



## World Christian Fellowship

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### Bathsheba – 2 Samuel 11 & 12

When you think of the life of David, one of two events probably come to your mind.

You either remember the time young David slew Goliath; or David committed adultery with Bathsheba.

Both events were monumental moments in the life of David.

- Goliath, David revealed fact of his humility.
- Bathsheba, David revealed the fact of his humanity.
  
- Goliath, David proved that he was a man of faith.
- Bathsheba, David proved that he was a man of flesh.
  
- When David met a giant named Goliath, we are privileged to witness his greatest victory.
- When David met Bathsheba, we are forced to watch his greatest defeat.

Bathsheba has two parts.

## **1. Bathsheba and King David.**

Bathsheba was a beautiful, clever, and unscrupulous woman. She was seen by King David as she bathed, desired by him, and subsequently became pregnant to him even though married to the soldier Uriah. Uriah was murdered by David, and she then married the King. Her baby died. She had a second son, who was called Solomon.

## **2. The struggle for the throne. (1 Kings 1:1-37 & 2:10-25)**

David lost his sexual potency, and therefore his political power, in old age. In a palace coup Bathsheba and her adviser Nathan manoeuvred to secure the throne for Solomon, even though there was an older, more popular brother who was expected to succeed King David.

Solomon took the throne, honoured his mother, and was advised by her. She took part in court intrigues, occupying the most prestigious position a woman could hold, Queen Mother. She and Solomon organized the death of Solomon's older half-brother who had been the popular choice to succeed King David.

## **Bathsheba:**

**2 Samuel 11:3**, *So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"*

**Father: Eliam**

**Husband: Uriah**

**Grand Father: Ahithophel, a Shrewd political and military Counsellor and friend of David.**

**2 Samuel 23:34**, *Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maachathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite,*

Bathsheba family lived very close proximity to the palace and King David.

**2 Samuel 23:39**, *and Uriah the Hittite: thirty-seven in all.*

**2 Samuel 23:8–39** and **1 Chronicles 11:10–47** list a group of people known as mighty men of David or David's mighty men.

They are also referred to as the "thirty chiefs" (**1 Chronicles 11:15**).

These mighty men of David were a group of David's toughest military warriors who were credited with heroic feats, including **Josheb-basshebeth**, who killed 800 men in one battle with a spear (**2 Samuel 23:8**).

Bathsheba father and husband were stationed at Jerusalem, directly under the control of the king. They were David's personal bodyguards, his champions, renowned for their bravery.

So, she was a member of an elite warrior family, something like the wife of a high-ranking samurai. Since her grandfather, father and husband were close allies of David's, it is safe to assume that she and David had already met before the famous scene where David sees her bathing.

### **Approximate years.**

David must have been king for about 18 or 19 years. (He reigned for 40 years)

David became king at the age of 30.

David lived for 70 years.

So, David must be around 49 or 50 years.

## David's Reign

30 – David becomes king over Judah

37 – Other tribes submit

50 (approx)- Sins; replacement king born

63 (approx) – Tribes revolt under Absalom

70 – David dies.

Ahithophel was alive during the Absalom revolt.

Ahithophel must be 61 years old.

Eliam must be about 41 years old.

Bathsheba must be around 21 years old.

### 1. Bathsheba Bath:

**2 Samuel 11:1-3**, *It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold. <sup>3</sup>So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"*

It happened late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king' house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. David sent someone to inquire about the woman.

### **What kind of Bath she was having?**

**2 Samuel 11:4**, *Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house.*

Post-menstrual purification, to show she was not carrying Uriah's child, but was at the stage in her menstrual cycle when she was likely to conceive.

A Levitical law declares that a woman during her menstrual period becomes unclean for seven days after her period begins.

**Leviticus 15:19-21**, *'If a woman has a discharge, and the discharge from her body is blood, she shall be <sup>19</sup>set apart seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening. <sup>20</sup>Everything that she lies on during her impurity shall be unclean; also everything that she sits on shall be unclean. <sup>21</sup>Whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.*

The woman must reckon seven days after the termination of the period. If this lasts seven days, she cannot become pure until the fifteenth day. Purification, furthermore, can be gained only by a ritual bath.

Jewish women have used the ritual bath, or *mikve*, for centuries as a way to spiritually “purify” themselves after menstruation. In Israel, hundreds of thousands visit the *mikve* once a month.

King David was on the roof terrace of the palace above, looking down.

The text does not tell us whether Bathsheba knew she was being watched. David may have been screened from sight by a lattice, so that she was unaware of his presence. Or she may have been quite aware she was being watched.

### **Adultery with the King.**

In any case, David saw her young body and desired her. At the time, Bathsheba’s husband Uriah was away, fighting with the army – something David knew.

Bathsheba was summoned to the palace. She went.

### **Did she go willingly?**

Feminist literature likes to think she was a victim taken to the palace against her will, but the text gives a clue that she went willingly.

The sentence reads 'David sent messengers to get her, and she went ', suggesting that, though young, she was ambitious and strong-willed enough to seize her chance.

The reason when David summoned Uriah asked him to go and sleep in his home he refused.

But we do not see any scripture support Bathsheba protested.

### **Bathsheba's Point of View**

What Bathsheba thought or felt in all of this is not explained. Because the text states that "she came" to David, some interpreters conclude that Bathsheba was a willing participant in the adultery. Several elements in the story suggest otherwise.

1. How could Bathsheba know what David had in mind when he sent his messengers to retrieve her?

Even if she suspected, could she, as one of David's subjects, refuse to come when summoned? Once she was at David's

palace, if she resisted his advances and cried out, who would have intervened on her behalf?

2. Scripture clearly points David as the initiator, perpetrator, and mastermind of the crime and cover-up (**2 Samuel 11:4, 6-15**).

Bathsheba is never called an “adulteress,” and David is held solely responsible for the evils committed (11:27).

3. Bathsheba portrayed as Victim.

When Nathan confronts David with the parable of the rich man and poor man in **2 Samuel 12:1-4**, Bathsheba is portrayed as a victim.

According to this interpretation, the statement establishes that Bathsheba was not pregnant when she went to David.

Bathsheba returned to her house, and sometime later she sent David a tersely worded note: “I am pregnant” (**v. 5**).

These are the only words attributed to Bathsheba in the entire account. Bathsheba said nothing else in the note, but clearly pointed the finger at David, in essence saying, “You are the man” (**2 Samuel 12:7**).

**2 Samuel 11:5-13**, *And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, “I am with child.”* <sup>6</sup>*Then David sent to*

*Joab, saying, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. <sup>7</sup>When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered. <sup>8</sup>And David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah departed from the king's house, and a gift of food from the king followed him. <sup>9</sup>But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. <sup>10</sup>So when they told David, saying, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Did you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?"*

*<sup>11</sup>And Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing." <sup>12</sup>Then David said to Uriah, "Wait here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. <sup>13</sup>Now when David called him, he ate and drank before him; and he made him drunk. And at evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.*

While she was at the palace, she and David had sexual intercourse. Afterwards, she returned to her home, and we hear no more until a few months later, when she realized she was pregnant.

She sent a message to David to tell him, and David responded by sending for Uriah.

When the soldier-husband arrived in Jerusalem and reported to David, the king told him to go down to his home and wife. He hoped that Uriah would make love to his wife, and that the child might be passed off as Uriah's.

### **Uriah, the wronged husband**

Uriah seems to have known what was going on, and why he was summoned. There were plenty of people to tell him – outraged family members who had seen Bathsheba go to the palace, or soldier-friends who had watched her pass through the guardhouse at the entrance of the palace.

The reconstruction of the gates at Gezer shows the sort of gates Bathsheba had to pass through. The compartments at the side of each gate provided shelter for guards on duty, and she and David's messenger could not have passed through without the soldiers seeing them. The events of that night would have been known to many people.

But Uriah did not confront David with what he knew.

Instead, he took the line of passive resistance. He told David he would not break the rules of soldiers on active service –

ancient people believed that sexual intercourse robbed a man of some of his physical strength, so during active service soldiers were required to abstain from sexual intercourse. Uriah would not visit his wife and have intercourse with her, since he was still technically on active service.

### **David Murders Bathsheba's Husband Uriah**

Despite every inducement, Uriah stuck to this line of behaviour, and David found himself backed into a corner.

Enraged, he secretly ordered that Uriah be killed in battle. He gave Uriah a sealed letter addressed to Uriah's commander, ordering him to arrange Uriah's death.

## **2. A Grieving Widow**

*2 Samuel 11:26-27, When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.<sup>27</sup> And when her mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased<sup>1</sup> the Lord.*

When soon after Uriah had returned to the army and delivered the letter, he was sent into battle to storm the walls of a city. Following David's instructions, the soldiers around Uriah pulled back and left him alone, so that he was surrounded by the enemy and cut down.

**V 26**, *When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.*

**Did Bathsheba know that David had arranged to have her husband killed?**

**Did she mourn for the death of a good man?**

**Or was her mourning just pretence?**

It is impossible to tell.

**So, what is the truth?**

The story of Bathsheba's seduction as we have it in the Bible was edited by court story-tellers during the reign of her son Solomon, and doubtless influenced by Bathsheba and her son.

This is why it is so hard to tell what really happened. We only know two things: what Bathsheba wanted us to know, and what she was forced to acknowledge because it was already public knowledge.

With Uriah now dead, David married Bathsheba and she went to live in the harem of the palace – a relatively small harem, since Israel at the time was only an emerging power.

The baby she was expecting died soon after birth, but she had a second son.

She named him Solomon, 'his replacement' – a replacement for the baby who died, or for her murdered husband? The choice of name is ambiguous.

### **3. A Little Ewe Lamb**

David is blind to his guilt, so God sends Nathan the prophet to him with a message. Nathan tells David a parable about a rich man with many sheep and cattle, and a poor shepherd with one precious lamb. In the story, the rich man takes the one lamb of the poor shepherd.

**2 Samuel 12:1-4**, *Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: "There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. <sup>2</sup>The rich man had exceedingly many flocks and herds. <sup>3</sup>But the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him. <sup>4</sup>And a traveller came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."*

David sees the injustice in the story. He becomes angry at the rich man and exclaims that the man must die. He does not

realise that he has acted just like the ruthless rich man, and Nathan must point out to David, “You are that man!”

David finally realises what he has done. He writes a song, Psalm 51, that expresses his contrition.

David has broken three of the Ten Commandments:

- He coveted his neighbour’s wife,
- Committed adultery, and
- Had Uriah murdered.

God spares David life, but others will suffer because of his sins.

David bears the responsibility and the condemnation, and from this point on he is beset by problems within his family that have political implications for his reign. This David is quite different from the man depicted in the Abigail story.

Most interpreters conclude that she is represented by the ewe lamb in the parable—an innocent victim slaughtered to satisfy the rich man’s desires.

However, a case can be made that Uriah is the ewe lamb since he, like the lamb, is slaughtered, and Bathsheba is the poor man since she, like the poor man, loses a loved one.

In either case, the parable offers the most compelling evidence that Bathsheba was a victim, not an accomplice.

## What can we learn from Bathsheba?

- David was not where he was supposed to be (2 Samuel 11:1).
- God held David accountable for this sin (2 Samuel 12:1-15), not Bathsheba. She bore the consequence because she lost her son, but the reason for the loss was on David's head (2 Samuel 12:14).
- The Bible makes it clear that this sin is David's. He saw, he wanted, he took. When his deed went bad, he sinned further by lying and committing murder to cover what he had done (**2 Samuel 12:9**).
- There is nothing in scripture that indicates Bathsheba did anything wrong in her actions.

Nowhere does it say she was naked.

Full body bathing was not normally done at this time, as it is today.

Most translations of scripture indicate that “she had purified herself from her uncleanness” in 2 Samuel 11:4. This would show that she was keeping the law and was purifying herself after her monthly cycle was ended (**Leviticus 15:19-33**) Scripture indicates this was something that David did against her and Uriah (2 Samuel 12:3-4, 9).

Here we have another woman being put into a situation because a man did not have her best interests in mind.

David did not protect this woman. Bathsheba did what she could. She did not allow his sin to go hidden. She forced David to deal with his actions.

The light of truth is meant to push back the darkness of sin. David moved further towards darkness when he instructed that Uriah be killed. As with Ahab, David is guilty of killing Uriah himself even though he used the hands and swords of Ammon to accomplish it (2 Sam. 12:9). Bathsheba bore no part in this sin. It was David’s own.

1. Avoid men who seek to be with you because their own lust is out of control.

Protect yourself from situations and do not assume that others will look out for you.

**Deuteronomy 22:22-27,**

**Proverbs 1:10-19,**  
**Proverbs 5:1-14,**

2. Do NOT take upon yourself guilt that is not your own!

When someone does something to you, do not help them to hide their sin. Their shame is NOT your shame.

Do not listen to the lies that tell you otherwise.

God has provided leadership, husbands, fathers, and government to uphold the righteous and to punish the evildoer.

**Romans 13:3-4,** *For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. <sup>4</sup>For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.*

When someone around you sins against you, go to a good man and shine light into the darkness by telling the truth. All the women we have studied, you have a choice as to how you will behave. You cannot control the behaviour of others.

God is just – He holds each of us accountable for our own actions.

**1 Peter 1:17**, *And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;*

This woman is held up as being important in the thread that brings Christ to us on earth. The primary situation of her life that God chose to show us has many lessons for us – both from Bathsheba and from David. We can see what we should try to avoid in our own relationships.

Take from Bathsheba the confidence to do what YOU can in each situation.

**Philippians 2:4**, *“Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”*

Unfortunately, others may not do that for you. So, you need to take care of your part.

**Proverbs 3:5**, *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.”*

Let your light shine!