

## 2 Samuel 24 Introduction

Chapter 24 is the *fourth* and final chapter of the appendix that concludes 2 Samuel (i.e., chs. 21 – 24). The concluding chapter of the book chronicles an event, most likely, late in David's reign. It is an episode *not* of spiritual strength, but rather, one of grievous spiritual weakness. In a similar instance many years previous, David lost his way at the *zenith* of his reign because of the "lust of his eyes," the "lust of his flesh," and the insidious "pride of life." This event that closes the book does *not* record David "walking" *in step* with the LORD, or in *close* communion with Him. But rather, the LORD is not anywhere in the picture, at the OUTSET. Instead, David once again is seen "walking" in the flesh; he who was "*the sweet Psalmist of Israel*." (23:1).

This is the account, however, the Spirit of God chose to end king David's illustrious life in the book of 2 Samuel. Why? Why close the book on such a somber note? Many reasons are possible for the Spirit's purposes in doing so. One reason might be that David's life is thus seen as pattern that is often repeated in the lives of many: lives exemplary and distinguished with spiritual highs, but at the same time lives marked by serious and painful spiritual stumbles, even up to the very end. In this manner, it certainly stands as a warning to all that, "*If a man thinks he stands, take heed, lest he fall*" (1 Cor. 10:12).

Moreover, it may be the Spirit's faithful reminder that we are never too old to succumb as prey to the devil. For, if this spiritual lapse can happen in David's "walk" with the LORD, it can surely happen to me!

Although, however, the chapter starts with a bitter episode in David's life; it *ends* on the most glorious note possible: God locates the place where His provision for sin will be fully and finally accomplished. For even the best of men fall prey to sin and need an atoning sacrifice to stay the certain and severe judgment of God! The chapter ends with God's good plan being worked out that "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20). God's hand of judgment was "*stayed*;" and, in its place His great mercy, love, and grace will prevail! Hallelujah!

**24:1-9**, David, enticed by Satan, acts faithlessly and **stumbles** spiritually, *again*. David commanded a census to be taken in Israel (v.1). However, since David's intention was to only count military men (vv. 2,9), "it suggests that he was interested in determining his military strength" (BKC, Vol.1, p.481) (Note: Perhaps this was in preparation for a regime change, in anticipation of Solomon's rule.). Joab, the commander of Israel's army, objected and counseled David that God could multiply troops if necessary and whenever the need might arise. Regardless, David the king insisted. The census was undertaken in a counterclockwise manner, beginning in Transjordan, east of the Dead Sea. From there the census went to the north, then west beneath Mount Herman and to the Mediterranean Sea; the census turned south from Tyre and Sidon and finally ended



at Beersheba. Only the recognized boundaries of Israel were included, no one outside of them was counted. The king's command took 9 months and 20 days to complete. But when it was finished, "*David's heart struck him*" (v.10).

**24:10-17**, David's heart convicts him of his great **sin** and foolish action. David knew the census was odious to Joab, but now he fully realized it was '*evil in the sight of God*' (1 Chron. 21:7). This section of the narrative both *begins* and *ends* (vv.10,17) with David's confession of his "*wickedness*" before God (v.17). In verses 10 – 17, clearly the humility and contrition of David's heart are *emphasized* by the repetition of his words, saying in verse 10, "*I have greatly sinned,*" "*I have done very foolishly,*" and again in verse 17, "*I have sinned, and I have done wickedly.*" In between these 2 verses that recite David's brokenness and confession, he is confronted with the consequences of his sin.

David must now choose the divine judgment on his sin; three options are given: 3 years of famine in the land (cf. 21:1); 3 months fleeing from the pursuit of his adversaries; or 3 days of pestilence from God upon the people. David "*in great distress*" (v.14) chooses pestilence from the LORD. As a result, 70,000 perish in Israel. The plague is stayed by God outside the city of Jerusalem, on its northside, "*by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite*" ("*Ornan*" in 1 Chron. 21:18).

**24:18-25**, God commands David to build an **altar** to the LORD. The *altar* that God commands David to build on this site, outside of Jerusalem, where the plague was stayed becomes the central subject of vv. 18-25 (Wow. How appropriate in light of the sacrifice that would one day be offered there, on the same site, when God's Lamb would be sacrificed for the sins of ALL, and God's judgment on *stayed* for ALL contrite and brokenhearted! Amen, and amen.). Verse 18 begins with God's command to David through the prophet Gad to build Him an altar: "Build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite" (v.18). And in verse 25 the chapter ends, and David built "an altar to the LORD there" (v.25). The end, however, is really not the end, but rather, it's a narrative of HOPE that projects us to God's future plan of redemption for ALL, and forever!