

Ezekiel 5:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts.

Analysis

Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts.

Within the comprehensive judgment, grace appears—"a few in number" (me'at be-mispar, מְעַט בְּמִסְפָּר) will be preserved. The Hebrew me'at emphasizes smallness, yet the phrase "in number" (be-mispar) indicates precise counting—God knows exactly how many will survive. "Bind them in thy skirts" (vetzartam bi-khenafekha, וַתְּצַרְתָּם בִּכְנָפֶיךָ) pictures securing the hairs in garment folds, symbolizing divine protection and preservation.

This verse introduces the remnant theology central to prophetic literature. Though judgment is comprehensive, God always preserves a faithful remnant (Isaiah 10:20-22; Romans 11:1-5). The remnant's survival isn't due to superior righteousness but sovereign grace—God chooses to preserve some for His purposes. The bound hairs in Ezekiel's garment represent those whom God keeps secure through judgment's worst devastations.

The imagery of binding in skirts/wings recalls Ruth finding refuge under Boaz's wing (Ruth 3:9) and God's protective wings (Psalm 91:4). Despite executing severe judgment, God simultaneously shelters those He chooses to preserve. This dual reality—wrath and mercy operating simultaneously—reaches its fullness at the cross, where God's judgment fell on Christ while mercy flowed to believers (Romans 3:25-26).

Historical Context

History confirms this remnant principle. Though Jerusalem suffered catastrophic losses, a remnant survived the siege, exile, and subsequent trials. Some were protected by Babylonian officials (Jeremiah 39:11-14; 40:1-6), others maintained faithfulness in exile (Daniel and friends), and eventually a remnant returned to rebuild Jerusalem under Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 1-2).

The 'few in number' proved crucial for covenant continuity. From this preserved remnant came post-exilic Judaism, the restored temple, the completed Old Testament canon, and ultimately the Messiah's genealogical line. God's preservation of the few ensured His redemptive purposes continued despite deserved judgment against the many.

This pattern repeats throughout Scripture. Noah's family (8 people) survived the flood preserving humanity. Abraham and Sarah produced Isaac when both were past childbearing years. A remnant returned from Egyptian slavery. Jesus chose twelve apostles to launch the church. God's saving purposes often work through small, preserved remnants rather than large, compromised multitudes.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does the 'few in number' challenge our tendency to equate numerical size with spiritual success?
2. What does God's precise counting of the remnant teach about His sovereign, particular election?
3. In what ways does the binding in skirts/wings provide comfort for believers facing trials?

Interlinear Text

וְלָקַחְתָּ	מִשָּׁם	מֵעַט	בְּמִסְפָּר	וַיַּצַּדְתָּ	אוֹתָם
Thou shalt also take	H8033	thereof a few	in number	and bind	H853
H3947		H4592	H4557	H6696	
בְּכִנְפֵיהֶם:					
them in thy skirts					
H3671					

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 52:16 (Parallel theme): But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard left certain of the poor of the land for vinedressers and for husbandmen.

Jeremiah 40:6 (Parallel theme): Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.

Jeremiah 39:10 (Parallel theme): But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, which had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.