

Psalms 8:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

Analysis

For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. This verse answers the previous question, explaining why humanity merits divine attention. Despite our insignificance compared to cosmic vastness, God has given humans unique dignity and purpose. The verse balances human limitation ("a little lower than the angels") with human exaltation ("crowned with glory and honour").

"Thou hast made him a little lower" translates vattechaserehu me'at (וַתַּחַסְרֵהוּ מֵעַט). The verb chasar (חָסַר) means to lack, be deficient, or be made lower. Me'at (מֵעַט) means "a little" or "for a little while." The Hebrew is ambiguous: it can mean humans are "a little lower" in rank or "lower for a little while" in time. Both interpretations have merit and appear in Christian interpretation.

"Than the angels" translates me-elohim (מִמְּאֱלֹהִים). Here's where translation gets complicated. Elohim typically means "God" but can mean "gods" or "divine beings/angels." The Greek Septuagint translates it angelous ("angels"), which Hebrews 2:7 follows. Yet many Hebrew scholars argue the original means "lower than God [Himself]." In this reading, humans are created just beneath God in the hierarchy of beings—an even more exalted position!

"Crowned him with glory and honour" (ve-kavod ve-hadar te'atterehu, וְכָבוֹד וְהַדָּר תַּעֲטֶרֶהוּ) employs royal imagery. Kavod (כָּבוֹד) suggests weightiness, significance, and splendor. Hadar (הַדָּר) means beauty, majesty, or honor. The verb attar (עָטָר) means to crown or adorn.

means to crown or encircle—like placing a crown on royalty. God has crowned humanity with His own glory and honor, deputizing us as His royal representatives on earth.

Christologically, Hebrews 2:7-9 interprets this verse as fulfilled in Jesus, who "was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death" but is now "crowned with glory and honor." Jesus perfectly embodies God's design for humanity—fully human, fully obedient, and fully exalted.

Historical Context

Genesis 1:26-28 establishes humanity's unique dignity: created in God's image and given dominion over creation. This divine image (tselem Elohim) distinguishes humans from animals. While all creatures bear God's creative fingerprints, only humans reflect His character, rationality, morality, and relational capacity. This unique status grounds human dignity and rights.

Ancient Near Eastern cultures reserved "image of god" language for kings—only rulers represented deity to their people. Biblical theology democratizes this: every human, regardless of status, gender, or ethnicity, bears God's image. This revolutionary concept ultimately undermined slavery, patriarchy, and ethnic superiority, though the church has sometimes been slow to apply its implications.

The "little lower than angels" phrase prompted theological reflection. Angels are spiritual beings without physical bodies, apparently sinless (at least the unfallen ones), and inhabiting God's immediate presence. In what sense are humans "lower"? We're mortal, embodied, subject to sin, and live on earth rather than heaven. Yet through Christ, believers will ultimately "judge angels" (1 Corinthians 6:3), suggesting redeemed humanity's final destiny surpasses angelic status.

Church fathers debated whether the Incarnation would have occurred without the Fall. Some argued Christ would have become human anyway to fulfill God's purpose for humanity (crowned with glory and honor). Others insisted the Incarnation was necessary only for redemption. Either way, Jesus reveals human destiny: glorified, honored, and reigning with God forever (Revelation 22:5).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does it mean practically that humans are created 'a little lower than God' (or angels), and how should this affect our self-understanding?
2. How does being 'crowned with glory and honour' by God differ from seeking glory and honor from human achievement or recognition?
3. In what ways has sin diminished the 'glory and honour' God intended for humanity, and how does Christ restore it?
4. What implications does universal human dignity (as image-bearers crowned by God) have for issues like justice, equality, and human rights?
5. How does Jesus's temporary becoming 'lower than the angels' (Hebrews 2:9) reveal God's strategy of exaltation through humiliation?

Interlinear Text

וַתַּחַסְרֵהוּ	מְעַט	מֵאֲלֹהִים	וְכָבֹד
lower	For thou hast made him a little	than the angels	him with glory
H2637	H4592	H430	H3519
וְהָדָר	תַּעֲטֶהוּ:		
and honour	and hast crowned		
H1926	H5849		

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 2:7 (Glory): Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:

Hebrews 2:9 (Glory): But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Hebrews 2:16 (Parallel theme): For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

Psalms 103:4 (Parallel theme): Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;

Ephesians 1:21 (Parallel theme): Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

Genesis 2:7 (Parallel theme): And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.