

SECOND SAMUEL

Chapter 11

David and Bathsheba

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. 2 It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. 3 And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" 4 So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. 5 And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant." 6 So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. 7 When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going. 8 Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." And Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. 9 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. 10 When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?" 11 Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing." 12 Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. 13 And David invited him, and he ate in his presence and drank, so that he made him drunk. And in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house. 14 In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. 15 In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die." 16 And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. 17 And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite also died. 18 Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting. 19 And he instructed the messenger, "When you have finished telling all the news about the fighting to the king, 20 then, if the king's anger rises, and if he says to you, 'Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? 21 Who killed Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman cast an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?' then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.'" 22 So the messenger went and came and told David all that Joab had sent him to tell. 23 The messenger said to David, "The men gained an advantage over us and came out against us in the field, but we drove them back to the entrance of the gate. 24 Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall. Some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also." 25 David said to the messenger, "Thus shall you say to Joab, 'Do not let this matter displease you, for the sword devours now one and now another. Strengthen your attack against the city and overthrow it.' And encourage him." 26 When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband. 27 And when the 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 the LORD.

11:1 *the spring.* Of the year following the events reported in ch. 1. The time must have been about ten years after David became established in Jerusalem. (CSB)

the time when kings go out to battle. Directly after the grain harvest in April and May. (CSB)

When the rainy season ended, the ground and roads became more favorable for armies to move and fight. (TLSB)

Rabbah. Though now alone (see 10:19), the Ammonites had not yet been subjugated. (CSB)

11:2 *walking on the roof of the king's house.* The roofs were flat (see 1Sa 9:25). David had probably gone there to enjoy the cool evening air. (CSB)

Roofs were flat and functioned as an extra room. (TLSB)

11:3 *Eliam.* Perhaps the same Eliam who was a member of David's personal bodyguard (23:34) and a son of his counselor Ahithophel. (CSB)

Uriah. Also listed among those comprising David's royal guard (23:39). His name suggests that even though he was a Hittite, he had adopted the Israelite faith (Uriah means "My light is the LORD"). (CSB)

11:4 *David sent messengers and took her.*† Through this action David eventually becomes guilty of breaking the fifth, sixth, eighth, ninth and tenth commandments (Ex 20:13–17). (CSB)

She came to him, and he lay with her. Bathsheba appears to have been an unprotesting partner in this adulterous relationship with David. (*She had purified herself from her uncleanness.*) The purpose of this parenthetical statement is to indicate Bathsheba's condition at the time of her sexual relations with David. She had just become ceremonially clean (Lev 15:28–30) after the seven-day period of monthly impurity due to menstruation (Lev 15:19–30). The significance of this in the context is to make it clear that she was not already pregnant by her own husband when David took her. (CSB)

Sin of adultery. "When holy people—still having and feeling original sin and daily repenting and striving against it—happen to fall into manifest sins (as David did into adultery, murder, and blasphemy) ... then faith and the Holy Spirit have left them" (SA III III 43–44). *she had been purifying.* From the uncleanness of menstruation. A woman had to wait seven days after the menstrual period before having intercourse with her husband. This indicates that Bathsheba was not pregnant when she lay with David. (TLSB)

11:5 *I am pregnant.* Bathsheba leaves the next step up to David. The law prescribed the death penalty for both David and Bathsheba (Lev 20:10; Dt 22:22), as they well knew. (CSB)

To seek his aid in dealing with the consequences of their sin. According to the Law, they both should have been put to death for their sin (Lv 20:10; Dt 22:22). (TLSB)

11:6 *Send me Uriah.* Under the pretense of seeking information about the course of the war, David brings Uriah back to Jerusalem. (CSB)

Uriah. Lit, "my light is the LORD." Though of Gentile background, it seems he adopted the faith of Israel. (TLSB)

11:8 *Go down to your house and wash your feet.* In essence, David tells Uriah to go home and relax. What he does not say specifically is what is most important, and well understood by Uriah (v. 11). (CSB)

David encouraged Uriah to go home, hoping he would lay with his wife to make it look like the child was his. (TLSB)

a present from the king. The Hebrew word for “gift” has the meaning of “food” in Ge 43:34 (“portions” from the king’s table). David wanted Uriah and Bathsheba to enjoy their evening together. (CSB)

11:9 *slept at the door.* In the court of the palace or in a dwelling affixed to it in which the servants of the king lived. There is no indication that Uriah suspected any impropriety on the part of his wife or the king. (TLSB)

11:11 *ark.*† Uriah states that the ark was in the field camp with the army rather than in the tent that David had set up for it in Jerusalem (6:17). It was there to lead Israel’s army, giving guidance for the war. But then the circumstances are even more damning for David—the Lord is in the field with his army while David stays at home in leisure. (CSB)

Uriah’s words show he was a dedicated and conscientious soldier who understood that while his people and nation were fighting for the Lord, he should not be seeking personal pleasure. (TLSB)

How could I go to my house ... ? Uriah’s devotion to duty exposes by sharp contrast David’s dalliance at home while his men are in the field. (CSB)

11:13 *David made him drunk.* In the hope that in this condition he would relent and go to Bathsheba. (CSB)

Hoping that with his guard lowered, Uriah would find his way to his wife. (TLSB)

11:14–15 Ironic exploitation of Uriah’s faithfulness. He would surely deliver the note and thereby deliver himself to death. With Uriah dead, there would be no one to challenge the assumption that Uriah was the father of Bathsheba’s child. (TLSB)

11:15 *that he may be struck down and die.* Unsuccessful in making it appear that Uriah was the father of Bathsheba’s child, David plotted Uriah’s death so he could marry Bathsheba himself as quickly as possible. (CSB)

11:17–18 Joab knew politics and honored the king’s orders, perhaps so that his own interests might be honored at another time. (TLSB)

11:19–21 Joab anticipated that David would pretend to be angry at the military failure. (TLSB)

11:21 *Jerub-Besheth.* Another possible spelling is “Jerub-Bosheth.” In Judges he is called Jerub-Baal. (CSB)

Uriah ... is dead. Joab knows that this news is of great importance to David, and he uses it to squelch any criticism David might otherwise have had of the battle tactics. (CSB)

11:25 *David said to the messenger.* David hid his satisfaction over the news with a hypocritical statement that war is war and the death of Uriah should not be a discouragement. (CSB)

11:26 *she lamented over her husband* – This was only an outward ritual. There is no evidence of real remorse or repentance. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

Whether or not the lamentation was genuine, the normal mourning period was seven days (Gn 50:10; 1Sm 31:13). Bathsheba likely became David's wife shortly after the seven days in order to hide their sin (v 27). (TLSB)

11:27 *time of mourning was over*. Presumably a period of seven days (Ge 50:10; 1Sa 31:13). (CSB)

she became his wife. At first opportunity they were married. Again, a sign that neither one of them felt and remorse over their actions. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

the thing David had done displeased the LORD. Not only had David brazenly violated God's laws) but, even worse, he had shamelessly abused his royal power, which the Lord had entrusted to him to shepherd the Lord's people (5:2; 7:7–8). (CSB)

As people we can fool many people much of the time, but can never fool God. The Hebrew verb here describes the offensiveness to God as a being very strong and repugnant. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

Ch 11 David's sin of the eye becomes a sin of lust and of deed. He lies with another man's wife and then has the man killed to keep the sin secret. Whenever you try to hide a sin by committing another sin, you are just digging yourself deeper into a hole. Instead, confess! God will forgive all who repent and seek the forgiveness earned by Christ on the cross. • "Lord Jesus, think on me And purge away my sin; From worldly passions set me free And make me pure within." Amen. (LSB 610:1). (TLSB)