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Rotherham offers a reasonable supposition for the time and place of the writing of this psalm. Discuss his position.
2. This is a psalm about the power of the tongue. Please notice the graphic descriptions of David's evil speaking enemies. Do we have such today?
3. What is the difference between slander and gossip? Discuss.
4. What specific requests to God does David make concerning these evil talkers? Are we justified in asking the same for those who speak against us?
5. David has not only a complaint but a confidence. Can we always be confident that the innocent or the righteous will not be slain with the tongue of the wicked? Discuss.

## PSALM 65

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Israel's Temple-Song of Praise, on behalf of Herself and all Nations, chiefly in Grateful Acknowledgment of Seedtime and Harvest.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Preparations for Worship. Stanza II., vers. 5-8, The God of Israel is the God of All the Earth. Stanza III., vers. 9, 10, Praise for Seedtime. Stanza IV., vers 11-13, Praise for Harvest.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

(Lm.) Psalm—By David—Song.

- 1 To thee is recited a song of praise<sup>1</sup> O God in Zion,  
and to thee in Jerusalem<sup>2</sup> shall be rendered the vow:
- 2 Thou hearer of prayer! unto thee all flesh shall come.
- 3 Reports<sup>3</sup> of iniquities have been too strong for me.  
As for our transgressions thou thyself shalt<sup>4</sup> put a propitiatory cover over them.<sup>5</sup>
- 6 How happy the man thou dost choose and bring near,  
he shall inhabit thy courts:  
We would be satisfied with the blessedness of thy house,  
the holiness<sup>6</sup> of thy temple.
- 5 By fearful things in righteousness shalt<sup>7</sup> thou answer us  
O God of our Salvation,—  
who art the trust of all the ends of the land and of the sea  
far away,<sup>8</sup>
- 6 who settest fast the mountains by thy<sup>9</sup> strength being girded  
with might,
- 7 who stillest the noise of the seas the noise of their billows  
and the tumult of populations;
- 8 Thus are moved to reverence the dwellers in the uttermost  
parts by thy signs:  
The goings forth of morning and evening thou makest ring  
out their joy.
- 9 Thou hast visited the earth and given it abundance  
full of<sup>10</sup> dost thou enrich it,—  
The channel of God is full of water;  
Thou preparest their grain when thus thou preparest the  
land:<sup>11</sup>

- Kp.
1. So Br. "For thee praise waiteth"—Per. "Praise beseemeth thee"—
  2. So in some MSS. of Sep. and P.B.V.
  3. "Instances"—Del. "Manifold"—Dr.
  4. For "consenting petitions," cp. 5:17, 8 note.
  5. "Thou wilt cancel them"—Del. "Is always used in a fig, sense of *covering morally*. . . . In the Levitical law the priest is usually the subject; and then the meaning is that he *covers up* sin by means of a propitiatory rite upon ground of which God consents to overlook it; in this sense, it is the word which is often reduced to *make atonement* (Lev. 1:1, 4:20, 26, 31, &c.)"—Dr., Glossary, I.
  6. Or: "holy place."
  7. Or: "dost," w. Del. and Dr.
  8. "The most distant sea"—Del. "Read perhaps, *and of isles (or coasts) afar off* (Isa. 66:19)"—Dr.
  9. So Sep.
  10. Cp. 129:1, 3.
  11. Ml.: "her"—the land. Cp. O.G. 466, 2a.

## PSALM SIXTY-FIVE

- 10 The furrows thereof drenching settling the ridges thereof,  
with myriad drops dost thou soften it  
the sprouting thereof dost thou bless.
- 11 Thou hast set a crown on thy year of bounty,  
and thy tracks drop fatness;
- 12 They drop on the pasture of the wilderness,  
and with exultation the hills do gird themselves;
- 13 Clothed are the mountains<sup>1</sup> with the flock,<sup>2</sup>  
the valleys also cover themselves with corn:  
they shout to each other for joy, yea they sing.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. PSALM 65

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 65

O God of Zion, we wait before You in silent praise, and thus fulfill our vow. And because You answer prayer, all mankind will come to You with their requests.

3 Though sins fill our hearts, You forgive them all.

4 How greatly to be envied are those You have chosen to come and live with You within the holy tabernacle courts! What joys await us among all the good things there.

5 With dread deeds and awesome power You will defend us from our enemies,<sup>3</sup> O God who saves us. You are the only hope of all mankind throughout the world and far away upon the sea.

\* \* \* \* \*

6 He formed the mountains by His mighty strength.

7 He quiets the raging oceans and all the world's clamor.

8 In the farthest corners of the earth the glorious acts of God shall startle everyone. The dawn and sunset shout for joy!

9 He waters the earth to make it fertile. The rivers of God will not run dry! He prepares the earth for His people and sends them rich harvests of grain.

10 He waters the furrows with abundant rain. Showers soften the earth, melting the clods and causing seeds to sprout across the land.

11, 12 Then He crowns it all with green, lush pastures in the wilderness; hillsides blossom with joy.

1. So, conj., w. Br.; and in antithesis to the "valleys" (*harim* for *karim*).

2. =small cattle, sheep and goats.

3. Literally, "will answer us in righteousness."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

13 The pastures are filled with flocks of sheep, and the valleys are carpeted with grain. All the world shouts with joy, and sings.

### EXPOSITION

It is difficult to say which feature of this psalm is most worthy of admiration: whether the beauty of its twin-pictures of seed-time and harvest; or the broad and sympathetic setting which turns these in combination into a song for all nations; or the quiet presuppositions which place Israel at the head of the nations in rendering this tribute of praise. When we have satisfied our powers of discriminations in tracing these features of the psalm, we have still to congratulate the joint-author that he had such gems at his disposal as the two snatches of song for the ever recurring seasons to which he here gives such an appropriate setting; and still more that, having them in his repertoire, he had so signal an occasion as we assume he had for weaving his materials into such a complete and beautiful whole.

To begin at the end of these points of observation, we can assume, with the general concurrence of comentators so far as our observation extends, that the occasion for which this psalm was prepared for temple-service was a no less remarkable occasion than the first full harvest reaped in Palestine after the Assyrians had been either destroyed in the land or driven from it as it was foretold by Isaiah that they should be (Isa. 37:30). Surely never was a harvest-song composed with so many grateful hearts bursting with eager joy to waft to heaven its strains. Assuming this as the occasion, we instinctively think of King Hezekiah as the poet-musician who acted as co-author in constructing this psalm and adapting it for actual use in the temple at Jerusalem. Just as naturally do we think of David as the composer of the seed-time and harvest gems, here so happily brought together; and we do so for the two good reasons,—first, that David's name is at the head of the psalm; and, second, that he, rather than Hezekiah, was a son of the soil, born on the land, familiar from boyhood with its hills and glens, its pastures and its prairies, its waggon-tracks and its sheep-walks, its sowing-seasons and its harvest-times, its want of water and its bountiful supplies; he, rather than his descendant of princely birth, had enjoyed many a quiet opportunity of admiring the mountain and

## PSALM SIXTY-FIVE

hills as enrobed in the flocks which were spread over them, and of hearing valley answering to valley with voices calling forth and answering his own songs; he, moreover, having elsewhere given his night-view (8) and his day-view (19) of the heavens, and glimpses of flocks peacefully resting beside still waters (23); and being, as we know, skilled with his harp, and therefore fond of it, and therefore oft sweeping its strings, what more likely in the nature of things than that he should have left behind him these hitherto unused fragments, which we are the more entitled to call "fragments," if, according to Dr. Briggs, the one consists of "five tetrameters," and the other is "a trimeter heptastich"—just the polished gems that Hezekiah knew how to appreciate and on fitting occasion to employ. The setting is not David's. Other times, other manners. The temple has now been reared; and by the best minds (Isa. 56:7) has come to be regarded as "a house of prayer for all nations." And so, while *Zion* and *Jerusalem* are placed in the forefront of this psalm, there is an immediate reference to Jehovah as a *hearer of prayer to whom all flesh shall come*. But Hezekiah had been born in a decadent reign, and had known what it was to be slighted as prince (35), to be thwarted as king (Isa. 22); and therefore no wonder that, before his enthusiastic gratitude (Isa. 38) for recovery from sickness and deliverance from Sennacherib could find full and fitting public expression, he should feel his praise a little *belated* and should complain that *reports of iniquity* from all parts of the land (14, 53) *had been too strong for him*; and that, in fact, his own *transgressions* and those of his people only *God himself* could *effectually remove*. Thinking thus of *propitiation*, he thinks of the priests—*chosen, brought near, inhabiting the temple-chambers*; and prays that he and his people may be *satisfied with the blessedness of God's house, the holiness of his temple*. By characteristic features judged, this first Stanza is certainly from the pen or by the suggestion of King Hezekiah.

And now see how again the psalm widens out. It can take in, as familiar, the thought of chastisements to be *revered*, because hard to bear, like his own and his people's, yet administered in *righteousness*; and there are more such answers to come (Isa. 39:6, 7). Nevertheless, the *God of Israel's salvation* is exalted; and the more, in humble submission to him, King and people realise their national calling as "a kingdom of priests" (Exo. 19:6) the more are they qualified to fear and to rejoice

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

with the nations of the earth—in common alarms and common reliefs. And so the psalmist—this co-author, as he plainly is—looks out on nature and up to nature's God with a feeling of real fellowship with the peoples dwelling in *the ends of the land and of the sea far away*; he looks on the same strong *mountains*, and hearkens to the same surging and thundering *seas* as they do. Just like Hezekiah to have added, *and the tumult of populations*. Moreover, on this common ground, their *signs* are ours, and ours are theirs; and they, in their measure and way, *revere* the same great manifestations of Divine power as do we. And so we help them to express the reverence we all feel. But, besides the common *signs*, inspiring *fear*,—the storm, the flood, the earthquake, the popular *tumults*,—there are the common blessings of life, the sweet and gentle ministries of nature, which with us they share. They rise with the lark, refreshed; and sing as do we; they return to their homes after their toil is done and sing in their homes like ourselves. It is the good God who gladdens all. Wars make terrible upheaving and pour out an awful roar; but the music of morning and evening is more constant as well as more sweet. "Therefore praise we thee, in thy temple, O Jehovah;—for ourselves, for the nations who, with less clear vision, behold thy glory and thy love."

That the first stanza of this psalm distinctively celebrates "seed-time" rather than "harvest," though still of course with a view to harvest, becomes evident as soon as candidly examined with this idea in mind. It begins with the early rains that prepare for the seed, and culminates with the sprouting of the seed when sown. There it stops; which it scarcely could have done had not seed-time been, so far, its one dominant topic. That seed-time has harvest in view, is a matter of course; but very beautifully does the main thought turn back on the preparing of the land; and this is pictured in a few graphic touches as the detailed way in which the grain itself is prepared. You see the plough at work, scooping out furrows and turning up ridges by one and the same process: and the Divine Co-operator dealing with both according to need and capacity. The *furrows* are naturally receptive of the streams which flow in abundance from those upper and invisible *channels of God* which are *full of water*; and what they thus receive, they hold and convey to the roots of the young plants. The turned-up *ridges* need to be *settled* down and closed well in upon the precious seed which they

## PSALM SIXTY-FIVE

have received. The same rain that does the one does the other: fills the furrows, settles the ridges. Divine agriculture is economic of means, various in adaptations. But soon the surface becomes encrusted, and might imprison the tender blade, did not the gentler after-showers with their myriad drops come to soften the soil and make it easily permeable. And so, as eyes of wonder look on, and discreet judgment calculates how many dangers have been passed as the green crop carpets the earth, Devotion exclaims, *The sprouting thereof thou dost bless.*

It is harvest, however, that is set as a crown on the head of the year of bounty: harvest largely viewed as presenting in perfection the result of earlier processes. The very thought of a crown gives a glimpse of the golden grain. As if in special recognition of the latter rains, securing a full harvest, the laden clouds are conceived as the chariot of God leaving in its tracks fruits of fatness and plenty. The refreshed pastures of the open lands—the wilderness or prairie land—will shew the tracks of the chariot of God. The hills made vocal with the tuneful voices of harvesters seem to lift up a loud voice of exultation. The mountains, nearly to their summits, are well-nigh hidden by their robe of goats, sheep and lambs: the vales, running between the hills are clad with a rich mantle of corn; and happy voices, shouting and echoing and ringing and singing, celebrate the Divine Coronation of the year.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There seems to be two writers for this psalm—discuss who they are and the portion written by each.
2. Scroggie suggests that this psalm could be divided into three divisions: (1) God's Grace, vs. 1-4; (2) God's Greatness, vs. 5-8; (3) God's Goodness, vs. 9-13. Please read these verses and see if you agree on this division.
3. What are the indications of God's grace or favor as seen in vs. 1-4?
4. God's greatness is seen in His concern and in His works as observed in verses five through eight. Mark these out for yourself from these verses.
5. The *Harvest Song* of verses 9 through 13 contains an expression of God's goodness. This does *not* say that "mother nature" did all these things. Mark the use of the pronoun "Thou".