

Psalms 88:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave,
whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from
thy hand.

Analysis

Free among the dead (חֹפְשִׁי בַּמֵּתִים, chofshi bametim)—A haunting phrase: "free" typically denotes liberation, yet here it means cut loose, abandoned, cast off like a slave released without provision. The dead are "free" only in that they are forgotten, no longer under God's providential care. **Like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more**—The verb "remember" (זָכַר, zakar) in Hebrew means active, covenant faithfulness, not mere recollection. To be forgotten by God means to be outside His saving attention.

And they are cut off from thy hand (נִגְזְרוּ מִיָּדְךָ, nigzeru miyadekha)—The hand of God throughout Scripture signifies power, provision, and protection. To be "cut off" is to experience the ultimate abandonment. Yet remarkably, the New Testament reveals that in Christ's death, He experienced this very cutting off—forsaken by the Father—so that believers would never truly be cut off from God's hand (John 10:28-29).

Historical Context

This verse reflects the limited Old Testament understanding of afterlife. While later revelation (Daniel 12:2) and Christ's teaching would unveil resurrection hope, the psalmist speaks from the perspective that death ends meaningful relationship with God—making the stakes of earthly suffering even more acute for ancient believers who lacked full clarity on eternal life.

Psalms 31:22 (Parallel theme): For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.

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