

Psalm 65

When studying the Psalms, it is helpful to look at both the Hebrew and Greek versions. Whereas the original text was composed in Hebrew, the oldest manuscripts which still exist are of the Greek translation and this was the version which was used in the early Church. The two versions largely agree, but there are some passages and words present in one and not the other. Even St. Jerome, when he was translating the whole Bible into Latin, thought it was worth making two translations of the Book of Psalms, **one from the Greek and one from the Hebrew.**

The first difference between the versions comes in the heading at the top of the Psalm. The Hebrew version only gives very general notes: “For the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. A song.” But **the Greek version adds**, “A song of Jeremiah and Ezekiel for the people of the captivity, when they were going into exile.” The Babylonian Exile, a period of 70 years when Jerusalem was destroyed and most of the population was forced to leave their country, was among the most devastating events in the history of God’s people. Taking the Exile as the context of Psalm 65, many of the lines take on more meaning. “To you all flesh will come,” expresses the hope that even as they leave the Promised Land, they will eventually return to the Lord. “Blessed is he whom you choose and

Call to dwell in your courts,” now takes on the sorrowful sound of longing for what was recently lost. Whenever we hear of Jerusalem in the Psalms, we can be reminded of heaven, “**the heavenly Jerusalem,**” and share in their longing for that blessed homeland.

It is not just the Greek text that adds meanings of significance, but the Hebrew text does as well. In the first line of the Psalm, the Greek says “Praise is fitting to you, O God, in Zion.” **However the Hebrew text uses a different word** and says, “**Silence** is praise for you, O God in Zion.” This meaning, taken by itself, is significant for it reminds us of the importance of silent prayer. This theme appears in other Psalms as well: “ponder on your bed and be still” (Ps. 4:5) and “Be still and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:11). However there is another way in which God is praised in silence: by all of his creatures throughout the world. The verses of this Psalm that we hear today speak about the “rich harvest,” the “untilled meadows,” “the hills,” “the fields,” and “the valleys.” Although these can’t speak the same way we do, the Psalmist says, “They shout and sing for joy!” In this way, even where all appears still and silent, the praise of God exists in every creature that does his will, whether it be by words or in the silence.