

2 Samuel 11 & 12 (ChoW for June 17 – 23)

David and Bathsheba

11 In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. ²One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, ³and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite." ⁴Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. ⁵The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant." ⁶So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent him to David. ⁷When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. ⁸Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. ⁹But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house. ¹⁰David was told, "Uriah did not go home." So he asked Uriah, "Haven't you just come from a military campaign? Why didn't you go home?" ¹¹Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents,^[a] and my commander Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!" ¹²Then David said to him, "Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. ¹³At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants; he did not go home. ¹⁴In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. ¹⁵In it he wrote, "Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die." ¹⁶So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were. ¹⁷When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died. ¹⁸Joab sent David a full account of the battle. ¹⁹He instructed the messenger: "When you have finished giving the king this account of the battle, ²⁰the king's anger may flare up, and he may ask you, 'Why did you get so close to the city to fight? Didn't you know they would shoot arrows from the wall?' ²¹Who killed Abimelek son of Jerub-Besheth^[b]? Didn't a woman drop an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you get so close to the wall?' If he asks you this, then say to him, 'Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.'" ²²The messenger set out, and when he arrived he told David everything Joab had sent him to say. ²³The messenger said to David, "The men overpowered us and came out against us in the open, but we drove them back to the entrance of the city gate. ²⁴Then the archers shot arrows at your servants from the wall, and some of the king's men died. Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead."

²⁵David told the messenger, "Say this to Joab: 'Don't let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it.' Say this to encourage Joab."

²⁶When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. ²⁷After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.

Footnotes:

- a. 2 Samuel 11:11 Or *staying at Sukkoth*
- b. 2 Samuel 11:21 Also known as *Jerub-Baal* (that is, Gideon)

Nathan Rebukes David

12 The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. ²The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, ³but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. ⁴"Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him." ⁵David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die! ⁶He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity." ⁷Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. ⁹Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. ¹⁰Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.' ¹¹"This is what the LORD says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. ¹²You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'" ¹³Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. ¹⁴But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for^[a] the LORD, the son born to you will die." ¹⁵After Nathan had gone home, the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and he became ill. ¹⁶David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and spent the nights lying in sackcloth^[b] on the ground. ¹⁷The elders of his household stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused, and he would not eat any food with them. ¹⁸On the seventh day the child died. David's attendants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they thought, "While the child was still living, he wouldn't listen to us when we spoke to him. How can we now tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate." ¹⁹David noticed that his attendants were whispering among themselves, and he realized the child was dead. "Is the child dead?" he asked. "Yes," they replied, "he is dead." ²⁰Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate. ²¹His attendants

asked him, “Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!” ²²He answered, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, ‘Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live.’ ²³But now that he is dead, why should I go on fasting? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.” ²⁴Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and made love to her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The LORD loved him; ²⁵and because the LORD loved him, he sent word through Nathan the prophet to name him Jedidiah.^[c] ²⁶Meanwhile Joab fought against Rabbah of the Ammonites and captured the royal citadel. ²⁷Joab then sent messengers to David, saying, “I have fought against Rabbah and taken its water supply. ²⁸Now muster the rest of the troops and besiege the city and capture it. Otherwise I will take the city, and it will be named after me.” ²⁹So David mustered the entire army and went to Rabbah, and attacked and captured it. ³⁰David took the crown from their king’s^[d] head, and it was placed on his own head. It weighed a talent^[e] of gold, and it was set with precious stones. David took a great quantity of plunder from the city ³¹and brought out the people who were there, consigning them to labor with saws and with iron picks and axes, and he made them work at brickmaking.^[f] David did this to all the Ammonite towns. Then he and his entire army returned to Jerusalem.

Footnotes:

- a. 2 Samuel 12:14 An ancient Hebrew scribal tradition; Masoretic Text *for the enemies of*
- b. 2 Samuel 12:16 Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint; Masoretic Text does not have *in sackcloth*.
- c. 2 Samuel 12:25 *Jedidiah means loved by the LORD.*
- d. 2 Samuel 12:30 *Or from Milkom’s (that is, Molek’s)*
- e. 2 Samuel 12:30 That is, about 75 pounds or about 34 kilograms
- f. 2 Samuel 12:31 The meaning of the Hebrew for this clause is uncertain.

Reflections on the Word:

2 Samuel 11 & 12 is the well known story of King David’s failure as a husband, father and man of God. He should have been leading his army defending his people against the army of Ammon. But he sent his general instead. Idle hands. An evening stroll. A stolen glance and the rest is history. A sad history full of regret. But that’s the result of all sin, not just David’s. These chapters remind us that the Bible does not hide or whitewash the failures of its “heroes”. In reality the only hero in its pages is God himself. He not only confronts us in our sin but helps bring sorrow over sin, wipes away tears and erases our guilt. Sin can grab us when we least expect it – just ask David. We all stand only because God is our strength.

Chapter 11

11:1 It has been about 10 years since David became established in Jerusalem. He has been busy in those years consolidating his kingdom and conquering other peoples. The spring mentioned is the year following the events of chapter 10....when David’s army fights hired soldiers of the Ammonites. Though Israel had defeated the forces Ammon hired they had not subjected the Ammonite people and king themselves.

11:2-5 Roofs in those days were flat and David had probably gone to catch a cool breeze. No doubt his roof was higher than most others so stealing a glance would have been easy. There was an Eliam who was a member of David’s personal bodyguards. And Uriah was listed among those who were part of his royal guard. In sending for Bathsheba David eventually becomes guilty of breaking the 5th,

6th, 8th, 9th and 10th commandments. Bathsheba does not appear to an unwilling participant in this relationship. It is also made very clear that she was not already pregnant by her own husband when she slept with David. In telling David of her pregnancy, she leaves the next step up to him. (The punishment in Jewish law for what they had done was the death penalty for both.)

11:6-13 David tries to fix things, by using the pretense of finding out about the war by calling Uriah back to Jerusalem. He is hoping, of course, that Uriah will use the time home to go have relations with his wife so that it will appear Bathsheba's child is Uriah's. But Uriah's devotion to duty is in sharp contrast to David's dalliance at home. Even the ark was with the army meaning the Lord is in the field while David stayed home. In a last ditch try David gets Uriah drunk hoping that he will lose resolve and sleep with his wife.

11:14-25 Having been unsuccessful in making it appear Uriah was the father, David plans for Uriah's death so he can marry Bathsheba as quickly as possible. In reporting on the battle Joab makes sure David will not be critical by reporting that Uriah had died. In return David hides his satisfaction over the news of Uriah's death by making a hypocritical statement that 'war is war' and not to let Uriah's death be a discouragement. (Please note that Uriah is not just some foot soldier, but a well known leader of David's inner circle of fighting men.)

11:26-27 The mourning period was usually 7 days. So in addition to violating much of God's law David had shamelessly abused his royal power in this cover up.

Chapter 12

12:1-5 Nathan came to David as spokesman for the Lord and uses a parable (earthly story with a faith lesson). David's response to the obvious injustice of this parable is to make an oath and demand retribution in agreement with what was prescribed for sheep in Ex. 22:1.

12:7-12 Nathan lists all the things God has done and provided for David. He had made him king, protected him from Saul's attempts to kill him, provided not only Saul's wives and harem (a new king would assume that responsibility) but brought the 12 tribes on unity under David's rule. Yet David was not satisfied and not only lusted but was held directly responsible for Uriah's death. The punishments would be harsh. Three of David's sons did die violent deaths and David was driven from Jerusalem by Absalom's attempt to take over the kingdom. In addition Absalom showed contempt for David by sleeping with some David's wives on the roof of the palace in full view of the populace.

12:13-23 David recognizes his sin and repents and confesses. And while he is assured of God's forgiveness, being released from the customary death penalty for adultery and murder, he is required to suffer the disciplinary results of his sin in a way that was open to public view. His newborn son would die. David shows remorse for this punishment the child received for his sin and also shows acceptance of God's discipline by his worship of God in response. Verse 23 shows the irreversible affects of death and may be an expression of the hope of eternal life.

12:24-25 Solomon is born a child of comfort for David and Bathsheba, yet more evidence of God's grace. The name Jedidiah (a name given by God to the baby, means "loved by the Lord" and was further evidence that God would keep his promise to David of future descendants to sit on the throne.)

12:27-31 To close up the story we go back to the war against the Ammonites. God may have been displeased greatly with David but still gives victory over a people that had abused and disgraced them (see chapter 10). Note that this time David is with the army as their head and ruler.