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**BIBLE STUDY**

**Straightway Church of Christ, Inc.**

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**“SATANIC INFLUENCE”**

**1 Chronicles 21:1-30**

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***I Chronicles 21:1 "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."***

In this chapter, the chronicler recounts the devastation that resulted from David’s pride when he commanded a military census. It appears, the sin in the lives of the people of Israel had brought on this attack. The temptation to number them came to David, and he succumbed to the temptation. This is the first time in the Old Testament to see the name Satan.

***II Samuel 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."***

A comparison of both narratives begs to question, which is correct. Did God stir David to take a census of the people, or did Satan? The answer is both. To execute his own judgment on some sin the people of Israel had committed, God allowed Satan to lay a snare for David by tempting him to take pride in the size of his kingdom and in the number of his troops rather than trusting in God. So, God put Satan on a short leash that allowed him permission to work on David. (This is similar to the scene in Job 1–2, in which God permits Satan to do a number on Job for his purposes.) We can learn about Satan’s influence and methods of deception from this incident. Satan likes to mess with our minds, our thoughts. The apostle James, in fact, explains the process by which Satan deceives people. It begins with our desires, which, in David’s case, was the desire to know his army’s strength.

***2 Corinthians 2:11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.***

***James 1:12-15***

***12Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.***

***13Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:***

***14But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.***

***15Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.***

***I Chronicles 21:2 "And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beer-sheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know [it]."***

David bought into the temptation presented to him, so he gave this order to Joab: Go and count Israel from Beer-sheba to Dan and bring a report to me so I can know their number. This numbering was not ordered by the LORD. Perhaps, David wanted them numbered, to see if everyone was paying their taxes. He could have wanted them numbered, to see how large an army he could put together. The reason does not matter. This will greatly displease the LORD. Joab was in control of his army, so he headed up the census taking.

***I Chronicles 21:3 "And Joab answered, The LORD make his people an hundred times so many more as they [be]: but, my lord the king, [are] they not all my lord's servants? why then doth my lord require this thing? why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?"***

***I Chronicles 21:4 "Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab. Wherefore Joab departed, and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem."***

It appears, from this, that David counted all the people as his servants. Joab tried to persuade David not to do this. He was afraid it would anger the LORD and cause Him to punish Israel. He was telling David it did not matter how many they were, they all were his servants. This was one time David should have listened to Joab. The sad thing was that many times the king would sin, and all the people suffered the punishment. Even though Joab did not want to do this, he had to obey the orders of his king. We read in 2 Samuel chapter 24, that it took nine months and twenty days to take the census. But Joab was thinking more clearly than his king and replied to David, May the Lord multiply the number of his people a hundred times over! My lord the king, aren’t they all my lord’s servants? Why should he bring guilt on Israel? In other words, Joab tried to help David see the sinfulness of his actions, but he was overruled. He had to carry out the census against his own wishes and better judgment.

***I 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."***

***I Chronicles 21:6 "But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them: for the king's word was abominable to Joab."***

***I Chronicles 21:7 "And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel."***

***I Chronicles 21:8 "And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly."***

This is saying there were 1,100,000 men of Israel who drew the sword and 470,000 men of Judah who drew sword. Verse 6 informs us that Joab didn’t actually complete the census because the king’s command was detestable to him. More important, it was also evil in God’s sight, so he afflicted Israel. There is no reason given for Joab not numbering Benjamin, or Levi, except that he was totally opposed to the census. Levi was not counted, probably, because their men did not go to war, or pay taxes. We know that David's conscience had gripped him so greatly, that he began to grieve at the sin he had committed. Whereas before, Satan had appealed to David’s desires to lead him to sin, the Holy Spirit apparently worked on David’s conscience to lead him to repent.

***2 Samuel 24:10 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.***

We read earlier that God was already angry with the people was why he allowed David to be tempted in this way. The punishment of a king comes on the people who are his subjects, as well as the king. David immediately repented and asked God to remove the sin. We are not certain whether some punishment had already begun upon the people, or not. We do know David was greatly grieved. He confessed to God: I have sinned greatly. Now, please take away your servant’s guilt, for I’ve been very foolish. To repent means to change one’s mind and reverse direction. It’s like reversing course when you realize you’ve been traveling the wrong road. David’s confession of his sin was what the Lord was waiting for, but it did not eliminate the consequences of his sin.

***I Chronicles 21:9 "And the LORD spake unto Gad, David's seer, saying,"***

***I Chronicles 21:10 "Go and tell David, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three [things]: choose thee one of them, that I may do [it] unto thee."***

***I Chronicles 21:11 "So Gad came to David, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Choose thee"***

***I Chronicles 21:12 "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 advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me."***

***I Chronicles 21:13 "And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the LORD; for very great [are] his mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man."***

David's seer is, also, called the prophet, Gad. The LORD always cares for His people. He heard the cry for forgiveness from David, and now sends the prophet with a message to him. The LORD will give David the option of three different punishments he could take. He will definitely be punished for this, but he will choose which punishment. Any of the three would be terrible to bear. It appears, since David was trying to find the number of subjects he had, as if they were his possession, the LORD will take some of the people in either punishment. David must decide which would be the less painful. This would be a difficult choice to make. Perhaps, he would prefer the one that would be over the fastest. It would, also, place himself into the hands of the LORD, rather than their enemies around them. God is faithful to discipline us for our sin—for our good and for his glory. So, through Gad the seer, God confronted David with three choices of consequences for his actions. Each of the choices was horrific, so David chose to appeal to God’s grace. He said, Let me fall into the Lord’s hands because his mercies are very great. David knew that though the Lord’s discipline can be extremely severe, he doesn’t exercise it as with vengeance toward an enemy, but rather as a father toward his children.

***I Chronicles 21:14 "So the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men."***

***I Chronicles 21:15 "And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite."***

***Chronicles 21:16 "And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders [of Israel, who were] clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces."***

God sent a plague on Israel and seventy thousand Israelite men died. The angel was wreaking havoc when God relented and ended the destruction. When David saw him with his drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem, he and the elders fell facedown. This scene brings us to an important aside: angels in the Bible aren’t pictured as sweet cherubs with rosy cheeks. When visible in all their glory, they’re overwhelming and fearsome-looking creatures. Even in the face of the punishment which David knew he deserved, he still wanted whatever punishment was to come to be inflicted by the LORD. He knew the LORD was full of mercy. As bad as the loss of the 70,000 men was, it was, probably, less than they would have had from war, or famine. This was soon over. God sent a destroying angel to perform the punishment on the people. He was so displeased with David, and in fact, all Israel that He was about to allow the angel to destroy Jerusalem. God's wrath subsided, and He changed His mind about destroying Jerusalem. God started the killing by the angel, and now, He stops it. Jerusalem is the city of God. This was His place of fellowship with mankind. The angel was between heaven and earth. The threshingfloor of Ornan was the point at which the destruction stopped. We have discussed before that sackcloth was a sign of great mourning. When David's spiritual eyes were opened, and he saw the angel with the drawn sword over Jerusalem, he and the elders fell on their faces before their LORD.

***I Chronicles 21:17 "And David said unto God, [Is it] not I [that] commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but [as for] these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued."***

David takes total responsibility for the sin of numbering the people. He speaks to God and asks Him to remove the punishment from the people for the sin he, himself, had committed. David is willing to take whatever punishment God has for him but pleads for his subjects. David begged God for mercy. He said, Wasn’t I the one who gave the order to count the people? I am the one who has sinned and acted very wickedly. In other words, he didn’t attempt to excuse his actions or explain them away. He didn’t claim he’d made a mistake. David called what he’d done what it was: sin. He accepted full responsibility for it, and he pleaded with God to punish him instead of the people. When the Holy Spirit convicts you of your sin, humbly agree with him.

***I Chronicles 21:18 "Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite."***

***I Chronicles 21:19 "And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the LORD."***

An insight gained here helps explain why the chronicler included this larger story in God’s Word. The rest of the chapter describes how David purchased this piece of property, the threshing floor of Ornan, on which to build an altar and offer sacrifices to atone for his sin and stop the plague. This is where Abraham had taken Isaac to sacrifice him to the LORD. We, also, know that God stayed his hand, and did not allow him to do this. This is supposed to be the spot where Abraham met Melchizedek and gave him a tithe. This would later be in the area of the temple. This particular site was a very special place. God wants David to build an altar in this spot where so many wonderful meetings with God and man had been previously made. David immediately obeyed the LORD. He knew that Gad was bringing him God's message.

***I Chronicles 21:20 "And Ornan turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing wheat."***

***I Chronicles 21:21 "And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshingfloor, and bowed himself to David with [his] face to the ground."***

***I Chronicles 21:22 "Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of [this] threshingfloor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people."***

***I Chronicles 21:23 "And Ornan said unto David, Take [it] to thee, and let my lord the king do [that which is] good in his eyes: lo, I give [thee] the oxen [also] for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I give it all."***

***I Chronicles 21:24 "And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take [that] which [is] thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost."***

The fear of the LORD had gripped Ornan. He and his sons were aware of the judgment of God on the people for the sin of David and they were afraid they would be killed too, so they hid. Ornan recognized his king, and he came to find what he wanted. It was a custom to bow to the king. David had immediately come to buy the threshingfloor, where God had told him to build an altar. David asked the owner to sell him the piece of land at full price no favors, no discounts. He said, Give it to me for the full price, so the plague on the people may be stopped. David did not want Ornan to give it to him. He wanted to pay full price to Ornan for the threshingfloor. He explained to Ornan the purpose of his desire for the threshingfloor, was to build an altar to the LORD there. He, also, expresses the urgency of the matter by telling him this was to stop the plague. Ornan was concerned about the plague, also. He was willing to give the threshingfloor to David for the purpose of putting up an altar there. He was even willing to give him the oxen for the sacrifice, as well. Ornan was more than glad to do his part and donate the land, but his offer only led to David’s famous statement, I insist on paying the full price, for I will not take for the Lord what belongs to you or offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing. Now, if our churches were infused with this kind of attitude toward God and Christian service, we would have fewer problems. David understood that sacrifice isn’t sacrifice if it doesn’t hurt. Likewise, service isn’t service if it doesn’t cost you something.

***I Chronicles 21:25 "So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight."***

***I Chronicles 21:26 "And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering."***

***I Chronicles 21:27 "And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof."***

***I Chronicles 21:28 "At that time when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there."***

***I Chronicles 21:29 "For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, [were] at that season in the high place at Gibeon."***

***I Chronicles 21:30 "But David could not go before it to inquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD."***

After David bought the land from Ornan, built an altar, and made offerings to the Lord. It would not have been an offering from David, if the expense of the offering had been paid for by Ornan. David wanted this offering to be his. It must cost him his own money for the offering to be his. David wanted to pay and must pay for this offering to be from him. This shekel was a half ounce of gold. This means that David paid him 300 ounces of gold for the whole thing. At present prices of about $400.00 per ounce, this would figure $120,000. We can see this was a large amount to pay. God answered him with fire from heaven and commanded the angel to put his sword back into its sheath. This answering by fire would have been similar to the fire that came from heaven in Elijah's day. The burnt and peace offering were accepted of God. This, probably, means that fire from heaven came and consumed the burnt offering. for destruction. The plague is stayed. In the midst of this, David immediately recognized the importance of his purchase: This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel. The temple will be built on this sight many years later by Solomon, David's son. This would be the place of sacrifice, as long as David lived. God had met with David, showing him where he wanted to meet with him. This is speaking of David not going to Gibeon. God had shown David where He wanted him to sacrifice.

**QUESTIONS**

1. Who stood up against Israel?
2. What did David do, that was displeasing to God?
3. Why did David want the people numbered?
4. Who was to lead the numbering?
5. How did he feel about the numbering?
6. How long did it take for the census?
7. How many men of Israel did they count of the age to go to war?
8. In verse 8, what did David say to God?
9. Who was David's seer?
10. What offer of punishment did God make to David?
11. Why did God take some of David's people in any of the three punishments?
12. How many people died from the punishment of the LORD?
13. Who did God send to Jerusalem?
14. What does verse 15 say, that God did to stop Him from letting the angel destroy Jerusalem?
15. When David lifted up his eyes, what did he see?
16. What did David and the elders do when David saw this?
17. In verse 17, who did David blame for this?
18. What did the angel of the LORD tell Gad to tell David?
19. What did David do, when Gad gave him the message?
20. What did Ornan do, when he saw David?
21. Why would David not take the place as a gift from Ornan?
22. How much did David pay Ornan?
23. How did David know his offering was accepted of God?
24. What would Solomon build here later on?
25. How long will David sacrifice here?