

Psalm 21:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.

Analysis

His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him. This verse reveals the reciprocal relationship between God and His anointed king: God grants salvation, and this salvation brings the king glory. However, the verse carefully attributes the king's glory to God's saving work—"in thy salvation" his glory exists. The Hebrew word for 'glory' (kavod, כָּבוֹד) carries connotations of weightiness, substance, and splendor. The king's significance derives entirely from God's salvific intervention.

The parallel line intensifies this: 'honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.' These royal attributes—hod (הוד, splendor) and hadar (הָדָר, majesty)—are divine qualities that God shares with His chosen servant. In Hebrew thought, honor and majesty properly belong to God (Psalm 96:6, 104:1), yet He graciously bestows them upon His anointed. The verb 'laid upon' (teshavveh, תֵּשַׁבֵּה) suggests intentional bestowal, like placing royal robes on someone or crowning them.

This verse anticipates Christian theology of union with Christ and the believer's glorification. Just as God adorned the Davidic king with honor and majesty, so Christ shares His glory with believers: 'The glory which thou gavest me I have given them' (John 17:22). Our glory is derivative, found 'in Christ,' secured by His salvation. Paul writes that God will 'transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body' (Philippians 3:21)—ultimate glorification awaits the resurrection, but even now Christians are 'being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another' (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Historical Context

Royal investiture ceremonies in the ancient Near East involved elaborate robing and crowning rituals designed to manifest the king's divine appointment. Archaeological evidence from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Persia shows kings wearing distinctive garments, crowns, and regalia that set them apart from common people. These visual markers communicated the king's unique status as the deity's chosen representative.

Israel adapted these practices within its monotheistic framework. When Solomon was crowned, Zadok the priest anointed him, and the people shouted, 'God save king Solomon!' (1 Kings 1:39). The king wore royal robes and crown (2 Samuel 12:30), sat on a throne (1 Kings 1:46), and received the people's homage. Yet Israel's theology prevented royal deification—the king remained human and accountable to God's law (Deuteronomy 17:18-20).

This psalm describes the king's glory as a gift from YHWH, not an inherent attribute. Ancient readers would have understood this as referring to both the initial coronation and subsequent victories that confirmed God's favor. Each military success vindicated the king's divine election and added to his honor. However, this glory was always conditional—maintained only through covenant obedience. When kings turned to idolatry or injustice, their glory departed (1 Samuel 4:21, Ezekiel 10:18). The psalm thus celebrates not permanent royal status but God's ongoing favor manifest in salvation.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How do you understand your own 'glory' as derivative from God's salvation in Christ?

2. In what ways are you tempted to claim honor and majesty as your own rather than as God's gift?
3. How does understanding that God 'lays upon' you Christ's righteousness change your self-perception?
4. What does it mean practically to let your glory be 'great in His salvation' rather than your achievements?
5. How can you cultivate gratitude for the spiritual honor and majesty God has bestowed on you in Christ?

Interlinear Text

גָּדוֹלָה בְּיַשׁוּבָתֶךָ בְּבָזְדָן גָּדוֹלָה
 is great His glory in thy salvation honour and majesty hast thou laid

H1419 H3519 H3444 H1935 H1926 H7737 H5921

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 3:22 (Parallel theme): Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

Hebrews 8:1 (Parallel theme): Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

John 17:22 (Glory): And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: