

Psalms 65:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed.

Analysis

Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed. This opening establishes Zion (Jerusalem/the temple) as the focal point of worship where Israel's corporate praise and vow-keeping occur. The phrase "praise waiteth" translates the Hebrew *lekha dumiyah tehillah* (לְךָ דְּמִיָּה תְהִלָּה), literally "to you silence praise." The word *dumiyah* (דְּמִיָּה) means silence, stillness, waiting quietly. This paradoxical phrase suggests several possibilities:

1. praise offered in reverent silence before God
2. praise that waits in anticipation for appropriate expression, or
3. the silence of awe that precedes spoken praise.

The KJV's "waiteth" captures the sense of expectant anticipation.

In the temple, worshipers gathered in silent reverence before breaking into praise. This pattern appears throughout Scripture—worshipful silence acknowledging God's holiness and majesty (Habakkuk 2:20, Zephaniah 1:7, Zechariah 2:13). True praise doesn't rush carelessly into God's presence but begins with reverent acknowledgment of His transcendence. The phrase also suggests that praise is owed—it waits to be given, it is due to God, it is prepared and ready for expression.

"In Sion" (*be-Tzion*, בְּצִיּוֹן) identifies Jerusalem, specifically Mount Zion where the temple stood, as the designated place of worship under the old covenant. God established Zion as His dwelling place (Psalm 132:13-14), the location where His

name dwelt, where sacrifices were offered, where the nation gathered for festivals. Worship in Zion connected Israel's present generation with Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac on this same mountain (Genesis 22) and with David's establishment of the ark there (2 Samuel 6). Zion represented God's chosen place of meeting between divine holiness and human worship.

"Unto thee shall the vow be performed" (ulekha yeshulam neder, וְלָךְ יֵשְׁלַם-נֶדֶר) refers to the completion of vows made to God. Neder (נֶדֶר) is a voluntary pledge or promise, often made in times of need—promising to offer sacrifice, service, or devotion if God delivers. The verb shalem (שָׁלַם) means to complete, fulfill, make whole—to pay what was promised. The psalm's opening assures that in Zion, vows will be kept; promises made to God will be fulfilled. This reflects covenant faithfulness—what is promised is performed, establishing integrity in worship.

Historical Context

Psalm 65 is attributed to David and appears to be a harvest thanksgiving psalm, possibly composed for one of Israel's agricultural festivals (Feast of Weeks/Pentecost or Feast of Tabernacles). These festivals brought Israelites to Jerusalem to celebrate God's provision, offer firstfruits, and fulfill vows made during the planting season or times of need. The pilgrimage psalms (120-134) often accompanied these journeys to Zion.

The temple in Jerusalem (later replacing the tabernacle) served as Israel's worship center from Solomon's dedication (circa 960 BCE) until its destruction by Babylon (586 BCE), then from its reconstruction (515 BCE) until its final destruction by Rome (70 CE). Three times annually, Jewish men were required to appear before the Lord in Jerusalem for the major festivals (Exodus 23:14-17, Deuteronomy 16:16). These gatherings reinforced national identity, covenant relationship, and collective worship.

Vow-keeping was serious business in ancient Israel. The law provided regulations for vows (Leviticus 27, Numbers 30, Deuteronomy 23:21-23), and wisdom literature warned against making vows carelessly. Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 teaches: "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in

fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay." Ananias and Sapphira's lie about their vow (Acts 5:1-11) demonstrated the New Testament seriousness of commitments made to God.

For Christians, Zion finds fulfillment in Christ and the church. Jesus declared Himself the true temple (John 2:19-21), the place where God and humanity meet. Believers are living stones built into a spiritual temple (1 Peter 2:5). Hebrews 12:22-24 tells believers they have come to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the assembly of the firstborn. The geographical location matters less than the spiritual reality—worship in spirit and truth through Christ (John 4:21-24).

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does it mean for praise to begin with silence, and how does this contrast with rushed or casual approaches to worship?
2. How does understanding worship as something 'owed' or 'due' to God affect your attitude toward corporate and private praise?
3. What is the significance of having a designated place (Zion) for worship in the Old Testament, and how does Christ fulfill this as the true meeting place between God and humanity?
4. What vows or promises have you made to God, and what does faithful vow-keeping look like in practice?
5. How does the psalm's emphasis on corporate worship in Zion challenge individualistic approaches to spirituality?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׁלֵם וְלֹא בָצִי וְאֵלֵּי הָיִם תִּהְיֶה דָמִי לֹא
H0 waiteth H1747 Praise H8416 for thee O God H430 in Sion H6726 H0 be performed H7999

וְנָדָר:
and unto thee shall the vow
H5088

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 62:1 (References God): Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.

Psalms 76:11 (References God): Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God: let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared.

Psalms 21:13 (Resurrection): Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power.

Psalms 76:2 (Parallel theme): In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion.

Psalms 56:12 (Resurrection): Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee.

1 Chronicles 11:7 (Parallel theme): And David dwelt in the castle; therefore they called it the city of David.

1 Chronicles 15:29 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw king David dancing and playing: and she despised him in her heart.