

For Better or For Worse - Lessons From Old Testament Couples
David and Bathsheba: Adultery and After

Lesson #10 for September 8, 2007

Scriptures: 2 Samuel 11,12; 1 Chronicles 20:1.

1. The story of David and Bathsheba is familiar. How many of us would like to have the intimate details of our sinful lives spelled out on the pages of Scripture? And once again, the story raises many questions! And the most important questions are always about God.
2. Why didn't Bathsheba have children by Uriah? If she had had children, the events of this story would not have occurred. Having not had children with Uriah, why did she become pregnant after a single sexual encounter with David? Did God have something to do with controlling her fertility? Or did Satan?
3. Read 1 Chronicles 20:1. Compare 2 Samuel 11:1 and 12:26. The writer of Chronicles conveniently left out this entire story! This episode was obviously a major factor in the life of David. Why would Chronicles not mention it?
4. Read 2 Samuel 12:10. If you look at the whole sequence related to this episode, it seems that David's children were the ones who suffered most of the consequences. Is that fair? What consequences did David himself suffer?
5. Did David lose his moral leadership? Compare the first half of David's life—while he worked as a shepherd boy and later as a refugee winning battles almost miraculously on a regular basis—with his life after this episode with Bathsheba. What contrasts do you see?
6. Both David and Bathsheba were among the political elite in Jerusalem. Uriah was among the top group of soldiers that had helped to put David on the throne. (2 Samuel 23:39) Bathsheba was the daughter of Eliam (2 Samuel 23:34) and the granddaughter of Ahithophel, both of whom were prominent men in Jerusalem. Did David and Bathsheba really believe that no one would find out about their liaison?
7. What do we know about Bathsheba? Did she know that she was bathing within full view of the king's rooftop? Did she have any idea that the king went up on his rooftop? Did she and David both know about Leviticus 20:10? Did David believe that as king, he was above the law?
8. How much do we know about David's marital history? (1 Samuel 18:17-30; 25:2-44; 2 Samuel 2:2-5; 12:7,8) Did having all those wives satisfy him? Or did it seem to make him want even more?
9. David had been through many life-threatening experiences. He, along with his band of followers, had also lived at peace in foreign countries. He had defeated major enemies: single-handedly (Goliath) and as the leader of a military group (on many occasions). Some of his soldiers had killed hundreds of enemy combatants! (2 Samuel 23:8-39) David already had a number of children and had been promised more.
10. Why did God direct the Bible writers to include this story in the history of the children of Israel and the ancestors of Jesus? What lessons should we learn from this story? Clearly, David was closer to the Lord in times of threat and danger than he was at this time of prosperity and success. What does that teach us?
11. There are other questions about the story that make us wonder. Why didn't Uriah go home

to his wife when he came home from the battle? (2 Samuel 11:9-13) If he had, would everyone have assumed that the child born was his child? If he had, would the story have been recorded in Scripture?

12. The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* raises a serious question about Bathsheba's true role. Was she, in some way, complicit in this affair? Or was she a victim? As a woman, what was her status in the Israel of David's time? The Bible is silent concerning Bathsheba's involvement in this experience. It does not tell us whether she was a willing participant or whether she resisted in any way.
13. One of the questions which is commonly asked is, "How can a man after God's own heart commit such a dastardly series of crimes?" Why and when was David called "a man after God's own heart"? (1 Samuel 13:14)
14. Let us assume that the life of Uriah was otherwise honorable and he will be in the kingdom of God. If David is there—as is suggested by Hebrews 11—and Bathsheba and Solomon are also there, try to imagine the conversation when those four get together! How will the military expert, Uriah, respond when he finds out the story behind the cause of his death? How will he feel about what happened to his wife, Bathsheba? How does one relate to his murderer?
15. What should David have done when he first saw Bathsheba bathing in her garden or yard? In our society, none of us can avoid seeing sexually suggestive messages, whether on billboards, or television, or magazines, etc. Do we stop to further investigate? In David's case, the sequence seemed to have been: seeing, investigating, yielding, and then adultery. At what point in that sequence would it have been most easy for David to avoid the sin? When did the first sin occur?
16. David knew the law about adultery and what the consequences were supposed to be among the children of Israel. He also knew that Bathsheba was already married. Did David think that this casual liaison would remain secret and that would be the end of it?
17. Did Bathsheba have any idea why she was being summoned to the king's house? Did David know Bathsheba from previous experiences? Might David have actually been present when Uriah and Bathsheba were married?
18. Certainly, David was well enough informed that he knew that if this experience ever became public, the consequences could only be terrible. Did he think that since he had several other wives, nobody would notice?
19. Were any other people privy to the details of the story before it broke? Who carried the message from David to Bathsheba requesting her to come to the king's palace? Who carried the message from Bathsheba to the king that she was pregnant? What were David's first thoughts when he received that message? Did David summon her to the palace and grill her about her certainty that he was the father? Had Uriah previously been away for long periods of time, fighting David's battles?
20. If the affair became public and became a case of "He said, she said," did David think that everyone would believe him and no one would believe her?
21. Why has the sin of adultery always been considered so serious by virtually all cultures in all time periods?
22. What was the major fallout from this episode? What did David's sons think when they heard this story? As children of the king, did they think that their father's experience opened the gates for them to do whatever they wanted?

23. Should David have arranged for Bathsheba to move to a faraway village until her child was born? Was it a noble act for David to marry Bathsheba?
24. The first son of David to die as a result of this affair was the firstborn son of Bathsheba. Did God have anything to do with the death of that child? With the death of Amnon? With the death of Absalom? With the death of Adonijah? (1 Kings: 1:5-10; 2:13-25) Or were those deaths the natural consequences of some processes about which we do not know?
25. This story should be compared in many ways to the story of the woman taken in adultery in John 8. That woman was probably Mary Magdalene. Both of these women later became very prominent, one in the palace of David and an ancestor of Jesus and the other in the rising Christian church.
26. Who would you consider to be the greater sinner? Would it be Bathsheba who had an affair with David or Mary Magdalene from whom seven devils had been cast out and who was almost certainly a prostitute before becoming attached to the followers of Jesus? (Luke 8:1-3) Do you expect to see the details of these two stories portrayed in the great panorama at the end of time? Will "Christians" raise questions about these experiences in heaven?
27. When Nathan presented that story to David and then pointed out the fact that David was the guilty party, what would have been the typical reaction of a Middle Eastern king in David's day? Why was David's reaction so different? What does that tell us about David and about his relationship with God?
28. Read Psalms 32 and 51. What do these Psalms teach us about David's repentance?
29. Clearly, God thought it was necessary to record this story for the benefit of future generations. This is certainly not just a sex story for the entertainment of future generations!
30. Perhaps the most significant thing we should learn from this story is the incredible graciousness of God in forgiving both David and Bathsheba. Those who take on significant responsibilities in the church or in the work of God must constantly guard themselves lest they make David-like mistakes.
31. Do you have any questions that you would like to ask David, Uriah, or Bathsheba when you get to heaven? Or will all questions about past histories be forbidden or forgotten? Will the story of David, Uriah, and Bathsheba be forgotten? Will Psalms 51 be forgotten? Will all record of sin be forgotten?
32. Despite all his troubles, David always took a very different attitude in his relationship with God than his predecessor, Saul, did. In our relationship with God, are we more like David or Saul?

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