

## Week 29: *The Temple Mount*

### Hook



**Main Point: Godly people repent, receive God’s grace, and respond with worship.**

North Korea seemed like a promising emerging market in the 1970s. Export companies signed huge trade contracts and sent Swedish-made industrial machinery to the communist country; included in these shipments were 1,000 Volvo cars. Soon enough it was evident that North Korea was incapable of financing their investments. North Korea still owes Sweden \$322 million dollars and, more than 40 years later, Sweden sends twice-yearly reminders to the North Korean government of that debt. So far, these notes have proven ineffective.<sup>1</sup>

**Q: Can you think back to moments in your life when you realized you had made a massive mistake?**

**Q: What’s your natural response when you’ve committed a blunder? Cover it up? Apologize? Try to fix things quickly?**

**Q: As a believer, what’s the healthiest plan of action when you realize that you’ve sinned?**

**RECAP:** Last week we saw David sin yet again at the very end of his life. Even though he had spent most of his life living in humility and trusting the Lord, right at the end he sinned out of pride and a lack of trust. In today’s lesson, we see David repent, turn back

to God, and conclude his story with worship. Though David messed up a lot, he ultimately had a heart that desired to follow God.

## **Week 29: *The Temple Mount***

**Book** (*Note: 1 Chronicles 21:28-29:19 are parallel to this passage.*)

**Main Point:** Godly people repent, receive God's grace, and respond in worship.

**2 Samuel 24:15–21; Psalm 51:15–17 [Read]**

**Talking Point 1:** When we sin, God desires that we repent and turn back to Him in trust.

**Q: Why did David ask the angel to punish only himself and his family?**

In the last lesson, we saw that David had disobeyed God by counting his people, which revealed a heart of pride and lack of trust in the Lord. Even though much of David's life was characterized by humility and trust in the Lord, at the very end, he still struggled and made mistakes, reminding us that he was not the perfect king who would save us. That future Messiah would be a son of David, but He was yet to come. In response to David's sin, God gave him the option to choose his own punishment. Though he had shown pride in his sin, he showed trust in his punishment choice, choosing one that would put him in the hands of God rather than human enemies because he believed that God's mercy is great. Even in his punishment, David had faith in the goodness of God. He had no delusions that he didn't deserve punishment.

David asked if the Lord could punish only him and his family, not all the people (24:17). In this verse, he spoke in the imagery of himself as shepherd and the people as sheep, realizing he had not done the shepherd's job of keeping them safe, providing for them, and caring for them. Though he made a lot of mistakes as king, this reveals that David had the heart of God for his people. He saw himself as a servant "shepherd" leader, the kind of king God wanted (Deuteronomy 17:14–20), not like the kings of the world who lorded their authority over their people (Luke 22:24–30). Both this attitude and the desire to take the punishment himself foreshadows Jesus the Messiah, who came as a servant leader and took the punishment of the whole world that He didn't deserve on Himself (Matthew 20:28; Philippians 2:1–8).<sup>2</sup>

Then the prophet Gad told David to go build an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah. A threshing floor was a large, high, flat, open area where grain was threshed during harvest. Threshing was the process of separating the grain (the part you eat) from the chaff (the part you throw away) by having oxen walk over it with a "threshing sledge," a platform of boards with iron stuck through holes. Then they would use a winnowing fork (pitchfork) to throw the mixture into the air so the wind could blow away the chaff, leaving the good grain on the threshing floor. Because they were high, flat, open areas, threshing floors were natural gathering places for the community. For that and their connection to the harvest, threshing floors were typical places to build altars and have religious ceremonies in every ancient community, not just Israel.<sup>3</sup>

David's intention was to build an altar and sacrifice to the Lord to stop these plagues, though this land would be used for much more later. The plagues were a punishment for David's sin, so he knew they had to happen, but he was hoping to stop them from continuing. This story contains an interesting interplay of what was happening from David's human perspective and what was happening in the spiritual realm. God said the plagues would last for three days. The text tells us that the plagues went on "until the appointed time," killing 70,000 people "from Dan to Beersheba," which was a way of saying from the far north to the far south, or all of Israel. But the story tells us that when the angel went to destroy Jerusalem, God stopped him. The text explicitly tells us that the angel was at the threshing floor of Araunah (24:16).

From the human perspective, David saw the destruction, prayed for the Lord to punish only him instead, and on the third day, the prophet told him to build an altar on the same place where the angel stood. God had already stopped the plague, but He was asking David to participate in what He was doing. David didn't stop the plague, as if his sacrifice and prayers were some kind of magic. Yet God asked him to make a sacrifice because sin required sacrifice. This reminds us that it is Christ alone who saves by the sacrifice of His body, yet we have to receive His saving work by faith (Ephesians 2:1–10).

This is also interesting in comparison to what David wrote in Psalm 51, his psalm confessing his sins of adultery and murder. David knew that, more than an animal sacrifice, God really wanted but a "broken and contrite heart" (Psalm 51:17). This altar on the threshing floor wasn't really about the physical sacrifice but rather about repentance and obedience (1 Chronicles 21:19). It was about the condition of his heart.

**Q: How can you tell when someone is truly repentant? What difference does a contrite heart make in their words and actions?**

**Q: Why does true repentance always result in changed attitudes and behavior?**

**Q: How have you experienced repentance and true heart change?**

**2 Samuel 24:22–24 and Malachi 1:6–9, 13, 14 [Read]**

**Talking Point 2:** If our sacrifices don't cost us something, they're not a sacrifice.

**Q: Why would Araunah offer to give David the land and everything needed for the sacrifice? Why did David refuse his offer?**

Araunah was a Jebusite, not an Israelite. The Jebusites were the previous inhabitants of Jerusalem, whom David conquered when he took the city (2 Samuel 5). David clearly didn't get rid of them all, because Araunah was still there. He would have been a vassal to David and paid tribute to him, which is why he called David "my lord the king." This doesn't mean he had joined the Israelites' covenant and converted to their faith. He said to David, "May the Lord *your* God accept you" not "our" God. Yet even though he did not worship David's God, when David asked him to sell him the land, he offered to just

give it to him and even to give him the oxen and threshing sledges to use for the offering.

As king, David could have demanded that Araunah give him the land and whatever else he needed or wanted. But he didn't demand that, and even when Araunah offered, David said no. Not because he didn't deserve it but because he refused to sacrifice to the Lord that which cost him nothing. This is a short sentence, yet it makes an important point about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. It gives us a simple yet poignant principle for our offerings to the Lord – sacrifices should cost us something.

We use the term “sacrifice” not only because the animal was burned up, but because it cost the giver something. The law commanded that they give their “first fruits,” the best of their crops (Leviticus 23:10). The animals they offered had to be without blemish (Deuteronomy 15:21). These were valuable animals that could have been sold or eaten. An unbeliever may call that a waste, but believers call it a sacrifice. <sup>4</sup>

You offer your best to the Lord, not your leftovers or the things you were going to throw out anyway. You offer to God first, trusting that He will continue to provide, and you won't run out. This theme runs throughout Scripture, from the beginning of the very first book. When Cain and Abel brought their sacrifices to God, Cain just brought “some” of his crops as an offering, but Abel brought “the fat portions” (the best) of the firstborn (Genesis 4:1–5). God rejected Cain's “leftovers” sacrifice but honored Abel's “best portion” sacrifice. In the very last book of the Old Testament, God told the Israelites that as the Great King of the Universe, He would not accept blemished animals as sacrifices because it is dishonoring to Him (Malachi 1:6–14).

Our sacrifices to the Lord should cost us something, whether time or money or some other resource. Giving out of our extra is not a sacrifice. That doesn't mean we should go into debt to be generous, but our giving should be sacrificial. It should cost us something. We don't just give to God out of our leftovers; we give Him our first and our best. In Corinthians, Paul described how the Macedonian believers considered it a privilege to give sacrificially even though they lived in poverty (2 Corinthians 8). Whatever we give to the Lord, whether our time or our money or other resources, if it doesn't cost us anything, it's not really a sacrifice.

**Q: In what ways does giving your time, money, talents and other resources cost you something? How is your generosity “sacrificial”?**

**Q: In what ways are you still holding back from sacrificing everything to the Lord?**

**2 Samuel 24:25; 1 Chronicles 22:1; Psalm 30 [Read]**

**Talking Point 3:** The only appropriate response to God's grace is worship and thanks.

**Q: Knowing the backstory of the plague, why was this the place to build the temple?**

**Q: How does Psalm 30 fit the theme of dedication of the temple?**

We often talk about how David bought the land on which to build the temple though Solomon was the one to build it, but we don't always study the whole context of this passage and the events that led to it. David's original reason for buying the threshing floor wasn't to build the temple. It was to offer a sacrifice to stop the plague of his own making, a result of his own sin. Only later did he say that this same place would be where Solomon would build the temple (1 Chronicles 22:1).

Yet this is the perfect backstory for the place the temple would be built, a story of David's sin, God's mercy, and the sacrifice required to atone for it. It all points ahead to the Gospel – our sin, God's mercy and the sacrifice that was required. It is only fitting that David's response to God's mercy and forgiveness was an act of worship, dedicating this spot as the place for the temple to be built. There is no other response to the amazing grace of God than worship and thanksgiving. We cannot earn it. We cannot repay it. All we can do is thank and praise Him.

Psalm 30, written for the dedication of the temple, which David did not actually live to see, describes God's salvation. God healed David and restored him to life (30:2–3) and turned his mourning into dancing and gladness (30:11). David responded with praise and thanks (30:12). This is the message of the Gospel. We were dead in our sins, but God made us alive in Christ (Ephesians 2:1–9). The original physical temple was the place where God's Spirit dwelled, and His people could go to worship and offer sacrifices. In the new covenant, our bodies are the temple. His Spirit dwells in us. Our response is still worship and sacrifice, but with the temple of our bodies – offering up a continuous sacrifice of praise with our lips (Hebrews 13:15) and offering ourselves as a living sacrifice, glorifying Him with everything we say and do (Romans 12:1–2; Colossians 3:17). David's heart for worship points ahead to a new reality when we would worship the Lord not at a physical temple but in Spirit and in truth, everywhere we go (John 4:23).

**Q: If you were to write a psalm of praise and thanks to God for all He has done for you, what would you say?**

**Q: What does it mean to say our bodies are not just a temple, but “the temple of the Holy Spirit”? How does that affect what we do with our bodies? The way we speak, think, and act? The way we interact with other people and the world?**

## **Week 29: *The Temple Mount***

### **Took**

**Main Point: Godly people repent, receive God's grace, and respond in worship.**

Scripture tells us that following Jesus not only costs us something, it costs us *everything*. When Jesus told His disciples they must “count the cost” of becoming His disciples, He said they could not be His disciples unless they renounced all they had (Luke 14:33). He described following Him as taking up our cross (sacrifice) and losing our lives for His sake (Matthew 16:24–27). Paul said we are to offer our whole selves as a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1–2). The real cost of following Jesus is not just sacrificial giving of our time, talent and resources. It costs everything we have and everything we are – our whole life, our whole self.

### **CHALLENGES**

**THINK:** What areas of your life are you still trying to control instead of sacrificing them to the Lord? How are you falling short of bringing glory to God in everything you say and do? In what areas are you not walking with the Lord, following the way of Jesus – loving as He loves, living as He lived? Confess any and every one of those things now and ask God to give you a real heart change in those areas, to make it more than behavior modification but a true repentant change of heart that results in authentic change of behavior.

**ACT:** Begin each day this week with a prayer of dedication. Offer up your schedule, words, thoughts and resources for hours that will follow – be specific. Take time before you go to sleep to reflect on how the day went; repent of anything necessary, pray for the folks and situations that you encountered, praise God for His mercy and grace, and thank Him for the opportunity to live that day for Him.

**PRAY** for God to glorify Himself through you. Pray for yourself to be a temple of the Holy Spirit, with the Holy Spirit living in you, changing you from the inside out and working through your life. Read the words of your dedication aloud over yourself in prayer as an act of dedicating yourself to the Lord.

**NEXT TIME in *The Life of David*:** Next week, we will see one last story of a son of David trying to take the throne for himself before the prophet Nathan and Bathsheba intervene and remind David of God's promise that Solomon would be the next king. This story shows us that God's promises cannot be thwarted, but it also shows us (again) the

grace, forgiveness and mercy of God. That God would use a son of Bathsheba to carry on the Davidic line, from which would eventually come the Messiah, points to His incredible ability to redeem all our sin and all our brokenness for His great plan, for our good and His glory.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2017/12/04/547390622/how-1-000-volvos-ended-up-in-north-korea-and-made-a-diplomatic-difference>

<sup>2</sup> *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000).

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