***1 Chronicles***

***Chapter 21***

***David Numbers the Fighting Men***

**Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel. 2 So David said to Joab and the commanders of the troops, “Go and count the Israelites from Beersheba to Dan. Then report back to me so that I may know how many there are.” 3 But Joab replied, “May the Lord multiply his troops a hundred times over. My lord the king, are they not all my lord’s subjects? Why does my lord want to do this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?” 4 The king’s word, however, overruled Joab; so Joab left and went throughout Israel and then came back to Jerusalem. 5 Joab reported the number of the fighting men to David: In all Israel there were one million one hundred thousand men who could handle a sword, including four hundred and seventy thousand in Judah. 6 But Joab did not include Levi and Benjamin in the numbering, because the king’s command was repulsive to him. 7 This command was also evil in the sight of God; so he punished Israel. 8 Then David said to God, “I have sinned greatly by doing this. Now, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing.” 9 The Lord said to Gad, David’s seer, 10 “Go and tell David, ‘This is what the Lord says: I am giving you three options. Choose one of them for me to carry out against you.’ ” 11 So Gad went to David and said to him, “This is what the Lord says: ‘Take your choice: 12 three years of famine, three months of being swept away before your enemies, with their swords overtaking you, or three days of the sword of the Lord—days of plague in the land, with the angel of the Lord ravaging every part of Israel.’ Now then, decide how I should answer the one who sent me.” 13 David said to Gad, “I am in deep distress. Let me fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercy is very great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men.” 14 So the Lord sent a plague on Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell dead. 15 And God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem. But as the angel was doing so, the Lord saw it and was grieved because of the calamity and said to the angel who was destroying the people, “Enough! Withdraw your hand.” The angel of the Lord was then standing at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. 16 David looked up and saw the angel of the Lord standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand extended over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell facedown. 17 David said to God, “Was it not I who ordered the fighting men to be counted? I am the one who has sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? O Lord my God, let your hand fall upon me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on your people.” 18 Then the angel of the Lord ordered Gad to tell David to go up and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. 19 So David went up in obedience to the word that Gad had spoken in the name of the Lord. 20 While Araunah was threshing wheat, he turned and saw the angel; his four sons who were with him hid themselves. 21 Then David approached, and when Araunah looked and saw him, he left the threshing floor and bowed down before David with his face to the ground. 22 David said to him, “Let me have the site of your threshing floor so I can build an altar to the Lord, that the plague on the people may be stopped. Sell it to me at the full price.” 23 Araunah said to David, “Take it! Let my lord the king do whatever pleases him. Look, I will give the oxen for the burnt offerings, the threshing sledges for the wood, and the wheat for the grain offering. I will give all this.” 24 But King David replied to Araunah, “No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the Lord what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing.” 25 So David paid Araunah six hundred shekels of gold for the site. 26 David built an altar to the Lord there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. He called on the Lord, and the Lord answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering. 27 Then the Lord spoke to the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath. 28 At that time, when David saw that the Lord had answered him on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, he offered sacrifices there. 29 The tabernacle of the Lord, which Moses had made in the desert, and the altar of burnt offering were at that time on the high place at Gibeon. 30 But David could not go before it to inquire of God, because he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the Lord.**

**21:1–22:1** See 2Sa 24 and notes. Although the story of David’s census is quite similar in both narratives, the two accounts function differently. In Samuel the account belongs to the appendix (2Sa 21–24), which begins and ends with accounts of the Lord’s anger against Israel during the reign of David because of actions by her kings (in ch. 21, an act of Saul; in ch. 24, an act of David). See note on 2Sa 21:1–24:25. The Chronicler appears to include it in order to account for the purchase of the ground on which the temple would be built. The additional material in Chronicles that is not found in Samuel (21:28–22:1) makes this interest clear. The census is the preface to David’s preparations for the temple (chs. 22–29). (CSB)

**21:1** See note on 2Sa 24:1. *Satan.* See NIV text notes on Job 1:6; Zec 3:1. (CSB)

**21:4** The Chronicler abridges the more extensive account of Joab’s itinerary found in 2Sa 24:4–8; he does not mention that the census required nine months and 20 days (2Sa 24:8). (CSB)

**21:5** *In all Israel … one million one hundred thousand men … including four hundred and seventy thousand in Judah.* 2Sa 24:9 has 800,000 in Israel and 500,000 (which could be a round number for 470,000) in Judah. The reason for the difference is unclear. Perhaps it is to be related to the unofficial and incomplete nature of the census (see 27:23–24), with the differing figures representing the inclusion or exclusion of certain unspecified groupings among the people (see v. 6). Or perhaps it is simply due to a copyist’s mistake. The NIV relieves the problem somewhat by translating the conjunction here as “including” instead of “and.” (CSB)

**21:6** The Chronicler adds the note that Joab exempted Levi and Benjamin from the counting. This additional note reflects the Chronicler’s concern with the Levites and with the worship of Israel. The tabernacle in Gibeon and the ark in Jerusalem both fell within the borders of Benjamin. (CSB)

**21:9** *Gad.* A longtime friend of David, having been with him when he was a fugitive from Saul (1Sa 22:3–5; cf. 1Ch 29:29; 2Ch 29:25). (CSB)

**21:12** *three years of famine.* See NIV text note on 2Sa 24:13. (CSB)

**21:16** The verse has no parallel in the traditional Hebrew text of 2Sa 24, so some scholars regard it as an addition by the Chronicler reflecting the more developed doctrine of angels in the postexilic period. However, a fragmentary Hebrew text of Samuel from the third century b.c., discovered at Qumran, contains the verse. It now appears that the Chronicler was carefully copying the Samuel text at his disposal, which differed in some respects from the Masoretic (traditional Hebrew) text. Josephus, who appears to be following the text of Samuel, also reported this information. Presumably, he too used a text of Samuel similar to that followed by the Chronicler. (CSB)

**21:20–21** The Chronicler reports that Araunah was threshing wheat as the king approached—information not found in 2Sa 24:20. However, Josephus and the fragmentary text of Samuel from Qumran both mention this information (see note on v. 16). (CSB)

**21:25** *six hundred shekels of gold.* 2Sa 24:24 says 50 shekels of silver were paid for the threshing floor and oxen. The difference has been explained by some as the Chronicler’s attempt to glorify David and the temple by inflating the price. However, the difference is more likely explained by the Chronicler’s statement that this was the price for the “site,” i.e., for a much larger area than the threshing floor alone. (CSB)

**21:26** *fire from heaven.* Underscores the divine approval and the sanctity of the site (see 2Ch 7:1; Lev 9:24; 1Ki 18:37–38). (CSB)

**21:28–22:1** This material is not found in 2Sa 24. It reflects the Chronicler’s main concern in reporting this narrative (see note on 21:1–22:1). (CSB)

**21:30** *it.* The tabernacle. (CSB)