

I. Introduction and review.

II. David sinfully counts the people of Israel. v. 1-9 I Chron. 21:1-6

A. Who incited David to number the people: the LORD or Satan? v. 1 I Chr. 21:1

1. The parallel passage in I Chr. 21 states that Satan moved David to number Israel.
2. Some claim this is a serious contradiction in Scripture.
3. Instead it exemplifies the sovereignty of God even over Satan (and evil). Eph. 1:11 Ro. 8:28 9:17ff II Th. 2:11 Isa. 45:7 II Cor. 12:7ff Hab. 1:6 Is. 10:5 Gen. 50:20 Ex. 9:16 I Ki. 22:19-23
 - a. Satan needed the LORD's permission to tempt Job. Job 1:6-12 2:1-6,10
 - b. Those who killed Christ carried out God's plan. Acts 4:27f 2:23 Isa. 53:10
4. God is not the author of sin, but He directs evil to His good ends. Js. 1:13-14 Ro. 8:28 Gen. 50:20 Pr. 21:1
5. Just because we can affirm God's absolute sovereignty does not mean we fully comprehend the mystery of it. Deut. 29:29 Isa. 55:8 Ecc. 3:11
6. We are comforted knowing that no evil can befall us and that even Satan cannot touch us without God's permission. Ro. 8:28ff

B. Why did the LORD move David to conduct the sinful census? v. 1a

1. His anger burned against Israel. v. 1a 6:7 Nu. 25:3 32:13 Judg. 2:14,20 3:8
2. We are not told what Israel had done this time do incite God's anger.
3. The horrible plague which occurs as a result of the census is God's just judgment on the nation.
4. God often brings judgment on a nation through the sins of its rulers. Pr. 29:2

C. What was wrong with taking a census? v. 2-3

1. The LORD had previously commanded Israel to take a census. Ex. 30:12 Nu. 1-4
2. The New Testament also records significant counts. Mark 6:44 8:9 Acts 2:41 4:4
3. It appears that David's sin is that of proud self-reliance when he should humbly trust God. v. 3 23:10,12 22:18ff Ps. 20:7 33:16-18 30:6ff I Sa. 14:6 Pr. 6:16-17
4. David is acting like the gentile rulers. The LORD's anointed king was to be different. 7:8ff I Sam. 8:5 Deut. 17:14-20
5. How can we be guilty of the same sin? Js. 4:6 I Ti. 6:17 Luke 12:16ff I Pe. 5:5 Pr. 30:8-9 6:16-17 Jer. 9:23-24 Mark 10:42ff
6. The fact that God is sovereign, even over our sin, does not eliminate our responsibility and culpability. v. 10 Gen. 50:20 Isa. 10:5 30:31 Mark 14:21

D. Joab spends over nine months taking the census in all Israel. v. 4-9 I Chron. 21:6-7

III. David repents and faces the consequences of his sin. v. 10-17 I Chron. 21:7-17

A. David's conscience is smitten. v. 10

1. This time David repents before God's prophet comes. 12:1ff I Sa. 24:5
2. While David is still a sinner, what sets him apart from other kings is that he is willing to humbly confess his sin to God. v. 10,17 12:13 Ps. 32 51 I Sa. 13:14
3. The difference between believers and unbelievers is not that the Christians never sin, but that we repent after we sin. I Jo. 1:8-10
4. David repents more than nine months after his sin, illustrating the fact that a real believer may remain in sin for a while before finally coming to repentance. v. 8
5. Does your conscience ever smite you? What do you do? Isa. 55:6-7 II Co. 7:10f

- B. The LORD, through the prophet Gad, gives David three options. v. 11-14 I Sa. 22:5
1. Each of these punishments is a curse for covenant disobedience. 21:1a Dt. 28:15ff Jer. 34:13-17 24:10 27:8 21:7,9 15:2 14:12
 2. Each punishment fit the crime — David was relying on strength in numbers.
 3. David throws himself upon the LORD's mercy. v. 14 12:22 Ex. 34:6 Ps. 119:156
 4. Even when we confess our sin and experience God's forgiveness, we may still suffer the consequences of sin. 12:9ff Ga. 6:7
 5. Yet God is merciful and does not treat us as badly as our sins deserve. Ps. 103:10
 6. Communities (nations, churches, families) may suffer the consequences of the sins of their leaders. 21:1 Pr. 29:2 Neh. 9:2 Dan. 9:16 Ex. 20:5

C. The LORD sends pestilence to Israel. v. 15-17

1. The angel of death slays seventy thousand in Israel. v. 15
2. Our God is an awesome and just God Who is to be feared. II Ki. 19:35 Ex. 12:23ff
3. The LORD mercifully relents in the midst of judgment. v. 16 I Chron. 21:15 Jon. 4:2 Ex. 32:14 Je. 18:8
4. David again expresses repentance as he intercedes for the people. v. 17 Ex. 32:32
5. Now David is acting like a godly king – a shepherd who loves his people, rather than a despot who uses them to make himself great. I Sa. 16:11 Eze. 34:1ff Ps. 23
6. David is a picture of Christ the perfect shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep. John 10:11ff II Co. 5:21 I Pe. 3:18 Isa. 53:10 Mark 10:45
7. Jesus intercedes on our behalf. Heb. 7:25 Isa. 53:12
8. Just as David became more Christlike as a result of his trial, God uses our trials to bring us to repentance and maturity. Js. 1:1ff Heb. 12:7ff Ps. 119:67,71
9. Our leaders should imitate David and Christ and care for God's sheep, rather than using them selfishly. Ezek. 34:1ff I Pe. 5:1ff Mark 10:42-45

IV. David makes atonement for sin. v. 18-25 I Chron. 21:18-27

A. David builds an altar and offers sacrifices to the LORD. v. 18-24

1. David's sincere repentance is not enough. A propitiatory sacrifice must be made.
2. Why is it important that David pays for the threshing floor and the oxen?

B. The LORD is moved by David's intercession and ends the plague. v. 25 21:14

C. David's offerings point ahead to Christ's sacrifice for us.

1. The location is at Mount Moriah where Abraham took Isaac to sacrifice him. Gen. 22:1ff II Chron. 3:1
2. This becomes the site of the temple where sacrifices will be made to God, foreshadowing Jesus' sacrifice for His people. I Chron. 22:1ff II Chron. 3:1
3. Sin is atoned for through blood sacrifice. Heb. 9:11ff
4. God's wrath is turned away from His people once and for all by the intercession of Jesus Christ, the anointed King. Heb. 9:22-28 10:3ff I Pe. 2:24 3:18
5. Jesus' sacrifice is infinitely superior to that of David. Heb. 7:22 8:6 9:23 12:24

D. Have your sins been atoned for? Has God's wrath been turned away from you?

E. What do you offer to God? Give Him your best. v. 24 Ro. 12:1 Pr. 3:9 Mal. 1:6ff Heb. 13:15-16 I Pe. 1:18-19 4:10ff

V. Conclusion.

- A. David is the king by whom all future kings will be measured.
- B. We need a greater king than David.

Discussion questions

1. How is this chapter similar to 21:1-14?
2. Name several of God's attributes which are displayed in this passage.
3. How does this passage, along with I Chronicles 21, illustrate God's sovereignty over Satan?
4. How can we be held responsible if God allows Satan to tempt us?
5. Why was it wrong for David to take a census?
6. How can we be guilty of the same kinds of sin as David?
7. Does your conscience ever trouble you? What must you do? v. 10
8. When God forgives sin does He always remove the consequences? Give examples.
9. Do people still suffer because of the sins of their leaders? Give examples.
10. How is David shown to be a great king?
11. How in this text does David point us to Christ?