

2 Samuel 24 compared with 1 Chronicles 21

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These two chapters apparently contradict each other, but they don't. The authors of Samuel and Chronicles recorded the same event but gave different descriptions in their accounts. Listed below are explanations for their 6 differences.

2 Samuel 24	1 Chronicles 21
The Lord incited David to number Israel (v.1)	Satan moved David to number Israel (v.1)

This is a Hebrew idiom, where a person is said to do that which God permits to be done. In this instance, God permitted Satan to be the primary agent in tempting David. In Job 1:6-12, we find that Satan had get permission from the Lord before he could act.

2 Samuel 24	1 Chronicles 21
800,000 valiant men who drew the sword (v.9)	1,100,000 men who drew the sword (v.5)

1,100,000 describes the grand total for Israel. This includes the standing army of 12 units of 24,000 men each (288,000) plus the 12,000 men attached to Jerusalem and the chariot cities. See 1 Chron. 27:1-15 and 2 Chron. 1:14.
 $800,000 + 288,000 + 12,000 = 1,100,000$.

2 Samuel 24	1 Chronicles 21
500,000 men of Judah (v.9)	470,000 men of Judah (v.5)

Chronicles does not include the 30,000-man standing army of Judah (see 2 Samuel 6:1).
 $470,000 + 30,000 = 500,000$

2 Samuel 24	1 Chronicles 21
7 years of famine (v.13)	3 years of famine (v.12)

Some people have suggested that a copyist made an error in 2 Samuel 24. The Hebrew word in 2 Samuel 24 says "7" while the O.T. Greek Septuagint (LXX) says "3." All manuscripts say "3" in 1 Chronicles 21. The Hebrew letter Zayin ("7") looks almost identical to the Hebrew letter Gimel ("3") and this view assumes a scribe made a mistake in writing the number.

A better explanation is that a famine had already begun several years before (2 Samuel 21:1) and when God spoke to David, the famine would continue for three years. In the 1 Chronicles 21 account, three choices are given to David. The latter two choices are the same as the 2 Samuel 24 account, but the first choice is different, both in the number of years mentioned and in the way the punishment is worded. The Lord there does not invite David to choose 3 years of famine, but rather asks, ". . . shall seven years of famine come to you in your land?"

2 Samuel 21:1 tells us, "Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David sought the presence of the Lord. And the Lord said, 'It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he put the Gibeonites to death.'" Three years of famine had already occurred. Add to this the current year (the time which passed from 2 Samuel 21:1 to 2 Samuel 24:13), and then the three years of famine as recorded in 1 Chronicles 21:12, and it equals seven years of famine. The two accounts are not a contradiction, but 2 Samuel counts from when the famine began and 1 Chronicles 21 counts the remaining years if David chose them.

2 Samuel 24	1 Chronicles 21
Threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (v.18)	Threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite (v.15)

Araunah is another name for Ornan.

2 Samuel 24	1 Chronicles 21
David buys threshing floor and oxen for 50 shekels of silver (v.1)	David gave Ornan 600 shekels of gold by weight for the site (v.25)

David paid 50 shekels of silver for the threshing floor and oxen to build the altar. He paid 600 shekels of gold for the entire site, which was 8 acres that later became the location for Solomon's temple.

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