

Disciplined
2 Samuel 24:10-25
August 26

Our lesson focuses on a passage of Scripture that raises some interesting questions.

First, why was God angry with Israel? The book of 2 Samuel ends in a negative way. People suffered because of the actions of King David. The chapter opens with God's anger against Israel again. The biblical text does not state the reason for God's anger. In my opinion, the key term in verse one is "again." I personally think God's anger arose because of the people's continual lack of truth/faith in God.

Second, who incited David to complete a census of Israel and why? 1 Chronicles 21.1 states, "Satan rose up *against Israel* and incited David to count the people of Israel." 2 Sam 24.1 states, "The Lord's anger burned *against Israel* again, and he stirred up David *against them*." It is important to notice the common terminology the Bible used to describe the same event as well as the key difference. Both 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles state that God directed His anger "against Israel." The difference is that 1 Chronicles seems to ascribe the impetus for David's census to Satan while 2 Samuel ascribes the impetus for the census to God. Is there a contradiction? God can use Satan for His purposes, but I think there is a possible solution. The Hebrew term "Satan" means adversary. In the Hebrew Bible, the term "Satan" can describe the fallen angel and leader of rebellion against God. The term, however, can have the general meaning "adversary" without the connotation of the devil. For example, the Philistines viewed David as a potential "satan" or "adversary" as David mingled with the Philistines as he hid from Saul. "Send that man back and let him return to the place you assigned him. He must not go down with us into battle only to become our adversary [Heb. 'satan'] during the battle" (1 Sam 29.4 CSB). 2 Samuel 19.22 provides another example, "Send that man back and let him return to the place you assigned him. He must not go down with us into battle only to become our adversary [Heb. 'satan'] during the battle" (CSB). Furthermore, everywhere else in the Hebrew Bible the definite article precedes the term adversary when the reference is to the evil power – "the Satan." The Hebrew Bible lacks a definite article. Perhaps 1 Chronicles 21.1 might be translated, "An adversary rose up against Israel. . ." Thus, God in his adversarial role against Israel incited David to take the census rather than both God and Satan being the powers that motivated David to begin a census.

Third, what is wrong with taking a census for ascertaining the military strength of the people of God? Why was the military commander Joab opposed to the census? At God's direction, Moses conducted a census of potential soldiers prior to entering the land of promise (Num. 1.1-4). David requested the military commander Joab to conduct a census most for the purpose of discerning the military strength of Israel. 2 Samuel 24.9 details the results of the census in terms of military strength. According to 2 Samuel 24.3, Joab, David's military commander, protested, "Why?" David likely desired a census to ascertain the combined forces of Israel's professional army and militia (or what we would call 'reservists.')

establishment. Perhaps Joab took offense at David's request because he thought the regular army was sufficient. God may have viewed the purpose of the census as pride on David's part. "Some take pride in chariots, and others in horses, but we take pride in the name of the Lord our God (Ps. 27.7). David's action certainly was one he needed to confess.

Third, what are the consequences of sin? As a result of the action of completing a census, "David's conscience bothered him" (2 Sam. 24.10). When confronted by the prophet Nathan the prophet after his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah's death, David confessed, "I have sinned against God (1 Sam. 12.13). Prior to a confrontation with the prophet Gad, David confessed, "I have sinned *greatly*" (2 Sam. 24.10). David became more sensitive to his personal sin. David requested God that take away his guilt. Our sins have serious consequences for other people. The prophet outlined three possible punishments. David choose the punishment of shorter more intense punishment. When David saw the devastation his sin caused others, he prayed that God would take his life (v. 17).

Fourth, how should people (leaders) respond to tragedies? David interceded for the people as they suffered as a result of the plague. After the plague ceased, David sought out a place to build an altar and worship God because He showed grace. David offered to purchase the threshing floor of the owner because he knew that worship costs. God prohibited David from building the temple – a role God gave to Solomon. In gratitude for God's mercies, David was able to purchase the land upon which Solomon was able to build the temple.