

Isaiah 13:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.

Analysis

'I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.' This paradoxical statement means human life will become rare—casualties will be so immense that survivors are as precious as the finest gold. Ophir's gold was legendary for purity and value (1 Kings 10:11). Yet in Babylon's judgment, human scarcity will exceed gold's scarcity. This is both threat (devastating death toll) and promise (the righteous remnant becomes precious). God's judgment removes the wicked and purifies a people. What remains after judgment—true faith, genuine righteousness—is infinitely valuable.

Historical Context

Ophir's location remains uncertain (possibly Arabia, India, or East Africa), but its gold was proverbial for excellence. The massive casualties in ancient warfare—siege, famine, plague, slaughter—could indeed depopulate entire regions. Babylon's fall, combined with deportations and resettlement, drastically reduced its population. The principle extends beyond Babylon: God's judgments throughout history have reduced populations, making survivors precious. Eschatologically, the 'narrow way' means few find life (Matthew 7:14)—making the redeemed precious beyond measure.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's judgment reveal the true value and rarity of righteousness?
2. What does it mean that God's remnant—those who survive judgment through faith—are infinitely precious to Him?

Interlinear Text

אָוֶן יְרֵשׁ אַוְן יְרֵשׁ	מִתְּכָלָה	אֵין כָּלָב	מִתְּכָלָה
more precious	H376	than fine gold	even a man
H3365		H6337	H120
אָוֶן יְרֵשׁ	מִתְּכָלָה	אֵין כָּלָב	מִתְּכָלָה
than the golden wedge			
			H3800

אָוֶן יְרֵשׁ

of Ophir

H211

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 4:1 (Parallel theme): And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.

Isaiah 24:6 (Parallel theme): Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.

Psalms 137:9 (Parallel theme): Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

Job 28:16 (Parallel theme): It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire.

