

1 Chronicles 21 – Thursday, September 22nd, 2016

- For those of you who have been with us in our study through the Old Testament, chapters like this one will sound very familiar.
- This because, there's a parallel account of 1 Chronicles 21 back in 2 Samuel 24. However, 1 Chronicles provides more detail.
- As such, I would like to draw upon the account in 2 Samuel so as to fill in some of the blanks to this particular sin in David's life.

1 Chronicles 21:1 Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.

2 Samuel 24:1 Again the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah."

- The reason I wanted to read both verses is we have difficulties to work through the first of which has to do with God's anger.
- The question is, what was the sin that Israel and or David committed that had so aroused the anger of the Lord against them.
- The thought is that God's anger was due to the Israelites having joined Absalom in their rebellion against both David and God.

- Lest one think that a rebellion on the part of the Israelites wouldn't rise to the level of warranting God's judgment, think Moses.
- When his cousin Korah rebelled against him, Numbers 16 tells us thousands of Israelites died as a result of God's judgment.
- Prior to Korah's rebellion, his own sister and brother Miriam and Aaron also rebelled against him in Numbers chapter twelve.

- The reason I point this out is because Numbers 12:9 reads almost verbatim like 2 Samuel 24:1 concerning the Lord's anger.

Numbers 12:9 (NKJV) — 9 So the anger of the LORD was aroused against them, and He departed.

- Here is where I'm headed with this, if God's anger against Israel was because of Absalom's rebellion, then, it all makes sense.
- More specifically, everything that we're about to see in this chapter is more understandable as the consequences of rebellion.
- At the risk of overthinking this, if it weren't because of rebellion, then there's more of a difficulty in understanding this chapter.
- The next difficulty that we need to work through is we're led to believe that the Lord Himself is the one who made David do this.
- In other words, it would seem that the Lord is the one Who in His anger moved David to take a census of both Israel and Judah.
- The problem with this interpretation is that God cannot tempt us to do evil nor will He ever be a party to our sinning against Him.
- Simply put, 1 Chronicles 21:1 resolves this difficulty, such that, we're told it was Satan who moved on David's heart to do this.

Pastor Chuck Smith of this said, "Now the 'he' there, 9in 2 Samuel 24:1) we assume would be the Lord. But as we find out in 1 Chronicles 21:1, it was Satan that moved David's heart, to the numbering of the people. So God opened the door, and allowed Satan to move in and tempt David."

- I suppose this may bring up another difficulty, such that, God will often times allow Satan to move in and tempt us as Christians.
- While on its face it may seem disconcerting, however, we need to realize that this will always serve God's purpose in the end.
- Peter is one of the best examples of the Lord allowing Satan to tempt us in order to glorify Himself and better us in the process.

Luke 22:31–32 (NIV) — 31 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

- It's important to note Satan must ask for permission before he so much as touches a hair on our head, for those who have hair.
- Like Peter, such is the case with David here in verse one. Simply put, Satan was given permission to tempt David to do this.
- I'll take it a step further and suggest that God allowed Satan to tempt David so as to mete out judgment for the sin of rebellion.

Charles Spurgeon offers us some tremendous insight concerning this, "In the book of Chronicles, Satan is said to have provoked David to this deed, and so indeed he did, and thus the moral evil of the action belongs to the tempter and his ready victim; but the writer of the present passage saw the hand of the Lord in it, using the sin of David as the means of punishing the sins of the people. Both statements are true and there is no need to attempt a reconciliation, since one truth must agree with another whether we see it or not."

- Before we move on to verse two, there's one more matter that I think we would do well to clear up in order to better understand.
- It has to do with a census rising to the level of sinning against God as it is here. The question being, is taking a census a sin?
- This because, we do find census taking in scripture that was not a sin against God but instead, actually a command from God.

Exodus 30:11–12 (NKJV) — 11 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 12 "When you take the census of the children of Israel for their number, then every man shall give a ransom for himself to the LORD, when you number them, that there may be no plague among them when you number them.

- Here is the answer to our dilemma, the only time a census was to be taken was when God commanded that their be a census.
- Conspicuously absent from the narrative is any mention of God commanding him to do this, which is why it was a sin to do so.
- Moreover, the principle of census taking was related to one counting that which belonged to him. Israel did not belong to David.

Charles Spurgeon - "According to the law of Moses, a piece of money as a sin-offering was to be offered by every Israelite when the tribes were counted, but this was neglected. Moses numbered the people at God's bidding, considering them to be the Lord's people, but David counted them at his own will, as if they were his own people, and this the Lord would not endure."

2 So David said to Joab and to the leaders of the people, "Go, number Israel from Beersheba to Dan, and bring the number of them to me that I may know it." 3 And Joab answered, "May the LORD make His people a hundred times more than they are. But, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? Why then does my lord require this thing? Why should he be a cause of guilt in Israel?" 4 Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab. Therefore Joab departed and went throughout all Israel and came to Jerusalem. 5 Then Joab gave the sum of the number of the people to David. All Israel had one million one hundred thousand men who drew the sword, and Judah had four hundred and seventy thousand men who drew the sword. 6 But he did not count Levi and Benjamin among them, for the king's word was abominable to Joab.

- Here we're told that even David's men knew that what he was doing was wrong, which begs the question of, why David does it.
- Why does David want to count the numbers of his military? Answer, because he has started to trust in the strength of numbers.
- The problem is that trusting in the strength of his numbers militarily, he has stopped trusting in his God who gave that to David.

G. Campbell Morgan - "The spirit of vainglory in numbers had taken possession of the people and the king, and there was a tendency to trust in numbers and forget God."

- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the most dangerous temptations for a Christian, it would have to be affluence.
- Let me explain, when God blesses and prospers us materially and financially, our tendency is to start trusting in our resources.
- The book of Proverbs is replete with warnings about the folly of trusting in anything or for that matter anyone but the Lord God.

7 And God was displeased with this thing; therefore He struck Israel. 8 So David said to God, "I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing; but now, I pray, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly." 9 Then the LORD spoke to Gad, David's seer, saying, 10 "Go and tell David, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "I offer you three things; choose one of them for yourself, that I may do it to you." ' " 11 So Gad came to David and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Choose for yourself, 12 either three years of famine, or three months to be defeated by your foes with the sword of your enemies overtaking you, or else for three days the sword of the LORD—the plague in the land, with the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the territory of Israel.' Now consider what answer I should take back to Him who sent me." 13 And 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." 14 So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell. 15 And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it. As he was destroying, the LORD looked and relented of the disaster, and said to the angel who was destroying, "It is enough; now restrain your hand." And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. 16 Then David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, having in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. So David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell on their faces.

- This is why we took so much time at the beginning to understand the why behind the what as it were related to God's judgment.
- Here's why, the seventy thousand men of whom we're told died because of David's census, was not arbitrary on God's part.
- I'm of the belief these seventy thousand men received their due punishment by virtue of having joined in Absalom's rebellion.

17 And David said to God, "Was it not I who commanded the people to be numbered? I am the one who has sinned and done evil indeed; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray, O LORD my God, be against me and my father's house, but not against Your people that they should be plagued." 18 Therefore, the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David that David should go and erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. 19 So David went up at the word of Gad, which he had spoken in the name of the LORD. 20 Now Ornan turned and saw the angel; and his four sons who were with him hid themselves, but Ornan continued threshing wheat. 21 So David came to Ornan, and Ornan looked and saw David. And he went out from the threshing floor, and bowed before David with his face to the ground. 22 Then David said to Ornan, "Grant me the place of this threshing floor, that I may build an altar on it to the LORD. You shall grant it to me at the full price, that the plague may be withdrawn from the people." 23 But Ornan said to David, "Take it to yourself, and let my lord the king do what is good in his eyes. Look, I also give you the oxen for burnt offerings, the threshing implements for wood, and the wheat for the grain offering; I give it all." 24 Then 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, nor offer burnt offerings with that which costs me nothing." 25 So David gave Ornan six hundred shekels of gold by weight for the place. 26 And David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called on the LORD; and He answered him from heaven by fire on the altar of burnt offering. 27 So the LORD commanded the angel, and he returned his sword to its sheath. 28 At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he sacrificed there. 29 For the tabernacle of the LORD and the altar of the burnt offering, which Moses had made in the wilderness, were at that time at the high place in Gibeon. 30 But David could not go before it to inquire of God, for he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the LORD.

- Notice that the plague ends when the King offers a sacrifice. This points to Jesus the greater than David about 1000 years later.
- By the way, we have recorded here the title deed as documentation that the temple mount and Jerusalem belong only to Israel.
- I cannot think of a better way to bring a study and in this case a book in the Bible to an end; the scriptures testify about Jesus.

John 5:39–40 (NIV) — 39 You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me to have life.