

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 12



the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

PUNISHMENT FOR NUMBERING ISRAEL

Scripture Text: 2 Samuel 24:1-25

Sin brings punishment; repentance brings forgiveness; Christ is the only atonement for our sins; for Christ to be our sacrifice, He must be accepted by us.

Because of some sin that Israel had committed and the census that David was taking of the people in order to ascertain the military strength of his people, God sent a terrible plague upon Israel. In less than one day seventy thousand men died throughout the land. When David saw the great plague he cried unto the Lord, saying, "Lo, I have sinned."

MEMORY VERSE: *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*
– *Psalms 32:5*

David Stubbornly Numbers Israel

2 Samuel 24:1-9 God is never angry without reason. His reason for anger against Israel here is not given. No doubt it was for pride or rebellion. It is obvious that David had conquest in mind when he sought to number Israel, for only men of fighting age were counted (**2 Samuel 24:9**). David did not seek the Lord's will in this, as we can see God was not pleased. It was sin for David.

Samuel says the Lord **moved David** to do this. **1 Chronicles 21:1** says Satan, or an adversary, provoked him to do it. **James 1:13** says God does not tempt us to do evil. No doubt Satan tempted him and God allowed it for punishment, because Israel was not in condition to receive God's help. Numbering people is not evil of itself, only if done from a wrong motive. (**1 Chronicles 21** adds more detail.) David's motive was to lean on the strength of man with many soldiers. He failed to lean on God Who had taken him through other battles of the past, regardless of numbers.

Joab tried to persuade David otherwise but could not. After nearly ten months they returned with the report. There is a discrepancy between the figures given in the two accounts. This may have resulted from copiers misreading the Hebrew characters denoting numbers, some of which are easily mistaken for others, or if a small line on one became obliterated with age, it might appear as another.

The Blessing of Repentance

2 Samuel 24:10 David now realized the wrong of his act. **I have sinned greatly. . . .** God put conviction in his heart. Conviction of sin is sent for the purpose of turning one away from the sin and to God. David responded to Him with confession and repentance. **I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity. . . .** Now David was on the way to forgiveness.

One door which **MUST** be passed through to reach God is repentance. Although concession and repentance are painful they are great blessings because of what they accomplish. Repentance is a shedding, separation from the sin, a clearing of ourselves. Repentance leads to God, to union with Him, to cleansing from sin, and brings peace to the heart.

David sinned deeply, yet his Psalms abound in joy, confidence, assurance, and hope. **The Lord is the strength of my life. . . (Psalm 27:1). Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous. . . (Psalm 33:1). I will bless the Lord at all times (Psalm 34:1).** This was because of the quality of his repentance.

David opened his heart with childlike simplicity—quickly, freely, fully, no reservations, or covering up. We must guard against partial repentance. To try to reform in our own strength, to blame others, to excuse self, to

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cling to a bit of sin, to cover it, to delay—these keep us from the blessing of forgiveness. **The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance (Romans 2:4).**

A Choice of Punishment

2 Samuel 24:11-17 God spoke to David through His prophet Gad. David was given the choice of three—(1) seven years of famine, (2) three months of war, or (3) three days of pestilence. David chose to fall into the hands of God and not man. He believed in God's goodness and mercy, he trusted Him, he yielded to Him. So the Lord sent a pestilence. Seventy thousand died.

The servant of God who brought the pestilence was an angel. The Lord stopped him just short of destroying the people of Jerusalem. When David saw the angel, the sight seems to have brought him to a fresh rush of repentance and submission toward God and pity for his people. He cried unto the Lord, saying, **Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand . . . be against me. . . .** Like Moses of old who prayed that God would blot him out of the Book of Life instead of the children of Israel (**Exodus 32:32**), David took the blame, accused no one else and willingly yielded to punishment. These are the marks of complete and genuine repentance. The hand of the angel was stayed and the people were spared further trouble.

Atonement Made

2 Samuel 24:18-25 Another message from God came to David through Gad. **Rear an altar . . .** that is, offer a sacrifice to the Lord. It was to be offered at the place where the pestilence was stayed, where the angel stopped at the threshingfloor of Araunah. David obeyed. Araunah would have freely given the floor and all with it to David. But David felt the offering would not be truly his if it cost him nothing. So he paid. Had he not paid, it would have been Araunah's sacrifice, not his, and so of no avail as satisfaction for David's sin. By paying, he made it his and offered it as his. **The plague was stayed.** The Lord confirmed His acceptance by sending fire upon David's sacrifice. This answer from Heaven gave David sure confidence.

On this same spot, where Abraham had willingly placed his son, Isaac, on an altar as a sacrifice to God a thousand years before, but was prevented from killing him by the angel, God's mercy had once again been shown toward Israel. It is little wonder then that this hallowed place was selected later on as the site of Solomon's Temple (**2 Chronicles 3:1**).

Christ Is Our Atonement

Seventy thousand of Israel died for the sin of numbering the people and the sin which angered the Lord in the first place. No doubt many of these were innocent. There are many examples of innocent animals of sacrifice which died to atone for sin. These are types to teach us that sin has a substitutionary sacrifice. They point to the only Sacrifice to atone for our sins, Jesus Christ (**1 Peter 2:24**).

David had to make the properties his own before the sacrifice could atone for HIS sin. He bought them, and then gave them as his own. Christ must be our own before His sacrifice can atone for OUR sins. What do we pay to make Him ours? Ourselves. Yes, our lives, our love, our trust, our all. This is the only sacrifice He accepts.

Efforts to support work of the church by sales, suppers, and solicitations are an attempt to offer that which costs us nothing.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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