

2 Samuel Chapter 24 Commentary

2Sa 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."

Notice, God's anger was against Israel. Why? Because they were turning away from God and their God given king. We know this because they have, recently, twice turned away to self-proclaimed kings. God moves David to number Israel that he might punish Israel. We shall see that David is not guiltless, yet God does not hold him responsible in a personal way. How do we know this? When we get to the end of this chapter, we see that all the wrath of God, and the judicial judgment of God, is upon Israel, not upon King David or his personal house.

We are told in: **1Ch 21:1 "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."** Some will immediately say that is a conflict in scripture. However, we remember that God is the supreme ruler of heaven and earth, and Satan can do nothing that God does not allow. God demonstrates this perfectly in the life of Job. Wherefore, we say to those who see a conflict: undoubtedly God was angry with Israel, for turning from God, and from not following their God given king, and allows Satan to stir up David's heart to number the people. We also know what scripture records in: **Jas 1:13-15; 13 ¶ "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: 14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. 15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."** God cannot sin; neither will he tempt man to sin, but he will allow Satan to tempt man so that the providence of God is manifested.

Likewise, we must not forget what God told David in: **2Sa 12:10 "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife."** One of the definitions of "**sword**" is **destruction**. We certainly shall see destruction continuing in the house of Israel. Though this is not David's personal house, It is the house over which he is ruler as King of Israel.

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. 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? 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. 5 And they passed over Jordan, and pitched in Arzer, on the right side of the city that lieth in the midst of the river of Gad, and toward Jazer: 6 Then they came to Gilead, and to the land of Tahtimhodshi; and they came to Danjaan, and about to Zidon, 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. 8 So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. 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."

David tells Joab to go and gather the number of Israel. Joab, who is a war hardened general, tells David: the LORD thy God (notice that Joab says thy God not my, or our, God) add to the number of Israel even to a hundredfold and let the king see it; but why does my king want to do this?

Joab is reminding David that the number of Israel is not any information that is needed by the king. He is saying to David; only those who are seeking their own glory would number the people to bolster their ego. Joab is telling David; you are a man after God's own heart, and you know better than to go down this road, for it can only bring trouble. We know that Joab did not want to do this because we are told in: **1Ch 21:6 "But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them: for the king's word was abominable to Joab."** This is one time we see Joab in a good light, despising to do what he knows is sinful.

Joab's plea to the king fell on deaf ears. Remember, God is angry with Israel and has allowed Satan to move David's heart to do this. Therefore, even though reluctant, Joab and the captains of the host go through Israel and gather a partial number of the people.

We find further in: **1Ch 27:23-24; 23 "But David took not the number of them from twenty years old and under: because the LORD had said he would increase Israel like to the stars of the heavens. 24 Joab the son of**

Zeruiah began to number, but he finished not, because there fell wrath for it against Israel; neither was the number put in the account of the chronicles of king David." These are different accounts of the same one we are looking at here. We point out that the scripture says in **1Ch 27:24** that the numbering was not put into the **"account of the chronicles of king David."** Why? Because the numbering was never finished, because God's wrath upon Israel began to be poured out upon them. Wherefore, we only have a partial number here in 2 Samuel.

We notice; they separated the number of those in all the other tribes, who were counted, from the number of the men of Judah. Why? Judah was David's own tribe and his confederate defenders.

We point out these other places that are mentioned to say; if you study them together, you see a larger, and clearer, picture of what is transpiring. You can also resolve all perceived thoughts of conflicting scriptures. A reminder to us all: scripture is always true whether we understand it or not.

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. 11 For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, 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."

Joab gives David the partial numbers they have gathered. Then, God sent Gad the seer to David with a message. Gad told David that God was giving him a choice, of one of three things, as punishment for numbering the people. Notice, God now tells David you are guilty by telling him **"that I may do it unto thee."** King David's heart is smitten with guilt. David immediately turns to God in prayer for forgiveness of this foolish thing. Why the sudden change of heart and confession of foolishness? Because we are reminded again that David is a man after God's own heart. In confession and repentance David manifest this attribute God has given him.

How can this be? God allowed Satan to move David to number Israel because God was angry with Israel. David is guilty in that he did not recognize the sinfulness of numbering Israel, even after Joab rebuked him. However, the only punishment that David will suffer is the pain of watching God destroy the people of Israel, in his wrath against them.

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. 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. 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. 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."

Gad gives King David the three options. King David wisely chooses to have God make the choice and do his perfect will. King David makes this choice because he understands that God's mercies are very great. Wherefore, God begins the three days' pestilence that very morning. The pestilence killed seventy thousand men.

Next, we are told that the angel stretched forth his hand to destroy Jerusalem, and the Lord stopped him from further destruction, because God's wrath was appeased. Did you notice that the angel was carrying out the plague of death as commanded by God? The angel was by the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite when God stayed his hand.

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."

God opens David's eyes and shows him the angel that was killing the people. David says to God; I have sinned in numbering the people, but what have these sheep done? Thus, we see David voluntarily accepting the punishment for God's anger toward Israel as his own. David still does not know that all this is happening because

God is angry with Israel. David's request, for God to punish him instead of Israel, giving us the picture of Jesus Christ taking our sins upon himself that the sheep, the children of God, might not be slain. Thank you, King Jesus!

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. 19 And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded. 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. 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. 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. 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."

God sends Gad to David again and tells him: set up an altar upon the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite. Wherefore, David goes to Araunah, who asks why his king has come to his place. David tells him that he has come to buy his threshingfloor, to set up an altar to stay the plague upon Israel. Araunah, speaking to David as one king to another, here is everything you need; take freely whatsoever you need and do as you have said. He adds his prayer for God's acceptance of David's offering.

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 threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. 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."

King David tells Araunah that he will not use free gifts to make a sacrifice for himself to God. David says it must be at my expense that this is done. They agree on a price and David purchases the threshing floor and the oxen for sacrifice. David builds the altar as God required and makes the sacrifices thereon, of burnt offerings and peace offerings. God accepts the sacrifices, and his wrath now being satisfied against Israel, the plague is ended.

"So, the LORD was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel." God's wrath against Israel is now satisfied and stopped, through the intercessory prayer of King David. God stopped the angel from destroying Jerusalem, which was the home of David and his family. This is why we know that God providentially used David to bring his wrath upon Israel, who were sinning against God and had stirred up his wrath.

What lessons can we learn from this chapter? One lesson we see: man does not always see or fully comprehend the actions of God. Remember, David did not know that God was angry with Israel. Remember, God had told David in: **2Sa 12:10 "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife."** The word sword has the meaning **sword of destruction**. We can certainly see destruction in Israel, the house over which David was king, in this scene. So, we see the continuing judicial judgment of God against King David.

Also, we can see a prophetic picture of how God's anger is stirred up against all people because they are all sinners, as God has told us in: **Ps 14:2-3; 2 "The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. 3 They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."** God repeats it in **Ps 53:2-3**. Also, we find in the New Testament in: **Ro 3:9-12; 9 "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; 10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."** So that we see: we, all people, are under the same condemnation as Israel was in the Old Testament.

King David, looking upon dying Israel, which broke his heart, and made him willing to ask God to put the sin upon himself, and thereby to intercede on the part of sinning Israel, to spare the lives of those remaining alive: God used Jesus, in the pangs of his love for those that God had given him to save, to make the sacrifice of himself, that God's wrath against our sins might be satisfied, and we could be restored to a right relationship to God. God used our King Jesus, to accomplish his will and satisfy his wrath against the sin of all of God's people.

God used King David to pay the full price to make the acceptable sacrifice to stay the plague: God used Jesus to fully pay the cost to stay the plague of sin in our lives, by shedding his own blood, and giving his own life.

We thank you, King Jesus, for the voluntary sacrifice of yourself, that God's wrath against us may be eternally satisfied, and the plague of death for sin be stayed in our lives through the new birth. Thus, when we are born again, we are to live lives that are as the life of our sacrifice, Jesus Christ, sinless and pure before God and man. We shall go by the way of the grave, unless Christ return before we die naturally, but we will be raised, or changed, into incorruptible bodies to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. The plague of death will be forever ended for all of God's people, through the finished work of Jesus Christ, our King. Hallelujah! Amen!