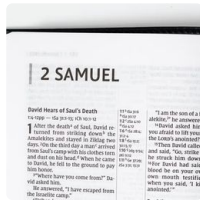


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## 2 Samuel 23 - 24



### 2 Samuel - Steve Gregg

In this segment, Steve Gregg provides an overview of 2 Samuel 23-24. He discusses the catalog of the various Philistine giants killed by David and his men, the mighty men of David, and the events surrounding David's decision to take a census of Israel and Judah. Steve also explains the disparity in the numbers recorded in the different accounts of the census and the consequences David faced as a result of his actions.

### Transcript

We have a little bit more of 2 Samuel to complete, and we're turning to 2 Samuel 23. Beginning at chapter 21, the structure of the book seems to have experienced a transition, because from chapter 1 of 1 Samuel all the way through 2 Samuel chapter 20, there seems to be a consecutive story of events that happened in the chronological sequence, just a narrative, as we had in the larger part of the book of Judges. But also as we had in the book of Judges, there's a section at the end, in Judges it was 5 chapters, in 2 Samuel it's 4 chapters, but it's sort of an appendix.

It goes up and picks up some scraps, miscellaneous details that had occurred earlier, but which the narrative previously had not been allowed to be interrupted in order to include. And so we have in chapters 21 and 22 and 23 and 24, various stories that pertain to something or another in the time of David's reign. And so in chapter 21 we saw there was this issue with the Gibeonites, that Saul had sought to wipe out the Gibeonites, and therefore because Israel had a covenant with Gibeon, and was not allowed to do that kind of thing, a famine or a drought had come on Israel for several years, and David had to address that, and had to make that right with the Gibeonites.

Also in that chapter there's a catalog of the various Philistine giants who were killed either by David or his men, and that's just thrown in there too because that's worth noting. And then chapter 22 was one long psalm, and it was just David's psalm celebrating his many deliverances that God had given him from many enemies throughout his career. Exactly when he wrote the psalm, we're not told, but it occupies an entire chapter, and no doubt is taken to be a summary of David's life, which was full of tribulations, full of enemies and adversaries, but from which he was delivered in every

case, and he did not die at the hands of any of his adversaries who sought to kill him, he died in his bed as an old man instead.

In chapter 23 there's a couple of other issues. One is what is referred to as the last words of David, but it should not be thought that this means the last words that he spoke before his spirit expired, like on his deathbed. Rather it's probably the last written words of David, the last poetry he wrote.

It's yet another prayer or psalm, and he wrote many psalms. We know of at least 75 psalms that David wrote. And these may be the last inspired words of David, because in verse 2 he does mention that the spirit of the Lord spoke by him, and his psalms were inspired by the spirit of the Lord.

So this last words of David may simply mean the last inspired writings that he wrote before his death. There were other words he spoke to Solomon and so forth before he actually expired. And then the latter part of the chapter, which is the longest part, is really just a catalog of David's mighty men and some of their exploits.

David had unusually gifted soldiers who served under him. Many of them did exploits almost equal to some of those that Samson had done. And so we have some of the stories briefly noted, and the names of the mightiest men in his service.

And that's what verses 8 through 39 are devoted to in this chapter. So, beginning at the beginning of chapter 23, now these are the last words of David. Thus says David the son of Jesse, Thus says the man, raised up on high, the anointed of God, of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, the spirit of Yahweh spoke by me, and his word was on my tongue.

The God of Israel said, the rock of Israel spoke to me. He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he should be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after the rain.

Although my house is not so with God, yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure, for this is all my salvation and all my desire. Will he not make it increase? But the sons of rebellion shall all be as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands. But the man who touches them must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear, and they shall utterly be burned with fire in their place.

So, this last psalm of his actually mentions that he spoke by inspiration, by the spirit of God. Not all of the psalms would give us that impression, necessarily. There are psalms that, since they don't specifically say they're inspired, might lead us to wonder whether they are, but it would appear that Jesus acknowledged David's writings as being inspired,

and that is because when he was talking to the Pharisees and the Jews in Matthew chapter 22, and he said, what do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he? They said to him, the son of David.

And in Matthew 22, 43, Jesus said, how then does David say in the spirit, how then does David in the spirit call him Lord? And then he quotes Psalm 110 verse 1, where he says that David said this in the spirit, or through the spirit. So, Jesus recognized the inspiration of at least Psalm 110, and perhaps by implication of the Psalter as a whole, of David's writings as a whole, like they were written by an inspired man, an inspired prophet. And David makes that claim about himself here.

Now, the message he says that God told him, and when God told him this we don't know, but he says that anyone who rules over men must be just, and must rule in the fear of God. Now, David said, my house hasn't been exactly like that. He says, not everything that I've done has been just, not everything I've done has exhibited the fear of God.

He certainly must think, of course, of his sin with Bathsheba, and the killing of Uriah the Hittite. Certainly that was not just, that was not done in the fear of God. And many of his offspring, his sons, were also chief rulers under him, chief officers in his government, and some of them were wicked men as well.

So, he says, even though God has this standard that he has set up for rulers, and my family has not, in all points, met that standard, despite our failures, God has made an everlasting covenant with me. And this, he sees as a marvel of the grace of God on him, an unworthy recipient of such a unique privilege. And he ends by talking about the rebellious are transient, unlike David's house.

David was not really a rebel against God, he was not one of the rebellious. He was an imperfect saint, but there are people who are rebellious, and unlike David, whose house is going to be established forever and ever, according to God's covenant, they're rebelliously thrust out, thrown away like worthless thorns. But they're like thorns in the sense that people can't touch them with their hands, he said, so therefore people can't uproot the wicked.

Only God can do that, but in his sovereignty and his providence he will do that. They will utterly be burned with fire in their place, he says. Now, after that short psalm, we have the account of the mighty men of David.

And David had a standing army of 30,000 men, according to 2 Samuel 6, verse 1. But he had special troops, special forces, who were more accomplished, who were more highly decorated soldiers than others, of which there are 30 names given to us in verses 24 through 39. But even above the 30, there were some men who ranked highest of all in their accomplishments. There were three who were chief, and they were Joseph Bathshebeth, the first one's the hardest one to pronounce, Joseph Bathshebeth is in

verse 8, and then Eliezer in verse 9, and then Shammah in verse 11.

There are two other Shammahs in the list of mighty men, there are three Shammahs, but one of them, along with Eliezer and Joseph Bathshebeth, are the chief among them. And others did great things but never quite measured up to these three, we are told. Two other great men that are named but didn't measure up to these top three are Abishai, who we know as the brother of Joab, and Benaiah.

In verse 18, Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruah, was chief of another three. He lifted his spear against 300 men and killed them, and won a name among these three. He was not the most honored, or was he not, the most honored of three, therefore he became their captain.

However, he did not attain to the first three. His accomplishments weren't quite up to those of the first three mentioned in the first 12 verses. Abishai, apparently, and two other men were a special team, a special forces group that worked together, and he was the chief of one of the three.

But, although he was great, he wasn't quite as great as some of the others that were named earlier. Likewise, Benaiah, in verse 20, was the son of Jehoiada. He's the son of a valiant man from Kabzil.

And it says also of him what his accomplishments were. We'll look at those later. But it does say of him, in verse 23, he was more honored than the 30, which are named afterward.

But he did not attain to the first three. So the first three are the greatest ones, and yet they're not the best known to us. I mean, we know about Joab, we know about Abishai, we know about some of these other men.

We've even heard of Benaiah before, but we had not really heard of Joshabashabeth or Eleazar or Shammah previously. And yet they were really the most amazing. So the account could hardly be complete without giving credit where credit is due to some of these men who did things, as I say, some of them rivaling the very feats that Samson himself accomplished in terms of battle.

Verse 8 says, these are the names of the mighty men whom David had. Joshabashabeth, the Tacoma knight, chief among the captains. He was called Adino, the Esnite, because he had killed 800 men at one time.

Now Samson had killed 1,000 men with the jawbone of an ass, but this man killed almost as many at one time. And we're not told that he had superhuman strength like Samson had, though he must have been pretty amazing, quite a fighting machine. Now to kill 800 men at one time, it's hard to picture how that could be done.

I mean, it seems like four or five or ten guys ganging up on you would be enough to stop you. But he must have been positioned in a place where he was rushed on by a lot of people, and maybe the crowd was so thick that no one of the enemy dared to shoot an arrow toward him because there were too many people near him that they didn't want to hit. So it had to be hand to hand, and he may have just had his back against some protective wall or something and just been such a slasher with his sword that everyone who came near him got killed and didn't get through to him.

So this man is treated as an amazing soldier who accomplished great things, and by any standards he would be so regarded. Verse 9, And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, one of three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle, and the men of Israel had retreated. So apparently there was a time not recorded previously where David and three mighty men, of whom one of them was Eleazar, were the only men left standing to face the Philistines that were advancing, and the Israelite armies had retreated for fear, and David and these three men stood alone to face the enemy.

He arose and attacked the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand stuck to the sword, apparently gripping it tightly for hours at a time while he was striking the enemy. You know, your hand becomes almost paralyzed in that position. It's hard to peel your fingers off when you're done, and that's apparently what is said to have happened here.

And the Lord brought about a great victory that day, and the people returned after him only to plunder. So he did all the killing, and then the people didn't have to do anything but plunder the enemy that was dead. And after him was Shammah the son of Agi the Hararite.

The Philistines had gathered together into a troop where there was a piece of ground full of lentils, apparently a field growing lentils, became the battlefield in this instance. Then the people fled the Philistines, but he stationed himself in the middle of the field, defended it, and killed the Philistines, and the Lord brought about a great victory. We don't know how many he killed, but it placed him among the top three, as he stood alone when the armies had fled, and he apparently killed all the Philistines that came after him.

It says, then three of the thirty chief men. Now this little story in verses 13 through 17 does not name which three. They are three of the thirty.

Now the thirty have not been named yet, but they are listed in verses 24 through 39, and some of them, though we don't know which ones, figured into this particular story. Three of the thirty chief men went down at harvest time and came to David at the cave of Adulam, and the troop of the Philistines camped in the valley of Riphah. David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem.

Now this particular event, remember David was sometimes in the cave of Adulam when he was running from Saul, before he was made king, but this is not then. This is when the Philistines were coming, and David went down to the same area where he had hidden from Saul at one time, and was there to ambush the Philistines, and he actually did defeat them. But apparently before the battle actually took place, he was hiding with his soldiers in the cave there, and David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem.

And David said with longing, Oh, that someone would give me a drink of water, of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate. Now this was not really probably his way of saying, I really want to drink some of that water. It may be that the well water was good there, but he's not going to be saying, I want somebody to go down and risk their lives among the Philistines to give me that water, if there was any other water for him to drink, that was safer to get to.

But no doubt what he was saying is, I long for the days when I was a boy in Bethlehem and could drink from that well. Wouldn't it be nice if those days could come again, if I could just drink from that well water again. More or less reminiscing, thinking out loud, but not really making his, not really literally wanting someone to go down and get water for him there.

A little bit more like Citizen Kane, you know, reflecting on all his troubles and just saying, Rosebud, remembering something from his childhood that was a simpler childhood, simpler times, better times. And David was perhaps thinking that way. I remember when I was a kid in Bethlehem, we used to just drink from that well and it was a peaceful place.

Now the Philistines have besieged it. Now I'm living in a cave, fighting for my life. Oh, for those better days when I could just drink from the water at the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate.

But some of his men heard him say that. So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from that well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David. And they did so successfully.

Nevertheless, he would not drink it, but poured it out to the Lord. Now imagine, I mean, this is told with great brevity, imagine how this would be. These men would have to travel from the desert into the town of Bethlehem, which is controlled by a garrison of Philistines.

They have to be toting something to carry water in. And water is heavy stuff to transport. And they may have only had a small skin to put the water in or something, a bottle.

But they had to get through the Philistines, draw the water from the well, and then get through the Philistines again without getting stopped or killed or anything like that, and then carry the water back to the cave. There was quite a dedication these men had to David. And David was surprised that they brought it back to him.

He didn't really expect anyone to really take him up on his wish that he'd given. He says, nevertheless, he would not drink it, but poured it out to the Lord. And he said, far be it from me, O Lord, that I should do this.

Is this not the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore, he would not drink it. These things were done by the three mighty men, the three who are not mentioned. It may be that we're supposed to think of the three that were mentioned earlier as the ones.

However, it does talk about them being three of the thirty. And the thirty are listed later and don't include these top-ranking soldiers. So it may be the first three on the list in verses 24, which would be Asahel, the brother of Joab.

He was one of the thirty. Elhanan, the son of Dodo of Bethlehem. And Shammah, the son of the Herodite.

Those might be the three mighty men that he's talking about, but we don't really know. And after all, the Shammah in verse 25 could be the Shammah of verse 11 also, because both of them are Herodites. Oh no, I'm sorry, one's a Herodite.

My mistake. So I don't think it's the same Shammah. In any case, the names of these three men are not preserved for us, only the fact that David had men among his thirty that could accomplish such a feat and were so loyal to him as they would risk their lives like that.

I would point out that when David poured out the water and said, Is this not the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives? He's saying, This water is the blood of those men. And I'm pouring it out as an offering to the Lord. And his words are not really much different than Jesus saying, This cup is my blood.

It's not literal. And I point that out because it's obviously not literal here. But some people think it's to be taken literally when Jesus said, This cup is my blood.

This bread is my body. Obviously, some persons, Roman Catholics in particular, believe that he's talking literally. The cup really does become his blood, and the bread really does become his body because he said that.

But his words are no more literal than David's words are here. It's the very same expression, really. And so no one would take David literally here, so why would they insist on taking it literally in the upper room? Now, verse 18.

Now, Abishai, who along with Benaiah, belonged to a lower rank than the top three, but still above most. The brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief among another three. He lifted his spear against 300 men and killed them.

Not quite as great an accomplishment as the man who killed 800 at one time, Josaphat, but still 300. That's not chopped liver. That's pretty good.

He killed 300 men, and he won a name among these three. He was not the most honored, or was he not the most honored of the three? Therefore, he became their captain. However, he did not attain to the first three.

Now, Abishai was a captain over three other mighty men who were probably officers over a group under them, so he held rank probably over three battalions and their generals or their captains is what we probably should understand that to mean. But he still was not personally one who accomplished as much as the first three that were mentioned. Now, Benaiah, verse 20, was the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabziel, who had done many deeds.

He had killed two lion-like heroes of Moab. I don't know what lion-like is intended to mean when applied to a man. Does it mean royal? Does it speak of the way they carried themselves? In Proverbs, it talks about there are four things that are stately in their walk.

One is a lion. Lions are definitely un intimidated. Lions have no natural enemies.

Lions are stately and regal in their manner. Or does it mean their hair was so wild? Long hair and long beards, they looked like a lion with a mane. I don't know.

I think probably the latter is what most people would assume, and I'm not sure which it is, but these were apparently two exceptional heroes of the Moabites, and in some war against the Moabites, this man killed two of them. While others of David's men killed hundreds, these two must have counted more than quite a few other ordinary men because it's mentioned as a great accomplishment. Certainly there would not be a small number of David's heroes who had killed two men, even two warriors before, but these two men must have been exceptional.

Along with the third that's mentioned, he also killed an Egyptian, a spectacular man. In 1 Chronicles 11.23, it tells us this man was about 7 1/2 feet tall, so a very large man, taller than King Saul, not quite as tall as Goliath, but still a spectacular man. If you see a man 7 1/2 feet tall and well-muscled and so forth, he's intimidating.

He's formidable. And we're told the Egyptian had a spear in his hand, so he went down to him with a staff and wrested the spear out of the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear. Now, we have to assume this took place in the context of a battle, and a battle where some Egyptian, probably a mercenary, since we don't know of David having wars against the Egyptians, but the Egyptian might well have been a mercenary or an



ethnic Egyptian who had come to be part of the Philistine society and enlisted in their army.

He was perhaps one of their great heroes like Goliath had been. But Benaiah actually killed the man and attacked him with no more than a shepherd's staff or a club of some sort, a blunt stick. And the man had a huge spear and was a huge man and no doubt knew how to use it, but still Benaiah was so skilled that he was able to knock the spear out of his hand with his club and grab the spear and kill the man with his own weapon.

These things Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, did, and he won a name among three mighty men. He was more honored than the thirty, but he did not attain to the first three, and David appointed him over his guard. Now it says he won a name among three, and we're told that about Abishai.

He won a name among these three in verse 18. Maybe we're to understand that Abishai and Benaiah and some third man were the three, and maybe the third man's name has fallen out of the record somehow or was never mentioned. But the way these men are numbered and ranked is a little confusing at times.

But we have then in verse 23, he was more honored than the thirty, but he did not attain to the first three, and David appointed him over his guard. And then we just have a list of the thirty that are named. These are the thirty mighty men.

Now the list is also found in 1 Chronicles chapter 11, but it's different in some respects, significantly different. For one thing, there are four of these names left out in 1 Chronicles. There are thirty names here, but four of them are omitted in 1 Chronicles chapter 11.

In addition to four names being omitted, there are six of the names that are significantly different in their form, still recognizable as the same persons, but their names are given in various forms, different than here. But most striking is that the list in 1 Chronicles has nineteen additional names. So it doesn't just have thirty, it omits four, bringing it down to twenty-six, then adds nineteen more, so it's like forty-five names in 1 Chronicles.

Now why these differences exist, we don't know. Some have said that maybe the list was longer at one point, and then the men in question died in battle and lost their ranking or whatever. We don't know.

Or maybe just none of the lists are really complete. This list specifically mentions thirty and gives thirty names. So there must have been a group of thirty or maybe not.

Many scholars believe that thirty was often just a number that is given to mean a company, and that thirty was perhaps the minimum that would make up a company, and so they would call that a group of thirty, even if the number was sometimes not exactly thirty, maybe a little higher. The solution to this particular discrepancy is not known, but

it's not a serious problem because there might be any number of reasons why a list might include more names at a later date, and the Chronicles list was written much later. It's possible this list in Samuel was written at an early time in David's reign, and the Chronicler, reflecting developments later in David's reign and additions to the list, gives a larger number, because it's possible that David at an early part of his reign could have had thirty mighty men and then later on had forty-five.

We can't really know exactly without speculation why the differences exist. Now the names are given. Asahel, the brother of Joab, was one of the thirty.

Elhanan, the son of Dodo of Bethlehem. Shammah, the Herodite. Alikah, the Herodite.

Heles, the Peltite. Ira, the son of Ikesh, the Tekoite. Abiezer, the Anathithite.

It's a great crime mispronouncing these names, I'm sure. Mabunai, the Hushethite. Zalmon, the Ahohite.

Mahari, the Netathithite. Halib, the son of Bayana, the Netathithite. Itai, the son of Ribai from Gibeah, of the children of Benjamin.

Benaiah, a Pyrethinite. Hirai, from the brooks of Gash. Abi-alban, the Arbethite.

Asmaith, the Bahumite. Elish-ba, Eliah-ba. The Sheol-bonite, of the sons of Jason.

Jonathan, who is not given any other identifying information than just his name. Shammah, the Hararite. Ahaim, the son of Sharrar, the Hararite.

Eliphithlet, the son of Ahazbi. This gets a little difficult at times. The son of the Maakithite.

Eliam, the son of Ahithothel, the Gilonite. Now Ahithothel, we are familiar with. He was David's counselor.

Eliam was his son. Hezri, the Carmelite. Peahri, the Arbite.

Egal, the son of Nathan, of Zobah. Bani, the Gadite. Zelic, the Ammonite.

Nahari, the Birethite, armor bearer of Joab, the son of Zeruah. Ira, the Ithrite. Gerab, the Ithrite.

And Uriah, the Hittite. 37 in all. Now, why it says 37 here is we have to figure out who all is included here.

We've got the 30 names that are given. And we've got the two men, Abishai and Benaiah, mentioned before. And the other three, that makes 35.

So I'm not sure really how the tally is considered to be 37. Has anyone ever counted

these up differently than I have? But you don't get 37. You get 33.

Yeah. So I was guessing that... Maybe. Hard to tell.

Hard to say, yeah. I don't get as many. I've got them side by side.

I only get one for Chronicles. OK. I was... I have not gone name by name through it, but I read that there were four omissions.

I've got them column by column. OK. So maybe there's only one omission, not four.

So anyway, the names are not... The lists are not identical. And the tally at the end is not easy to figure out. And so we'll just leave it.

Obviously, it made sense at the time. And whoever wrote it would know how to do the math right. So if the math doesn't look right to us, there must be something... There could be something that has fallen out.

There could be names that have been fallen out of the list and copying or whatever. More interesting and more important, I think, to us would be the consideration of David's census, which is the last chapter of 2 Samuel 24, and also 1 Chronicles 21. Now, the differences between Samuel and Chronicles in this are numerous.

And there's many things about the very story itself that are confusing. For one thing, the plan and the project of numbering the people was a wrong thing for David to do. David knew it was wrong, and his general Joab knew it was wrong, but David did it anyway.

What's mysterious is, why was it wrong? It's not obvious why it would be a sin to take a census. And yet it was a serious offense, enough so that God brought a plague on the land because of it. And it's just not really obvious why David was doing the wrong thing.

Almost all commentators assume that it must have been David's motivation that was wrong. Maybe he wanted to just, out of his pride, be able to congratulate himself for having such a large number of people under his rule. From the amount of armed men, or at least men capable of being armed, that comes from the census, one could deduce that the total population of Israel at this time might have been as much as 5 million, which is quite a bit more than had come out of Egypt with Moses.

But why it would be wrong for David to get their number is not exactly obvious, but it is stated to be wrong. It displeased God. So there must be something about it we're not told.

This story is kind of brought up without much context. We don't know what was going on before or after it. At the beginning of the story, it says that the Lord, the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel.

And he moved David against them to say, go number Israel and Judah. Now, he moved David against Israel. Lots of times people say, well, it doesn't seem very fair of God to send a plague on Israel, as he did, and kill 70,000 men, as we read happen in verse 15, just because David did something wrong.

But actually, the story begins by saying God was angry at Israel, and he moved David to do what he did in order to have an occasion to punish Israel. Why was he angry at Israel? Well, there could be any number of reasons. They were a stiff-necked people.

And even during the reign of David, they followed rebels like Absalom and Sheba, and they actually were not really very loyal people to God. They were more in his day than they were at some previous times in the period of judges, but we have no difficulty imagining that there was a season where Israel was misbehaving again, as they did in the book of Judges, and that God intended to teach them a lesson and to bring punishment upon them. Now, rather than doing this directly, he did it through the expedient of moving David to number the people, which was for whatever reasons God had and knew, it was a wrong thing to do.

It was something that God would use as a basis for his bringing judgment on Israel. But this was not something that God did just because of David. This was something God did because God was angry against Israel, and he moved David against them.

Now, right at the very beginning, we find the very first difference between the account here and the account in Chronicles. Because in 1 Chronicles 21.1, it says, now Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel. And so, right at the outset, we have what looks like a contradiction.

It looks like Satan was the one who had a hostility toward Israel, and that Satan moved David to do this. And yet, we're told that God did this in 2 Samuel. I mean, one explanation that people have sometimes given is that a later writer of Chronicles had trouble believing that God had moved David to do the wrong thing, to bring judgment, so that he felt like this was the work of Satan.

But that would, of course, raise questions about the inspiration of that writer, and would attribute to him motives that would be not necessarily completely favorable to our view of it being an inspired document. Another thing to remember is that the word Satan, which we know of as a proper name for the devil, in Hebrew is simply a generic term for an adversary or the adversary. Satanus is used in the Old Testament and in the Hebrew language to mean an adversary.

In the New Testament, this becomes a proper name for the devil. And even in the Old Testament, in the book of Job, it's the adversary, or an adversary that comes to God and brings accusations against Job. But some have said that this might not be a reference to the devil, as we're thinking of Satan, but it could be an adversary stood up against Israel.

An adversary moved David. That is to say that David's decision to number the people was because there was some opposition coming, maybe from the Philistines or Ammonites, or some other adversary was threatening Israel. And as a result of the threat from this adversary, David was moved to number the people, to mobilize them.

That is a possibility because the word Satan does not have to be a reference to the devil. It can be, or it might simply be generic of an adversary. The word in the Hebrew can go either way.

So there's some confusion here, too. My own way of seeing it is that David's doing this was something that God allowed Satan to do, just as in the case where God allowed Satan to tempt Job. The devil wanted to tempt Job, and God did not always allow Satan to do that.

But on one occasion, he did allow him to. Two occasions. The devil was generally prevented from afflicting Job because there was a hedge that God had put around Job and all that he had.

So the devil generally could not touch the man. But on at least two occasions, the devil asked permission to afflict Job, and God, because there was some purpose that God could see in it, allowed it. And therefore, we can see this probably the same here.

Because the afflictions that came on Job, we know the devil had a hand in them, but so did God. Job said, The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. He saw the Lord as the one who took things away from him, although it was through the agency of Satan.

So also, when David is tempted or moved or provoked to number the people, Satan has a hand in it, and God does, in that the devil cannot come and bring such influence into the life of a believer without God allowing it. And that God was angry at Israel and therefore allowed this thing to happen that would give God an occasion against Israel to bring judgment that Israel deserved. That's, I guess, the way I would see the harmonizing of these two things.

And so David said, Go and number Israel and Judah. 2 Samuel 24, 2 So the king said to Joab, the commander of the army who was with him, Now go throughout all the tribes of Israel from Dan to Beersheba, and count the people, that I may know the number of the people. And Joab said to the king, Now may Yahweh your God add to the people a hundredfold more than they are, and may the eyes of my lord the king see it.

But why does my lord the king desire this thing? Now, here in Samuel, Joab's objection is toned down a little bit. He just says, Why do you want to do this? But it is clear that Joab is raising an objection. In Chronicles, 1 Chronicles 21, 3, Joab's words are somewhat extended beyond what we read here.

He also said, Why should he, that is the king, be a cause of guilt in Israel? So he said,

Why does my lord the king desire this thing? Why should he be a cause of guilt in Israel? So there is something about numbering the people that Joab instantly recognized would be a cause of guilt. Now, to number Israel is not a sin in itself. Moses was commanded to number the people twice in the book of Numbers.

Once right after the Exodus, and once 38 years later. So it is not wrong to number Israel. And therefore it must be something in the present circumstances that we are not apprised of, or in David's heart.

Pride, perhaps he was trying to see how large an armed force he could raise so that he could put his confidence in horses and chariots rather than in the Lord. God knows, we are not told. But it was wrong.

Nevertheless, the king's word prevailed against Joab and against the captains of the army. Apparently not only Joab, but the captains of the army were raising similar objections. This was not something that was a good idea.

And they all agreed that it was not. So Joab and the captains of the army went out from the presence of the king to count the people of Israel. And they crossed over to Jordan and camped at Aror on the right side of the town which is in the midst of the ravine of Gad and toward Jazar.

Then they came to Gilead and the land of Tathim, Hadshi, and came to Dan, Jaan, and around to Sidon. And they came to the stronghold of Tyre and to all the cities of the Hivites and the Canaanites. Then they went out to south Judah as far as Beersheba.

So from Dan, in verse 6, to Beersheba in verse 7, they covered the whole country. So when they had gone throughout all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end, at the end of nine months and twenty days. So this took that long, almost ten months, to take the complete census.

Then Joab gave the sum of the number of the people to the king. And there were in Israel 800,000 valiant men who drew the sword and the men of Judah were 500,000 men. Now these numbers are not the same in Chronicles and there have been many efforts to explain why they are different.

In this case, we see the total number of people in the country are 1,300,000. But the total that is given in Chronicles is 1,570,000. So the number in Chronicles appears to be 270,000 more than the number given here.

And the individual numbers of the different segments are different. Because here it says there were in Israel 800,000. In 1 Chronicles 21 it says there were in all Israel 1,100,000.

So we've got 300,000 more in all Israel in Chronicles than there are in Samuel. Likewise here we read that Judah had 500,000 men whereas in Chronicles it says 470,000 or

30,000 less are mentioned in Chronicles. So we get the total number in 2 Samuel is 1,300,000.

But in Chronicles the total is 1,570,000. And the individual numbers of Israel and Judah are different also. So what's the problem here? Well, some people have thought there may be a textual ascribable error here though it's not clear why these particular numbers would result from such an error.

And therefore it is assumed that there must be some different inclusions and exclusions in Chronicles than there are considered here. For example, in Samuel the tribes of Israel are contrasted with the tribes of Judah. And therefore Judah apparently is separated in the mind in 2 Samuel of the writer from the other tribes to the north.

And so two different numbers are given there. Whereas in Chronicles the number 1,100,000 is said to be the number of all Israel which might include Judah. It also gives the number of those in Judah separately but that could be a subcategory of the larger number.

Now if you consider it this way the total number of the census in Samuel is 1,300,000. In Chronicles the total number would then be 1,100,000. Just 200,000 number less.

The total number would be 200,000 less. In Chronicles which gives the larger number or the smaller number, the total is smaller in Chronicles. We are told in 1 Chronicles chapter 21 that Joab did not take the census of Benjamin and Levi.

In 1 Chronicles 21.6 it says but he did not count Levi and Benjamin among them for the king's word was abominable to Joab. Joab didn't have any taste for what he was doing. Again it's hard to say why this was such a bad idea but it was so offensive to Joab he didn't even carry it out completely.

He did not include Levi and Benjamin. It's possible that the writer of 2 Samuel did include them and therefore if the total number in Chronicles is 1,100,000 and in Samuel is 1,300,000 then the 200,000 disparity might be that Samuel is including a later census that included Benjamin and Levi which might have made up the difference of the 200,000. It's confusing, I know.

But then we have the question of why would there be a difference in the number that is attributed to Judah? Because in Samuel there's 500,000 in Judah. In Chronicles there's 470,000 so a disparity of 30,000. And some have thought well maybe in Chronicles it's not including the 30,000 of the standing army of David which are mentioned in 2 Samuel 6.1. In 2 Samuel 6.1 when David had become king and decided to attack Jerusalem he recruited 30,000 men to be his standard army, his standard troops.

There may have been special times when he recruited others as well but the standing army was 30,000 men of Judah primarily probably. And that being so it may be that the

standing army was not included in the reckoning in 1 Chronicles because this was not a census of the army. It was a census of potential army of men who were capable of bearing the sword.

This was the selective service investigation to see how many they could draft if they wanted to. No sense counting the 30,000 that were already in the army for that. So that you'd have 470,000 of Judah in Chronicles not including the standing army.

But Samuel wanting to include the total number of armed men as well as those who were potential armed men would give the number 500,000. So there are ways to work this out. Whether they are the correct ways or not is unknown.

But the differences are there and there are possible ways to harmonize them. Now it says in verse 10, David's heart condemned him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the Lord, I have sinned greatly in what I have done but now I pray, O Lord, take away the iniquity of your servant for I have done very foolishly.

Now when David arose in the morning the word of the Lord came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, Go and tell David. Thus says the Lord, I offer you three things. Choose one of them for yourself that I may do it for you.

So Gad came to David and told him and he said to him, Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or shall you flee three months before your enemies while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' plague in your land? Now consider and see what answer I should take back to him who sent me. Now there's a discrepancy here in verse 13 too because the first option is here said to be seven years of famine. In 1 Chronicles 21.12 it says shall there be three years of famine.

So Samuel and Chronicles disagree about this. I think most scholars would think that Chronicles preserves the original number since the other numbers are three also. Shall there be three years of famine, three months of you being pursued, or three days of plague.

And so for some reason the number got changed in 2 Samuel and I don't know of any better way to explain that except that it must be a textual error. Because we do have what makes a more sensible reading in Chronicles and it seems to be changed here for no reason. Except that someone may have copied it wrongly.

So David said to Gad, I'm in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the Lord for his mercies are great but do not let me fall into the hand of man. That is I'll take the last option rather than the second.

Don't let me fall into the hands of men. They are not very merciful. Let God be the one who decides.



Actually in Chronicles that third option three days of plague is also said to be the sword of the Lord. In 1 Chronicles 21.12 says either three years of famine or three months to be defeated by your foes with the sword of your enemies overtaking you or else for three days the sword of the Lord. The plague in the land.

And so David says I'd rather have the sword of the Lord than the sword of man after me. Because the Lord at least is merciful and good. Men can't be counted on to that.

So the Lord sent a plague upon Israel from morning till the appointed time from Dan to Beersheba. 70,000 men of the people died. And again it should not be thought that these were innocent people who died because of David's mistakes.

Because the judgment that God brought on Israel was something that he brought on them because he was angry at them at the very beginning of this. He was bringing a deserved judgment on them for whatever purposes. There's many things not told us in this chapter.

Including why God was angry or why it was wrong to take a census. This is a very sketchy abbreviated account. But we have to assume that since the Lord is indeed of great mercy and just that these 70,000 men who died did so not because of David's sin but because of the sins of the nation and possibly those 70,000 themselves.

And when the angel stretched out his hand over Jerusalem to destroy it the Lord relented from the destruction and said to the angel who destroyed the people It is enough. Now restrain your hand. And the angel of the Lord was by the threshing floor of Arana the Jebusite who is so called throughout this narrative though in 1 Chronicles he's called Ornan which is simply a different vowel pointing of the same consonants.

Arana or Ornan. The Jebusite. Then David spoke to the Lord when he saw the angel who was striking the people and he said surely I have sinned I have done wickedly but these sheep what have they done? Let your hand I pray be against me and against my father's house.

So he's saying these people aren't the ones who numbered the people I did so please spare the people. And he said this especially about the people of Jerusalem because that's where the plague had now come to. The angel of the Lord was apparently visibly it says in 1 Chronicles the angel of the Lord was seen between heaven and earth and is standing in the sky with his sword drawn.

And David saw that. Actually Ornan and his sons saw that too and were told that Ornan's sons went to hide when they saw the angel of the Lord but Ornan saw it and then just kept threshing at the threshing floor. He wasn't as intimidated apparently.

And Gad came that day to David and said to him go up erect an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. So David according to the word of Gad went up as

the Lord commanded. Now Ornan looked and saw the king and his servants coming toward him.

So Ornan went out and bowed before the king with his face to the ground. Then Ornan said why has my lord the king come to his servant? And David said to buy the threshing floor from you to build an altar to the Lord that the plague may be withdrawn from the people. Now Ornan said to David let my lord the king take and offer up whatever seems good to him.

Look here are oxen for burnt sacrifice and threshing implements and the yokes of the oxen for wood. All these O king Ornan has given to the king and Ornan said to the king may the Lord your God accept you. Then the king said to Ornan no but I will surely buy it from you for a price nor will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which cost me nothing.

So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for 50 shekels of silver. He apparently also paid a much larger price which is given as 600 shekels of gold for the place it says in 1st Chronicles 21-25 it says he gave 600 shekels of gold for the place. Now the place apparently was not just the threshing floor and the oxen the threshing floor was a part of the place.

This location became later where the temple of Solomon stood and he must have bought the whole area the whole property which later became the temple precincts and that was considerably more expensive than just the threshing floor and the oxen. So he paid 50 shekels of silver for the threshing floor and the oxen but he paid a lot more apparently after that transaction for the entire real estate around it which was 600 shekels of gold according to 1st Chronicles 21-25. And David built there an altar to Yahweh and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings so the Lord heeded the prayers for the land and the plague was withdrawn from Israel.

And the story just continues on into 1st Kings which we'll see later on. But I would point out that in 2nd Chronicles 3 we are told that it was this threshing floor that became the temple site in the days of Solomon. We're also told in that place that that was the same spot that Abraham had offered up Isaac in other words that was Mount Moriah.

We would not necessarily have known that because Samuel doesn't tell us but 2nd Chronicles 3-1 says now Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah where the Lord had appeared to his father David at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan, the Jebusite. So the temple was built on this spot that David purchased at this time and it was also identified as Mount Moriah where another sacrifice had been offered by Abraham a thousand years earlier. And that brings us to the end of 2nd Samuel or the books of Samuel.

And the story does continue just picks up and continues in the books of Kings.

