Praise God the Provider
Ps 65:1-13
SS Lesson for 01/15/2017

Devotional Scripture: Ps 104:10-18

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Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson teaches us to see more clearly our need to Praise God the Provider. The study's aim is to see how properly aligning ourselves with God’s pattern for our spiritual lives will bring great and lasting blessings. The study's application is to daily thank and praise God for the blessing of His gracious provision for all.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Ps 65:9

You visit the earth and water it, You greatly enrich it; The river of God is full of water; You provide their grain, For so You have prepared it.

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

David may have written this psalm to be sung annually when the first grain of the year’s barley harvest was brought to the Lord and waved by the priest as a dedication offering (see Lev. 23:9-14). It is a song of harvest blessing in celebration of God’s goodness to His people. In this “song” David declared that God, who hears prayers, atones for sin, a provision that results in God’s bounty. David also announced that God uses His supernatural power to aid His people. Based on these displays of God’s good pleasure, the songwriter anticipated God’s blessing on the land, which would bring the people prosperity.

65:1-4. The psalmist expressed his conviction that when God atones for sin He blesses abundantly. The psalm begins with a mention of mankind’s preparation to praise God because He hears prayer (vv. 1-2). The occasion for the prayer was apparently their overwhelming sins, but God atoned for their transgressions (v. 3). One who thereby is brought near to the presence of the Lord will experience happiness (he is blessed; cf. 1:1) and satisfaction (with... good things, 65:4). Atonement for sin made possible the praise of the people and their entrance on festival days into the courts of the tabernacle (the word for temple is hêḵāl, a magnificent house; cf. 5:7).

65:5-8. The psalmist was confident that God answers prayer; He is the hope of people in the farthest regions of the earth. God’s answers to prayer often come by awesome deeds; this is natural for God. He demonstrated His power and strength by forming the mountains and soothing the seas and their waves. God’s wonders bring fear to people and songs of joy throughout the world (where morning dawns and evening fades).

65:9-13. The psalmist was convinced that Israel would have an abundantly good year when God poured out His blessings on the land. Verse 9a summarizes God’s care for the land, and verses 9b-13a develop the theme of God’s blessings on the land. God’s control of the water produces the grain (v. 9b); God’s rain showers prepare the land for produce (v. 10); God’s blessing produces an abundant harvest (v. 11); God causes uncultivated areas to be enriched with grass (v. 12). In a word, the flocks and grain flourish under His blessing (v. 13a). The psalmist concluded that all of nature shouts for joy (v. 13b), that is, abundant fruitfulness testifies to God’s blessing.

Commentary from The Bible Expositor and Illuminator

This is a text about water, a topic that the Bible mentions at length. God created water. Water is vital to life on earth, including the whole cycle of evaporation, rain, and collection upon the earth. Water will be present in the New Jerusalem, the final home of believers. Scripture mentions all of these things. In this psalm God is given praise as the generous provider of water to sustain our lives. Water is seen in this text as a sign of God’s abundant blessing—His benevolent desire to provide for His people upon the earth. Of course we know that the Bible was written in an agricultural society. Think of how dependent the people were upon a regular supply of water. Everyone, of course, needs water, but it is easy for us to take it for granted. Israel, though, was a land where rainfall and fresh water could be sparse. The rains normally came in the fall. This water would cause growth. This text marks out God's provision of water as a sign of His blessing. First, God is always interested in "visiting" His people, that is, in being present and active in their lives. We often speak of God's visitation in the sense of His care and intervention in the circumstances of our lives. Life is not random; God is sovereignly present with us, which makes both prayer and praise possible and fruitful. When God sent the provision of water, He was visiting His people with His care and
love, just as He visits us in our lives now in many ways, both seen and unseen. Next, God has a "river," or channel, of water. Perhaps this is a metaphorical reference to how the rains are directed from the heavens above to the earth. It speaks of direction and purpose. God's blessings purposely come to us. God knows what we need, and He is to be praised for His thoughtful provision. Finally, we see that this text speaks of God's abundant provision. He waters the earth and enriches it. The earth becomes "full of water." When God supplies, it is generous and abundant. How many of us can testify that God has dealt bountifully with us? This is another reason why we praise Him. As we look around at creation and see the ample nature of His provision, we are led to give Him praise and thanksgiving. So in the midst of this very positive psalm of blessing and praise, the believer is led to confidently contemplate God's wonderful care and provision. The Lord is sovereign over the elements of nature and sovereign over our lives. We are happy that the creation is in subordination to Him, and we happily place our lives in subordination to Him. We who are sustained by His provision have a duty to render praise to Him. So this text gives us a picture of a Heavenly Father who is like a devoted gardener, moving about in the garden He has fashioned in order to carefully and generously care for it. He purposefully pours out His provision upon His people. We receive this provision gladly and turn thankfully to Him to render praise and thanksgiving.

Lesson Introduction and Background
From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

My state of Nebraska is an agricultural powerhouse. Rich soil, flat land, and sufficient rain make this possible. There has been plenty of rain this year, and record harvests are predicted. But this was not the case two years ago. The usual summer rains did not come. Fields languished in drought conditions. The harvest was a disaster for many farmers. Science can explain how the cycle of precipitation works, even predict rain with some accuracy, but no technology exists to bring rain reliably. So we wait and pray. We don't understand how God controls the rain, but we believe that he does—so we ask for his help. When we pray for rain, we are not asking "Mother Nature" to provide it! Psalm 65 presents God as the Creator of the systems of the earth, and the one in control of these systems. The psalmist surely knew of years when Israel suffered drought, and crops were meager. Yet his confidence remained in God. If God is powerful enough to create the earth, surely he is powerful enough to control the earth and its weather. God did not create something bigger than he! Some religions of antiquity had separate gods for creation and weather. For example, Canaanite religion featured an ancient creator god who had withdrawn from human affairs. By contrast, their most worshipped deity was the weather or storm god, the one whom they sought to appease and please with their sacrifices. No such nonsense for the psalmist! There is only one God, and he has never withdrawn from his creation.

Many psalms have superscriptions. Psalm 65 is one that does, and the superscription introduces what follows as being "A Psalm of David. A song." Thus King David, "the hero of Israel's songs" (2 Samuel 23:1), is the author. The superscribed introduction also indicates it was "For the director of music." This is more than a dedication. It serves as permission for the composition to be used by those who orchestrated the musical praise for Israel's national celebrations. The psalm serves to reveal the heart of the man whom the Lord selected to be king of his chosen nation, a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). The Israel of David's era seems to have been a nation of singers and instrumentalists (1 Chronicles 13:8; etc.). They had no electronic amplification. They had no technology to allow projection of words on a screen. And Israelite worship did not feature songs that people had been listening to all week on personal devices. Instead, worship featured heartfelt songs sung from memory, sung with passion and conviction. Psalm 65 seems to have been one those.
Major Theme Analysis
(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Praise God for His Provision of Redemptive Works (Psalms 65:1-5)

1 Praise is awaiting You, O God, in Zion; and to You the vow shall be performed.
2 O You who hear prayer, To You all flesh will come.
3 Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, You will provide atonement for them.
4 Blessed is the man You choose, And cause to approach You, That he may dwell in Your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, Of Your holy temple.
5 By awesome deeds in righteousness You will answer us, O God of our salvation, You who are the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of the far-off seas;

Answered prayer (1-2,5)

Answered prayers because God's eyes are on the righteous (Ps 34:15)
15 The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry;

Answered prayers because God promises to answer even before speaking (Isa 65:24)
24 Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.

Answered prayers because God promises to fulfill answers and seeking (Matt 7:7-8)
7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Answered prayers because of obedience (1 John 3:21-22)
21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God 22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.

Forgiving sin (3)

God is forgiving because of man's repentance (Jer 18:7-8)
7 If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, 8 and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned.

God is forgiving because He is gracious (Joel 2:13)
13 Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

God is forgiving because He hears the prayers of His children (Isa 38:1-6)
1 In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, "This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover." 2 Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, 3 "Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes." And Hezekiah wept bitterly. 4 Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah: 5 "Go and tell Hezekiah, 'This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life. 6 And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city.

God is forgiving because He promises to forgive those who forsake their ways and turn to Him (Isa 55:7)
7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.
God is forgiving because God grieves over punishing man (Jer 42:10)

10 ‘If you stay in this land, I will build you up and not tear you down; I will plant you and not uproot you, for I am grieved over the disaster I have inflicted on you.

Imparting joy (4)

Joy through the refreshing of God (Acts 3:19)

19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

Joy through liberation (Rom 8:19-21)

19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Joy through reconciliation (2 Cor 5:17-20)

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Joy through knowing that there is eternal life (1 John 2:17)

17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Joy through hope in the new heaven and earth (Rev 21:1)

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

Praise God for His Provision of Creative Works (Psalms 65:6-13)

6 Who established the mountains by His strength, being clothed with power;
7 You who still the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the peoples.
8 They also who dwell in the farthest parts are afraid of Your signs; You make the outgoings of the morning and evening rejoice.
9 You visit the earth and water it, You greatly enrich it; The river of God is full of water; You provide their grain, For so You have prepared it.
10 You water its ridges abundantly, You settle its furrows; You make it soft with showers, You bless its growth.
11 You crown the year with Your goodness, And Your paths drip with abundance.
12 They drop on the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side.
13 The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered with grain; They shout for joy, they also sing.

Creative power (6)

God's creative power through the work of His hands (Ps 102:25)

25 In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.

God established the world (Prov 8:27-29)

27 I was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, 28 when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, 29 when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command, and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.
God created the world through His power, wisdom, and understanding (Jer 10:12)
12 But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.

God's created the world through His Almighty power (Amos 4:13)
13 He who forms the mountains, creates the wind, and reveals his thoughts to man, who turns dawn to darkness, and treads the high places of the earth — the Lord God Almighty is his name.

Stilling the waters (7)

God leads beside still waters (Ps 23:2)
2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,

God has control over all waters (Mark 4:39)
39 Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.

God leads beside streams of water because He is our Father (Jer 31:9)
9 They will come with weeping; they will pray as I bring them back. I will lead them beside streams of water on a level path where they will not stumble, because I am Israel's father, and Ephraim is my firstborn son.

God has a covenant that one day all will lie down in safety (Hos 2:18)
18 In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the creatures that move along the ground. Bow and sword and battle I will abolish from the land, so that all may lie down in safety.

Watering the earth (8-10)

Waters through abundant showers (Ps 68:9)
9 You gave abundant showers, O God; you refreshed your weary inheritance.

Waters that satisfies the earth (Ps 104:13)
13 He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the earth is satisfied by the fruit of his work.

Waters allows plants to grow over the earth (Ps 147:8)
8 He covers the sky with clouds; he supplies the earth with rain and makes grass grow on the hills.

Watering through rain (Joel 2:23)
23 Be glad, O people of Zion, rejoice in the Lord your God, for he has given you the autumn rains in righteousness. He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before.

Bountiful harvests and pastures (11-13)

God provides bountiful creatures on the earth (Ps 104:24-25)
24 How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. 25 There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number — living things both large and small.

God provide bountiful food (Acts 14:17)
17 Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy."
God provides open green pastures (Joel 2:22)

22 Be not afraid, O wild animals, for the open pastures are becoming green. The trees are bearing their fruit; the fig tree and the vine yield their riches.

Jesus is the shepherd and provides all that is needed (Ps 23:1)

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from David Guzik

(See URL: http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/psalms-65.html#1)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Pantheism is the false belief that all things are God. Closely related is the belief that God is in all things (panentheism). These beliefs are popular today among some people who want to be “spiritual” but reject “religions.” Sometimes, pantheists point to Bible texts like Psalm 65 to justify their views, claiming the psalmist extols creation itself as being worthy of worship. The psalmist’s depictions of the earth’s singing for joy, etc., are thereby misinterpreted to signify that the world is a living entity, capable of offering praise to God just as humans do. Make no mistake: a pantheistic reading of this psalm is incorrect. The psalmist does indeed marvel as he looks around at creation, but he does not pause to worship created things. He sees creation as evidence of the greatness and kindness of the one who stands behind it: the Creator. God the Creator is a person in Psalm 65, worthy to be praised and worshipped. Part of the created order is that we are persons too. Our personhood in no way makes us equal to God, but reflects the intention in his design that we are capable of having a personal relationship with him. We should respect God’s creation, but we should never worship it. Pantheists are looking in the right direction, but they stop before they get to the mighty Creator of the universe. He is the uncreated God who loves, forgives, and cares for us.

The contents of Psalm 65 suggest praise during a harvest celebration. These community gatherings may have been where the people of Israel learned the words and music of the psalm. But a psalm such as this would also have lent itself to home worship, to be taught to children and sung as a praise and thanksgiving song before the weekly minifeast of Sabbath day. Psalm 65 still serves us well today, whether as a personal expression of praise or for lending words to corporate worship. May we honor the Lord with our hearts full of thanksgiving. May our voices of joy join with the witness of earth as we lift our praises to the Lord, the Creator of all.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. We worship God in spirit and truth. Our access to God is made possible through Jesus. We should have compassion on those who are separated from Him (Ps. 65:1-2; cf. Jer.29:12)
2. We often take for granted God’s provision for all mankind and for us personally (Ps. 65:9)
3. There is a season for all things. Winter will inevitably lead to spring. God does everything in His own time (Ps. 65:10-11; cf. Eccles. 3:1-8; 2 Pet. 3:8)
4. God elicits praise from the earth as it basks in His provision (Ps. 65:12-13; cf. Matt. 5:45)