

David and Bathsheba

David was a good king and made sure his people were treated fairly. Since he would not get to build the temple for God himself, he began to gather materials for the time when his son would build it. David was famous with the people because of the victories God gave him over their enemies. These wars were not just fought for glory, though. God was using His people to punish those who had turned away from Him to worship idols. Finally, the nations nearby were conquered; Israel included all the land God had promised to Abraham. During one of the wars, David stayed behind in Jerusalem when his soldiers went off to fight. It was at this time that David fell into grievous sin, which would haunt him for the rest of his life.

As David walked on the roof of his house one evening, he saw a beautiful woman taking a bath. Someone told him she was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, a Hittite soldier fighting with David's army. David should have put Bathsheba out of his mind when he heard she was married, but he didn't. Instead, he had her brought to the palace and sinned with her there. Sometime later, Bathsheba sent David word that she was going to have his baby.

David, the king over all of Israel, had committed adultery with one of his soldier's wives and now there was going to be a child! Desperately, he tried to think of a way to cover his sin. Finally, David had a plan; he would bring Uriah home from the battlefield and let him visit his wife. Then everyone would think he was the baby's father.

But David's plan didn't work. Uriah came back to Jerusalem, but he wouldn't go down to his house, not even after David got him drunk. He slept with the king's servants instead. He wouldn't let himself enjoy being home with his wife while the other soldiers were having a hard time on the battlefield.

What could David do now? Soon Uriah would hear that Bathsheba was going to have a baby, a baby that was not his. He must never know that David was its father!

David did a terrible thing. He wrote to Joab, the leader of his army, commanding him, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die." Then he had Uriah take the letter back with him.

Was David actually trying to get Uriah killed? Yes, he was! And that was just what happened. When David heard Uriah was dead, he told Joab not to feel guilty. "The sword devours one as well as another," David said, as if Uriah's death had been an ordinary casualty of war.

After about a year, God sent Nathan the prophet to talk with David. He had been a wise judge over his people, so Nathan told a parable that would let the king himself judge. In the parable, there was a rich man with many sheep and a poor man with only one little lamb. This little lamb was so special to the poor man that he treated it like his own child.

This rich man did an awful thing. One day a traveler came by and he killed the poor man's little lamb to feed the visitor. When David heard what the rich man had done, his anger was hot. "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this shall die!" he declared indignantly, not knowing he was talking about himself!

"You are the man," Nathan told the king. Then he delivered God's message. "I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been too little, I also would have given you much more," God said. Yet David had broken God's law and had done evil in His sight. Not only had he killed Uriah with the sword, he had taken his wife for himself.

As punishment, Nathan said David's family would have trouble for the rest of his life. "I have sinned against the Lord," David confessed, and God saw that he had repented. But sad consequences would still follow.