

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**
[Adapted from Bethel Bible-
Presbyterian Church, 10 Downing St.
Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE STUDY CLASS

2 SAMUEL 24

LESSON 13C

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 24 concerns a census which resulted in God's judgment. David, as well as the nation, was punished for doing it. The chapter teaches God's holiness and God's mercy towards His people who repented after they sinned against Him.

God is no respecter of persons. When a person sin against God, he will be judged. The judgment will impact the people closest to him. In some cases, due to the covenantal aspect of our relationship with one another, the whole will be punished because of the sin of the part. In the case of Achan and his family who stole from the LORD when Israel destroyed the city of Jericho in Joshua 7, 36 men lost their lives in a battle against the men of Ai.

The nature and consequence of sin in our lives must never be underestimated. It is a very grievous offence against God. Sometimes sinful men including professing Christians have a very low view of sin. In order to avoid certain consequences such as a threatened lawsuit or imprisonment or death, they would compromise. They would not defend God's Word and God's Name. Vain excuses would be concocted to sooth their conscience. Noble motives such as maintaining

peace in the church would be used to mask the real reason of cowardice and fear.

David's last and final sin is recorded here for our instruction that we might not repeat it. David had done a lot for Israel in uniting her into a composite whole. But when David sinned, he would also be punished like everyone else. The punishment was severe but tempered with mercy because David truly repented. We must truly repent when our sins are pointed out to us.

COMMENTARY

**David Sinned by numbering the
people – 24:1-9**

David ordered a general census of the population to be taken. This incident is also reported in 1 Chronicles 21. The census could have taken place after David's many victories against the neighbouring kingdoms. A census is not wrong in itself in light of Exodus 30:12 – *"When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every **man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD**, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them."* [emphasis added] The ransom was half a shekel which was the price for the redemption of each man's soul. This was to acknowledge God's right and power over their lives.

The chapter which begins with the phrase "and again" refers back to 2 Samuel 21:1-14, an incident which has some similarities. The LORD was angry with Israel for their sins. The text goes on to say the LORD moved David to call for the census (23:1). Subsequently we learn that

David had committed a sin in calling for the census. How shall we understand this? Why did God cause David to sin by calling for the census? We know that God cannot tempt anyone to sin (James 1:13). 1 Chronicles 21:1 enlightens us by stating that Satan provoked David to number Israel. 1 Chronicles 21:1, *“And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.”*

Note that the phrase used in 2 Samuel 24:1 was “the anger of the LORD was kindled against **Israel**”, not David. Israel had sinned grievously against God. The nature of their sin was not mentioned. Due to this sin, God caused David to number Israel and Judah. The immediate cause was Satan who provoked David into numbering the people.

God had asked His people to take a census as recorded in the Book of Numbers. But why was David’s taking of a census sinful? Joab’s response to the king is revealing. The reason was that the “LORD thy God” could multiply the number of people in the nation, and the king would live to see it, “but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing”. The phrase points to David’s pride in his own accomplishment instead of giving God the glory as Joab had suggested. The calling for a census was sinful because it was out of pride. Joab was right.

However, David’s order as Joab’s king prevailed and the census was taken. Joab reported the result. 2 Samuel gave us the figure of 800,000 men that drew the sword for Israel whereas 1 Chronicles 21:5 gave us a figure of 1,100,000. 2 Samuel gave us a figure of 500,000 for Judah whereas 2 Chronicles 21:5 gave us a figure of 470,000. Could this be an error on the part of the

Bible as claimed by those who do not believe in the doctrine of Verbal Plenary Preservation? An examination of the Hebrew manuscripts revealed that there were no manuscripts from both passages saying that the numbers were wrong. All the Hebrew manuscripts from 2 Samuel put the figure as 800,000 and 500,000 for Israel and Judah respectively. It was the same for the passage in 2 Chronicles.

How can we reconcile the apparent differences? The key is in comparing the two verses. **2 Samuel 24:9**, *“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.”* **1 Chronicles 21:5**, *“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.”*

We know that the Bible is perfect. This is the basic unchanging assumption as it is clearly stated in the Bible. The differences between the two verses are:

- a) “there were in Israel” – 2 Samuel; “all they of Israel” – 1 Chronicles
- b) “valiant men that drew the sword” – 2 Samuel; “that drew the sword” – 2 Chronicles
- c) “the men of Judah” – 2 Samuel; “men that drew the sword” – 2 Chronicles

These differences are significant. The difference in the numbering of the Israelites is 300,000. These were the men of Israel in general whereas the number in 2 Samuel referred to VALIANT men, hence the difference. In the case of the number in Judah

and 2 Samuel, the difference is 30,000. The number in Judah refers to all the men in general whereas the number in 1 Chronicles refers to only the men who drew the sword hence there is no real discrepancy.

God's punishment upon David and Israel – 24:10-17

David was convicted of his sin for he said, "I have sinned greatly in that I have done" (24:10a). David did not tell us how he had sinned, neither did the inspired writer. The only way we can deduce David's sin is to see the context of Joab's opposition. It probably lies in the sinfulness of David's attitude in calling for the census. It was his pride or self-exaltation. He wanted to glory in the number of his fighting men and the strength of his military exploits as recorded in chapter 23. In addition, he could be guilty of falling into the temptation of measuring his real strength in terms of human and material resources instead of the "rock" and "shield" of chapter 22.¹ And David must have realized that he had sinned because the Spirit of the LORD must have convicted him. David even considered his present sin more serious than his sin in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah. He confessed that he had sinned "greatly". He did not use this adverb in 2 Samuel 12:13. David considered the sin of self-pride and self-glory more serious than the sin of adultery and murder.

The LORD called the prophet Gad, David's seer, to inform David him that he had three choices of punishment (24:11, 12). The first

form was seven years (then brought down to 3 years after "bargaining") of famine in the land. The second was that he would be pursued by his enemies for three months. The third was three days of pestilence in the land. David chose the third punishment. The first punishment would incur seven (finally 3) years of famine and the people would suffer. But for himself he had enough supply of food. The second judgment would incur warfare and he had many to protect him. The third punishment would be a plague in which he was equally exposed with his people. David chose the third judgment. David gave his reason for choosing it. He believed that the LORD is merciful and it was better to be under Him than to fall in the hands of man (23:14).

Again there appears to be a discrepancy between the record in 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles. **2 Samuel 24:12-13**, "*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. 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.*" **1 Chronicles 21:11-12**, "*So Gad came to David, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Choose thee 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*

¹Howard F. Vos, *1, 2 Samuel*, Zondervan Publishing House, 1983, p.160-161.

advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me."

The differences between the two passages are:

- a) "I offer thee three things, choose thee one of them" – 2 Samuel; "Choose thee" – 1 Chronicles
- b) choice in question form -- 2 Samuel; choice made in statement form – 1 Chronicles

It appears that the two incidents are different. The first one points to a query by Gad to David which was stated in question form in 2 Samuel. These were the three choices proposed to David—7 years, 3 months, 3 days. It was common for God's servants to "bargain" with God similar to what Abraham did in Genesis 18. David might have bargained with God and God reverted with a new proposal which explained why it was given in statement form in 1 Chronicles.

Accordingly the plague afflicted the people from the morning until the time of the evening. Seventy thousand men, presumably of combat age, died. When the angel of the LORD proceeded to afflict Jerusalem, the LORD "repented him (moved with compassion) of the evil (calamity, suffering)." When David saw the angel that smote the people, he cried out to the LORD (24:17): "*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.*"

Men must change their attitude towards God. God changes His dealings towards men because of their changed attitude and conduct toward Him. He commanded the angel to stop. At the time, the angel of the LORD was by the threshing-place of Araunah the Jebusite.

David purchased the Threshing Floor – 24:18-25

The LORD then instructed David through Gad to build an altar at the threshing-floor of Araunah. David went to meet Araunah, who when he saw the king approaching, received him with respect and obeisance. Araunah asked the king the purpose of his coming to him. David plainly mentioned that he had come to buy the threshing floor in order to build an altar unto the LORD so that the plague would stop and the people be saved. When Araunah heard it, he offered the place free to David. But David replied (24:24): "*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.*" David rightly concluded that any sacrifice offered to the LORD must cost the person something. David built the altar to the LORD and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. Interestingly, Araunah's threshing-floor was northeast of the hill of Jerusalem, which was also Mount Moriah, the very place where Abraham offered Isaac (Genesis 22:2). This was the site on which Solomon built the Temple when he succeeded David as king of Israel. After the burnt offerings and peace offerings, the LORD answered the prayer in behalf of the land and the plague stopped.

PRACTICAL VALUE

The closer a Christian draws to God, the more he has to be careful how he lives. The standard is unlike the world. In the worldly realm, the closer one is to one's father who is

king, the more one tends to get away with nonsense, but not so in the case with God. David and the people of Israel sinned and God had to deal with both. The numbering resulted in the punishment of Israel and David. It broke David's heart to see Israel suffer. This is the heart of every godly leader. The people are your charge to nurture, protect and feed. When they are being punished, you feel the pain. It is like a parent who feels more pain in his heart when his son dies than if he were to die himself.

Repentance of sin does not free us from the punishment or consequence of sin. For example, if a person commits the sin of fornication and contracted the HIV virus and subsequently he repents of his sin and becomes a Christian, this does not mean that the virus will disappear from his system. He will most likely die of Aids. Criminals on death row, who become Christians, will still be hanged.

We also learn from David's example that any offering or gift to God that costs nothing is no "cheerful giving" to the Lord. Worship is an expression of giving of ourselves to God. We have given much to ourselves and very little in comparison to the Lord. Are we not rebuked by the Spirit of God when we expect so much from Him and give so little to Him? Indeed, we can reason that God does not need our gifts; but our gifts are the expression of our love for Him. The one whom we love most is the one we will give almost anything to. Has not God who loves us, given His only begotten Son for us?

Let us appreciate the wonderful faith that we have received in the Lord Jesus Christ, and not rob ourselves of the beautiful things in life on earth and in heaven. AMEN

DAILY READINGS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

2 SAMUEL 24

LESSON 13C

DAILY READINGS:

MONDAY: 2 Samuel 24:1-7; Proverbs 6:16-17; 11:2; 1 Corinthians 10:11-13.

TUESDAY: 2 Samuel 24:18-25; Ephesians 5:1-11.

WEDNESDAY: 2 Samuel 24:1-25; Romans 16:1-24.

THURSDAY: 2 Samuel 24:1-25.

FRIDAY: 2 Samuel 24:1-25.

ANALYSIS

TEXT	TOPIC SENTENCE
<p>2 Samuel 24:1-25;</p> <p>a. 24:1-9</p> <p>b. 24:10-14</p> <p>c. 24:15-17</p> <p>d. 24:18-25</p>	

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In your opinion, which of the following three sins is the worst, lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and the pride of life? Give reasons.

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2. The sovereignty of God and responsibility of Man is taught in this chapter. How do you reconcile these two seemingly contradictory truths in the Bible?

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3. How critical is the doctrine of VPP to you? Would you mind if you are told that the Bible has mistakes?

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4. Is it credible to believe that once upon a time God gave us a perfect Bible and that we have a perfect God and the revelation of all these truths is from a Bible with mistakes? Explain your answer.

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5. How important is courage in the Believer's life? Are you a courageous Christian? What are the implications if the pastor or elder is a coward but he knows the Bible very well?

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6. Evaluate the three choices that the LORD gave to David as a punishment for his sin. Which would you have chosen and why?

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7. What character trait did David show when he insisted on paying for the threshing floor of Araunah?

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