

Psalm 82:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.

Analysis

I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. This stunning verse explains the exalted position God has given human judges and rulers. The Hebrew *ani amarti* (אַנְתִּי אָמַרְתִּי, "I have said") indicates God's own authoritative declaration. He designated these individuals as *elohim* (אֱלֹהִים, "gods")—a term used elsewhere for God Himself, but here applied to human authorities who represent divine justice on earth.

This isn't polytheism or deification of humans, but recognition that judges exercise delegated divine authority. When they pronounce judgment, they speak for God. Exodus 21:6 and 22:8-9 use *elohim* for human judges, indicating their role as God's representatives. To stand before a judge was to stand before God's proxy—a tremendous responsibility and privilege.

"Children of the most High" (*benei Elyon*, בְּנֵי עֶלְיוֹן) further emphasizes their elevated status. *Elyon* (עֶלְיוֹן, "Most High") stresses God's supreme sovereignty over all creation. These judges are called God's "sons" not by nature but by appointment—they bear His image, represent His authority, and should reflect His character. This makes their corruption (vv. 2-5) all the more heinous: they betray their divine calling.

Yet verse 7 immediately follows with sobering reality: "But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." Despite their exalted office, these "gods" are

mortal and accountable. Their divine calling doesn't exempt them from judgment but intensifies it. To whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48).

Historical Context

Jesus's Use of Psalm 82:6 and the Incarnation Debate

Psalm 82:6 gained profound significance when Jesus quoted it in John 10:34-36 during a heated confrontation with religious leaders who accused Him of blasphemy for claiming to be God's Son. Jesus's argument was brilliant: if Scripture calls mere human judges "gods" because they received God's word and represented His authority, how could it be blasphemy for Him—the eternal Word incarnate—to claim divine sonship?

Jesus wasn't arguing that all humans are divine (as some New Age interpreters claim), but rather establishing a *qal vahomer* (light to heavy) argument common in rabbinic theology: if this lesser thing is true, how much more this greater thing. Human judges are called "gods" by office; Christ is God by nature. The psalm's language for delegated authority cannot logically exclude the One who possesses original authority.

The early church wrestled with how Christ could be both fully God and fully man. Psalm 82's concept of humans bearing God's representative authority while remaining essentially human provided conceptual framework, though Christ transcended this—He wasn't merely God's representative but God Himself incarnate. The Word who spoke these words to judges in Psalm 82 became flesh (John 1:14) to judge the world in righteousness (John 5:22, Acts 17:31).

The psalm also shaped Christian understanding of human dominion. Humans are created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27) and given authority over creation—a delegated "godlike" role of stewardship and governance. When we rule justly, we reflect our Creator; when we oppress, we betray our calling and forfeit our authority.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does it mean that God calls human judges "gods," and how should this shape our view of human authority?
2. How does Jesus's use of this verse in John 10:34-36 defend His divine identity while also teaching about human responsibility?
3. In what ways are Christians today called to function as God's representatives, bearing His authority and reflecting His character?
4. What is the relationship between being made in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27) and being called "children of the most High" through appointed office?
5. How does the tension between exalted calling ("gods") and human mortality ("ye shall die like men") affect how we exercise authority?

Interlinear Text

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Additional Cross-References

Psalms 82:1 (References God): God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.

