

## David Numbers Israel

**Lesson Scope:** [2 Samuel 24](#)

### Lesson Focus

The events of this lesson occurred near the close of David's reign. He had led Israel to victory in many battles. He seems to have taken to himself some credit that belonged to God.

The statement that God's anger "was kindled against Israel" (24:1) suggests an undisclosed sin that involved the people. Perhaps they were feeling self-confident as well. This explains why seventy thousand Israelites died while David seemingly went free. The parallel account in 1 Chronicles 21 states that Satan stood up and provoked David to number Israel. Taken together, the two accounts complement each other. God, who has the greater power, does not tempt with evil (James 1:13), but He can withdraw His protection. Satan then brings as much evil and destruction as he is allowed. This does not mean that Satan overpowered David. David willfully acted contrary to sound advice and bore much responsibility in the matter.

God is always just. Whenever people sin, He faithfully exposes the wrong and provides the remedy.

This is the second of only two recorded instances of sin in David's life. As a man after God's own heart, it seems David's life was exceptionally noble and above reproach. Yet both of these unfortunate experiences cost David, his family, and even the nation most dearly. Sin brings serious and inescapable consequences.

The lesson is meant to stress the importance of humility, which certainly includes both carefully avoiding sin and carefully avoiding a critical attitude toward those who do fail. Jesus' words to His accusers certainly apply to every age and circumstance: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at [the accused]." The humble are less likely to sin, more forgiving of those who do, and more readily able to face the reality of personal sin

**Lesson Aim:** To see God's dealing with sin, and man's proper response to God's punishment.

**Theme Verse:** [Psalm 32:5](#). I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

## Lesson Text

### Sin Committed

[2 Samuel 24:1](#) <sup>1</sup> And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.

[2 Samuel 24:9](#) <sup>9</sup> 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.

### Sin Confessed

[2 Samuel 24:10-14](#) <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> 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.

### Sin Cleansed

[2 Samuel 24:15-25](#) <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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 threshing place of Araunah the Jebusite. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> All these *things* did Araunah, *as* a king, give unto the king. And Araunah said unto the king, The LORD thy God accept thee. <sup>24</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> 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.

## **Questions for Study**

### **Sin Committed**

1. How were the people involved with this sin?
2. Why did God disapprove this numbering of the people?
3. What are some ways Satan causes God's people to fail today?

### **Sin Confessed**

4. How did David recognize his sin? How did he deal with it?
5. How did David's choice of punishment demonstrate faith?

### **Sin Cleansed**

6. How did David view the reaping for his sin?

7. Why could David not accept the gifts that Araunah offered?
8. What results follow a proper confessing and forsaking of sin? Lesson

### **Analyzing the Passage**

Joab recognized the numbering itself as a trespass (24:3; 1 Chronicles 21:3). The Law required a half shekel of silver from each person numbered. This ransom money was an offering to the Lord to prevent a plague (Exodus 30:12). The numbering was never completely finished (1 Chronicles 21:6; 27:23, 24).

Gad (24:13) is called a seer in 24:11. As one who was in touch with God, he was one of the king's trusted advisors.

The scarlet thread of blood sacrifice runs throughout the Old Testament until it comes to rest at Calvary. The Lord directed Abraham to a place "which I will tell thee of in the land of Moriah, where he was to offer Isaac (Genesis 22:2). Later, the children of Israel were told to offer sacrifice at the tabernacle in the place "which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there" (Deuteronomy 26:2). Over and over again, the Lord impressed upon Israel the importance of their worship center.

Finally, in our lesson today, the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (a Gentile) became the scene of David's sacrifice to halt the slaughter in Israel. On this site (Mt. Moriah), Solomon built the temple (2 Chronicles 3:1), and nearby our Lord was crucified "without the gate" (Hebrews 13:12).

### **Principles and Applications**

#### **Sin Committed**

1. Satan is intent on causing God's people to fail (24:1). No one is exempt from his tactics. He knows our weaknesses even better than we do, which requires us to always be on guard against his onslaughts.
2. God deals justly and redemptively with His people (24:1). "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Hebrews 12:6). Sin begins with attitudes, which bear fruit in actions (James 1:14, 15). God faithfully sets up roadblocks through conviction and circumstances. Joab was one obstacle David had to deal with before he could proceed (24:3). If he had sought the Lord at that point, disaster could have been averted.

## **Sin Confessed**

3. God works through man's conscience to help him see his sin (24:10). David well described the work of the conscience when he said, "My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long" (Psalm 32:3). To respond with repentance is to find forgiveness, cleansing, and peace with God. To rebel is to become hardened and estranged from Him.

4. Personal accountability is necessary to deal with sin (24:10). God holds each person responsible for his own actions. Sin must be confessed to God. This is God's way of clearing sin (1 John 1:9). Man's natural tendency is to make excuses and to blame others for his wrongs. Doing so may salve the conscience, but it will only stand in the way of forgiveness and restoration.

5. Surrender to divine justice opens the way for divine mercy (24:14). A sinner must give himself up totally, and place himself in God's hands. When God sees a repentant response, He readily extends mercy and pardon. We must come on God's terms. As long as we have reservations and set our own terms for reconciliation, we will continue to struggle and will fail to find rest. The counterfeit peace offered by apostates and psychologists quenches the Spirit and hardens the conscience. Jesus illustrated God's plan for a new life by a grain of wheat that is planted. It must die before the new life can spring forth (John 12:24).

6. The consequences of sin are never pleasant, but always just (24:14). God never gives us more than we deserve. Man ultimately deserved death for his transgression. Any chastening that we receive because of our sin is very just. God is no respecter of persons, but He will bring judgment according to the offense.

## **Sin Cleansed**

7. To experience divine mercy, we must follow God's method for dealing with sin (24:18, 19). God sets the terms for us to receive His mercy. Abundant mercy is available to those who sacrifice all their sinful desires and live in simple obedience to God's Word. If we do not deal with sin the way God outlines, He will not extend mercy, and we will be the losers.

8. Atonement for sin is always costly (24:21, 22, 24). David rightly refused Araunah's offer to donate oxen, wood, and the site for a sacrifice. That would have bypassed the commitment that goes with sacrifice. Sin is costly to man and to God. "For God so loved the world, that he gave

his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). Our cost, then, is to give our bodies a living sacrifice, dedicated to the glory of God instead of to the lusts of the flesh.

### **Important Teachings**

1. Satan is intent on causing God's people to fail (24:1).
2. God deals justly and redemptively with His people (24:1).
3. God works through man's conscience to help him see his sin (24:10).
4. Personal accountability is necessary to deal with sin (24:10).
5. Surrender to divine justice opens the way for divine mercy (24:14).
6. The consequences of sin are never pleasant, but always just (24:14).
7. To experience divine mercy, we must follow God's method for dealing with sin (24:18, 19).
8. Atonement for sin is always costly (24:21, 22, 24).
9. God sets the terms for man to experience cleansing from sin (24:13).
10. Divine judgment is under the control of an almighty God (24:16).
11. Watching the innocent suffer because of our failures is one of God's methods of stirring hatred for sin (24:17).
12. True contrition is evidenced by worship and sacrifice (24:24).

### **Answers to Questions**

*1. How were the people involved with this sin?*

The Lord was angry with the people for undisclosed sin (24:1). One possibility is that they were involved, along with David, in feeling complacent because of their sizable army and the victories they had won.

*2. Why did God disapprove this numbering of the people?*

He had not called for a census. Neither did David follow the prescribed procedure for taking one. David's motive seems to have been a carnal desire to glory in the nation's military strength.

*3. What are some ways Satan causes God's people to fail today?*

Pride causes God's people to fail. Satan uses a self-sufficient attitude to make God's people fail. He uses our human desire to fit in as a way to make us fail in our separation from the world. Overconfidence in our ability to resist evil is a sure route to failure.

*4. How did David recognize his sin? How did he deal with it? David recognized his sin through his conscience. "And David's heart smote*

him" (24:10).

David felt the full responsibility for his sin. He repented of his sin and asked the Lord to forgive him. He was willing to accept the punishment the Lord chose.

*5. How did David's choice of punishment demonstrate faith?*

David chose to place himself in God's hands because he believed that God, unlike man, would not punish beyond what was appropriate. From a loving God he could expect to receive mercy.

*6. How did David view the reaping for his sin?*

David accepted the consequences of his sin as his just due. He rejoiced in God's mercy.

*7. Why could David not accept the gifts that Araunah offered?* To give what costs nothing is really no sacrifice at all. The cost of the sacrifice says something about the degree of a person's commitment. David wished to express true repentance and a strong commitment to God.

*8. What results follow a proper confessing and forsaking of sin?*

We can expect that God will receive us. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). God removes both the sin and the guilt, replacing them with peace and joy. We then become recipients of all the riches associated with the inheritance of the saints

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

My faith would lay her hand / On that dear head of Thine, While, like a penitent, I stand, / And there confess my sin.

Believing, we rejoice / To see the curse remove:

We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice, / And sing His bleeding love.

—Isaac Watts

### **Research Guide**

1. Read the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 21.

2. Use a concordance to find the many places where God, in speaking of Israel's atonement, refers to "the place which the LORD shall choose." This culminated on Mount Zion.