



First Chronicles - Chapter Twenty One

II 1 Chronicles 10:1-2 Chronicles 9:31 - The United Kingdom of David and Solomon (continues)

Summary of Chapter Twenty One

David foolishly requested that Joab undertake a military census, which the Lord had not commanded. Despite Joab's protests, David insisted so Joab did as his king had commanded. The Lord was angry with David for this sin and, through the seer Gad, David was offered the choice of three years of famine, three months of defeats by his enemies or three days of a plague sent by the Lord. David chose the plague. Eventually the Lord told his angel to stop the devastation of the land. David called upon the Lord to show mercy on his people for it was he that was at fault and not they.

The site where the plague was halted was the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. Despite being offered the site for free, David insisted on purchasing it from Ornan and he built an altar there and made burnt-offerings to the Lord and thus the plague was ended. This was the site where Solomon will later build the temple.

II.e 1 Chronicles 21:1-29:30 - David's Census and Preparation for the Temple

The Chronicler tells how David paves the way for Solomon to build the temple; even his sinful census yields a plot of land for the building site.

II.e.i 1 Chronicles 21:1-17 - The Census and Plague

The account of David's census and the plague it unleashes is moved from its location at the end of Second Samuel, where it is only loosely connected to the narrative, to a pivotal place in Chronicles, standing between David's wars in 1 Chronicles Chapters 18-20) and his temple preparations in Chapters 22-29, into which it immediately leads.

The purpose of the narrative here is not only to recount and explain David's purchase of the temple site, but especially to expound the meaning of the temple itself as the place of God's mercy and forgiveness, where sin is atoned for and its deadly consequences removed. Significantly, it is David, the principal model of 'seeking God' in this work, who exemplifies the need for forgiveness, as well as being the model penitent: *<<If they sin against you – for there is no one who does not sin – and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to a land far or near; then if they come to their senses in the land to which they have been taken captive, and repent, and plead with you in the land of their captivity, saying, “We have sinned, and have done wrong; we have acted wickedly”; if they repent with all their heart and soul in the land of their captivity, to which they were taken captive, and pray towards their land, which you gave to their ancestors, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name, then hear from heaven your dwelling-place their prayer and their pleas, maintain their cause and forgive your people who have sinned against you>>* (2 Chronicles 6:36-39).

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.'

1 Chronicles 21:1-2

Satan stood up against Israel. In 2 Samuel 24:1, it is God himself who in anger incites David against Israel, leading to the census. God's angelic adversary, which is the meaning of the proper name, is in no sense God's equal. Rather, Satan's counterpart in the Bible is Michael; refer to Jude 9 and Revelation 12:7-9. Still, the Chronicler wanted his readers to think of Satan's malice as God's means of carrying out his will; refer to the comment made on 2 Samuel 24:1. Nevertheless, David himself sinned in giving in to Satan's enticement and ordering the census. This census was sinful probably because it arose from David's presumptuous military ambitions and pride, rather than from God's express command. In addition, David neglected to levy the poll tax for a census required by Exodus 30:12, an act of disobedience that could bring plague on the people.

When Satan incites, he is interested merely in his own ends. He neither cares for righteous punishment nor looks for possible repentance, since they are as foreign to his nature as temptation to sin is to God's: <<You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies>> (John 8:44).

There is quite a gap in the historical record that the Chronicler passes over, including many family problems and a civil war. His reasons for a gap of this length are not difficult to surmise: little of what transpired during those two decades would encourage a postexilic Judah, before whom Ezra was seeking to portray a piety that characterised David at his best.

Go, number Israel. This was dangerous because of a principle stated in: <<*When you take a census of the Israelites to register them, at registration all of them shall give a ransom for their lives to the Lord, so that no plague may come upon them for being registered*>> (Exodus 30:12). The principle of Exodus 30:12 speaks to God's ownership of his people. In the thinking of these ancient cultures, a man only had the right to count or number what belonged to him. Israel did not belong to David; Israel belonged to God. It was up to the Lord to command a counting, and if David counted he should only do it at God's command and receiving ransom money to atone for the counting.

From Beer-sheba to Dan. This is a frequent statement indicating the southernmost extremity in the Promised Land to the northernmost point, therefore encompassing the notion of 'all Israel,' for example: <<*Then all the Israelites came out, from Dan to Beer-sheba, including the land of Gilead, and the congregation assembled in one body before the Lord at Mizpah*>> (Judges 20:1), <<*And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord*>> (1 Samuel 3:20), and: <<*So may God do to Abner and so may he add to it! For just what the Lord has sworn to David, that will I accomplish for him, to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beer-sheba*>> (2 Samuel 3:9-10).

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.

1 Chronicles 21:3-4

Why then should my lord require this? Joab was not afraid to speak to David when he thought the king was wrong. With the best interest of both David and Israel in mind, Joab tactfully asked David to reconsider this foolish desire to count the nation. Joab also hints at the motive behind the counting - pride in David. The thing that David desired was the increase of the nation, and he perhaps wanted to measure the size of his army to know if he had enough force to conquer a neighbouring nation. Experience should have told him that all he needed to do was to seek the Lord's will before going into battle and victory would always be achieved if the Lord confirmed he should go, for example: <<*David inquired of the Lord, 'Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will you give them into my*

hand?’ The Lord said to David, ‘Go up; for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand’>> (2 Samuel 5:19).

Why should he bring guilt on Israel? Guilt, Hebrew *’ashmah*, is a key term in the Chronicler’s theology; refer to 2 Chronicles 24:18, 28:13 and 33:2. This addition to 2 Samuel 24:3 emphasises David’s culpability.

But the king’s word prevailed against Joab. Second Samuel 24:4 reveals that it was not only Joab who tried to tell David not to do this - the captains of the army also warned David not to count the soldiers in Israel. But David did so anyway.

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 and 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.

1 Chronicles 21:5-6

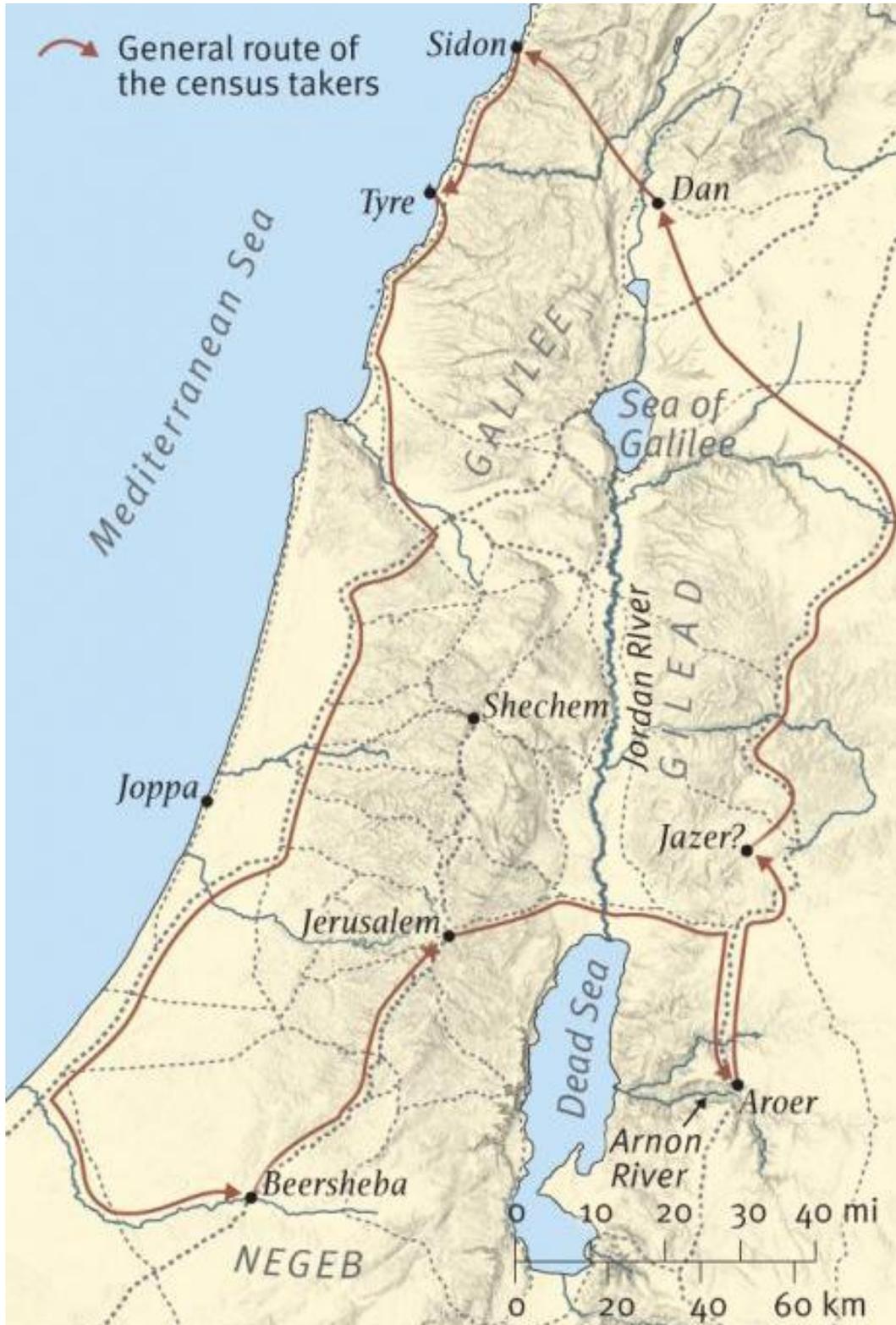
Joab gave the total count of the people to David. Second Samuel 24:5-9 indicates that it took almost ten months to complete the census. David should have called off this foolish census during the ten months, but he did not.

The Chronicler adds that Joab found the king’s command abhorrent, again emphasising David’s sinfulness, for which reason Joab excluded the priestly tribe of Levi from the count (perhaps in deference to Numbers 1:47-49), as well as Benjamin, whose territory included Jerusalem (the site of the ark) and Gibeon (the site of the tabernacle).

In all Israel there were one million one hundred thousand men who drew the sword. The parallel passage in 2 Samuel 24:9 records eight hundred thousand fighting men in Israel and five hundred thousand in Judah, which adds up to one million three hundred thousand in total. It will not do to call this apparent discrepancy a disagreement, since the Chronicler respected and drew on Samuel and Kings; but arriving at the exact explanation is a challenge. One possible solution begins by taking the four hundred and seventy thousand men in Judah as part of the total of ‘all Israel’ since, in Chronicles, ‘all Israel’ often includes Judah, and proceeds to notice that in v.6 the Chronicler says that Joab’s figures here were incomplete, for he did not include Levi and Benjamin in the numbering. Therefore, the census was unfinished, leaving the actual number of God’s people uncertain; refer also to 1 Chronicles 27:23-24, where the text again emphasises that the numbers were incomplete.

He did not include Levi and Benjamin in the numbering. The rabbis give the following reason for this: ‘Joab, seeing that this would bring down destruction upon the people, purposed to save two tribes. Should David ask, “Why have you

not numbered the Levites?” Joab purposed to say, “Because the Levites are not reckoned among the children of Israel”. Should he ask, “Why have you not numbered Benjamin?” he would answer, “Benjamin has been already sufficiently punished, on account of the treatment of the woman at Gibeah: if, therefore, this tribe were to be again punished, who would remain?”



David's Census circa 975 BC

David ordered his commander Joab to take a census of all the people in the regions in which he exercised direct control. The reason for this census was probably to assess David's military capacity. Joab's men left Jerusalem and began the census at Aroer, on the edge of the Arnon River. They progressed to Jazer near Rabbah, to Gilead, and on to Dan. After turning toward Sidon and the fortress of Tyre, they headed to Beer-sheba in the Negeb of Judah, and then they returned to Jerusalem. The map shows the extremities of the circular route with men being sent out to the towns and villages along the borders and in the centre in order to count the total number of fighting men.

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.'

1 Chronicles 21:7-13

But God was displeased with this thing, and he struck Israel. God would strike Israel with a choice of judgements offered to David. Yet God had already struck Israel by deeply convicting the king of Israel with an acute sense of his sin.

The man after God's heart was not sinless, but had a heart sensitive to sin when it was committed. David kept a short account with God. The main interest of this chapter lies in the revelation of the true character of David. His sins were the lapses and accidents of his life. This is not to condone them. It is, however, to emphasise that the habitual set of his life was different than these sins suggest, and the deepest truth concerning him is revealed, not by the failures, but by his action afterwards; David always came before God in repentance and acknowledged the sin was his fault - he did not seek to make excuses or to blame others for his own failings. It is also interesting that he did not let his failings discourage him for long but sought God and returned to the calling that the Lord had made upon his life.

I have sinned greatly in that I have done this thing. David's confession of guilt leads him to appeal to God's mercy, which is very great (the Chronicler adds 'very' to his source to underscore this point).

I pray you, take away the guilt of your servant; for I have done very foolishly. David now saw the pride and excessive vanity that prompted him to do such a foolish thing.

Three things I offer you; take your choice. God used David's sin and the resulting chastisement to reveal David's heart and wisdom. His choice of the following three options would test David:

- Three years of famine. This would surely be the death of many in Israel, but the wealthy and resourceful would survive. Israel would have to depend on neighbouring nations for food.
- Three months of devastation by your foes. This would be the death of some in Israel, but mostly only of soldiers. Israel would have to contend with enemies among neighbouring nations.
- Three days of the sword of the Lord, pestilence on the land. This would be the death of many in Israel, but anyone could be struck by this plague - rich or poor, influential or anonymous, royalty or common.

While the sword of your enemies overtakes you is a prominent image in the choice of punishments and perhaps an ironic comment on David's attempt to muster a great army of men 'who drew the sword' (v.5).

Now decide what answer I shall return to the one who sent me. God wanted David to use the prophet as a mediator, and to answer to the prophet instead of directly to God.

I am in great distress; let me fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercy is very great. This meant that David chose the three days of plague. In the other two options the king and his family could be insulated against the danger, but David knew that he had to expose himself to the chastisement of God. Had he chosen war, his own personal safety was in no danger, because there was already an ordinance preventing him from going to battle: <<*But Abishai son of Zeruiah came to his aid, and attacked the Philistine and killed him. Then David's men swore to him, 'You shall not go out with us to battle any longer, so that you do not quench the lamp of Israel'*>> (2 Samuel 21:17). Had he chosen famine, his own wealth would have secured his and his own family's support. However, he showed the greatness of his mind in choosing the pestilence, to the ravages of which he and his household were exposed equally with the meanest of his subjects.

But let me not fall into human hands. Although it is written: <<*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*>> (Hebrews 10:31), David knew

that the Lord was always just and merciful in his judgements. Men, on the other hand, were more likely to be wicked and merciless in their prosecution of David.

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-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.

1 Chronicles 21:14-16

So the Lord sent a pestilence on Israel; and seventy thousand persons fell in Israel. This was a great calamity upon Israel - a devastating plague striking this many in such a short period of time. It seems that almost every family would be in mourning for what had fallen upon their land due to one man's prideful sin.

The Lord took note and relented concerning the calamity. This justified David's wisdom in leaving himself in God's hands. He could not trust man to relent from destruction. This aspect of the Lord's compassion on repentant sinners is seen in Nineveh: *<<When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it>>* (Jonah 3:10). God honoured their repentance, even though their past sin was just reason enough for an outpouring of judgement. The state would never forgive a cold-blooded murderer who vowed to never do it again, but God mercifully relented from judgement against the people of Nineveh. God is never obligated to forgive people when they repent. Instead, repentance appeals to God's mercy, and not to his justice.

Did God's relenting make Jonah a false prophet, when he prophesied *<<Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!>>* (Jonah 3:4)? Not at all, for two good reasons:

- 1. God acted in total consistency with his Word:** *<<At one moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, but if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will change my mind about the disaster that I intended to bring on it>>* (Jeremiah 18:7-8). Jonah's preaching was like all warnings of judgement: it was an invitation to repent and avert the promised judgement. His words had an implied 'if you do not repent' in front of them. Remember the sum total of Jonah's preaching is not recorded; although it can be assumed that the statement in Jonah

3:5 is the central theme of what Jonah said, it should not be assumed it was all that he said.

2. God did judge Nineveh, as recorded in the Book of Nahum. Nevertheless, in light of their repentance he delayed it for another one hundred and fifty years.

The Chronicler does not tell his readers what the Lord noted; probably it is the impending calamity. The angel with the drawn sword over Jerusalem evokes the image of Abraham with his knife over Isaac in 'the land of Moriah' in Genesis 22:2 and 22:9-10. Uniquely in the Bible, the Chronicler will in fact identify the future temple site as Mount Moriah in 2 Chronicles 3:1. In both cases, the covenantal promises of Genesis 17:3-8 and 1 Chronicles 17:8-14 seem threatened with destruction were it not for God's merciful reversal of his command and provision of an alternative sacrifice as seen in Genesis 22:13 and in v.26 below.

Ornan is also known as Araunah. He was a Jebusite and thus one of the original inhabitants of the city some of whom had obviously remained after David had captured the city from them many years before.

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. At this point God had relented from the severity of judgement, yet the threat was still imminent. So David and the elders humbled themselves before God and David repented sincerely, acknowledging that the guilt was his alone.

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!'

1 Chronicles 21:17

And David said to God. In comparison with 2 Samuel 24:17, here David makes a fuller and more emphatic confession of his personal responsibility and guilt in calling the census and asks for the plague to be taken away from the people.

Let your hand, I pray, O Lord my God, be against me and against my father's house. Like a true shepherd: <<*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep*>> (John 10:11), David asked that the punishment be upon him and his own household. Having another purpose to accomplish, God did not accept David's offer. He would, however, accept the offer of the Son of David: <<*For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.*>>

I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father’>> (John 10:17-18).

II.e.ii 1 Chronicles 21:18-27 - David’s Altar and Sacrifice

David is instructed to build an altar to the Lord and he purchases it from the owner, Ornan, even though he is willing to give it to David for free. David purchased the land, built the altar, made offerings to the Lord and the plague was finally ended.

The altar is God’s initiative and provision for atonement. David’s purchase of the threshing floor of Ornan for the full price echoes Abraham’s purchase of the cave of Machpelah in Genesis 23:9 and continues the Abraham-David typology.

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.

1 Chronicles 21:18-19

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. This is where David met the angel of the Lord, and where God relented from the plague before it came upon Jerusalem. Now God wanted David to meet him there in an act of worship.

The threshing floor of Ornan had both rich history and a rich future. Second Chronicles 3:1 states that the threshing floor of Ornan was on Mount Moriah; the same hill where Abraham offered Isaac in Genesis 22:2, and the same set of hills where Jesus died on the Cross: <<So Abraham called that place ‘The Lord will provide’; as it is said to this day, ‘On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided’>> (Genesis 22:14). The decision of God to establish his altar and temple at Moriah in Jerusalem has affected all history: <<Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, ‘Come and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there’>> (Revelation 11:1); for this mountain became the focus of the Holy City, where his Son was crucified. And it will continue to affect history; for from this city he loves, he will someday rule the nations of the earth: <<In days to come the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into

pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more>> (Isaiah 2:2-4).

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.

1 Chronicles 21:20-25

Ornan turned and saw the angel; and while his four sons who were with him hid themselves, Ornan continued to thresh wheat. Partly because of the glory and majesty in which the angel appeared, which men’s weak and sinful natures are not able to bear; and partly for the fear of God’s vengeance, which was at this time riding circuit in the land, and now seemed to be coming to their family.

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. David wanted to transform this place where chaff was separated from wheat into a place of sacrifice and worship. It would remain a place of sacrifice and worship, because this land purchased by David became the site of Solomon’s temple; refer to 1 Chronicles 21:28-22:5.

Take it; and let my lord the king do what seems good to him. Ornan had a good, generous heart and wanted to give David anything he wanted. Had Ornan’s noble offer been accepted, it would have been Ornan’s sacrifice, not David’s; nor would it have answered the end of turning away the displeasure of the Lord.

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. David knew that it would not be a gift or a sacrifice unto the Lord if it did not cost him something. He did not look for the cheapest way possible to please God.

So David paid Ornan six hundred shekels of gold by weight for the site. According to 2 Samuel 24:23-24, David only paid fifty shekels for the threshing floor and the oxen. However, the reference here is for the site, most likely encompassing the whole area on which the temple complex would be built.

It has often been said that turning to Jesus for salvation will cost nothing and yet it will cost everything. There is always a price to be paid for coming to the Lord: <<*If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world – therefore the world hates you*>> (John 15:19), <<*Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*>> (2 Timothy 3:12), and: <<*Do not be astonished, brothers and sisters, that the world hates you*>> (1 John 3:13). However, the price is but a pittance compared with the price paid by Jesus and is a real bargain when one considers the eternal rewards for making that choice.

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.

1 Chronicles 21:26-27

David built there an altar to the Lord. This shows that David understood that the death of the seventy thousand in Israel in the plague did not atone for his and Israel's sin. Atonement could only be made through the blood of an approved substitute. Hence, Jesus had to die on the Cross as the only way that humankind could be fully restored to God.

David presented burnt-offerings and offerings of well-being. Burnt-offerings were to atone for sin; offerings of well-being or peace-offerings were to enjoy fellowship with God. This shows that from beginning to end, David's life was marked by fellowship with God. The man after God's own heart turns from his act of sin, repents and turns to an act of worship.

The Lord answered him with fire from heaven, signifying God's approval of the site: <<*Fire came out from the Lord and consumed the burnt-offering and the fat on the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces*>> (Leviticus 9:24), and: <<*When Solomon had ended his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the temple*>> (2 Chronicles 7:1). God showed his acceptance of David's sacrifice by consuming it with fire from heaven. God honoured David's desire to be right and to fellowship with God by answering with divine blessing from heaven. So it always is when God's children draw near to their God and Father for cleansing and fellowship.

The sending of fire from heaven answered a question that had burned in the heart of David for a long time. For many years, he had wondered where God wanted the temple to be built, and he sought for that place, as shown in: <<*O Lord, remember in David's favour all the hardships he endured; how he swore to the Lord and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob, 'I will not enter my house or get into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling-place for the Mighty One of Jacob'*>> (Psalm 132:1-5).

The fire on the altar from heaven confirmed the previous word of the prophet Gad that this was the place to build the altar and the temple. It can be seen that God simply uses Satan's provocation at the opening of this chapter to lead to the answer of this important question for David and for the nation of Israel. There were certainly other purposes of God at work, but this was one of them.

The character of Ornan's threshing floor reveals something about where and how God wants to meet with men. Ornan's threshing floor was:

- A simple, unadorned place - not like a fancy church at all.
- A place of ordinary work.
- A place bought with money.
- A place where bread was brought forth from grain.
- A place where the justice of God was evident.
- A place where sin was confessed.
- A place where sacrifice was offered and accepted.

Charles Spurgeon commented, "Do not believe for a moment that visible grandeur is necessary to the place where God will meet with you. Go to your threshing floor and pray; aye, while the unmuzzled oxen take their rest, bow your knee and cry to the Lord of the harvest, and you shall meet with God there amongst the straw and the grain. Fear not to draw nigh to God in these streets, but consecrate all space to the Lord your God."

II.e.iii 1 Chronicles 21:28-22:1 - The Place Chosen for the Temple

The normal place of sacrifice and worship would be at the altar in the Tabernacle that was still in Gibeon. However, David could not go there because of the plague. Instead he had been instructed to build an altar to the Lord in Jerusalem and that would be the site for Solomon to build the temple for the Lord.

This material is not found in 2 Samuel Chapter 24. It explains why David did not go to Gibeon to offer a sacrifice and why he concluded that God had authorised the transfer of that sanctuary to the new site in Jerusalem; refer also to 2 Chronicles 1:3-6 and 5:5.

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 21:28-30

When David saw that the Lord had answered him at the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he made his sacrifices there. David knew that there was something special about this threshing floor; he understood that God had sanctified the place himself with fire from heaven.

Again Spurgeon comments, “Abraham taught the fact of the sacrifice, while to David the reason of that sacrifice of Christ was explained. He was sacrificed to stay the plague - the plague of sin, the punishment of our iniquities.”

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. David had brought the ark to Jerusalem but had left the Tabernacle and the altar on which sacrifices should be made in Gibeon, attended by nominated priests; refer to 1 Chronicles 16:39-40. However, David offered sacrifices to the Lord in Jerusalem, not because it was convenient but because he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the Lord and the further harm that might be done while he travelled to Gibeon to make the sacrifices. Although it says that David made the sacrifices it is likely that he provided the animals from his own herds and flocks but that it was a priest that actually performed the rites.

^{22:1} Then David said, ‘Here shall be the house of the Lord God and here the altar of burnt-offering for Israel.’

1 Chronicles 22:1

Here shall be the house of the Lord God and here the altar of burnt-offering for Israel. David understood that the future temple should be built on this spot in Jerusalem. God had sanctified this humble threshing floor to himself. This is that very place foretold by Moses: <<*When you cross over the Jordan and live in the land that the Lord your God is allotting to you, and when he gives you rest from your enemies all around so that you live in safety, then you shall bring everything that I command you to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name: your burnt-offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and your donations, and all your choice votive gifts that you vow to the Lord*>> (Deuteronomy 12:10-11).