

THE PLAGUE STOPPED AT CALVARY

Exodus 30:12 *When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them.*

Exodus 30:13 *This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD.*

God is the source of every living soul. “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7). As such, anyone who wishes to count the souls of the people of God must acknowledge God’s ownership and Lordship over the souls of his people. Only God can give the order to number his people. In fact, an entire book, the fourth Book of Moses, is called the Book of Numbers because God ordered Moses to take a census of Israel twice in the desert. “Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls” (Numbers 1:2). Let us rejoice and take comfort in the fact that we are numbered among the people of God! Not only does the Lord Jesus know the precise number of his people, but the precise number of hairs on our heads. “But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Luke 12:7). If the people of God are counted, an offering of half a shekel per head must be given to the Temple as an acknowledgement of God’s ownership of the soul.

Psalm 49:6 *They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;*

Psalm 49:7 *None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:*

Psalm 49:8 *(For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:)*

Once we understand the relationship between God, the soul and numbering, we will be better positioned to make sense of David’s sin in counting the children of Israel. “And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel. And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it” (I Chronicles 21:1,2). Satan was the source of this need to number Israel because David did not intend to acknowledge God’s ownership of the soul by paying half a shekel for each soul. Satan has always desired to “play God”; David should have known better. It is for this reason I have always cautioned the people of God and church

leaders in particular to be very careful in numbering the people of God. What is the purpose? How will this be for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ? These are some of the questions we must consider before counting the souls. The result of David's sin was a gruesome plague from the Lord – the angel of death began slaying people with a plague. The first time there was a similar plague at the hands of the angel of death was in Egypt.

Exodus 12:23 For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

Nothing and no one can stop the destroying angel except the blood of the Lamb. God was severely provoked when Pharaoh declared that the souls of the children of Israel belong to him. He was basically saying that he did not acknowledge God's Lordship over the souls of Israel. "And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go" (Exodus 5:2). How often must Pharaoh have counted the children of Israel in his arrogance? The more he tried to kill them through hard labor, the more the Lord multiplied Israel. Finally, the destroying angel came to kill those who refused to recognize God's ownership of souls in Egypt. There was only one force that could stop this unstoppable angel – the blood of the Lamb that pointed to the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only those who apply the blood of Jesus in recognition of his precious atonement for souls can stop the angel of death. Fast forward to the time of King David who was devastated at the systematic destruction of the angel of death in Jerusalem because of his failure to acknowledge the Lord's ownership of the soul. How hopeless he must have felt! Then, all of sudden, something amazing happened.

1Chronicles 21:15 And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.

Once the destroying angel stood over the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, God said, "It is enough, stay now thine hand". Why precisely at this location? The answer ought to fill our hearts with gratitude and joy because this was precisely the location where Abraham was commanded to offer up Isaac, which also pointed to Calvary where the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, died for our sins. "And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their

faces” (I Chron 21:16). Just as the angel of the Lord stood between earth and heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ was raised upon the Cross reconciling earth and heaven. Like David and the elders of Israel we must come with broken hearts, sackcloth and ashes, to Calvary. The world must understand that nothing and no one can stop the plague from God except and until we come to Calvary where the blood of God was poured out to redeem our precious souls. King David rushed to Calvary with sackcloth and ashes just as father Abraham also came to this same spot hundreds of years before David. All who seek to escape the power of the destroying angel must come to Calvary.

The place was a threshing floor which belonged to Ornan (a title which meant “Lord”). Here the harvest was brought and threshed out so the wheat and the chaff could be separated. Calvary separates the good from the bad – the sinner from the sinful, just as it did the Egyptians from the Israelites. The Lord Jesus was threshed out for our sins so we will be threshed out of the world and into his glorious kingdom. Let us go to Ornan’s threshing floor where we can repent and our sins threshed out. May God burn the chaff of sin of our lives and gather in the wheat of blessing! “Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable” (Luke 3:17). Ornan also saw the angel of the Lord while he was threshing and trembled with his four sons. He wanted to give the threshing floor free of charge to David, but David could not repeat his first mistake – the souls of God are precious. He had now learned this message the hard way.

***1Chron 21:24** And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost.*

***1Chron 21:25** So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight.*

The 600 shekels of gold are equivalent to half a million USD today. David began by neglecting the half a shekel for each soul he counted but was more than happy to pay a handsome sum for Golgotha. What is Calvary worth to us? Everything! “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26). Come to Ornan’s threshing floor today, repent and be baptized in Jesus name for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38). This is the only place where the plague cannot touch us!