

David's Sacrifice: A Journey of Sin, Repentance, and Restoration

The story of David's sacrifice reveals profound spiritual truths about sin, divine judgment, and the path to restoration. When David ordered an unauthorized census of Israel, he triggered divine judgment in the form of a devastating plague that claimed 70,000 lives. This account from 1 Chronicles 21 demonstrates how one leader's pride led to national suffering, yet also shows God's mercy when genuine repentance occurs.

Through this powerful narrative, we'll explore how David confronted his sin, took responsibility for his actions, and ultimately established the future site of Solomon's Temple through his sacrifice at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

 by **Dr. Brenda Guess**



1 Chronicles 21:14-17

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 relented concerning the disaster 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^[a] 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, the shepherd,^[b] have sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? LORD my God, let your hand fall on me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on your people.” (NIV)

The Plague and the Angel



Devastating Plague

The Lord sent a plague that killed 70,000 men across Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, covering about 150 miles and affecting every village.



Angel of Destruction

God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem, but relented and commanded the angel to withdraw his hand as he stood at Araunah's threshing floor.



David's Vision

David saw the angel standing between heaven and earth with a drawn sword extended over Jerusalem, causing him and the elders to fall facedown in sackcloth.

The plague moved swiftly through Israel, bringing immediate death described as the "sword of the Lord." Every citizen would have felt the devastating loss, with sorrowful outcries impossible for King David to ignore. The threshing floor where the angel stood was a flat, hard area used for separating grain—an essential part of food production.

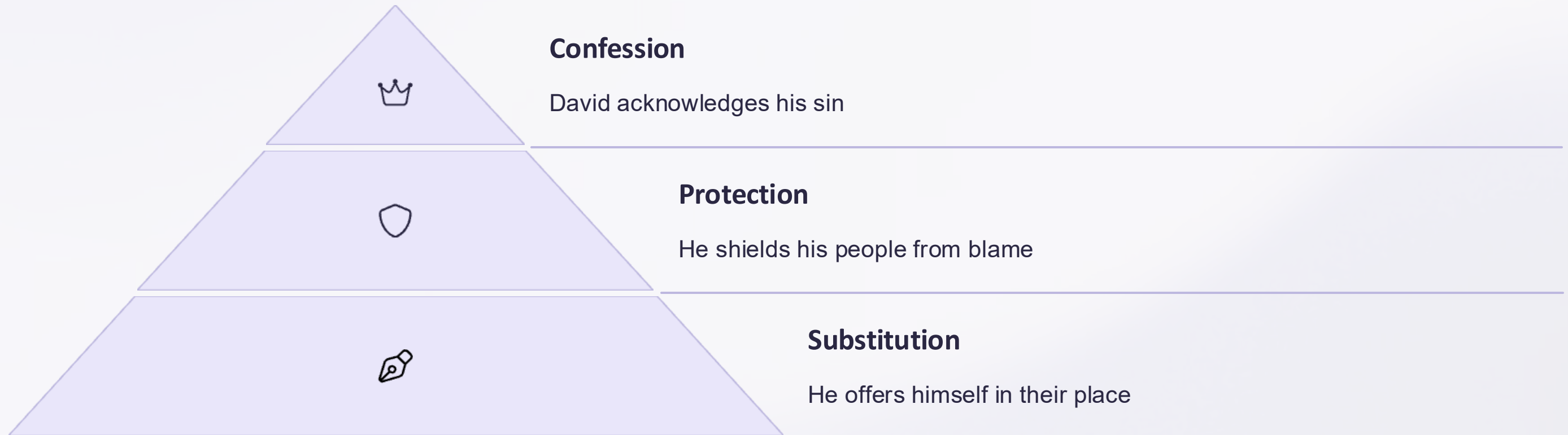
DAVID'S SIN

- David's sin was conducting an unauthorized census. Some scholars believe his actions demonstrated pride, to show his strength as King. He would be relying on human numbers rather than God. Other scholars believe that the knowledge gained from the census would allow David to impose more accurately taxes and levies, which would of course be an added burden to the people. David's sin caused suffering on others.

SIN

- Sin is something that is something that is committed by all humankind. The Bible tells us, "if any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone." (John 8:7) and "We all fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)
- The word SIN suggests the falling down or losing one's way (Hebrews 6:6); a sense of walking away from the right path (Acts 1:25)
- Sin wraps the sinner up with strong cords (Proverbs 5:22); and easily entangles its victim (Hebrew 12:1)
- Jesus warned "everyone who sins is a slave to sin" (John 8:34)

David Takes Responsibility



In a moment of true leadership, David confessed: "Was it not I who ordered the fighting men to be counted? I, the shepherd, have sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? LORD my God, let your hand fall on me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on your people."

This powerful admission stands in stark contrast to his earlier rejection of Joab's counsel against the census. David now fully accepts responsibility, comparing himself to a shepherd who has failed his flock. His willingness to bear punishment personally rather than see his people suffer further demonstrates his heart of repentance.

Repentance

- Genuine repentance begins with a clear understanding of the wrong committed.
- Paul noted that godly sorrow produces an earnestness, an eagerness, to clear one's name, alarm, longing, concern and a readiness to see justice done. (2 Corinthians 7:11)
- In the Bible, common expressions of this eagerness is shown in prayer, tears, sackcloth, ashes and fasting. The wearing of sackcloth was a garment of mourning. It was rough, loose-fitting, like modern burlap. The very opposite of fine clothing of a king.
- Psalm 51 illustrates David's repentance at another time in his life. Another great example. David notes his sin, the person who was harmed by it, and the justice of judgment against him.
- All these actions are the opposite to what the Bible describes as a hard heart or stone heart. What is shown is a soft heart, soft face. (Psalm 51)

2 Chronicles 21:18-22

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.”

2 Chronicles 21: 23-27

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^[a] 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.



Divine Instructions and Obedience

Obedience

Prophetic Direction

The angel of the LORD ordered the prophet Gad to instruct David to build an altar at Araunah's threshing floor.

Immediate Response

David went up in complete obedience to the word spoken in the name of the LORD, recognizing God's authority.

Divine Significance

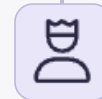
The location—Mount Moriah—was where Abraham nearly sacrificed Isaac and would later become the site of Solomon's temple.

The severity of David's sin demanded more than words of repentance and submissive postures. God made His expectations clear through the prophet Gad, who is referred to elsewhere as both "prophet" and "seer." David's obedience was immediate and complete, recognizing that Gad was speaking in the name of the Lord.

The Encounter with Araunah

Working at the Threshing Floor

Araunah and his four sons were threshing wheat when they saw the angel and hid themselves.



Royal Approach

When David approached, Araunah left his work and bowed before the king with his face to the ground.

King's Request

David asked to purchase the threshing floor at full price to build an altar and stop the plague.



Generous Offer

Araunah offered to give David the site, oxen, threshing sledges, and wheat for offerings.



We can scarcely imagine the shock Araunah and his sons experienced upon seeing both an angel and the king! Though a non-Israelite, Araunah demonstrated remarkable generosity and knowledge of Israel's sacrificial system, offering not just his land but also materials for the offerings.

The Costly Sacrifice

600

Gold Shekels

The amount David paid for Araunah's threshing floor

219

Troy Ounces

Modern equivalent of the gold David paid

\$400,000+

Modern Value

Approximate worth in today's currency

"No, I insist on paying the full price," David replied to Araunah. "I will not take for the LORD what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing." This powerful statement reveals David's understanding that true repentance comes with a cost. The sin was his, and so the price of reconciliation must be paid by him.

David built an altar and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. His sacrifice was accepted dramatically when "the LORD answered him with fire from heaven on the altar." This divine response confirmed God's acceptance of David's repentance and offering.

Divine Acceptance and Resolution



The Lord spoke to the angel, who then put his sword back into its sheath. This simple yet profound action signaled the end of judgment and the acceptance of David's sacrifice. The plague that had devastated Israel was finally stopped through David's obedience and sacrificial offering.

When David saw that the Lord had answered him on the threshing floor, he continued to offer sacrifices there. This location would gain even greater significance in Israel's history, becoming the site where Solomon would later build the temple—the permanent dwelling place for God among His people.

RESTORATION

- The imagery of restoration is seen as redemption, return, reunion, reconciliation and rebirth.
- Restoration is giving or receiving something back that was taken or lost.
- In our lesson today we see restoration in the relationship of God and David. We see God's acceptance and the plague's end.

2 Chronicles 21:28-30

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 wilderness, 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.

The Transition and David's Fear

Tabernacle at Gibeon

The tabernacle of Moses and the altar of burnt offering were located at the high place in Gibeon, about five miles north of Jerusalem. This represented a transitional phase between the mobile tabernacle and the permanent temple.

For 400 years, the tabernacle had been Israel's center of worship, but now God was establishing a new location in Jerusalem at the threshing floor David purchased.

This story marks a pivotal moment in Israel's history—the transition from tabernacle to temple, from Gibeon to Jerusalem. Through David's sin and repentance, God established the location for His permanent dwelling among His people. The threshing floor of Araunah would become the foundation of Solomon's temple, connecting this moment of judgment and mercy to Israel's future worship.

David's Lingering Fear

"David could not go before it to inquire of God, because he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the LORD." Despite his victory over Goliath and wild animals, David remained deeply affected by witnessing the angel's power.

This fear suggests that even after receiving forgiveness, the memory of sin's consequences can leave a lasting impression, teaching us to approach God with reverence.

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