

THEME: Understanding The Sinful Census

TEXT: 2 Samuel 24

TS: There are a lot of things I still have absolutely no understanding of in the Bible. I believe God is just, and cannot be anything but Just. His righteousness isn't just the most righteous thing I can think of, times a billion... It is so righteous that I would have no recognition or understanding of how its pureness if I saw it face-to-face!

I've heard ignorant people accuse God of being a bully in the Old Testament and a 'God of Love' in the New Testament. I once had a philosophy student from Coe College point out that it seemed mighty little in her estimation of God that He would make mankind susceptible to sin, and then punish mankind for sinning.

I remember telling her, (*this was before I know my Bible to the small degree I do even today*) that God didn't make Adam or Eve to sin, but rather they did it willingly, and it has been our fallen nature since the Garden to blame someone else for our sinful condition. See? We do it even today!

We're like the criminal who claims they would not technically be a criminal if we'd just get rid of the laws. No laws, no crime, right? :-P But the problem isn't with the law, but with the flow of behavior coming from the person.

However, when I come across **2 Samuel 24**, I wondered if maybe there was a valid point lurking somewhere. It must be that I just didn't see the big picture.

Q: WHY WOULD GOD PLACE IT IN KING DAVID'S HEART TO NUMBER THE PEOPLE AND THEN TURN AROUND AND PUNISH DAVID FOR NUMBERING THE PEOPLE?!?

THE RULES:

1.) The heart of the King is in the Hand of the Lord.

It is the rudder by which He has elected to steer is Sovereign Ship of Time.

ILL - Pharaoh's heart was hardened by God. Why? – Was it not so that Israel would leave with spoil, and that the Name of God be glorified clear unto the promised land, and that This Great Act would be remembered by His people and constantly used as a reminder unto His people when being pleaded with/pulled back to Him?

ILL - David's grandson, (*Solomon's son, Rehoboam*) who would end up dividing the nation, did so per prophecy, as the kingdom would be rent from David's house, for the most part, but not in Solomon's time. It would seem that Solomon's lament in Ecclesiastes about 'making straight

that which God made crooked' and the 'king who would not be admonished', would be yet another King's Heart in the Hand of God.

David's heart is moved 'Against Israel' to perform a census.

Here's the odd conflict, though:

- **2 Samuel** tells us that it was God's plan for this to happen, and clearly of God.
- **1 Chronicles** tells us that satan stood up against Israel and provoked (enticed) David to take this census.

Which is it?!? (*Obviously, from the text, this is not the correct question, as we can plainly see BOTH parties are involved.*)

The proper question should be: "WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?!?"

Clearly, there is something more at play than a simple census, and this is not the first time we read the LORD God and satan at the same point in time and same place involved in a matter.

Q: Can you think of another book of the Bible that features this SAME KIND of a scenario?!?

A: JOB!!!

Satan has been both allowed to vex (at times) and sometimes has even been used to ensure the sovereign will of God is carried out.

I will interject this thought: If **James 1:13** is accurate in its summation that God never tempts us to sin, but God's temptation is designed to grow us, and is ear-marked by a 'way of escape', it might stand to reason that God is allowing satan to vex David in this matter.

Scripture is pretty clear that they are both putting a hand to this, and that satan is trying to stand up against Israel. (*But then, when has he not??*)

THE END GOAL:

2. Israel is being clearly punished by God. But, Why is Israel being punished? What is it that they had done to kindle the anger of the LORD God?

For this, I honestly have no answer. I would not be so forgetful to say that Israel is, nor has been, blameless before God. In fact, they are CONSTANTLY having to be herded back to the LORD because they keep wondering in rebellion.

Mind you, even during King Saul's zealous and catastrophic reign, there was not only a still practicing witch at Endor... but SOLDIERS IN HIS VERY OWN PALACE THAT WERE IN COMPLETE KNOWLEDGE OF THIS.

While I do not know which exact offense this punishment would be addressing, I do not believe for an instant that God lacked for one. I find it completely within God's expressed character to use this

Sinful Census to bring about an occasion to punish Israel at this specific time, preceding the reign of peaceful Solomon.

THE MOTIVE:

3. Why would a census of Able-bodied warriors taken in pride be a 'sinful' thing?
David clearly DELIGHTED in this number

DELIGHT – When we read khaw-fates' (DELIGHT), we are looking at the same word first used when describing Hamor and Shechem's response in Genesis 34:19 tragedy of unrequited love.

ILL - Genesis 34 tells the account of Dinah, daughter of Jacob and tender-eyed Leah, who was defiled by Shechem, prince of Hivite country. (*Sex before marriage is a markedly NOT child-of-God practice, we should note, and condemned several times in the Scriptures*) Shechem is so taken with Dinah, he begs his father to go get her to be his wife!

The son's of Jacob (*Joseph's older brothers*) plot revenge and say they will relinquish all rights to Dina on the condition that Shechem, along with every Hivite male, be circumcised. This was a deceitful sell, as Shechem DELIGHTED in Jacob's daughter.

I classify this story as a tragedy in my outlook, because while there are many aspects I find repulsive and heart-breaking, God makes specific mention that Shechem was the most honorable Hivite there was, and it's a shame that he died as a fool.

None-the-less, as the young man delighted in his lover, so the soul of David delighted in the sinful census.

ILL - The word is used elsewhere when the wicked, self-centered king Ahasuerus finds himself indebted to Mordecai for saving his life. He calls in his chief of princes, Haman, to discuss the manner in which his deepest gratitude can be expressed... and it DELIGHTED the king to repay this long-forgotten debt.

The word is used again as LIKE in **Deuteronomy 25** when it pertains to a brother's duty to his child-less sister-in-law if his brother died. According to the Law, if a brother did not DELIGHT/LIKE he risked having his own name slandered. His house would no longer be known by his name, but rather, by the name of "The house of him that hath his shoe loosed".

ILL - So when we read in **Ruth 4** how **Boaz**, the NEXT next-of-kin, redeems **Ruth**, take careful note of what is going on here. The kinsman is offered the opportunity to redeem Elimelech's land and all his belongings. The kinsman jumps at this opportunity in eagerness until he finds out... **RUTH**, the MOABITESS must be part of the deal.

DO YOU REMEMBER THE REASON HE GAVE FOR SUDDENLY TURNING DOWN THE OFFER AND REJECTING HIS OBLIGATION, AS NEXT OF KIN, TO A MOABITE WOMAN?

“I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it.”

Did you get that? Talk about being stuck between a rock and a hard place, he opted to have his own family name turned to “The house of him that hath his shoe loosed” rather than taint his family tree with a woman of MOAB.

So saying, the man plucks his own shoe off and shoves it at Boaz!!!

And instead of bringing reproach upon himself, the elders serve as witnesses and declare a blessing upon **Boaz** and **Ruth**!

As Boaz obviously DELIGHTED to fulfill this obligation, so David DELIGHTED to see the results of the Sinful Census.

It took a little over 9 months for Joab and the Captains to traverse the entire nation evaluating and counting every able-bodied male who could be drafted into battle, should the need arise.

The Results were in:

Israel had 800k

Judah had 500k

TOTAL: 1.3M

We will note that according to 1 Chronicles 21, Levi and Benjamin seemed to have been missed in the census.

The moment King David was told the SUM TOTAL, his heart smote him and he was INSTANTLY convicted of sin, and driven to confession. (I might add, right where God was waiting for Him.)

THE PUNISHMENT:

4. Like some kind of a celestial game show of judgment, God gives King David (3) options to chose.

3 Years Famine

3 Months of being ransacked by the enemy

3 days of pestilence

Like the little boy who just wants to get the spanking and be done with it, I think most of us would choose the shortest route, don't you?

Yet, look into David's heart as he is vexed to the point of throwing himself upon the Mercy of God. And God chooses pestilence to be administered by the 'Angel of the Lord'.

God chooses (3) days pestilence in the land as punishment, and the Nation of Israel that boasted 800k + 500k able-bodied men is now -70k fewer! – And at the EXACT INSTANT the judgment is finished, God says, “It is enough!” ... before David even knows to build an altar.

KEEP (2) PRIMARY THOUGHTS IN FOCUS!

1.) Yes, God is just and righteous... And don't forget, He is also PLENTIEOUS AND QUICK IN MERCY!!!! God could have let the Angel continue on, but He chose not to.

2.) NOTICE THIS: David isn't punished. Because this grievance is with Israel, the people of Israel are punished.

CHECK OUT 1 Chronicles 21:17:

1 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.

1 Kings tells us that when David offers the sacrifice, the LORD was entreated FOR THE LAND.

How eager was the Lord to extend mercy?!? **1 Chronicles** points out that David built the sacrifice per the Lord's command, and GOD, HIMSELF, provided the fire from heaven!!! He wasn't going to wait for flint and kindling!

Did you know that grudges are a people thing?!

The difference between a judge and a grudge? One passes judgment once, and the other is a lifetime sentence.