

May 4, 2025

“David’s Sacrifice”
Lesson 1

2 Chron. 21:14-30

Intro

Despite being “a man after God’s own heart”, David also committed notable sins. The most remembered are the sins of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband. When confronted with these, he wrote Ps. 51, which contains the line “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

But another sin of David’s had greater consequences to a greater number of people. David took a census to know the potential size of his army (2 Sam. 24:2, 1 Chron. 21:2). The results showed over a million men who could fight. But this census angered God because David’s pride in wanting to find this out caused him to reject/ignore his reliance on God to save Israel.

God, through the prophet Gad, gives David three choices to choose from: three years of famine, three months of attacks by their enemies, or three days of a plague. David chose the third option, with horrible results for his people.

Read 2 Chronicles 21:14-30

1. vs. 14: The plague sent kills 70,000 people!

2 Sam. 24:15 says the plague went from “Dan to Beersheba”

This is about 150 miles from north to south, hitting the whole of Israel

Every village would have been affected by loss

The sorrow and cries from these losses would have been everywhere for David to hear

2. vs. 15: God sends an angel to “destroy Jerusalem”

This refers to a punishment on the people, not the destruction of the city itself

The angel begins doing this, but then God “relented”

This only means that God changed what happened next

God stops the angel from doing what He sent him to do originally

The angel appears to have been directed to go to the threshing floor of Araunah

A threshing floor is where the seeds of grain are separated from the stalks

This place and process were vital to food production for the people

Araunah is a Jebusite, a people the Israelites were to drive out of the Promised Land

David apparently let some of them stay

Araunah’s presence shows he is in good standing with David and the people

3. vs. 16: David must be here at the threshing floor, for he sees the angel

He sees the angel’s sword out and extended over Jerusalem—a warning gesture

David and the elders (who also seem to be here) fall down before the angel

They are wearing sackcloth, rather than the fine robes of kings or leaders

Both the sackcloth and the falling down indicate the seriousness of this situation

David and the leaders are acting in submission

They are surrendering to the judgement of God

4. vs. 17: David takes ownership of the wrong done

He says that he was the one who ordered the census, not the people

He pleads with God to punish him for what he did, but to spare the people more harm

David's willingness to accept responsibility for the wrongs he did is important

This is exactly how he responded when confronted by Nathan about Bathsheba

This is opposite of how Adam and Saul responded when confronted with sin

See Gen. 3:12 and I Sam. 15:13-21

5. vs. 18: There appears to be a little time between vs. 17 and vs. 18

According to vs. 16-17, the angel and David and the elders are at the threshing floor

In this verse, the angel tells David to "go up" to build an altar on the threshing floor

To "go up" suggest going uphill somehow—but they're already at the spot asked

Also, David is asked to build an altar; his repentance and submission are not enough

6. vs. 19: The phrase "go up" is used again here, indicating David's actions

The phrase here suggests that David was obedient to do what God asked

7. vs. 20-21: It appears to be a normal workday for Araunah and his sons, threshing wheat

Araunah turns and sees the angel

Perhaps the sons did also, for they hid themselves, a sign of fear

Then David (the king) appears

The parallel account in 2 Sam. 24:20 says that David was accompanied by servants

It would be quite a shock to turn around and see an angel, then the king and his servants

Araunah left the threshing floor and bows to the ground in front of David

8. vs. 22: David is clear and to the point, asking Araunah to sell him the threshing floor

He tells his why—to build an altar

He tells the purpose—to stop the plague on the people

He proposes the price—full price of what it is worth

9. vs. 23: Araunah shows himself to be a good person

He offers to *give* David not only the threshing floor, but the things needed for sacrifices

He offers cattle, wood, and wheat that will be needed

This shows he is a generous man, as he asks nothing in return for these items

He also appears to be familiar with the sacrifice system

He says what the things are that are needed, without David telling him

10. vs. 24-25: But David refuses this generous offer for a good reason

What is the value of a sacrifice if it doesn't cost you anything?

David won't offer a sacrifice to God unless it costs him; it's not a sacrifice otherwise

He insists on paying the full price for what the site is worth

He also notes that he won't take something belonging to another for a sacrifice

David's offer is for the *site*, not just the threshing floor

600 shekels of gold is worth about \$400,000 today!

This land is where the temple eventually will be built

11. vs. 26: David builds an altar, likely one that was quickly put up with nearby materials
He makes his offerings, and God accepts them with fire from heaven
Fire from heaven can sometimes show judgement, sometimes approval
Given what David is doing here, the fire seems to show approval
12. vs. 27: After David's sacrifice, God instructs the angel to put his sword away
This is what David wanted, to spare the people any further harm
This is the outcome that he sought.
13. vs. 28-29: David here sees that God has answered in the way David asked
The people have been spared, and he has done himself what needed to be done
This verse also shows a transition from the tabernacle to the temple
The tabernacle was made by Moses 400 years earlier
It was currently at the high place in Gibeon (see 2 Chron. 1:13)
The altar of burn offering was also in Gibeon, about 5 miles to the north
The temple to be built will bring these two worship aspects to Jerusalem
14. vs. 30: David is fearful of going to Gibeon "because...of the sword of the angel of the Lord"
It seems that David doesn't believe he's been fully forgiven
The fear of the Lord and His power are still very present in David's life here

Application: An important aspect to this story is for us to understand that our sin hurts others. David understood that his prideful sin cost the lives of 70,000 men. But also of note is the time factor. It took nearly 10 months for the census-takers to complete their task. God waited patiently during this time for David to come to realize that what he was doing wasn't what God wanted. God is patient—but his patience also has limits.

Prayer: Father God, we are like David, imperfect servants because of our sin. Help us to avoid being prideful and from not seeing how our actions affect those around us. Help us like David to choose responsibility and repentance so that others don't suffer for our actions. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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