

Psalm 105:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it.

Analysis

When Israel was 'but a few men in number,' 'very few and strangers' in Canaan, God's promises seemed impossible. Small numbers made the covenant promise of land and nationhood appear absurd. Yet God's promises don't depend on favorable circumstances. Abraham started with zero descendants; God promised innumerable offspring. 'Strangers' (ger) emphasizes their vulnerable, foreign status. This prefigures the church starting small but growing globally. Christ began with twelve disciples. The Reformed understanding of divine election recognizes God chooses the weak and few (1 Cor 1:27-29).

Historical Context

The patriarchal period featured Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons—a tiny clan among Canaan's nations. Their vulnerability made God's promise of possessing the land humanly impossible.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does God's building a nation from few people encourage you when facing overwhelming odds?
2. What does God's choosing the weak and few teach about His methods and values?

Interlinear Text

בְּ הַיּוֹם מִתְּ בָּאָה מִסְפָּר כַּמְעָד וְאֶנְגָּל יְמִינָה!
H1961 When they were but a few men H4962 in number H4557 yea very few H4592 and strangers H1481

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Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 11:9 (Parallel theme): By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

Genesis 34:30 (Parallel theme): And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.

Deuteronomy 7:7 (Parallel theme): The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:

Genesis 23:4 (Parallel theme): I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a buryingplace with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.