

17.38 David Numbers the People (2 Samuel 24:1–25; 1 Chronicles 21:1–30; 27:23, 24)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows
Brackets [. . .] indicate a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud, or they show answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.
- Sackcloth (burlap)
- A quarter (25 cents) for each student
- Unthreshed wheat; hand fan (actual or pictures)

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *to thresh*: to separate grain from chaff (outer shell)
- *threshing floor*: a flat place outside where threshing took place
- *sledge*: a heavy platform of wood that loosened the grain from the chaff
- *census*: a counting of a population
- *Araunah/Arunah/Ornan*: the various names of a Jebusite, native of Jerusalem, in this lesson
- *sackcloth*: coarse burlap worn when someone showed sadness or repentance

Scripture: (ESV)

2 Samuel 24:1 [Combined here with 1 Chronicles 21.] Again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, “Go, number Israel and Judah.” [1 Chronicles 21:1 Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel.] 2 So the king said to Joab, the commander of the army, who was with him, “Go through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and number the people, that I may know the number of the people.” 3 But Joab said to the king, “May the Lord your God add to the people a hundred times as many as they are, while the eyes of my lord the king still see it, but why does my lord the king delight in this thing?” [1 Chronicles 21:3 “Why then should my lord require this? Why should it be a cause of guilt for Israel?”] 4 But the king’s word prevailed against Joab and the commanders of the army. So Joab and the commanders of the army went out from the presence of the king to number the people of Israel. 5 They crossed the Jordan and began from Aroer, and from the city that is in the middle of the valley, toward Gad and on to Jazer. 6 Then they came to Gilead, and to Kadesh in the land of the Hittites; and they came to Dan, and from Dan they went around to Sidon, 7 and came to the fortress of Tyre and to all the cities of the Hivites and Canaanites; and they went out to the Negeb of Judah at Beersheba. 8 So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. 9 And Joab gave the sum of the numbering of the people to the king: in Israel there were 800,000 valiant men who drew the sword, and the men of Judah were 500,000. [5 In all Israel there were 1,100,000 men who drew the sword, and in Judah 470,000 who drew the sword. 6 But he did not include Levi and Benjamin in the numbering, for the king’s command was abhorrent to Joab.]

[1 Chronicles 21:7 But God was displeased with this thing, and he struck Israel.] 10 But David’s heart struck him after he had numbered the people. And David said to the Lord, “I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O Lord, please take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly.” 11 And when David arose in the morning, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Gad, David’s seer, saying, 12 “Go and say to David, ‘Thus says the Lord, Three things I offer you. Choose one of them, that I may do it to you.’” 13 So Gad came to David and told him, and said to him, “Shall three years of famine come to you in your land? Or

will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' pestilence in your land? Now consider, and decide what answer I shall return to him who sent me." 14 Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into the hand of man."

15 So the Lord sent a pestilence on Israel from the morning until the appointed time. And there died of the people from Dan to Beersheba 70,000 men. 16 And when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the calamity and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, "It is enough; now stay your hand." And the angel of the Lord was by the threshing floor of Araunah [Ornan] the Jebusite. [1 Chronicles 21:16 And David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the Lord standing between earth and heaven, and in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces.] 17 Then David spoke to the Lord when he saw the angel who was striking the people, and said, "Behold, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand be against me and against my father's house." [1 Chronicles 21:17 "But do not let the plague be on your people."]

[1 Chronicles 21:18 Now the angel of the Lord had commanded Gad to say to David that David should go up and raise an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.] 18 And Gad came that day to David and said to him, "Go up, raise an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." 19 So David went up at Gad's word, as the Lord commanded. [1 Chronicles 21:20 Now Ornan was threshing wheat. He turned and saw the angel, and his four sons who were with him hid themselves.] 20 And when Araunah looked down, he saw the king and his servants coming on toward him. And Araunah went out and paid homage to the king with his face to the ground. 21 And Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" David said, "To buy the threshing floor from you, [1 Chronicles 21:22—give it to me at its full price—] in order to build an altar to the Lord, that the plague may be averted from the people." 22 Then Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take and offer up what seems good to him. Here are the oxen for the burnt offering and the threshing sledges and the yokes of the oxen for the wood. 23 All this, O king, Araunah gives to the king." And Araunah said to the king, "May the Lord your God accept you." 24 But the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver [1 Chronicles 21:25 600 shekels of gold by weight for the site]. 25 And David built there an altar to the Lord and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. [1 Chronicles 21:26, 27 [A]nd the LORD answered him with fire from heaven upon the altar of burnt offering. Then the Lord commanded the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath.] So the Lord responded to the plea for the land, and the plague was averted from Israel.

23 David did not count those below twenty years of age, for the Lord had promised to make Israel as many as the stars of heaven. 24 Joab the son of Zeruiah began to count, but did not finish. Yet wrath came upon Israel for this, and the number was not entered in the chronicles of King David.

[1 Chronicles 21:28 At that time, when David saw that the Lord had answered him at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he sacrificed there. 29 For the tabernacle of the Lord, which Moses had made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering were at that time in the high place at Gibeon, 30 but David could not go before it to inquire of God, for he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the Lord.]

Introduction/Review:

[Show the term *threshing*, and show a grain.] *Threshing* means separating the outer shell of a kernel of grain from the actual grain. The shell is called *chaff*. [Display term *threshing floor*.] Threshing floors were usually on hilltops so that wind could blow chaff away. Two ways that the grain and chaff were separated were (1) by oxen or other animals' pulling a threshing sled (sledge; a heavy platform of wood that loosened the grain and chaff); or (2) by people's beating the grain with sticks. Then the grain was thrown into the air. The chaff blew away while the heavier grain fell. [Videos on YouTube show this process. Here are two sites: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zG_0t7sIQ-c and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSr_4563AIY.]

God had given David rest from all his enemies, even the giants like the one whose spear shaft was like a

weaver's beam, the one who had a 7.5-pound spear head, and the one with six-fingers on each hand.

Story:

Ordering a census

✓I don't know what David was thinking. Maybe he was fearful, saying, "Well, I'm safe for now. What would happen if another enemy showed up? I wonder how many soldiers I have." Or maybe he was prideful, thinking, "Wow! I have conquered all my enemies. I wonder how many soldiers are actually in my powerful kingdom."

We don't know what David thought, but we do know what he did. "Joab," he ordered, "go through all the tribes of Israel and Judah, from Dan (farthest city north) to Beersheba (farthest city south) and count so that I can know how many people (actually, fighting men) we have." What was David going to do? [Count the people; take a census.]

Now, God's law had special, specific instructions on how to count the people. "When you count the people, each person must give a half shekel (✓about 25 cents) as an offering for the Lord so that there will be no plague (widespread deadly disease) among the people" (Exodus 30:1–16). [Give each student a quarter.]

David said nothing to Joab about collecting this small offering. ✓Perhaps he had again quit reading God's law even though Israel's kings were supposed to read it often. So, we see David was again doing something ✓not so bad, it seems to us, but not with God's permission or in the way prescribed by God. What might have happened if the people did not pay the 25-cent offering? [Plague.] Hmm! This doesn't sound good.

Even if he did collect the small offering [have students give their coins], God had not ordered this census; it was done only by David's desire. [If students bemoan losing their quarter, assure them they will get it.]

The Bible tells us why God¹ caused David to count the people: it was for some reason of disobedience that "the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, [and] He incited David against them." ✓Maybe God was displeased because so many people had rebelled against His anointed, David, in following Absalom and others [according to John Gill]. This is just a guess since the Bible does not tell us.

Joab, David's nephew and the captain of his army, knew this idea of counting the people was wrong. He replied to David, "May God multiply your soldiers one hundred times in your lifetime, but why does my lord the king want to do such a thing? Why will he be a cause of trespass and guilt to Israel?"

Counting Israel

David insisted, however; so Joab and his commanders left Jerusalem to count Israel from Dan to Beersheba. After counting nine months and twenty days (290 days), not including anyone under the age of 20 nor the tribes of Benjamin (Saul's tribe) or Levi (the priests and helpers for the tabernacle), this was the count [see visual at the end of this lesson or write them on a board]: [Note that the figures are different in the two accounts.² This chart is a possible explanation.]

	✓People	✓Soldiers
Israel:	1,000,000	100,000
Judah:	<u>470,000</u>	<u>10,000</u>
Total:	1,470,000	110,000

(The total number of people was about half the population of Denver, Colorado, in the year 2007.)

The entire nine months (about as long as students go to school each year), Joab counted but ✓hated every minute of his work because he knew it was wrong. Yet, he obeyed David's orders except that he didn't count Benjamin, Saul's tribe.

Repenting of foolishness

By this time, David realized what a foolish thing he had done, and he repented. “I have sinned greatly in what I have done. Please forgive me, God.” He actually said, “Take away my guilt.”

Before David got up the next morning, God had spoken to the prophet Gad, telling him to go to David and offer three choices of punishment: (1) three years of famine; (2) three months of having his enemies chase him and his men; or (3) three days of a terrible plague from God, killing thousands and thousands. Although the first two choices would last longer, ✓it seems to me that there might be a chance that fewer people would die. But David didn’t think in the way I often do. Rather, he thought about the loving kindness of God. “Let me not fall into the hands of men,” he said, “but into the hand of God, for His mercy is great.” He depended on God’s being merciful.

Punishing sin

The choice was made, and the plague began that morning. Lots and lots of people died. Thousands of people. Tens of thousands of people—70,000 to be exact (seven times as many people as in our entire county).

Then God sent an angel with a sword in his hand to Jerusalem. He began to strike down men in Jerusalem, but, just as David had hoped God would do, God stopped the angel. “Enough! Withdraw your hand!”

At that moment this angel was at the threshing floor of a native of Jerusalem, not an Israelite, named Araunah (or Arunah or Ornan). David looked up and saw the angel of the Lord standing between heaven and earth with a drawn sword in his hand extended over Jerusalem [NIV]. David and his advisers, dressed in sackcloth, fell on their faces.

“God, wasn’t it I who ordered the census?” cried David. “I am the one who has sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? O Lord my God, let your hand fall upon me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on Your people.”

Then the angel of the Lord ordered Gad to tell David to build an altar to the Lord on the threshing field of Arunah. David immediately set out to obey, but there was one small problem: he didn’t own that land. Instead, it belonged to Arunah.

Arunah and his sons had seen the angel, and the sons had hidden themselves for fright. When Arunah saw David coming, he approached David and bowed, face down, before him.

Buying a threshing floor

David said to him. “Sell me your threshing floor for a fair price so that I may build an altar to the Lord, and He will stop the plague.”

“Take it,” replied Arunah. “Let my lord the king do with it whatever he likes. Take the oxen for the animals to be sacrificed, and take the threshing sledges here to burn, and take the wheat for a grain offering. I give it all to you.”

But King David replied, “No, I insist on paying full price. I will not take for the Lord what is yours or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing.” David gave him 600 shekels of gold³ ✓for the parcel of land, the oxen, the wood, and the grain.

Now David could build the altar to God. He placed the sacrificed animals and grain on the altar. He prayed to God, and God sent fire from heaven to burn up the sacrifice.

Stopping the plague

Then God spoke to the angel, who put his sword back into its sheath (holder). The plague was over. When David saw the Lord had answered his prayer, he offered more sacrifices to God there on that threshing floor.

This parcel of land was very special, for ✓it would become the place where the temple would be built. Its history, too, might have been significant, for ✓this was Moriah. Do you remember what had happened here

over 800 years before? [Abraham, 1834 B.C. minus David, 988 B.C. = 846 years.] Hint: Abraham and his son Isaac. Some say, but it is not proven, that Abraham had come to this place to “sacrifice” Isaac. But even more important than Abraham or the temple would be the future significance of this place, for it is here in this city that Jesus Christ was sacrificed by dying on the cross. Just as those animals David had sacrificed had saved the people from the plague, so Jesus, the sacrificed Lamb of God, saves those who believe on Him.

¹“ . . . not the Lord, but Satan, as may be supplied from (1 Chronicles 21:1); or “it moved him”; the anger of the Lord . . . or the heart of David . . . that is, the evil imagination of his heart . . . the Lord left him to the corruption of his nature, sometimes called Satan, (2 Corinthians 12:7); which wrought powerfully in him, and stirred him up to take a step contrary to the interest of Israel, and what was prejudicial to them, as the event showed” (2 Samuel 24:1 - Meaning and Commentary on Bible Verse (biblestudytools.com)).

²“In (1 Chronicles 21:5), they are said to be a million and an hundred thousand, which is three hundred thousand more than the sum here given; several methods are taken to reconcile this; but what seems to be the best solution of the difficulty is what is observed by a Jew, that here the number of the people in the several parts of the land of Israel was given, which were eight hundred thousand, there along with them, the numbers of the standing army which waited on the king in their courses, which were twenty four thousand every month, and amounted in the twelve months to 288,000, and reckoning [12] thousand officers to them, they make the sum of three hundred thousand wanted, see (1 Chronicles 27:1, 2).”

“and the men of Judah [were] five hundred thousand men. In (1 Chronicles 21:5), they are said to be only 470,000, thirty thousand less than here; which may be accounted for by making use of a round number, though something wanting, as is often done; or else the thirty companies, consisting of a thousand each, under the eighty captains mentioned in (2 Samuel 23:8-39), are taken into the account here, but left out in the book of Chronicles; or there were so many in the sum total of the men of Judah before the plague, but thirty thousand being consumed thereby, are left out in the latter accounts . . . but the other solutions seem best” (2 Samuel 24:9 - Meaning and Commentary on Bible Verse (biblestudytools.com)).

³“[I]n (1 Chronicles 21:25), David is said to give six hundred shekels of gold by weight . . . since it appears plainly to be the king’s purchase, and with his money: the [explanation] is, that there were two purchases, the first was of the threshingfloor, oxen, and instruments, which were bought for fifty shekels of silver, as here [in 2 Samuel 24:24], and the other was a purchase of the place, as it is called in the book of Chronicles; that large space of ground on which afterwards the temple, and all the courts adjoining to it, were built, and which was now Araunah’s farm, and on which were his dwelling house, and other buildings; and for all this David gave him six hundred shekels of gold” (2 Samuel 24:24 - Meaning and Commentary on Bible Verse (biblestudytools.com)).

Lessons from This Lesson:

- We see Jesus:

Just as those sacrificed animals saved the people from the plague, so Jesus, the sacrificed Lamb of God, saves those who believe on Him.

Activities:

- Play dough: sword
- Snack: Wheat Farmer’s Salad as found at [Fill Your Plate - Search recipes - Wheat Farmer's Salad](#) or a food showing grains, such as rice pudding or popped corn
- Thresh grain: (better if done outside) Put wheat or other grain in the hull on a sheet or large cloth; have students beat it; toss the grain in the air while a fan is blowing; watch the grain fall and the chaff fly off.
- Play-act (a) the angel of God’s stopping his slaying; (b) David’s conversation with Joab; (c) David’s

conversation with Arunah; (d) David's remorse.

- Take a census of your classroom or other population group that is accessible. Have students give the quarter they received during the lesson. (You may return the quarter to them after the census.)
- Review questions: (Game: Allow the student who answers a question correctly to take the chaff from a wheat grain. Put the grain in a container, and dispose of the chaff in a waste basket.)
 1. Who resisted David's order to count the people? [Joab.]
 2. Fill in the blanks. Joab included in the census all the cities from _____ to _____. [Dan to Beersheba.]
 3. Why did God strike Israel with a plague? [Because He was displeased about the census.]
 4. Of the three punishment choices, which did David choose? [Three days' pestilence in Israel.]
 5. How many died in the pestilence? [70,000 men.]
 6. Where did God stop the angel of destruction? [In Jerusalem at the threshing floor of Arunah.]
 7. What did David need to do before he could offer a sacrifice on the threshing floor? [Purchase it.]
 8. What building was later built on the site of the threshing floor? [The temple.]

Memory Verse[s]: I heartily recommend the song and visual at [Psalm 139 - NKJV \(thywordcreations.com\)](http://thywordcreations.com).

- Psalm 139:1 O Lord, You have searched me and known me. 2 You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. 3 You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. 4 For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O Lord, You know it altogether. 5 You have hedged me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it.
7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me; 12 Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.
13 For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. 14 I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.
17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! 18 If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You. . . .
23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; 24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

Handwork:

- Have students draw the three punishment choices God gave David. A good picture may be found at [ca2a9859741992e13bf6a379daa6d019.jpg \(1200x1600\) \(pinimg.com\)](http://ca2a9859741992e13bf6a379daa6d019.jpg).

to thresh

threshing floor

sledge

census

Araunah/Arunah/Ornan

sackcloth

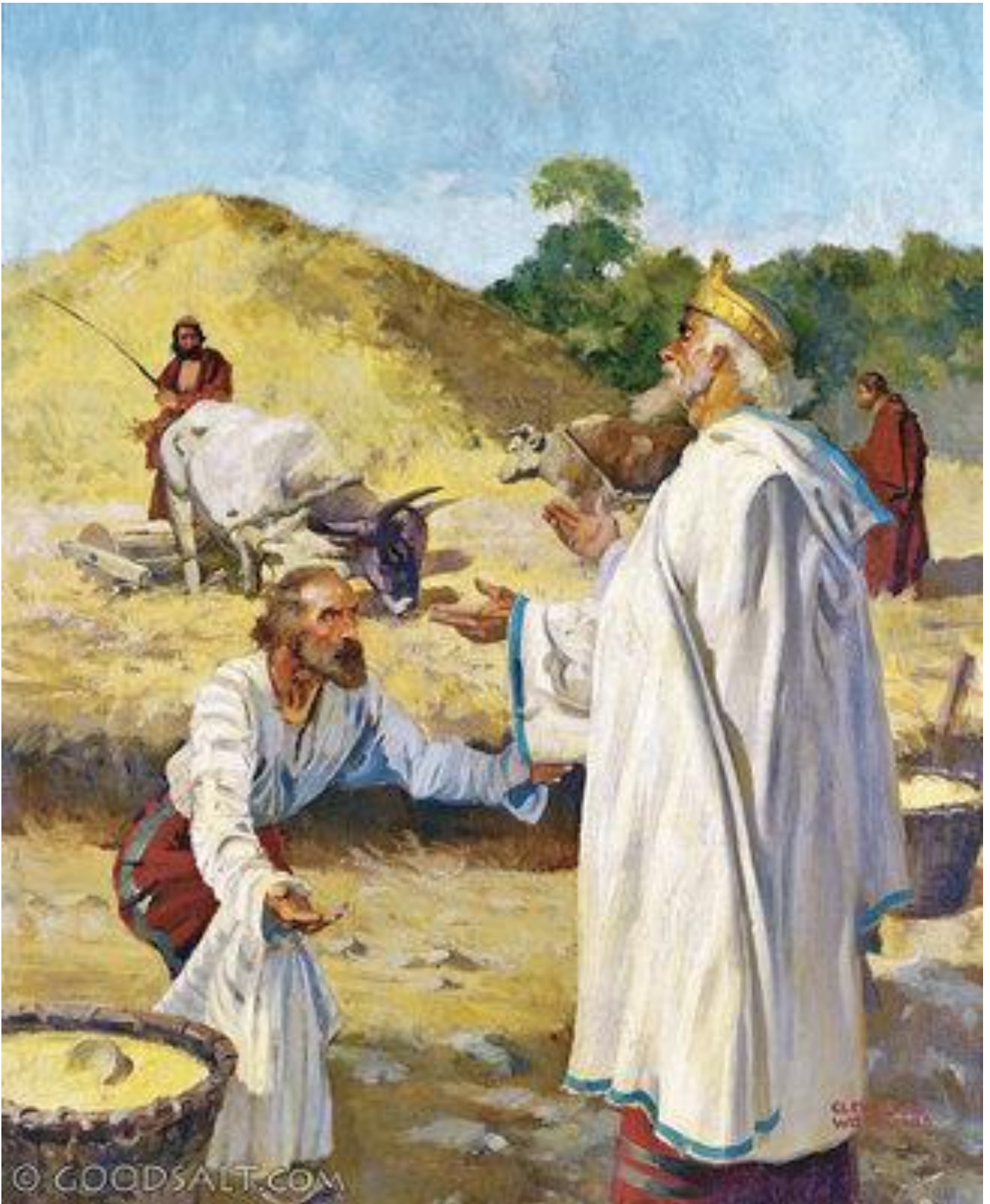


[Image: 19 David Orders Israel Numbered \(st-takla.org\)](http://st-takla.org)

The Census

	People	Soldiers
Israel:	1,000,000	100,000
Judah:	<u>470,000</u>	<u>10,000</u>
Total:	1,470,000	110,000





[King+David+and+Ornan.jpg \(327x400\) \(bp.blogspot.com\)](#)

