

## The Plague Was Not Short.

1 Chronicles 21: 9-28

This morning we are going to look at an adventure in recovery. For well over a year our country has been virtually shut down. Lives have been lost, Jobs have been lost. Loneliness has crept in, and it's been hard to hold on to hope. So today we are beginning the recovery. Our country is beginning to open up. Our businesses are starting to open up; and thankfully our church is open. But make no mistake it will take time to recover what we have lost.

So this morning I thought I would treat us to a little bit of history lesson from the book of Chronicles and talk a little about the prophet Ezra.

The Bible has lessons for every situation we will ever face. Chronicles was written to teach us how to recover from a national crisis.

In 606 B.C. the Babylonians surrounded Jerusalem, broke down its walls and carried virtually everyone into captivity and exile. The Israelites lost everything, their homes, their jobs, their identities, their loved ones. They lived in exile for 70 years and then God set them free. The Persian king Cyrus told them to go home, so they did and marched 900 miles back to the Holy Land.

How would they recover? So God sent them two spirit filled leaders, Nehemiah and Ezra. There was much to do: the walls needed rebuilding to give them security. This was Nehemiah's task. The second leader was Ezra. He wasn't a builder of walls. He was a builder of hearts; a builder of character. Nehemiah gave the people the wall. Ezra gave people the word.

The books of Samuel and Kings record the political history of Israel. The book of Chronicles tells the story of what happened to Israel as a result of their choices. Samuel and Kings record details, Chronicles record lessons.

The story we are going to talk about is about a plague that was cut short, but the lesson is about what to do when you've done something wrong. Wouldn't it be nice if we woke up tomorrow and found that coronavirus had just gone away. Most of us have done something wrong, that we know is wrong, but chose to do it anyway. King David was no exception; yet he failed many times, and yet, God still loved him and used him.

Ezra's lesson for today is about starting over with God when we've offended Him or disobeyed Him; and for the lesson Ezra selects not what we would consider a huge

sin in David's life, but a small sin. Egn tells about doing something that isn't always wrong. What did David do? He took a census. What's wrong with taking a census? Sometimes governments need a census to formulate policies for the future. God, Himself, ordered a census of Israel as they left Egypt. 1 Chronicles 2:1-2 says this "Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to count the people of Israel. So David said to Joab and the commanders of the troops, 'Go and count Israel from Beer-sheba to Dan and bring a report to me so I can know their number.'" Censuses are not normally sinful, but David's was, because David was taking one, simply to measure his own greatness.

He wasn't at war; he didn't need to know how many fighting men he had. He just wanted to know how many troops he had so that he could pat himself on the back. Does the word Pride come into our minds.

Joab knew there was no good need or reason for the census. Joab replied "May the Lord multiply the number of his people a hundred times over! My lord, the king aren't they all my lord's servants? Why does no lord want to do this? Why does he bring guilt on Israel?" Yet the king's order prevailed over Joab. This census was evil in God's eyes so He afflicted Israel. Some people are wondering if the Covid virus is an affliction from God. Throughout scripture God had used a plague to get people's attention. He's got a lot of people's attention right now. I hope He has ours.

So David's credit he said to God, "I have sinned greatly because I have done this thing. Now please take away your servant's guilt for I have been very foolish." Is it possible that David thought "I'm going to take this census, and I know it's wrong, but I also know that God loves me, so after I take it, I'll just ask God to forgive me, and He will. So we sometimes think like that.

But friends, this sin doesn't take place in the New Testament, it happens in the Old Testament.

Justice!

God is a God of justice, so sin always has to be paid for. Jesus paid for our sins permanently, as our once for all sacrifice on the Cross. But the Cross hasn't happened yet. So David's sin hasn't already been paid for. It's going to have to be paid for now! When the Lord instructed God, David's see, "Go and say to David, this is what the Lord says: It is an offering you three choices. Choose one of them for yourself and I will do it to you. Take your choice; three years of famine, or three months of

devastation by your foes, or three days of the sword of the Lord - a plague on the land  
bringing destruction to the whole nation of Israel." David answered God "I'm in  
anguish. Please let me fall into the Lord's hands because His mercies are very great,  
but don't let me fall into human hands. So the Lord sent a plague on Israel  
and seventy thousand Israelites died.