

## A Study of 2 Samuel 24

### I. Outline.

1. David gives Joab a command to number the people; Joab advises not to do it; David persists and has them numbered anyway (2 Sam 24.1-4).
2. Beginning on the western side of Jordan, the counting begins and proceeds counterclockwise through the land (2 Sam 24.5-9).
3. David acknowledges his sin in the numbering the people and Gad comes with 3 choices of the punishment—David chooses 3 days of pestilence (2 Sam 24.10-14).
4. 70,000 men died of the pestilence, and the Lord stayed the pestilence early (2 Sam 24.15-17).
5. David is instructed to offer a sacrifice at the threshing floor of Araunah which he does (2 Sam 24.18-25).

### II. Summary.

In this chapter we find David once again going against the Lord's will—numbering the people. What could have caused David to go against the idea of dependence upon God and move toward independence, by leaning upon the number of the host? I would suggest that he was struggling once again with the undue loyalty and determination to serve his sons, even putting their interests ahead of the nation as a whole. He could have been thinking that he needed to assure (as a military man) that Solomon, his son, would not be threatened by defeat of enemy nations due to Solomon's lack of a military background. I think David was thinking ahead in wanting to do all he could to make Solomon's reign a big success. In these thoughts, he was unknowingly giving in to Satan's plan (1 Chr 21.1). The numbering was opposed by Joab, but David insisted upon it. Absolute power almost always is a bad thing—God had warned His people about it (1 Sam 8.9-18). Much of the count was accomplished, but David came to his senses before completion and the counting was stopped. For David's disobedience and for the anger of the Lord against the people (2 Sam 24.1), there had to be punishment from a just God. When given three choices of a punishment, David selects three days of pestilence, reasoning it would be less damaging based on the mercy of God. The plague, unfortunately, led to 70,000 deaths. David is anguished of heart as a result of this toll (2 Sam 24.17). It seems to me that David may have not understood the first part of 2 Samuel 24.1 since he makes that plea at verse 17. The explanation which makes best sense to me is the one quoted from Keil by Coffman: "***Because David was about to boast proudly and to glory in the number of the people, God determined to punish him by reducing their number by famine, war, or pestilence. At the same time, the people themselves had sinned grievously against God and their king, through two rebellions headed by Absalom and Sheba.***" ***Thus it was not immoral on God's part that He punished both the sinful king and the sinful people. They both fully deserved it.***" Gad advises David to make a sacrifice at the threshing floor of Araunah and he proceeds to the place. All that would be needed for the sacrifice was offered to David, but David insisted on paying for it all, not wishing to offer up to God something which cost him nothing!

### III. Chronology/Lists/Links.

**BIBLE PERIOD:** The Period of the United Kingdom.

If you are not familiar with the **15 Bible Periods**, please click here: <https://tinyurl.com/wl79hp7>

You can read an excellent article on Chronology from Wayne Jackson here:

<https://tinyurl.com/wylvljh>

- The *KJV Reese Chronological Study Bible* estimates **David's age at this point to be 65** and that the **year was 1020 B.C.**
- "It is impossible to determine the date of this episode from 2 Samuel alone, but the parallel version in 1 Chronicles 21 places it just prior to David's instructions to Solomon about building the temple (1 Chr 21.28—22.19). The census must have come late in David's reign, and may have been part of the plan of dynastic succession in anticipation of Solomon's coming to power." —*Bible Knowledge Commentary*

**LISTS: Source:** *Dake's Study Bible Notes.*

**TEN BIBLE CHARACTERS CLASSED THEIR KIND AS SHEEP:**

01. David (2 Sam 24.17; 1 Chr 21.17; Ps 23; 119.176).
02. An Unknown Author (Ps 44.11; 49.14; 95.7; 100.3).
03. Asaph (Ps 74.1; 78.52; 79.13).
04. Isaiah (Isa 53.6-7; Acts 8.32).
05. Jeremiah (Jer 12.3; 23.1; 50.6, 17).
06. Ezekiel (Ezk 34.6, 11-12).
07. Zechariah (Zech 13.7; Mt 26.31).
08. Jesus Christ (Mt 9.36; 10.6, 16; 12.11-12; 15.24; 18.12-13; 25.32-33; Jn 10.27; 21.16-17).
09. Paul (Heb 13.20).
10. Peter (1 Pet 2.25).

**LINKS:** *These links are to the writings of men and not to inspired Scripture, thus care and caution in weighing the conclusions is always wise. Some might not be online links, but listing of material commonly available in books and publications.*

01. Burton Coffman Commentary:  
<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/2-samuel-24.html> .
02. Matthew Poole: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/mpc/2-samuel-24.html>

#### IV. Thoughts on the Text.

**2 Sam 24.1:** This verse tells us that the Lord was angry AGAINST ISRAEL. It does NOT tell us for what reason. It makes sense to me that since God was angry against Israel, they would have been aware of why that was the case, even though it is not revealed to us. Further, they had the nine months and 20 days of the census to repent of what they had done, and then they surely would not be punished by the Lord. When trying to explain why 70,000 died from the pestilence when it was David who called for the numbering, some believe the people were punished because they did not pay the atonement price that was a part of the numbering recorded in Exodus 30.12-13. I do not think this makes sense. It seems to me that particular numbering was done for a specific purpose—preparing to journey with the Tabernacle. There would be a need of providing for the Tabernacle and what took place there. This atonement price mentioned in Exodus 30 seems to have been an annual levy. Nehemiah 10.32 mentions YEARLY in connection with that atonement price. The explanation which makes best sense to me is the one quoted from Keil by Coffman: "*Because David was about to boast proudly and to glory in*

*the number of the people, God determined to punish him by reducing their number by famine, war, or pestilence. At the same time, the people themselves had sinned grievously against God and their king, through two rebellions headed by Absalom and Sheba.” Thus it was not immoral on God’s part that He punished both the sinful king and the sinful people. They both fully deserved it. IIIII* The Lord moved David to number the people in the sense that he allowed David to decide whether he would yield to the temptation Satan put before him (1 Chr 21.1). It was another failure of David to show a spirit of INDEPENDENCE (counting the forces), rather than a spirit of DEPENDENCE (knowing God was in control of everything). David must have understood it was sinful because verse 10 informs us that David’s heart condemned him for the numbering and God had not sent any prophet to tell him of his disobedience.

- 2 Sam 24.2:** What is so bad about numbering the people? The problem with numbering the people seems to be that of placing confidence in the power of AN ARMY rather than in THE ONE GOD. This troubled the people of God down through the history of this people. It often developed into spiritual adultery as the people abandoned God for gods they created themselves. That is NOT some minor problem, but of MAJOR significance.
- 2 Sam 24.3-4:** Joab’s counsel was good and should have been considered more carefully by King David. Here is another fulfillment of the warning prophecy from Samuel about the activity of kings (1 Sam 8.11).
- 2 Sam 24.5-8:** We are given some of the details of the counting procedure which started across the Jordan and proceeded counterclockwise back to Jerusalem. The count took nine months and twenty days.
- 2 Sam 24.9:** Henry Morris in the *Defender’s Study Bible* writes: *“In 1 Chronicles 21.5 these numbers are given respectively, as 1,100,000 and 470,000. However, the 800,000 in Israel are said in 2 Samuel to be valiant men, experienced in warfare, suggesting that the other 300,000 were of military age but not yet tested in battle. As far as the numbers in Judah are concerned, the total in 2 Samuel included the tribe of Benjamin, while the total in 1 Chronicles did not (note 1 Chronicles 21.6). Apparently the 500,000 in Judah had been simply augmented by an estimated total of 30,000 for Benjamin.”*
- 2 Sam 24.10:** Perhaps Joab’s conversation with the king finally registered with him. That he wants fellowship with God is so obvious from the total record of David’s life and writings. He does not want this INIQUITY to cause him to be separated from the Lord! Rather he seeks forgiveness based upon his repentance. He understands the folly of his previous stance.
- 2 Sam 24.11-13:** Gad, identified here as David’s SEER, is given a message to pass along to David which lists three choices for punishment.
- 2 Sam 24.14:** **LET US FALL NOW INTO THE HAND OF THE LORD; FOR HIS MERCIES ARE GREAT...** *“The decision David makes seems partly his confidence in God’s great goodness and mercy; partly because he, having sinned himself, thought it just to choose a plague, ...; whereas he had better defenses for himself against the sword and famine than they had. ... True, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! Fearful indeed for those who have, by their impenitence shut themselves out from his mercy. But a penitent dares cast himself into God’s hand, knowing that his mercies are great.”* –Joseph Benson
- 2 Sam 24.15-16:** It seems the expression, EVEN TO THE TIME APPOINTED, is difficult to translate. Some suggest that the Hebrew probably means TIME OF ASSEMBLY, likely referring to the daily evening sacrifice. If this is correct, the pestilence would have ended in one day rather than

three. Verse 16 gives the location of the angel of the Lord carrying out the punishment as being at Araunah's threshing floor.

**2 Sam 24.17:** David truly loved the people of God and made a strong appeal on their behalf here. It reminds us of Moses' similar intercession in Exodus 32:32 KJV *Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.*

**2 Sam 24.18-19:** David receives and follows instructions given him from Gad to construct an altar and make an offering to the Lord.

**2 Sam 24.20-21:** The king receives a humble welcome from Araunah. David tells him his business there and offers to buy the threshing floor for the purpose of building an altar to stop the plague.

**2 Sam 24.22-23:** The good cooperation of Araunah is impressive and would have involved quite a sacrifice had David accepted the free gift. Some commentators question his sincerity but I see no indication of that position.

**2 Sam 24.24:** The beautiful statement of David to Araunah is noteworthy. We should appreciate it and apply it to our own lives (see the application below). The 50 shekels mentioned here some point out is in conflict with the much larger sum of 600 shekels of gold mentioned in 1 Chronicles 21.25. Apparently, the original price was just for the threshing floor and sacrifice components. Most likely it was later, when David gave the larger price for the surrounding land upon which Solomon later built the magnificent temple.

**2 Sam 24.25:** The chapter ends with the good news that **THE LORD WAS INTREATED FOR THE LAND, AND THE PLAGUE WAS STAYED FROM ISRAEL.**

## V. Lessons & Applications.

- 01. THE ANGER OF THE LORD WAS KINDLED AGAINST ISRAEL** (2 Sam 24.1). One of the most frightening thoughts men could ever entertain, if they truly know the God of the Bible and His omnipotence, is that God is angry at me! There is a statement in the Book of James that likewise is especially frightening. James 2:13 KJV *For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.* When I contemplate the James passage and see the result of the 2 Samuel 24 passage, I begin to commence to start to kind of understand this DANGER. God be thanked for His grace and mercy!
- 02. ...WHY DOTHT MY LORD THE KING DELIGHT IN THIS THING?** (2 Sam 24.3). Such words of wisdom coming from Joab may seem strange. He does not seem to be the most righteous of David's staff. It suggests to me that outstanding advice sometimes comes from unexpected sources. Just think for a moment if David had given to Joab's advice a fair moment of investigation. Perhaps 70,000 lives might have been spared. Joab is clearly letting David know that he should NOT be delighting in the numbering project. Verse 4 makes clear that Joab was not the only advocate of this same opinion, but also even the captains of the host under Joab felt the same. An important principle always to consider when advice comes our way is: 1 Thessalonians 5:21 KJV *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*
- 03. AND DAVID'S HEART SMOTE HIM AFTER THAT HE HAD NUMBERED THE PEOPLE** (2 Sam 24.10). Just what is the KEY to having the kind of heart that is after God's own heart. Acts 13:22 KJV *And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be*

their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. To knowingly be opposing the will of the Lord for my life, and to allow that realization to move me to REPENT is pretty much the answer to this question. David acknowledged His sin and knew that he deserved whatever punishment the just God would prescribe. Thankfully, our God is perfect in all of His attributes and His justice is tempered with His mercy— Romans 11:22 KJV *Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.* Many Bible scholars interpret verse 15 to mean that the pestilence did NOT last for 3 days, but rather for a few hours. The Syriac version has: “from morning until the sixth hour.” Having a heart like David’s, at least in the sense that it is demonstrated here is the only way to please the God of heaven.

- 04. 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.** (2 Sam 24.24). In the Book of Luke 14 and the last section of that chapter Jesus urges those who would follow Him to count the cost of being His disciple. If we are not careful, as we grow older without growing more spiritual, we will find ourselves perfectly happy to do what David says he would NOT do. This beautiful verse should move us to examine our own lives— 2 Corinthians 13:5 KJV *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*

## VI. Questions.

### True or False

01. \_\_\_\_ David could not acknowledge his sin in numbering the people.
02. \_\_\_\_ David paid 100 shekels for Araunah’s threshing floor and the oxen.
03. \_\_\_\_ The captains of the hosts were in favor of numbering the people.
04. \_\_\_\_ Paul told the Philippians he was in a STRAIT (1.23) and David told Gad he was in a STRAIT.
05. \_\_\_\_ David saw the angel that smote the people.

### I Found it in Verse(s)

06. \_\_\_\_ David acknowledged he had done very foolishly.
07. \_\_\_\_ The word: DELIGHT.
08. \_\_\_\_ Threshing instruments offered to build a fire.
09. \_\_\_\_ The geographical extent for the deaths by the pestilence God sent.
10. \_\_\_\_ God said: IT IS ENOUGH.

### Short Answer

11. After the burnt offerings and peace offerings, this happened:

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12. The “journalist’s question” that Joab asked David was:

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13. Araunah was one of these:

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14. David requested this of the Lord:

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15. Gad is identified as David’s:

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*Each Question is worth 7 Points*

**My Score is: \_\_\_\_\_**

*Answers will be found on next week’s handout*

**ANSWERS to 2 Samuel 23 Questions...** **01**—FALSE (1); **02**—TRUE (5); **03**—FALSE (12); **04**—TRUE, by the gate (16); **05**—TRUE (22-23); **06**—20; **07**—4; **08**—16; **09**—8; **10**—11; **11**—His hand (10); **12**—Just (3); **13**—a spear (21); **14**—Bethlehem (14); **15**—Adino the Eznite (8).

**ANSWERS to 2 Samuel 24 Questions...** **01**—False, 10; **02**—False, 24; **03**—False, 4; **04**—True, 14; **05**—True, 17; **06**—10; **07**—3; **08**—22; **09**—15; **10**—16; **11**—The Lord was intreated for the land (25); **12**—WHY?, (3); **13**—Jebusite (16); **14**—Take away the iniquity of thy servant (10); **15**—Seer, 11).

**VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle.** The words may be backwards, diagonal, upside down, etc. See if you can find them all. The more you use the words of the Bible, the greater blessed you will be! You might be surprised at how much this little exercise will help you retain important truths. THANK YOU for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. –DRL

H E L O R D T K N A D A  
 K D A V I D E S T R O Y  
 W E N T S A I D H A N D  
 H A D G R E A T J U E B  
 E N P C A P T A I N P O  
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| COME  | DAVID   | DESTROY | DONE    | EVEN   |
| GREAT | HAND    | ISRAEL  | JOAB    | KING   |
| LAND  | LORD    | NUMBER  | OFFER   | PEOPLE |
| SAID  | SERVANT | STAY    | THERE   | THING  |
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