

Psalms 49:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the
beasts that perish.

Analysis

The refrain (repeating v.12): 'Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.' The addition 'understandeth not' is key. Honor without wisdom equals animal existence. Understanding--the wisdom the psalm offers--distinguishes the truly human from the merely biological.

Historical Context

The refrain, slightly modified, emphasizes the psalm's central point. The repetition invites readers to internalize the truth: honor without understanding is bestial, not truly human.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What is the 'understanding' that distinguishes wise humans from beasts?
2. How does this wisdom psalm's conclusion challenge our values?

Interlinear Text

אָדָם	בֶּן יָקָר	וְלֹא	יָבִין	נִמָּשׁ לֹ	כַּבֵּהֶם וְ
Man	that is in honour	H3808	and understandeth	not is like	the beasts
H120	H3366		H995	H4911	H929
נִדְמֶה:					
that perish					
H1820					

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 49:12 (Parallel theme): Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish.