

JUNE 5

2 Samuel 23:24-24:25

2 Samuel 23:24-39

The designation, *THE THIRTY*, must either have been a special name with a special meaning at that time, and/or the group always added others to replace a fallen comrade to keep it at thirty. Verse 39 seems to indicate that in their history, *THE THIRTY* only had 37 members, seven of them apparently falling in battle or leaving the group.

V. 24 Notice that Asahel, Joab's brother, was one of this group who died. That would tell us that the group was formed before David was made king in Hebron, because Asahel died very early in that civil war.

V. 34 It doesn't always bear fruit to make a connection and hunt down a name, but understanding who Eliam the son of Ahithophel was adds deeper understanding of what David did when he sinned against Uriah and Bathsheba; and then, why God judged David so strongly and why others, like Ahithophel, did what they did. I can only encourage you to take the time, as the Spirit brings things to your attention, to search and study and make connections.

I wonder if Eliam stayed with David, in *THE THIRTY*, or if he hung up his sword and moved to Giloh where he buried his father.

V. 39 This is the second guy I recognize in the list that fell in battle. Actually, it was a murder that became tragic for many families and for the entire nation.

2 Samuel 24

V. 1 So, where does the *again* come from? My only suggestion is that it comes from the final verse of the last chapter, where, because of David's action with Uriah, God brought judgment on Israel.

Now, this is where reading through the Bible every year leads you to make some interesting connections if you notice them. This same story is found in 1 Chronicles 21:1 and the wording there adds a much different twist to this event.

Back when the spies went into the land, it says in Numbers that God sent them in; and in Deuteronomy, Moses says that the people demanded from Moses that spies go into the land and Moses approved it. Putting those accounts together gives you some insight into how God will use the desires of people, sinful as they are, and allow them to follow those desires to work some purpose in His plan. In this case here, God not only furthers His purpose in judging Israel, but He allows David to express a sinful arrogance instigated by the enemy. And in all of it, God brings glory to Himself by humbling David and then by putting a very important "X" on the map.

V. 2 There was nothing wrong with a census per se, but this was pride on David's part wanting to know his military might in contrast to the nations around him. His victories were never dependent on numbers.

Dan to Beersheba was a phrase that meant all of Israel, from top to bottom.

Vs. 3-9 You know that this request had to be pretty bad, if Joab, that spiritual genius, knew it was bad. The fact David didn't see it means that God didn't help David overcome his own fleshly desires.

V. 9 shows you the true intent of the numbering. David wanted to see his military strength. Instead he should have been working, as any disciple knows, to be making more and better disciples. Israel's strength was in the closeness of its people to the Lord. This was simply, as the French would say, "Baloney."

Vs. 10-14 David was moved to repentance, but God would still judge the entire nation, just as in the situation with Uriah.

After reading all of The Psalms that we have read, it made sense that David would put himself in the Lord's hands. David knew of God's steadfast love and mercy.

Vs. 15-17 God cleaned up Israel. I'm sure not all of these were "innocent lambs;" but again, for anyone close to the Lord, "dying" means graduation, early retirement, joy and some R&R from this land of the walking wounded. It is actually great, unless you are not ready to meet Him.

In David seeing this angel, a lot of things happened. Not only did he see God's judgment, but he saw Israel's true military might. The other part of the story has to do with where the angel stopped.

Vs. 18-25 If you read 1 Chronicles 21 you'll understand why Araunah was so willing to sell this place. The place the angel stopped, where David built his altar and made peace with God, would become the temple. It was the place where Abraham had been ready to offer Isaac and it was the place where the Messiah would present Himself to the nation as their king. This spot is where Solomon would build the temple. In fact, it would have been built there even if David hadn't sinned. God brings good out of bad, but "bad" isn't necessary to His plan. As disciples, I feel safer looking at Paul as a model. He was very busy, very fruitful, very needy, and he finished well in the harvest following Christ and making disciples who made disciples.

Acts 3

Vs. 1-10 What's interesting to me is that Peter and John are in the forefront and that what is being shown here is not strategy in growing the church, but being led by and responding to the opportunities the Spirit gives them. We are seeing what it meant to abide in Christ. Our tendency is often to look for strategies, rather than simply following and observing what opportunities the Spirit is placing in our paths.

Note that this man had been a regular at *the Beautiful Gate*; and Jesus had seen him year after year, but had not healed him. To me it is interesting that Jesus never felt any compulsion or nudging to heal this man. And apparently, this man had never reached out to Jesus. It was all in the Father's plan. Now, Peter and John are confronted by this man and both of them understood spiritually that they were being told to do something. They were doing what Jesus had done. As Jesus had abided in the Father, they were now abiding in Christ.

V. 8 Remember how Jesus had always tried to calm people down, telling them not to make Him known? That was no longer necessary and this guy was manifesting "leaping joy" and the praise of Jesus.

Vs. 9-10 This was big, public news. Also, the fact that this man had been there year after year will make this event hard for the Jewish leaders to deal with.

Vs. 11-26 The simplest definition of being a witness is saying what happened, in this case, how this guy was made well.

Vs. 13-16 Peter was very direct and the application is in v. 16. Jesus was all of these things, and was raised from the dead and, being alive, He was still working.

V. 17 Peter wasn't afraid to get to the point, gently. Paul also pleaded ignorance in 1 Timothy 1:15.

Vs. 18-26 This is a great message. Notice in the rest of this short sermon, that sin, judgment, the resurrection and the offer of forgiveness are all mentioned, very simply and naturally. Although we don't see the result today, tomorrow it will say there were 5000 who gave their lives to Christ. And it will say the leaders were really annoyed. Too bad.

For us as disciples, we see what abiding in Christ looks like. Peter and John didn't know what was going to happen at the temple. They weren't any smarter than we are, but they were alert and

perceiving what the Spirit was showing them. They expected the Lord to be with them and working. Peter didn't have time to rehearse this sermon. The Spirit gave it to him as he saw the situation unfold and silently prayed, "Lord, help!"

Psalm 123

This would have been a great song to sing on your way to Jerusalem for worship. Not only does it have the elements of need, humility and longing, but it points to the only source of our hope, the Lord.

Vs. 1-2 I like the sense of persistence and expectancy in this longing for God. We are to keep looking, and not to give up, until the Lord has mercy on us.

Vs. 3-4 Even in Israel there were people who were irreligious, who mocked. They kept working on the Sabbath and they didn't lose valuable time by going up to Jerusalem. But better to be needy and long for God's mercy, than to forget our need. Jesus told His disciples that if anyone serves Him, the Father will honor him. We wait for God's mercy and His honoring of our faith, knowing it is better to suffer and wait, than to go our own way and find comfort.

It is interesting that in Paul's first letter to Timothy, written after the history we have recorded in the book of Acts, when churches were falling apart and Roman persecution was heating up, Paul told Timothy three times that those who follow Christ must have their hope set on God.

Proverbs 16:21-23

At the end of 1 Timothy 6:11, Paul exhorted Timothy to be different. *But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.* This is a familiar list, but suddenly *steadfastness* and *gentleness* are added. Wisdom that comes from God's righteousness, the desire to honor God in everything, can be steady and gentle in any and all circumstances. The wisdom of Christ is ours and we see the world through His heart. When that wisdom is our light and our heart, it's easier to control our mouth and bring steadiness and calmness to any situation.