

2 Samuel 24

Personal Note

Back from China with ICC

Orphan Sunday

More will be shared in weeks to come.

Care for orphans and widows.

Adoption into the Kingdom is a major theme of Christian faith.

Sponsorship, short term trip and considering adoption.

Lectionary Note

Samuel & Kings is reflected in parallel by Chronicles.

Samuel & Kings is more a part of the prophetic tradition,

meaning that they place more emphasis and comment on the spiritual state of the people.

Chronicles provide a post-exilic perspective of events.

It is actually rather fascinating to read both side by side and note their differences and similarities.

(God/Satan, Araunah/Ornan, census numbers.)

David's Anointed Life & Final Story (2 Samuel 6-23)

#Legacy

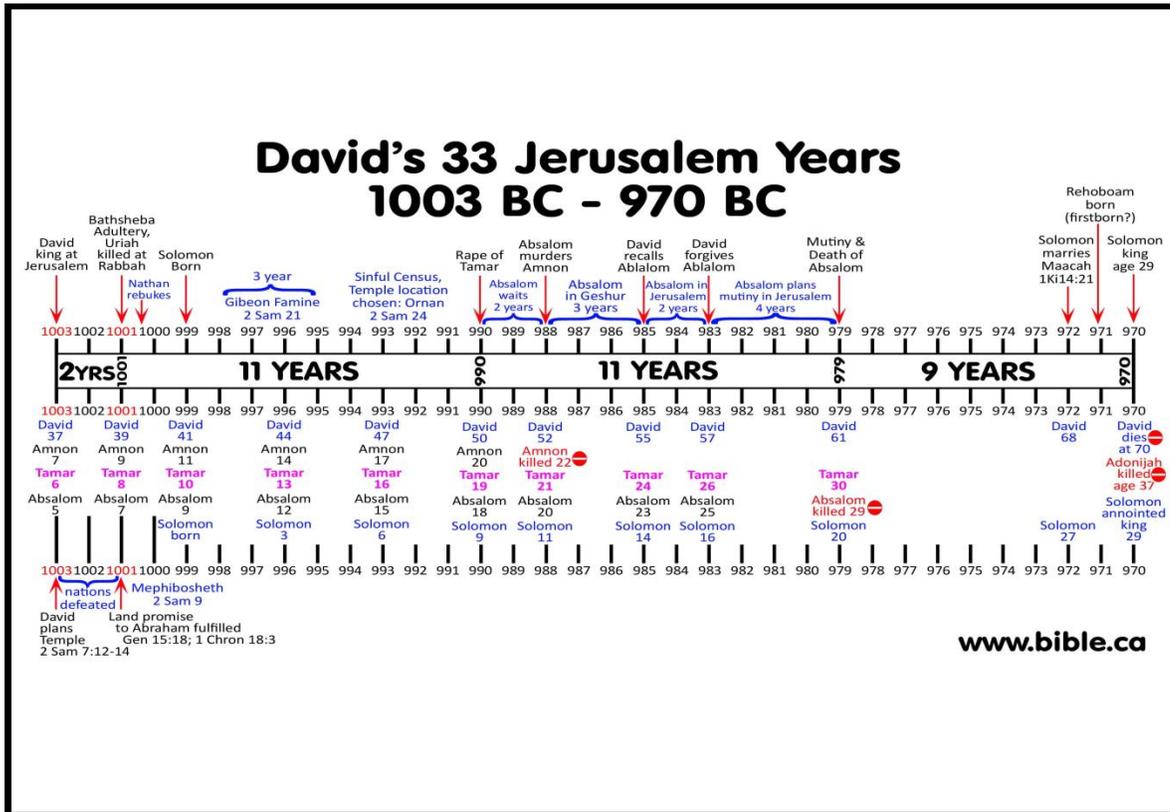
Bathsheba

Famine

Census

Tamar & Amnon

Absalom



Incitement of God - Free Will, Sovereignty & Interpretation (v.1-9)

Complexity

Theological implications.

In 1 Chronicles 21 it is Satan who incites.

(One of 3 OT mentions of satan - only in this case is it personalized.)

So who is responsible?
God or the Devil?
Or are we looking for someone to explain our actions?
Someone to take the fall for events we can't explain?
Indeed something is going on here.
It is a hint towards a deeper struggle within humanity.
The choice of action towards God or away from him.
There is an angel, a messenger and servant of God.
But who is responsible?
David.

Even the text balks at calling the greatest King of Israel culpable.
Say it was the incitement of God or the of the Devil.
But in this case we read between the lines.
Why does God allow this discrepancy in his word?
And I am going out on a limb here.
This is not exegesis - this is pure spiritual deduction.
but do not mistake it for an uneducated guess.

David is nearly released from responsibility by the narrators of Samuel & Chronicles.
But here is the transcendent beauty of this passage.
Given even the textual/exegetical excuse.
David does not surrender his responsibility.
Even the text knows this.
David chose a census for a number of reasons:
Pride - The power of his empire in fighting men (a trust in self rather than God)
Gain - Taxes can be levied when the population is known.

There is always an interesting dynamic between God's sovereignty and our free will.
Different theologians over history have tried to break it down and simplify it for our understanding.
But in all honesty, I'm not sure how helpful it is to work with a static rubric or model.
Our relationship with God is indeed complex, dynamic and deep.
Simplistic models have their place but can also be very incomplete.
I would say this, however, from this passage.
God is at work and indeed Lord over all things.
He will accomplish what he sets out to.
Our actions and choices, however, also matter.
They matter in the way in which we become part of what God does or not.
Simply put, God is going to make things right again - how we are a part of that us up to us.

And so David is given a choice.

The Hard Reality of Choice (v.10-16)

What David chooses here is not between good and evil.
It is a choice of consequence.
It is a lot like "twelve of this or a dozen of the other."
And in this case it isn't a choice between good or bad.
It is a choice between bad or worse.
It reminds me a bit of politics and voting.

Sometimes, in our cynical view, we only have the choice of the least worst possible leader!
But in a real-fallen-world application, we are faced with deeper dilemmas than this.
For example, how the church reacts to divorce, pre-marital sex, homosexuality, euthanasia, etc.
We know - or at least should know - what the Scriptures say about all these things.
That these realities are borne of brokenness and sin.
But does this mean we vilify and demonize or on the other hand pander and encourage?
No.

As far as we are able, we are to live in trust and obedience to the ways of God in our own personal life.
We find forgiveness and peace for what we have done or left undone for ourselves.

And then we extend that mercy, that forgiveness, that grace to those around us.
To one another and to those who do not necessarily believe what we do.
The dynamics of grace and truth are not simplistic.

Two other things about choice:

1. All our choices affect others - not just ourselves.

2. Different Choices have different Weight

There are minor choices -

like what colour socks should I wear?
or what's for lunch.

There are medium choices -

where will I go to school?
what should I study?
how much should I spend on that?

And there are the most important choices we make in life -

will I follow Jesus?
who will I date or marry?
how should I raise my kids?
Who do I trust?

It is important to be aware of the weight of our choices.

The weight of our choices determine the degree of consequential blessing or curse.

Unlike David, we don't usually get to choose the consequence.

We only get to make choices.

And this is what the passage is about - facing consequences.

David chose the shortest but perhaps severest of the three consequences.

Why? Because he knows God is merciful and he is right.

The Meaning of Sacrifice & Burnt Offering (v.17-25)

#Things for free

What does it really mean?

Sacrifice is about relationship.

The communion table is the New Testament sign.

Baptism.

The cross.

The religious sacrificial system is about the heart, not the action.

It is a symbol that represents a reality.

symbols can be faked.

Religious practice can be false and not reflect the heart.

The sacrificial system is about trust.

I have been asked how the OT saints are saved since they do not know Jesus.

You see, the NT already answers that in Ephesians 2 - "It is by grace you are saved through faith."

You see, you make the sacrifice, but the sacrifice represents you.

A burnt offering, unlike the other forms of offering that retain parts, is wholly consumed.

It is an act of totality.

There is no holding back.

There is a cost to sacrifice.

It is the cost of reconciliation.

Humility, mercy, grace, love.

Not just monetary.

The true cost is the death of Christ.

The laying down of your life.

The Future of Araunah's Threshing Floor

David pays for the site - it is the sign of his heart, desire, trust of God.

But ultimately, it is God who will pay for sin.

Jesus will be the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

The site of the temple.

The geography of promise.

But in the end the promise is not based on signs and symbols.

It is based on something deeper.

Something invisible yet made visible.

All our symbols and rites in the end must point to something that is truly real.

And that is found in the heart.

Our Altar

It is as the poet Alexander Pope expressed it:

"To err is human, to forgive, divine." (*An Essay on Criticism*, Part 2, written 1711)

All people are fallen.

God is merciful.

What lies between is

1. our willingness to confess - I am a sinner. I have sinned.

 Taking responsibility for our own sin.

 Pride in self rather than trust in God.

 Personal comfort and gain.

 Humility is the cost of confession - the altar.

2. and the sacrifice - is Jesus.

 Ultimately the sacrifice is not by us but by God who humbles himself.

And so we find union with God.

A humble people and a humble God.

For God brings down the proud and raises up the humble.

Know which you are and worship him.

This is Araunah's threshing floor.

We create a place of peace, here and in our homes.

For we are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

And we are living sacrifices.