

## Psalm 65

The book of Psalms bounces back and forth between two realities. There is one reality on earth; and another one in heaven. This psalm is about life as it is seen from heaven. We think that we have an idea about what that is like...but we don't.

**Read Psalm 65:1-2:** There is a heavenly Zion/mountain of God; and an earthly Zion. Zion is described as a place where God dwells with his people. The earthly Mt. Zion began with Abraham. Abraham brought Isaac to Mount Moriah (same place) to sacrifice him to the LORD. It is the extremely rare place where we really put God first. God used this same location to put his temple. God has identified Jerusalem as his city. It is where Abram met Melchizedek. Those two characters symbolize many aspects of our walk with Christ. Zion means *monumental guiding pillar*. Jerusalem and the temple are to be small replicas of God's throne in heaven. The altar is really ultimately our heart before God.

*The Lord also will roar from Zion, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; The heavens and earth will shake; But the Lord will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel. (Joel 3:16)*

There is a competition in our heart. There are competing interests with God in our lives. The three world capitals represent these interests. There is Jerusalem (Zion), Babylon and Mt. Sinai. Zion is described here as a contrast to other representative cities.

**Babylon** is all about personal greatness or doing your own thing. It is about challenging God's word. It is all about doing what we determine to be right under the circumstances. Babylon is used to represent the seat of idolatry. The bible says that whatever gods we create are in 100% agreement with our desires. That should be enough right there. We have all seen permissive parents who rear monster children.

**Mt. Sinai** is all about trying to be honorable and above criticism. This is where we find our *salt of the earth* folks whose word is their bond. It is full of Eagle Scouts, good Samaritans, respectable men and people we all look up to. We respect those former generations and pioneers who seemed to be a better breed. Many people are very sincere in their moral convictions; but they are sincerely wrong about what God accepts. The bible tells us that unbelievers become *a law unto themselves*. This means that your

criticisms of others are immediately hung around your own neck; and become your added requirements. Your impatience with others' failures and delays are now expectations placed upon yourself. No exceptions given, none-received. Religion always fails to please God. We all see ourselves as uniquely exempted; but the Law of Moses shatters that favoritism and preference. God displayed his unachievable, hard rules and boundaries to emphasize how he is unapproachable to those who do not know him, without an intermediary. The 10 Commandments are like a gauntlet that no man has achieved. Mt. Sinai, in Saudi Arabia is used to represent how God is perceived from an unbelieving world. It is a fearful place; where you can get smoked if you step out of line.

Jerusalem (**Zion**) is where we have the blessing to interact intimately with Jesus. He has brought us in as his friend. We know that we are completely unworthy. We get into trouble when we try to puff our chest out, and become worthy, after we are in a relationship with him. We need to remember that it is far better to be blessed than good. There is nothing wrong with walking according to our calling; but not if we secretly distinguish ourselves as being more special because of good behavior.

*Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, 24 which things are symbolic. For these are [g]the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar— 25 for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children— 26 but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. (Galatians 4:21-26)*

Clearly Mt. Zion is a far better place to be than Babylon or Mt. Sinai. That only comes by knowing God personally and intimately on his terms. Enduring peace and rest and satisfaction and freedom is only found in Christ. Those who long to invent and pursue their own creations identify more with Babylon.

*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:21)*

Babylon ruled the world for a while; and then it was destroyed. People who believe that they are inherently good, or entitled, or who can impress God with their good works are identified with Babylon or Mt. Sinai. Nobody can qualify the harsh and rigorous and

unforgiving expectations. It produces a form of slavery to our own sin. We cannot deliver ourselves from our status and our condition.

Heaven (the true Mt. Zion) is full of praise and love for God and men. It is a place of deep contentment and satisfaction. There are no thoughts of personal greatness or criticism. It is a completely safe place; where we will never be harmed or rejected.

**Read Psalm 65:3-4:** Heaven is a completely-satisfying place. People hear about the idea of sitting on a cloud and playing a harp for eternity. That does not appeal to most people. Other people feel that heaven will be uncomfortable, because everybody has to be on their best behavior. The truth is that we have never experienced anything close to that level of peace and satisfaction and wonder and purpose here on earth. Putting heaven into words would cheapen it; and be a poor description of how awesome it is.

*I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. 3 And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— 4 how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. (2 Corinthians 12:2-3)*

The carnal mind is opposed to spiritual things. Satan has done an excellent job at getting mankind to look past God's plans for us. Even just sitting still long enough to meditate on the word of God and pray reveals how estranged we are from God. Our impulses and stimulated drives short-circuit our ability to wait upon God. You really cannot fathom how important and valuable it is to come to Christ in humble worship. It is unappealing to the proud man; who thinks that he deserves good standing. As lifetime sinners; we have become very used to our own methods, and our patterns of failure.

It must be hard for the angels to live in the beauty and peace of heaven, and simultaneously having to monitor our ugly thoughts and actions. We are like the king who took in a street urchin. These angelic highly-qualified servants to the king marvel at how the king lets the child do his own thing; and continue to receive the run of the manor.

*Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit*

*of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to [e]us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into. (1 Peter 1:10-12)*

In heaven, our sins are covered by the blood of Jesus. Zion is a place of rest. Mt. Sinai and the curse on the earth is a constant reminder of being out of compliance. The people on earth are being constantly reminded that they are in a fallen world. Murphy's Law is constantly playing out in everyone's life. It is telling us to not build our retirement villa on the deck of the Titanic.

God does not strike us with lightning or earthquake or blast our ears out with a very loud trumpet. We are told to judge ourselves, and not be judged. We cannot pass any kind of behavioral or thought test. God gives us a lot of credit for efforts to reach out to him and repent. Satan piles up evidence to the contrary; but Jesus removes the records and welcomes us in. We feel a little like frauds as we remember how we got there.

People think of the God of the Old Testament as being harsh and judging; while Jesus is about forgiveness and mercy. Both God's are the same. The Old Testament is about how the Law of Moses and the commandments are hard rules for hardened characters, bent on going their own way. They only outwardly regarded God or their neighbors. They were looking for opportunities to be free from any obligation or expectations. There are bad consequences in this life and the next for bad behavior. The idea is that we are supposed to get sick of ourselves; and desire a better life. Once we are seated around the LORD in relationship with him our rap sheet is forgotten.

The curses Adam brought to the earth are really to keep us from falling in love with this world and ourselves. There is less potential for ultimate success since the fall. Any gains are easily lost. The setbacks help control our self-deception. The New Testament is less about being inspected for character flaws. It is how to receive the heart and mind of Christ in some small way. It is about how to turn the Holy Spirit loose inside of us to make changes in priorities, personal tastes, and to be able to enjoy fellowship with God.

God wants everyone in heaven. Men want to be the masters of their own destiny. They do not want to be a charity case. They want to be recognized for being able and

competent. Unfortunately, we don't see the spiritual realities around us. We are so proud of our little victories. Heaven is about accepting our unworthiness.

There is an entirely-different focus in heaven than there is at Mt. Sinai. In heaven, it is all about Jesus and the Father. Our accomplishments are of no interest. The 10 Commandments are like a posted speed limit; proving our dangerous and out-of-line patterns. We think that we were ok until we all get speedometers and posted traffic signs. Mt. Sinai is about trying to create evidence of our redeeming values; while hiding our deepest realities. Mt. Sinai is about outward conformity. Since the beginning, we have seen the importance of man getting over himself. God tried to make it easy by painting a picture of heavenly behavior. It is all about caring for others and worshipping God. We cannot follow self-life and pursue God.

*“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and [i]mammon. (Matthew 6:24)*

Once we give up on personal greatness; we have room to build an altar in our hearts for God. It is easy to sacrifice things that are imaginary, and can't be held on to.

**Read Psalm 65:5-8:** How does God seem to be handling our prayers? Does it seem like he is supernaturally-rescuing us? How does that look if we are sincerely going the wrong way? Is our satisfaction in knowing God; or in getting what we want? The barriers to progress may be serving as speed bumps and deterrents. In reality, most of God's rescues are protecting me from my wrong decisions and false hopes.

We focus on the 5 things that are going along in a less-than-desired way. We do not consider the thousands of things that are going well. We can be like Eve, surrounded by beautiful and fruitful trees in the garden; while pining away over one tree that is out of reach.

Another thing that happens is that we can feel like we have had enough trials and setbacks. We may feel that we have paid our dues (so to speak). Our routine can become more burdensome if we create an expectation of what we do not control. It helps to pray to have a servant's heart; otherwise we will feel like we are experiencing a loss.

God does not change. We are often wrong. That leaves prayer answers with a few possibilities. Sometimes it is encouragement. Sometimes it is a change in circumstances. Sometimes it can be a paradigm shift, and things become an entirely different reality. What we thought was happening; no longer is. The most-important thing is to have a good witness in the trial.

In what ways has God dealt with our prayers? For starters, we need to remember that God does not change.

*“For I am the Lord, I do not change; (Malachi 3:6)*

Is God our confidence? Do we have a certain lifestyle that we rely upon? What would we have without all of that? It is hard to trust the supplier of our blessings; without trusting and gripping onto the blessings.

God will answer my prayer and deliver me from a situation; and then a new one comes. You would think that I would stop experiencing the same concerns. Sometimes I feel like a dog that we adopted a number of years ago. The dog had been abused or dealt with harshly in some way. She would cower and shake when you walked up to her. Her expectation was for evil. It took a long time to build her trust and to change her expectation to good. Likewise, I had a period of hard trials a number of years ago. It seemed like every phone call had evil tidings. It seemed like everything was going wrong. My heart would race when my phone rang; because I expected it to be bad news. I knew that I was heaven bound; but I was not enjoying the present. I asked God to make the circumstances stop; and he did not immediately. I then asked to be restored and enjoy my lot in life...and it was. God restored my hope; without changing my circumstances. That is how every trial works. We need to have hope in the unseen things. As long as we walk by sight; we are not walking by faith.

We have to develop a trust of what God is doing. Is the rain an agent of destruction or a blessing? Are the delays protecting us from something unseen?

**Read Psalm 65:9-13:** We just experienced the third largest rainfall in San Francisco history. Our jobsite received 7” of rain over the weekend. Rain represents blessings from heaven. Our society is not just ignoring God. We are holding onto the things that he has specifically forbidden. Even so, God keeps our food and water coming. Our lives have not changed yet; but this is unsustainable.

*I brought you into a bountiful country, To eat its fruit and its goodness. But when you entered, you defiled My land And made My heritage an abomination. 8 The priests did not say, 'Where is the Lord?' And those who handle the law did not know Me; The rulers also transgressed against Me; The prophets prophesied by Baal, And walked after things that do not profit.9 "Therefore I will yet [c]bring charges against you," says the Lord, "And against your children's children I will bring charges. 10 For pass beyond the coasts of [d]Cyprus and see, Send to [e]Kedar and consider diligently, And see if there has been such a thing. 11 Has a nation changed its gods, Which are not gods? But My people have changed their Glory For what does not profit. 12 Be astonished, O heavens, at this, And be horribly afraid; Be very desolate," says the Lord. 13 "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water. (Jeremiah 2:7-13)*