

David's Census

Read the 2 Samuel version regarding the census that David took and then compare it with the parallel version in 1 Chronicles.

2 Samuel 24:1-25

Again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, "Go, count the people of Israel and Judah." ² So the king said to Joab and the commanders of the army, who were with him, "Go through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, and take a census of the people, so that I may know how many there are." ³ But Joab said to the king, "May the LORD your God increase the number of the people a hundredfold, while the eyes of my lord the king can still see it! But why does my lord the king want to do this?" ⁴ But the king's word prevailed against Joab and the commanders of the army. So Joab and the commanders of the army went out from the presence of the king to take a census of the people of Israel. ⁵ They crossed the Jordan, and began from Aroer and from the city that is in the middle of the valley, toward Gad and on to Jazer. ⁶ Then they came to Gilead, and to Kadesh in the land of the Hittites; and they came to Dan, and from Dan they went around to Sidon, ⁷ and came to the fortress of Tyre and to all the cities of the Hivites and Canaanites; and they went out to the Negeb of Judah at Beer-sheba. ⁸ So when they had gone through all the land, they came back to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. ⁹ Joab reported to the king the number of those who had been recorded: in Israel there were eight hundred thousand soldiers able to draw the sword, and those of Judah were five hundred thousand.

¹⁰ But afterward, David was stricken to the heart because he had numbered the people. David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O LORD, I pray you, take away the guilt of your servant; for I have done very foolishly." ¹¹

When David rose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, ¹² "Go and say to David: Thus says the LORD: Three things I offer you; choose one of them, and I will do it to you."

¹³ So Gad came to David and told him; he asked him, "Shall three years of famine come to you on your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' pestilence in your land? Now consider, and decide what answer I shall return to the one who sent me." ¹⁴

Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress; let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into human hands." ¹⁵ So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel from that morning until the appointed time; and seventy thousand of the people died, from Dan to Beer-sheba. ¹⁶ But when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented concerning the evil, and said to the angel who was bringing destruction among the people, "It is enough; now stay your hand." The angel of the

1 Chronicles 21:1 - 22:1

Satan stood up against Israel, and incited David to count the people of Israel.

² So David said to Joab and the commanders of the army, "Go, number Israel, from Beer-sheba to Dan, and bring me a report, so that I may know their number."

³ But Joab said, "May the LORD increase the number of his people a hundredfold! Are they not, my lord the king, all of them my lord's servants? Why then should my lord require this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?" ⁴ But the king's word prevailed against Joab.

So Joab departed and went throughout all Israel, and came back to Jerusalem.

⁵ Joab gave the total count of the people to David. In all Israel there were one million one hundred thousand men who drew the sword, and in Judah four hundred seventy thousand who drew the sword. ⁶ But he did not include Levi and Benjamin in the numbering, for the king's command was abhorrent to Joab. ⁷ But God was displeased with this thing, and he struck Israel.

⁸ David said to God, "I have sinned greatly in that I have done this thing. But now, I pray you, take away the guilt of your servant; for I have done very foolishly."

⁹ The LORD spoke to Gad, David's seer, saying, ¹⁰ "Go and say to David, 'Thus says the LORD: Three things I offer you; choose one of them, so that I may do it to you.'"

¹¹ So Gad came to David and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Take your choice: ¹² either three years of famine; or three months of devastation by your foes, while the sword of your enemies overtakes you; or three days of the sword of the LORD, pestilence on the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the territory of Israel.' Now decide what answer I shall return to the one who sent me." ¹³ Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress; let me fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is very great; but let me not fall into human hands." ¹⁴ So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel; and seventy thousand persons fell in Israel.

¹⁵ And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it; but when he was about to destroy it, the LORD took note and relented concerning the calamity; he said to the destroying angel, "Enough! Stay your hand."

The angel of the LORD was then standing by the threshing

LORD was then by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. ¹⁷ When David saw the angel who was destroying the people,

he said to the LORD, "I alone have sinned, and I alone have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let your hand, I pray, be against me and against my father's house."

¹⁸ That day Gad came to David and said to him, "Go up and erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite."

¹⁹ Following Gad's instructions, David went up, as the LORD had commanded. ²⁰ When Araunah looked down, he saw the king and his servants coming toward him; and Araunah went out and prostrated himself before the king with his face to the ground. ²¹ Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" David said, "To buy the threshing floor from you in order to build an altar to the LORD, so that the plague may be averted from the people." ²² Then Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take and offer up what seems good to him; here are the oxen for the burnt offering, and the threshing sledges and the yokes of the oxen for the wood. ²³ All this, O king, Araunah gives to the king." And Araunah said to the king, "May the LORD your God respond favorably to you." ²⁴ But the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will buy them from you for a price; I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. ²⁵ David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being. So the LORD answered his supplication for the land, and the plague was averted from Israel.

floor of Ornan the Jebusite. ¹⁶ David looked up and saw the angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, and in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell on their faces.

¹⁷ And David said to God, "Was it not I who gave the command to count the people? It is I who have sinned and done very wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Let your hand, I pray, O LORD my God, be against me and against my father's house; but do not let your people be plagued!" ¹⁸ Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to tell David that he should go up and erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. ¹⁹ So David went up following Gad's instructions, which he had spoken in the name of the LORD. ²⁰ Ornan turned and saw the angel; and while his four sons who were with him hid themselves, Ornan continued to thresh wheat. ²¹ As David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David; he went out from the threshing floor, and did obeisance to David with his face to the ground. ²²

David said to Ornan, "Give me the site of the threshing floor that I may build on it an altar to the LORD-- give it to me at its full price-- so that the plague may be averted from the people."

²³ Then Ornan said to David, "Take it; and let my lord the king do what seems good to him; see, I present the oxen for burnt offerings, and the threshing sledges for the wood, and the wheat for a grain offering. I give it all." ²⁴ But King David said to Ornan, "No; I will buy them for the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, nor offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing."

²⁵ So David paid Ornan six hundred shekels of gold by weight for the site.

²⁶ David built there an altar to the LORD and presented burnt offerings and offerings of well-being. He called upon the LORD, and he answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering. ²⁷ Then the LORD commanded the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath.

²⁸ At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he made his sacrifices there. ²⁹ For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses had made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering were at that time in the high place at Gibeon; ³⁰ but David could not go before it to inquire of God, for he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the LORD. **1 Chronicles 22:1** Then David said, "Here shall be the house of the LORD God and here the altar of burnt offering for Israel."

1. What questions do you have after reading this account? What further information would be useful?
2. What important differences do you note between the two accounts?
3. Do you have any explanations for why there might be such differences?
4. Do you notice any overarching themes or perspectives that distinguish or characterize the two accounts?
5. How do you deal with the (sometimes irreconcilable) differences within the Bible?