

2Samuel 24:1 ¶ And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.

This chapter opens with a statement that the LORD is angry with the people of Israel once again; it does not, however, specify why. The parallel passage in Chronicles provides important information.

1 Chronicles 21:1 "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."

It is important to note that Satan was the one that provoked David to sin, though I think it is also true that he was only allowed to provoke David because it would result in accomplishing God's purpose to judge the people of Israel. I truly believe that Satan is only allowed to afflict men and women of faith in accordance with God's sovereign purposes.

2Samuel 24:2 For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which *was* with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people.

2Samuel 24:3 And Joab said unto the king, Now the LORD thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see *it*: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing?

2Samuel 24:4 Notwithstanding the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the host. And Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel.

The king told Joab, the captain of the host, to go all over Israel and number the people. The continuing narrative will show that this accounting was intended to determine the number of available fighting men.

Joab reminded David that it was up to the LORD to determine that number. In other words, you don't need to know it. God is sufficient as our defender no matter the number. This is one time that Joab exhibits spiritual insight. David disregarded Joab's advice and ordered him to do as he was told; and he did. Verse 24 also indicates that the captains of the host sided with Joab, but that made no difference to David.

2Samuel 24:5 And they passed over Jordan, and pitched in Aroer, on the right side of the city that *lieth* in the midst of the river of Gad, and toward Jazer:

2Samuel 24:6 Then they came to Gilead, and to the land of Tahtimhodshi; and they came to Danjaan, and about to Zidon,

2Samuel 24:7 And came to the strong hold of Tyre, and to all the cities of the Hivites, and of the Canaanites: and they went out to the south of Judah, *even* to Beersheba.

2Samuel 24:8 So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days.

2Samuel 24:9 And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah *were* five hundred thousand men.

This section confirms that Joab and his men went throughout the land of Israel to take this census, a project that took them nine months and twenty days. He returned to the king and reported that there were 800,000 valiant men that were battle ready in Israel and 500,000 men in Judah for a total of 1,300,000 men.

The numbers in the parallel account in Chronicles again show a discrepancy. I liked Adam Clarke's observation: "...more corruptions have taken place in the numbers of the historical books of the Old Testament, than in any other part of the sacred records. To attempt to reconcile them in every part is lost labor; better at once acknowledge what cannot be successfully denied, that although the original writers of the Old Testament wrote under the influence of the Divine Spirit, yet we are not told that the same influence descended on all copiers of their words, so as absolutely to prevent them from making mistakes. They might mistake, and they did mistake; but a careful collation of the different historical books serves to correct all essential errors of the scribes."

2Samuel 24:10 ¶ And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

Once Joab reported the numbers from the census, it hit David that he had acted very foolishly. He immediately repented of his sin before the LORD and asked for his forgiveness. How had he sinned? I think it could have been a couple of ways. The numbering could have been an act of pride in showing him just how great Israel had grown during his reign. Or—It reflected a lack of faith in the LORD to need to know just how large a military force he had in facing the enemy. It shouldn't have mattered if that number were in the hundreds or millions when considering whether or not to go out against the enemy in battle; it hadn't mattered in his early years. All that was needed was to seek the LORD's direction and act accordingly. Or—it could have been both.

2Samuel 24:11 For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying,

2Samuel 24:12 Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may *do it* unto thee.

2Samuel 24:13 So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me.

2Samuel 24:14 And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies *are* great: and let me not fall into the hand of man.

The next morning the LORD sent the prophet Gad to give David a message. The LORD presented three options for David to choose from as the consequences of his sin.

- Seven years of famine OR
- Three months of enemy attacks OR
- Three days pestilence in the land

David told Gad that he would rather fall into the hands of the LORD because he knew that His mercies were great. He certainly couldn't expect such mercy from men. It was only the choice of pestilence that left the extent of the judgment dependent upon God's mercy. The other two judgments had defined parameters.

2Samuel 24:15 So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men.

2Samuel 24:16 And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite.

2Samuel 24:17 And David spake unto the LORD when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house.

The LORD sent three days pestilence in the land in accordance with David's choice. As a result, 70,000 men died throughout the land. When the angel came to stretch out his hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD stopped him. He determined that judgment had been sufficient.

It is noted that the angel of the LORD was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite. Many times in the Old Testament scripture "the angel of the LORD" is a reference to the preincarnate Jesus.

I assume that David was at the threshingfloor when he saw the angel. Gill posits that the angel was visible to all as he was poised in the sky ready to strike Jerusalem. The Chronicler does tell us that Ornan and his four sons did see the angel after the fact when David went to build an altar to the LORD as referenced below.

1 Chronicles 21:18–20 "Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite....And Ornan turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing wheat."

Upon seeing the angel David spoke to the LORD and again admitted his sin while interceding for the people. He was the one that had done wrong. He declared that the judgment should be against him and his house, not those innocent of wrongdoing.

I think it is important to remember that God's purpose in allowing David to be tempted by Satan was to accomplish judgment against the people of Israel.

Therefore, all three options for the punishment of David's sin were intended to judge the people. David did not know this.

It's interesting to note David's response because his psalms are full of the truth that God is omniscient and righteous. He should have realized that the people were guilty of sin also or God would not have judged them. It is natural, however, that David was focused on his own sin at the time.

It's also interesting to me that David thought it acceptable that the judgment of his sin be allowed to affect his whole family even though he was the guilty one.

2Samuel 24:18 ¶ And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite.

2Samuel 24:19 And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded.

The LORD sent Gad back to David in answer to his prayer. He told David to go and make an altar to the LORD in the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite. So David headed out to do just that.

2Samuel 24:20 And Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming on toward him: and Araunah went out, and bowed himself before the king on his face upon the ground.

2Samuel 24:21 And Araunah said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, To buy the threshingfloor of thee, to build an altar unto the LORD, that the plague may be stayed from the people.

2Samuel 24:22 And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what *seemeth* good unto him: behold, *here be* oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and *other* instruments of the oxen for wood.

2Samuel 24:23 All these *things* did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king. And Araunah said unto the king, The LORD thy God accept thee.

Araunah is called Ornan in Chronicles (as seen above). Araunah was threshing wheat when he looked up and saw the king and his servants coming toward him. He went out and bowed before the king asking what he wanted. David told him that he wanted to buy his threshingfloor to build an altar to the LORD so that the plague would stop. Araunah offered to give him the land as well as the oxen and all the instruments needed to make the sacrifice. He expressed his hope that the LORD would accept the offerings and stop the plague.

2Samuel 24:24 And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy *it* of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

2Samuel 24:25 And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.

David, however, told Araunah that he wanted to buy the land and the oxen; he

could not offer a sacrifice to the LORD that cost him nothing. So David bought the land and animals for 50 shekels of silver. He then built the altar and offered burnt and peace offerings. The LORD accepted his sacrifices and the plague was stopped. In fact, the Chronicler tells us that the LORD showed His acceptance by sending fire from heaven to consume the burnt offering.

1 Chronicles 21:26 "And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering."

The Chronicler notes that David eventually bought the land outright for 600 shekels of gold.

1 Chronicles 21:24–25 "And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost. So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight."

This would seem to imply that the 50 shekels of silver bought a small area on top of the hill and the 600 shekels included the purchase of the whole hill.

David recognized an important truth. To qualify as a sacrifice, the thing being offered must cost the one making the sacrifice. Something that is sacrificed to the LORD is something we give to the LORD for His use to honor Him. Webster words it like this: "Destruction or surrender of anything for the sake of something else."

When we surrender our lives to Christ, that should be our mindset. We are giving our lives to Jesus to use for His glory and His purposes—not our own. Since we have to live in this world, that is a hard truth for us to process—at least it is for me. I truly want to honor the LORD and serve Him in every way I can. The world, however, provides so many distractions and temptations to prevent us from doing that. I so look forward to the day that He takes us home, and I can serve Him freely without dealing with the temptations of the flesh and the distractions of this world!

Note: The Chronicler identifies this piece of land as mount Moriah, as the place that Solomon chose to build the temple.

2 Chronicles 3:1 "Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite."

I just realized that this verse confirms that the "angel of the LORD" was indeed the preincarnate Jesus, the LORD that appeared to David.

It is supposed that this is the same Moriah upon which Abraham took his son Isaac to offer as a sacrifice to the LORD.

*Genesis 22:1–2 “And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee **into the land of Moriah**; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”*