

2 Samuel Chapter 11

Verses 1-4: David's sin occurred because he ignored his duty and indulged his desire. Had David been leading the troops as a king should, he would never have found himself in this moment of enticement. Also, he literally presided over a harem despite God's command to refrain from multiplying wives and concubines (Deut. 17:16-17). So that moment on the rooftop was part of a pattern: sin is never satisfied. It gets more and more daring as it opposes God. It was simply a matter of time before David's sins would catch up with him.

2 Samuel 11:1 "And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth [to battle], that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem."

"After the year was expired ... when kings go forth to battle": In the Near East, kings normally went out to battle in the spring of the year because of the good weather and the abundance of food available along the way (see note on 10:14).

"David sent Joab": David dispatched Joab, his army commander, with his mercenary soldiers and the army of Israel to continue the battle against Ammon begun the previous year (10:14).

"Rabbah": The capital of the Ammonites, about 24 miles east of the Jordan River opposite Jericho. The previous year, Abishai had defeated the Ammonite army in the open country, after which the remaining Ammonites fled behind the walls of the city of Rabbah for protection (10:14). Joab returned the next year to besiege the city.

"But David tarried still at Jerusalem": Staying home in such situations was not David's usual practice (5:2; 8:1-14; 10:17; but compare 18:3; 21:17). This explicit remark implies criticism of David for remaining behind, as well as setting the stage for his devastating iniquity.

We must remember in the last lesson, that Joab allowed them to go back into their city unharmed. David did not lead the battle against Rabbah, but sent Joab. Perhaps, this was to finish the job, he started a year ago. This army is made up of men of all the tribes. This is quite a large army gathered against the Ammonites.

Verses 2-5: Nowhere does Scripture implicate "Bath-sheba" in this event. She was innocently taking a bath, as she normally did within the supposed privacy of her courtyard. David "saw" her and he coveted her. Then he "sent" for her and "took" her. She was a subject of the king and was required to do his bidding.

The sequence of David's sinful affair with Bath-sheba is most instructive. He "saw" (verse 2), he sought knowledge of Bath-sheba (verse 3), he "sent" for her (verse 3), and sinned with her (verse 4). The rapid development of sin from lust as catalogued by James (James 1:14-15), is applicable

here. The sin of “David” and Bath-sheba was to result in further deceit (verses 6-13), and eventually in the death of the innocent party (verses 14-17). Unless rapidly refused, one sin so often leads to another (Joshua 7:21; Luke 22:33-62). David’s sin was punishable by death (Lev. 20:10). Although it was forgiven by God (Psalm 51), the sin was to have tragic consequences for him personally, for his own family, and for his nation.

2 Samuel 11:2 "And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman [was] very beautiful to look upon."

“Walked upon the roof”: The higher elevation of the palace roof allowed David to see into the courtyard of the nearby house. That same roof would later become the scene of other sinful immoralities (see 16:22).

Possibly, David was unable to sleep. The roof of the house was a common place for these people to go and cool off in the heat. There would be a breeze on the roof. It appears, this woman's house was very near the king's house. She was bathing herself. She was a very beautiful woman, and David looked upon her. She was the wife of one of his officers in the army.

2 Samuel 11:3 "And David sent and inquired after the woman. And [one] said, [Is] not this Bath-sheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"

“Bath-sheba” was the daughter of Eliam, son of Ahithophel, one of David’s advisers (verse 3; 23:34). She was the beautiful wife of Uriah the Hittite, whom David coveted and seduced while her husband was off fighting against the Ammonites with Joab (verses 1-4). After David had ordered Uriah to the frontlines where he was killed, he married Bath-sheba. But the child conceived in adultery died. God blessed them with four more children: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon (1 Chron. 3:5). The adultery with Bath-sheba was rebuked by Nathan the prophet. After she became the mother of Solomon (12:24), she begged the elderly David for Solomon’s succession to the throne (1 Kings 1:15-17). According to Jewish tradition (Proverbs 31), was written by Solomon to memorialize his mother. In the genealogy of Jesus (Matt. 1:6), Bath-sheba is mentioned indirectly as the wife of Uriah and the mother of Solomon by David.

Not until (12:24), is her name used again. Rather, to intensify the sin of adultery, it is emphasized that she was the wife of Uriah (verses 3, 26; 12:10, 15). Even the New Testament says “the wife of Uriah” (Matt. 1:6; compare Exodus 20:17).

“Eliam”: The father of Bath-sheba was one of David’s mighty men (23:34). Since Eliam was the son of Ahithophel, Bath-sheba was Ahithophel’s granddaughter (15:12; 16:15). This could explain why Ahithophel, one of David’s counselors (15:12), later gave his allegiance to Absalom in his revolt against David.

“Uriah”: Also, one of David’s mighty men (23:39). Although a Hittite (Gen. 15:20; Exodus 3:8, 17, 23), Uriah bore a Hebrew name meaning “the Lord is my light,” indicating he was a worshiper of the one true God.

Caught in the passion of the moment, David ignored the question of his servant. That query was his way out, if only he had heeded it.

“Uriah” was one of David’s elite soldiers (23:39). To pursue Bath-sheba would be not only foolish but also unjust.

This should settle the whole matter. She is a married woman. Her husband is off fighting a war that David has sent him to. Her name is Bath-sheba, which means daughter of an oath.

2 Samuel 11:4 "And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house."

“She came ... he lay”: These terms are euphemistic references to sexual intercourse (Gen. 19:34), indicating that both Bath-sheba and David were guilty of adultery.

“Her uncleanness”: Her recent days had involved menstruation and the required ceremonial purification (Lev. 15:19-30). They were followed by adulterous intercourse. The fact that she had just experienced menstruation makes it plain that Bath-sheba was not pregnant by Uriah when she came to lie with David.

David had a weakness, and it was women. He already had a large number of wives and 10 concubines. His lust for this woman has caused him to commit adultery. She had no choice in this matter. She would not dare disobey the king. It appears that this sin left him out of God's good graces and many sins took place between his children. This was the beginning of the downfall of David.

2 Samuel 11:5 "And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I [am] with child."

“I am with child”: The only words of Bath-sheba recorded concerning this incident acknowledges the resultant condition of her sin, which became evident by her pregnancy and was punishable by death (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22).

The sin of adultery for a woman was punishable by stoning to death. She is pregnant and there is no way to conceal that very long. The only thing she could do was get word to David and perhaps he could save her life. We must remember that she did not instigate this thing, he did.

Verses 6-7: This inane conversation was a ploy to get Uriah to come home and sleep with his wife, so it would appear that he had fathered the child, thus sparing David the public shame and Bath-sheba possible death.

Verses 6-13: Hebrew law required that anyone caught in adultery should be stoned (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22-24). While it was improbable that the people would insist on such punishment for

their king, his actions would have discredited him had they been known, so David tried to cover up his adultery and make it appear as if Bath-sheba's child belonged to "Uriah". There is no limit to the depths of sin a person is capable of once he or she starts to walk away from God.

2 Samuel 11:6 "And David sent to Joab, [saying], Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David."

David proposed thus to cover up his crime. By calling for Uriah and treating him with marked consideration, he thought to establish a friendly feeling on his part, and then by sending him to his wife to have it supposed that the child, begotten in adultery, was Uriah's own.

David is supreme ruler of the land. The head of the army, Joab, would not dare refuse to send Uriah home if the king ordered it.

2 Samuel 11:7 "And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded [of him] how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered." David pretended that his reason for calling Uriah home, was to see how the war was going.

Giving way to sin hardens the heart, and provokes the departure of the Holy Spirit. Robbing a man of his reason, is worse than robbing him of his money; and drawing him into sin, is worse than drawing him into any worldly trouble whatever.

2 Samuel 11:8 "And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house, and there followed him a mess [of meat] from the king."

"Wash thy feet": Since this washing was done before going to bed, the idiom means to go home and go to bed. To a soldier coming from the battlefield, it said boldly, "enjoy your wife sexually." Hopefully, David's tryst with Bath-sheba would be masked by Uriah's union.

"A mess of meat": This was designed to help Uriah and Bath-sheba enjoy their evening together.

David's plan was for Uriah to sleep with Bath-sheba and everyone would believe the baby was his. David in a sense is sending him home to relax before going back to the battleground. The mess of meat is a present from the king for Uriah and his wife. Uriah was one of David's highest ranking officers. Some believe he was one of the 37 heroes of David.

2 Samuel 11:9 "But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house."

"Uriah slept": Wanting to be a loyal example to his soldiers who were still in the field, Uriah did not take advantage of the king's less-than-honorable offer (verse 11).

The trick has not worked. He did not go home to be with Bath-sheba. He stayed in the soldier's quarters at the door of the king's house.

2 Samuel 11:10 "And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from [thy] journey? why [then] didst thou not go down unto thine house?"

The bodyguards which were probably placed there to watch the palace during the night. Uriah first fell into a conversation with these as is highly probable, to whom he was well known, and who might inquire of one and another of their friends in the army; and he being weary, laid himself down among there, and slept.

"And went not down to his house": Whether the trifling questions David asked him, or the information the guards might give him of his wife being sent for to court; made him suspect something, and so had no inclination to go to this own house. Or however so it was ordered by the providence of God, which directed him to act in this manner, that the sin of David and Bath-sheba they studied to hide might be discovered.

David could not understand why Uriah would not go to visit so beautiful a wife as Bath-sheba? He calls him to explain that he had given him a day off to be with his wife, before going back into battle.

2 Samuel 11:11 "And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? [as] thou livest, and [as] thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing."

"The Ark": The Ark of the Covenant was residing in either the tent in Jerusalem (6:17), or in a tent with the army of Israel on the battlefield (1 Sam. 4:6; 14:18). The Ark, it seems, was now carried with them for their encouragement and direction, as was usual (see Num. 10:35).

In the open fields": To wit, in tents which are in the fields.

"And to lie with my wife": He might possibly add these words, to insinuate his apprehension of the king's design, and to awaken his conscience to the consideration of his sin, and of the injury which he had done him. His meaning is, now when God's people are in a doubtful and dangerous condition; it becomes me to sympathize with them, and to abstain even from lawful delights. Whereby he might possibly intimate how unworthy it was for David in such a season to indulge himself in sinful and injurious pleasures. But David's ear was now deaf, his heart being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Uriah was a man who believed in fairness. He did not believe it fair for him to be with his wife, when his men were still on the battlefield. The Ark at this time was housed in a tent. It had no permanent building. The tent was a tabernacle where the people could worship. It was not in a permanent building. What he is really saying, is that he feels bad about being home having a good time when his men are facing death on the battlefield.

2 Samuel 11:12 "And David said to Uriah, Tarry here today also, and tomorrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow."

In his court, when he found he could not persuade him to go to his own house.

"And tomorrow I will let thee depart": After he had tried one method more with him.

"So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day and the morrow": Not in his own house, but the king's palace.

2 Samuel 11:13 "And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house."

"Made him drunk": Failing in his first attempt to cover up his sin, David tried unsuccessfully to make Uriah drunk so he would lose his resolve and self-discipline and return to his home and his wife's bed.

Uriah's sense of duty, even when he was drunk, contrasted with David's failure to even show up for battle.

David thought surely if he could get him drunk, he would go home to his wife. Even while he was drunk, he was a man of honor. He did not go home but slept with the king's guards.

Verses 14-25: David was so anxious to cover up his sin that he was willing to commit murder, an act he had vehemently opposed regarding Saul, Abner, and Ish-bosheth. Committing just one sin often makes people callous to bigger sins, until they find themselves doing things they never imagined they would do.

2 Samuel 11:14 "And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent [it] by the hand of Uriah."

The brave soldier is made the bearer of his own death-warrant, and his well-known valor for his king is to be the means of accomplishing his destruction, to relieve that king of the consequences of his crime, which also involved a great wrong to himself. No reason is given to Joab for this order, but as a loyal and somewhat unscrupulous general he obeys without question.

Not everyone could write, but David had been taught in the school of the prophets. Uriah was such a man of honor that he would not look at the message David sent to Joab by him.

Verses 15-17: "Joab" did not exactly follow David's instructions, which were to have his men "retreat" from Uriah. Perhaps this maneuver would have been too difficult to explain to veteran soldiers. Instead, Joab sent a group of men close to the wall (11:20-21), resulting in the unnecessary death of more soldiers.

2 Samuel 11:15 "And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die."

"He may be smitten, and die": Failing twice to cover up his sin with Bath-sheba, the frustrated and panicked David plotted the murder of Uriah by taking advantage of Uriah's unswerving loyalty to him as king, even having Uriah deliver his own death warrant. Thus, David engaged in another crime deserving of capital punishment (Lev. 24:17). This is graphic proof of the extremes people go to in pursuit of sin and in the absence of restraining grace.

Now David has added premeditated murder to his sin of adultery. Be sure, one sin leads to another. David is not only committing this sin himself, but is including his nephew Joab in it as well. The worst thing of all this, is the fact that the doomed man took the message, as a good soldier would, to Joab.

2 Samuel 11:16 "And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men [were]."

Where lay its greatest strength and where it was best defended; or besieged it, as the Targum.

"That he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were": Who would not easily give way, and when they saw an opportunity would leave suddenly. Joab cannot be excused from sin, unless he thought that Uriah had been guilty of death, and that David took this way of dispatching him for some political reason. However David was king, and to be obeyed.

This is just saying he put him in the most dangerous part of the battle. They were stationed outside the city, but the place he sent Uriah was a very vulnerable place.

2 Samuel 11:17 "And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell [some] of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also."

They suddenly withdrew, as Joab expected they would, when they appeared before them at that part of the city where valiant men were.

"And fought with Joab": At least with part of his army posted with Uriah.

"And there fell some of the people of the servants of David": Which made David's sin the more heinous, that several lives were lost through the strategy he devised to procure the death of Uriah; who could not be placed in a dangerous post alone, and therefore others must be sacrificed with him as well.

"And Uriah the Hittite died also": Which was the objective aimed at, and the end to be accomplished by this scheme.

The enemies are the men of the city, who came out trying to break the blockade against their city. During the battle, Uriah was killed along with some of the other servants of David.

Verses 18-24: "Joab ... Uriah ... died": He sent a messenger with a veiled message to tell David his wish had been carried out. Joab must have known the reason behind this otherwise stupid military deployment.

2 Samuel 11:18 "Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war;"

Joab sent messengers to David, as soon as Uriah was killed.

"And told David all the things concerning the war": How the siege had been carried on; what success they had had, good or ill; what their advantages and disadvantages; what men they had lost, and especially in one account of the enemy upon them, for the sake of which the plan had been sent.

2 Samuel 11:19 "And charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king,"

Gave him a particular direction and instruction what he should say at the close of his narrative, according as he should observe the king's countenance to be.

"Saying, when thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king": Giving an account of all the events that happened since the siege was begun to that time.

This is a report of the disaster in which Uriah was killed. It appears, the men of Israel had come too close to the wall of the city and some of the soldiers were killed with Uriah. Perhaps Joab thought this would be less conspicuous, than doing exactly what David had said. The sad thing is that more innocent people were killed because of this.

2 Samuel 11:20 "And if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall?"

Which might be seen in his countenance, or expressed in his words.

"And he say, wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight?" As to expose the king's troops to the enemy on the wall, who by stones or darts greatly annoyed them, or ran out on them, and killed many of them.

"Knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall?" They must have known that, and therefore should have kept out of the reach of their shot.

Joab knew that David would not approve of this move, until he hears that Uriah is killed. David would generally be angry with Joab for making such a poor decision. It appears from this, that Uriah was killed with an arrow from someone shooting from the wall.

2 Samuel 11:21 "Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also."

The same with Jerubbaal, who was Gideon (Judges 6:32). Baal, one part of his name, was the name of an idol, and sometimes called Bosheth or Besheth, which signifies shame, being a shameful idol. Gideon had a son called Abimelech, who was smitten, and it is here asked, by whom?

"Did not a woman cast a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez?" Which should have been a warning not to go too near the wall of an enemy; (the history is recorded in Judges 9:52).

"Why went ye nigh the wall?" Exposing your lives to so much danger, and by which so many lives were lost.

Then say thou, thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also": The whole has not been told, the worst of all is, as the messenger was to represent it, that brave gallant soldier Uriah is dead. This Joab ordered to be told last, as knowing very well it would pacify the king's wrath, and was the agreeable news he wanted to hear.

Joab and all the mighty men of Israel had been taught of mistakes made in battles in the past, so they would not make them again. "Jerubbesheth" is speaking of Gideon, who was known as Jerubbaal. When David heard that Uriah was killed, he would understand why Joab made such a foolish decision.

2 Samuel 11:22 "So the messenger went, and came and showed David all that Joab had sent him for."

From Joab, from the army before Rabbah.

"And came": To David in Jerusalem, a course of sixty four miles.

"And showed David all that Joab had sent him for": All the events of the war so far.

2 Samuel 11:23 "And the messenger said unto David, Surely the men prevailed against us, and came out unto us into the field, and we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate."

The particulars of his account follow.

"Surely the men prevailed against us": The men of the city of Rabbah, the besieged there, in one onset they made upon them.

"And came out unto us in the field": The besiegers that lay encamped there; they rushed out upon them.

"And we were upon them, even unto the entering of the gate; rallied upon them, and drove them back, and pursued them to the gate of the city.

2 Samuel 11:24 "And the shooters shot from off the wall upon thy servants; and [some] of the king's servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also."

Arrows shot from their bows, or stones out of their engines. The Israelites following them so closely to the gate of the city came within the reach of their shot from the wall.

"And some of the king's servants be dead": Killed in the attack upon them, and by the shot from the wall.

"And thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also": The messenger did not entirely obey the orders of Joab to wait and observe if the king's wrath arose, but was in haste to tell him the last piece of news. Perhaps he had some suspicion, from the manner of Joab's telling him what he should say, that this would be acceptable to the king.

This is an even more detailed description of what happened here. The servant that Joab sent, is relating this, as if he were involved in the battle and therefore knew the details.

2 Samuel 11:25 "Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it: and encourage thou him."

"And encourage thou him": David hypocritically expressed indifference to those who died, and he consoled Joab, authorizing him to continue the attack against Rabbah.

This messenger is unaware of what is going on. He is to carry a message of encouragement back to Joab. David also insists on them going ahead and taking the city. It appears the blockade is not working and they must go on in and take the city.

Verses 26-27: "She mourned for her husband": The customary period of mourning was probably 7 days (Gen. 50:10; 1 Sam. 31:13). Significantly, the text makes no mention of mourning by David.

2 Samuel 11:26 "And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband."

The news of which were soon sent her by David, though it is very probable she knew nothing of the plot to take away his life; and, besides, David chose to have his death published abroad as soon as possible, the more to hide his sin.

"She mourned for her husband": Expressed tokens of mourning by shedding tears, putting on a mourning habit, seeing no company, and this continued for the space of seven days. It may be, (1

Sam. 31:13); as little time as possible was spent in this way, and the marriage hastened, that the adultery might not be discovered.

One thing, we must remember about Bath-sheba, is that she was not in on the plan to kill her husband. She probably loved her husband. She mourned for the appropriate number of days. Some people were mourned for thirty days. We do not know for sure how long her period of mourning was.

2 Samuel 11:27 "And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD."

“The thing that David had done displeased the Lord”: This sinful act would bring forth evil consequences.

The literal rendering of “displeased the Lord” is: “was evil in the eyes of the Lord” (12:9; Psalm 51:4). David had urged Joab not to be displeased (11:25), but the Lord’s perspective mattered most. David’s actions concerning Uriah were premeditated. His was a sin of the mind and of the will as well as a sin of passion.

We know that David had been a man who pleased the LORD. This act of adultery and then murder was displeasing to the LORD. It caused a tear in the relationship of David with the LORD. This child that David and Bath-sheba had from this adulterous affair was a son. The sad thing in this is that we see no confession of this sin of David, nor do we see David repent of this. It is as if he feels he is above sin. He has probably become calloused and thinks the king can do whatever he wants to. He has forgotten that even kings have to answer to God.

2 Samuel Chapter 11 Questions

1. Where had David sent Joab and his warriors in verse 1?
2. Where did David stay?
3. What did David do in the evening?
4. Who did he see from his rooftop?
5. When David inquired of her, what answers was he given?
6. Why should this have stopped his interest in her?
7. What did he have a messenger go and do?
8. What was David's weakness?

9. What sin did she and David commit?
10. What terrible news did she send back to David?
11. Who did David immediately send for?
12. What did David ask Uriah, when he came?
13. What was David's real plan for having Uriah come home?
14. What did Uriah do instead?
15. What did David do the second night, thinking surely Uriah would go to his wife?
16. Why did he not go home?
17. When David saw he could not trick him into sleeping with Bath-sheba, what did he do?
18. What was in the letter?
19. What sin has David, now, added to adultery?
20. What did Joab do about the note?
21. Was Uriah killed?
22. Who did Joab send with the news?
23. Why would the messenger not suspicion that he was bringing word of Uriah's death?
24. What message did David send back to Joab?
25. What did Uriah's wife do, when she heard he was dead?
26. What is one thing we must remember about Bath-sheba?
27. When her mourning was over, what did David do?
28. What did this do to David's and the LORD's relationship?
29. What was really sad about all of this?
30. What had David forgotten about even kings?