

# SECOND SAMUEL

## Chapter 11

### *David and Bathsheba*

In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, <sup>3</sup> and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" <sup>4</sup> Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (She had purified herself from her uncleanness.) Then she went back home. <sup>5</sup> The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant." <sup>6</sup> So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent him to David. <sup>7</sup> When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. <sup>8</sup> Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. <sup>9</sup> But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house. <sup>10</sup> When David was told, "Uriah did not go home," he asked him, "Haven't you just come from a distance? Why didn't you go home?" <sup>11</sup> Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my master Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open fields. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and lie with my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!" <sup>12</sup> Then David said to him, "Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. <sup>13</sup> At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants; he did not go home. <sup>14</sup> In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. <sup>15</sup> In it he wrote, "Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die." <sup>16</sup> So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were. <sup>17</sup> When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died. <sup>18</sup> Joab sent David a full account of the battle. <sup>19</sup> He instructed the messenger: "When you have finished giving the king this account of the battle, <sup>20</sup> the king's anger may flare up, and he may ask you, 'Why did you get so close to the city to fight? Didn't you know they would shoot arrows from the wall?' <sup>21</sup> Who killed Abimelech son of Jerub-Besheth? Didn't a woman throw an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you get so close to the wall?' If he asks you this, then say to him, 'Also, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.'" <sup>22</sup> The messenger set out, and when he arrived he told David everything Joab had sent him to say. <sup>23</sup> The messenger said to

David, “The men overpowered us and came out against us in the open, but we drove them back to the entrance to the city gate.<sup>24</sup> Then the archers shot arrows at your servants from the wall, and some of the king’s men died. Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.”<sup>25</sup> David told the messenger, “Say this to Joab: ‘Don’t let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it.’ Say this to encourage Joab.”<sup>26</sup> When Uriah’s wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him.<sup>27</sup> After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.

**11:1** *the spring.* Of the year following the events reported in ch. 10. The time must have been about ten years after David became established in Jerusalem. (CSB)

*the time when kings go off to war.* 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.* See note on 10:3. Though now alone (see 10:19), the Ammonites had not yet been subjugated. (CSB)

**11:2** *walked around on the roof.* 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)

*Hittite.* See note on 1Sa 26:6. (CSB)

**11:4** *David sent messengers to get 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 slept 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 gift from the king was sent after him*. 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)

*As surely as you live.* See note on 1Sa 1:26. (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** *so he will 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 (see note on Jdg 6:32; see also NIV text note here). For similar name changes by the author of Samuel see notes on 2:8; 4:4. (CSB)

*millstone.* See Jdg 9:52–53. (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 told 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 MOURNED HIM – 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.* See notes on 3:2–5; 5:14. (CSB)

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 (see note on v. 4) 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)