

Psalms 82:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.

Analysis

But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. God's verdict shatters delusions of invulnerability. "But" (וְאַתֶּן/aken) introduces stark contrast: despite divine appointment and authority, corrupt judges face mortality. "Die like men" (וְאַדְם תָּמֹתָן/ke'adam temutun) can mean either "die like Adam" (the first man who fell through sin) or "die like ordinary men" (not gods). Both readings work: judges appointed to represent God's authority have no inherent divinity and will die like Adam who sinned.

The phrase confronts ancient Near Eastern ideology that elevated kings and judges to semi-divine status. Egyptian pharaohs claimed divinity; Mesopotamian rulers bore divine titles. Even Israelite judges, called "elohim" (gods/mighty ones) in verse 1 and 6 because they represented God's authority, might be tempted toward arrogance. God declares: you are mortal. Death awaits. Accountability comes.

"Fall like one of the princes" (וְאַחַד הַשָּׂרִים תִּפְלֹל) specifies violent death, not peaceful demise. Naphal (fall) often denotes death in battle or judgment. Princes who oppressed others will themselves fall. This echoes the pattern throughout Scripture: Pharaoh drowned, Haman hanged on his own gallows, persecutors of the church struck down. Corrupt authority faces divine retribution.

Historical Context

Jesus quoted Psalm 82:6 ('I have said, Ye are gods') in John 10:34-36 to argue that if Scripture called human judges 'gods' because they represented divine authority, how much more appropriate for the true Son of God to claim deity. The psalm thus provides christological foundation: human judges failed in their divine appointment, but Christ the perfect Judge executes justice with righteousness. The certainty of mortality for corrupt judges would encourage oppressed believers: current injustice is temporary; divine judgment is certain.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does awareness of mortality inform the way leaders should exercise authority and make judgments?
2. What delusions of invulnerability or permanence might those in authority (including spiritual authority) be tempted toward today?
3. How does Christ as the perfect Judge fulfill what human judges failed to accomplish in Psalm 82?

Interlinear Text

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|------|------|------|------|-----------|-----|------|------|------|---------|---------|----------|-------|
| כִּי | אַ | כִּי | כִּי | תִּמְתֹּה | וְ | כִּי | אַ | כִּי | פָּשַׁר | יְמִ | תִּפְלֹל | |
| But | like | men | ye | shall | die | like | one | of | the | princes | and | fall |
| H403 | | H120 | | H4191 | | | H259 | | H8269 | | | H5307 |

Additional Cross-References

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

Ezekiel 31:14 (Parallel theme): To the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height, neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs, neither their trees stand up in their height, all that drink water: for they are all delivered unto death, to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, with them that go down to the pit.

Job 21:32 (Parallel theme): Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb.

Psalms 83:11 (Parallel theme): Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna:

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