

1 Chronicles 21 - David's Sin in Taking a Census; Consequences; David Purchases the Temple Site

II. David prepares to build the temple (1 Chr 10:1—29:30)

(6) David's census sin leads to David's purchase of the temple site (1 Chr 21:1—22:1)

1 Chronicles 21

(6) David's census sin leads to David's purchase of the temple site (1 Chr 21:1—22:1)

(Cf. 2 Sam 24:1-25)

1 Then **Satan** stood up against Israel and incited David to **count Israel**.

1 Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel.

1 Then Satan attacked Israel by inciting David to enumerate a census of Israel.

1 And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.

- There is a 20-year gap between 20:8 and 21:1 (~995-975 BC)

- "...Satan" - "adversary"; 2 Sam 24:1 states that God "moved" David

— This apparent discrepancy is resolved by understanding that God sovereignly and permissively uses Satan to achieve His purposes. God uses Satan to judge sinners (Mark 4:15; 2 Cor 4:4), refine saints (Job 1:8—2:10; Luke 22:31-32), to discipline those in the church (1 Cor 5:1-5; 1 Tim 1:20), and to further purify obedient believers (2 Cor 12:7-10).

— Neither God nor Satan forced David to sin, but God allowed Satan to tempt David and he chose to sin. The sin surfaced David's proud heart, and God dealt with him for it.

— This is the first time in Scripture the word appears without the definite article as a proper noun

— It seems the adversary God permitted to worry David into numbering the people was a foreign enemy (Cf. v12; 1 Sam 29:4; 2 Sam 19:23; 24:1-25; 1 Kings 5:4; 11:14,23,25)

- "...count Israel" - David's census brought tragedy because, unlike the census during Moses' time (Num 1-2), God did not command this one

— This census by David was to gratify his pride in the great strength of his army and consequent military power. He was also putting more trust in his forces than in his God.

— He was taking credit for his victories by the building of his great army. This angered God, who moved Satan to bring the sin to a head.

2 So David said to Joab and to the leaders of the people, "Go, count Israel from Beersheba to Dan, and bring me *word* so that I may know their number."

2 So David said to Joab and to the princes of the people, "Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan, and bring me *word* that I may know their number."

2 David ordered Joab and the commanders of the army, "Go take a census of Israel from Beer-sheba to Dan, and bring me a report so I can be aware of the total number."

2 And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it.

- This will turn out to be a major sin of King David: his immediate purpose was to assess his military strength. This incurred divine displeasure because it suggested that he was relying more on military capabilities than on God's power. David admitted that his action was sin (v8).

3 But Joab said, "May the LORD add to His people a hundred times as many as they are! My lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? Why does my lord seek this thing? Why should he be a cause of guilt to Israel?"

3 Joab said, "May the LORD add to His people a hundred times as many as they are! But, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? Why does my lord seek this thing? Why should he be a cause of guilt to Israel?"

3 But Joab replied, "May the LORD increase the population of his people a hundredfold! Your majesty, all of them are your majesty's servants, aren't they? So why should your majesty demand this? Why should he bring guilt to Israel?"

3 And Joab answered, The LORD make his people an hundred times so many more as they be: but, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? why then doth my lord require this thing? why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?

4 Nevertheless, the king's word prevailed against Joab. Therefore, Joab departed and went throughout Israel, and came to Jerusalem.

4 Nevertheless, the king's word prevailed against Joab. Therefore, Joab departed and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem.

4 But the king's order overruled Joab, so Joab left, traveled throughout all of Israel, and then returned to Jerusalem

4 Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab. Wherefore Joab departed, and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem.

5 Then Joab gave the number of the census of the people to David. Israel was 1,100,000 men in all who drew the sword; and Judah was 470,000 men who drew the sword.

5 Joab gave the number of the census of *all* the people to David. And all Israel were 1,100,000 men who drew the sword; and Judah *was* 470,000 men who drew the sword.
5 to report the total population count to David. Throughout all of Israel there were 1,100,000 men trained for war. In Judah there were 470,000 men trained for war.
5 And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew sword: and Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword.

6 But he did not count Levi and Benjamin among them, because the king's command was abhorrent to Joab.

6 But he did not number Levi and Benjamin among them, for the king's command was abhorrent to Joab.

6 Levi and Benjamin were not included in the census, because what the king had commanded was unethical to Joab.

6 But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them: for the king's word was abominable to Joab.

- When Moses had taken the census, he had 603,000 men. David has a million more men than Moses had!

— Joab reported the totals of 1,100,000 men of Israel and 470,000 of Judah. He did not count the Levites or Benjamites: Levi was exempt militarily (Num 1:47-49) and the census appears to have been called off before Benjamin could be counted (1 Chr 27:24).

David didn't feel the need for God when he had 1.1 million men. When you have only a slingshot and five stones, you know you need Him.

Alternative Reckonings

The 2 Sam 24 account indicates that there were 800,000 combat troops in Israel and 500,000 in Judah (2 Sam 24:9); the NIV suggests that the 1,100,000 (in all Israel) included the 470,000 of Judah (1 Chr 21:5) thus giving a total of 630,000 for Israel proper. The 800,000 of 2 Samuel might include an estimate of 170,000 Levites plus 630,000 other Israelites; the 500,000 Judeans of 2 Samuel could also include an estimated 30,000 Benjamites, who were not counted by the Chronicler.

The Chronicler's grand total of 1,100,000 may have included a standing army of 300,000, thus reducing the total to 800,000 given in 2 Samuel. The 500,000 Judeans (2 Sam account) may have included the 470,000 of 1 Chronicles along with a standing army of 30,000 (2 Sam 6:1).

David Chooses His Punishment (Cf. 2 Sam 24:10-18)

7 Now God was displeased with this thing, so He struck Israel.
7 God was displeased with this thing, so He struck Israel.
7 God considered this behavior to be evil, so he attacked Israel.
7 And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel.

8 David said to God, "I have sinned greatly, by doing this thing. But now, please overlook Your servant's guilt, for I have behaved very foolishly."

8 David said to God, "I have sinned greatly, in that I have done this thing. But now, please take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly."

8 David responded to God, "I sinned greatly by behaving this way. But now I am asking you, please remove the guilt of your servant, since I have acted very foolishly."

8 And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

- This time, David did not try to cover up his sin, as he tried to do when he sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah; instead, he readily confessed

9 The LORD spoke to Gad, David's **seer**, saying,

9 The LORD spoke to Gad, David's seer, saying,

9 So the LORD responded through Gad, David's seer.

9 And the LORD spake unto Gad, David's seer, saying,

- "...seer" - by referring to Gad in this way implies that Gad served David primarily by seeking and inquiring of God, and giving divine revelation back to David (Cf. 1 Sam 22:5; 2 Sam 24:11-19)

— In contrast, the "prophet" Nathan's primary role appears to have been announcing messages from the Lord to the king (Cf. 2 Sam 7:2-17; 1 Chr 17:1-15)

10 "Go and speak to David, saying, 'This is what the LORD says: "I extend to you three *choices*; choose for yourself one of them, which I will do to you.'"

10 "Go and speak to David, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "I offer you three things; choose for yourself one of them, which I will do to you.'"

10 "Go and tell David, 'This is what the LORD says: "I'm holding three choices out for you: pick one of them for yourself, and I will do it to you.'"

10 Go and tell David, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things: choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee.

11 So Gad came to David and said to him, "This is what the LORD says: 'Take for yourself

11 So Gad came to David and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Take for yourself

11 Gad went to David and told him, "This is what the LORD says: 'Make a choice for yourself:

11 So Gad came to David, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Choose thee

12 **three years** of famine, or three months to be swept away before your foes while the sword of your enemies overtakes *you*, or else three days of the sword of the LORD: a plague in the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout the territory of Israel! Now, therefore, consider what answer I shall bring back to Him who sent me."

12 either three years of famine, or three months to be swept away before your foes, while the sword of your enemies overtakes *you*, or else three days of the sword of the LORD, even pestilence in the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the territory of Israel! Now, therefore, consider what answer I shall return to Him who sent me."

12 Either three years of famine, or three months of reversals as you are swept away by your enemies while the sword of your enemies overtakes you, or three days with the sword of the LORD, consisting of pestilence infecting the land, with the angel of the LORD wreaking destruction from border to border throughout all of Israel! Decide right now what I am to answer to the one who sent me."

12 Either three years' famine; or three months to be destroyed before thy foes, while that the sword of thine enemies overtaketh thee; or else three days the sword of the LORD, even the pestilence, in the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel. Now therefore advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me.

- "three years'" - 2 Sam 24:13 states "seven years," but that is likely a copyist error; it appears the intent is 3 years, 3 months, 3 days.

13 David said to Gad, "I am in great distress; please let me fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are very great. But do not let me fall into human hands."

13 David said to Gad, "I am in great distress; please let me fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are very great. But do not let me fall into the hand of man."

13 So David replied to Gad, "This is a very bad choice for me to make! Let me now please fall into the hand of the LORD, because his mercy is very great, but may I never fall into human hands!"

13 And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the LORD; for very great are his mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man.

- David chose to leave the decision up to the Lord because he had learned that God is merciful

14 So the LORD sent a plague on Israel; seventy thousand men of Israel fell.

14 So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel; 70,000 men of Israel fell.

14 Then the LORD sent a pestilence to Israel, and 70,000 men died in Israel.

14 So the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men.

15 And God sent an **angel** to Jerusalem to destroy it; but as he was about to destroy *it*, the LORD saw and **was sorry** about the catastrophe, and said to the destroying angel, "It is enough; now relax your hand." And the angel of the LORD was standing by the **threshing floor of Ornan** the Jebusite.

15 And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it; but as he was about to destroy *it*, the LORD saw and was sorry over the calamity, and said to the destroying angel, "It is enough; now relax your hand." And the angel of the LORD was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

15 God also sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem, but as he was about to do so, the LORD looked and withdrew the calamity by saying to the destroying angel, "Enough! Stop what you're doing!"

So the angel of the LORD remained standing near the threshing floor that belonged to Ornan the Jebusite.

15 And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.

- "...angel" - the Angel of the Lord; some identify Him with God Himself, even the preincarnate Christ (Cf. Gen 16:13; 18:1-2; 22:11-12; 48:16; Judges 6:16,22; 13:22-23; Zech 3:1)

- "...was sorry" - "repented" [KJV]; changed His mind (Cf. Num 23:19; see notes on Ex 32:14)

- "...threshing floor of Ornan" - today, it is believed to be the flat rock under the Dome of the Rock mosque

— "Ornan" - a Hebrew name; also called "Araunah" (2 Sam 24:18). He had been converted to worship the true God.

16 Then David raised his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, with his drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, covered with sackcloth, fell on their faces.

16 Then David lifted up his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, with his drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, covered with sackcloth, fell on their faces.

16 David looked up and saw the angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, with a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell on their faces.

16 And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces.

17 And David said to God, "Is it not I who commanded to count the people? Indeed, I am the one who has sinned and acted very wickedly, but these sheep, what have they done? LORD, my God, just let Your hand be against me and my father's household, and not against Your people as a plague."

17 David said to God, "Is it not I who commanded to count the people? Indeed, I am the one who has sinned and done very wickedly, but these sheep, what have they done? O LORD my God, please let Your hand be against me and my father's household, but not against Your people that they should be plagued."

17 David told God, "Wasn't I the one who ordered the census of the population? Wasn't it I who sinned and acted wickedly? Now as for these sheep, what have they done? LORD God, please let your hand be against me and my ancestral household, but don't let your people be ravaged by plague!"

17 And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.

- David volunteered to bear God's judgment in place of the innocent Israelites

— However, God instructed him to build an altar at the place of God's judgment and to offer the sacrifice that the Mosaic Law required

— This was the site that God chose for His house (21:18–22:1), the place where forever after, as long as Israel occupied the land, would be where the priests would atone for Israel's sins by sacrifice

David Buys Araunah's Threshing Floor (Cf. 2 Sam 24:18-25)

18 Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David was to go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

18 Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

18 The angel of the LORD told Gad to tell David that David was to go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor that belonged to Ornan the Jebusite.

18 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.

- The primary purpose of the Chronicler in disclosing this episode is to explain how the site for the temple was chosen

19 So David went up at the word of Gad, which he spoke in the name of the LORD.

19 So David went up at the word of Gad, which he spoke in the name of the LORD.

19 So David went up, obeying Gad's directive that he had spoken in the name of the LORD.

19 And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the LORD.

20 Now Ornan turned back and saw the angel, and his four sons *who were* with him hid themselves. And Ornan was threshing wheat.

20 Now Ornan turned back and saw the angel, and his four sons *who were* with him hid themselves. And Ornan was threshing wheat.

20 Ornan turned around and saw the angel. While his four sons with him ran away to hide, Ornan continued to thresh wheat.

20 And Ornan turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing wheat.

21 As David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out from the threshing floor and prostrated himself to David with his face to the ground.

21 As David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out from the threshing floor and prostrated himself before David with his face to the ground.

21 As David approached Ornan, Ornan looked around and observed David, left the threshing floor, and fell to the ground before David with his face on the ground.

21 And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshingfloor, and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground.

22 Then David said to Ornan, "Give me the site of *this* threshing floor, so that I may build on it an altar to the LORD; you shall give it to me for the full price, so that the plague may be brought to a halt from the people."

22 Then David said to Ornan, "Give me the site of *this* threshing floor, that I may build on it an altar to the LORD; for the full price you shall give it to me, that the plague may be restrained from the people."

22 David told Ornan, "Give me the threshing floor as a site to build an altar to the LORD on it. Give it to me at its full price, so the plague may be averted from the people."

22 Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshingfloor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people.

- David purchased the land that would eventually contain the temple

23 But Ornan said to David, "Take *it* for yourself, and may my lord the king do what is good in his sight. See, I am giving the oxen for burnt offerings, and the threshing sledges for wood and the wheat for the grain offering; I am giving *it* all."

23 Ornan said to David, "Take *it* for yourself; and let my lord the king do what is good in his sight. See, I will give the oxen for burnt offerings and the threshing sledges for wood and the wheat for the grain offering; I will give *it* all."

23 But Ornan replied to David, "Take it! Let your majesty the king do whatever seems like a good idea to him. Look here! I'm giving the oxen for burnt offerings, the threshing machinery for the wood, and the wheat for a grain offering. I'm giving all of it."

23 And Ornan said unto David, Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: lo, I give thee the oxen also for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I give it all.

24 Nevertheless, King David said to Ornan, "No, but I will certainly buy *it* for the full price; for I will not take what is yours for the LORD, nor offer a burnt offering which costs me nothing."

24 But King David said to Ornan, "No, but I will surely buy *it* for the full price; for I will not take what is yours for the LORD, or offer a burnt offering which costs me nothing."

24 But King David told Ornan, "No. I will buy them for the full price because I will not offer to the LORD what is yours or offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing."

24 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.

25 So David gave Ornan six hundred shekels of gold by weight for the site.

25 So David gave Ornan 600 shekels of gold by weight for the site.

25 So David paid Ornan 600 shekels weight worth in gold for the site,

25 So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight.

- The 600 shekels (15 lbs) of gold also included the lot of land surrounding the threshing floor

26 Then David built an altar there to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. And he called to the LORD, and He answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering.

26 Then David built an altar to the LORD there and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. And he called to the LORD and He answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering.

26 built an altar to the LORD there, and presented burnt offerings and peace offerings. He called out to the LORD, and he answered him from heaven with fire on the altar of burnt offerings.

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.

- God demonstrated His approval of David's offerings by sending fire from heaven (Cf. Lev 9:24; 1 Kings 18:38)

27 The LORD commanded the angel, and he returned his sword to its sheath.

27 The LORD commanded the angel, and he put his sword back in its sheath.

27 After this, the LORD spoke to the angel, who then sheathed his sword.

27 And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof.

- Note how the offering was accepted: fire from heaven (that's probably how Abel knew his was accepted, and Cain's was not)

— The sword of judgment was sheathed. But at Golgotha, that sword pierced the side of the Lord Jesus Christ

— As someone has said, "I got into the heart of God through a spear wound"

28 At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he offered sacrifice there.

28 At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he offered sacrifice there.

28 From that time on, after David had observed that the LORD had answered him at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he made his sacrifices there.

28 At that time when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there.

29 For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses had made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering *were* on the high place at Gibeon at that time.

29 For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses had made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering *were* in the high place at Gibeon at that time.

29 Meanwhile, the tent of the LORD that Moses had crafted in the desert, along with the altar of burnt offerings, were being stored at the high place in Gibeon at that time,

29 For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon.

- The Ark of the Covenant resided at Jerusalem in a tent (1 Chr 15) awaiting the building of the temple on the threshing floor of Ornan

— The Mosaic tabernacle and altar remained in Gibeon until the temple was completed (1 Kings 8:4)

30 But David could not go before it to inquire of God, for he was terrified by the sword of the angel of the LORD.

30 But David could not go before it to inquire of God, for he was terrified by the sword of the angel of the LORD.

30 but David was not going before it to inquire of God, because he was afraid of the sword carried by the angel of the LORD.

30 But David could not go before it to enquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD.

- As a result David began to worship there regularly instead of going to Gibeon where the Mosaic tabernacle was located

— He stayed away because he feared the angel at Gibeon, the center of worship

— The Lord had previously appeared to him there (2 Chr 3:1) and hallowed the place