

# ***FPFWC Christian Development***



## **Justice and Adversity**

February 2022

Winter Quarter

**February 5, 2022**

## **Lesson #1 – Nathan Condemns David**

### **Scripture Focus – 2 Samuel 12:1-9,13-15**

#### **ICE BREAKER –**

1. *How can a story help prepare a person to face a confrontation?*
2. *How can you remove the “beam” from your eye in order to help with the “mote” in another’s (Matthew 7:3)?*
3. *How can bringing “open secrets” concerning a person’s sins to light help heal the damage?*

**Key Verse - Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. —2 Samuel 12:7a**

#### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

At the time of today’s lesson, the Israelite army was fighting the Ammonites (Genesis 19:38; Deuteronomy 2:19). The date was about 990 BC. The particular backdrop for us is a siege of the Ammonite capital, Rabbah. This was located at the site of the modern city of Amman, Jordan. Situated at the sources of the Jabbok River, the city was about 40 miles east of Jerusalem.

With a good general directing his army, a king could stay home to take care of administrative concerns or personal matters. King David had such a man in Joab (2 Samuel 8:16). Although not without ethical problems of his own (see 3:30), Joab was a fierce and unrelenting warrior, at that time very loyal to David. One day while home, David seemed to have been enjoying a nap on the roof (compare 1 Samuel 9:25). After waking, he began to walk around the roof (2 Samuel 11:2).

The highest point in Jerusalem was Mount Zion. Next to the mount on the south side was David’s palace, making his rooftop the second highest position in the small city (probable size: about 2,000 people within 12 acres). This is how David could have observed activity on a nearby rooftop (2 Samuel 11:2b).

What David saw was the woman Bathsheba performing a ritual bath for purification (see 2 Samuel 11:4; compare Leviticus 15:19–24). David may have known Bathsheba’s family, for her father was Eliam, thought to be the son of one of David’s counselors Ahithophel (see 2 Samuel 11:3; 15:12; 16:23).

King David’s notice of Bathsheba quickly turned to lust. He ended up sleeping with her, which resulted in a pregnancy (2 Samuel 11:5). David tried to influence her husband, Uriah, to go to his own house before returning to battle. That way everyone (except David and Bathsheba) would think that the baby was Uriah’s. But Uriah’s sense of honor kept him from spending time with his wife (11:6–13). Little did Uriah know that his sense of honor sealed his fate (11:14–17), as he carried his own death warrant back to Joab. After Uriah’s death, David took Bathsheba as his own wife.

Nine months later, it looked as though David had gotten away with these crimes.

### **LESSON COMMENTARY**

**12:1a.** In chap. 11 David did virtually all the sending for people, but in chap. 12 **the LORD sent Nathan to David** with a divinely directed message (Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 369), although the exact time or nature of the revelation was not recorded. Nathan wisely told David a story that penetrated his mind and heart before his defenses went up.

**12:1b–3.** Nathan told David a story about two men, one of whom was **rich** and one of whom was **poor**. The poor man had only **one little ewe lamb** (v. 3) that he had purchased. The lamb was like a member of the poor man's family. Nathan depicted the poor man's family life as the perfect image of countrified tranquility. The lamb **was like a daughter to him**. The image appealed to David's pastoral imagination.

**12:4–5.** Nathan introduced another character in the story, **a traveler** who was visiting **the rich man**. The traveler needed to eat, but the rich man refused **to take from his flock or cattle**. Instead, he **took the poor man's ewe lamb and prepared it for the man**. Angered by this story, David said this man **deserves to die** (v. 5).

**12:6.** To **make restitution for the lamb fourfold**, as David demanded, meant that the rich man must pay four times the lamb's original cost. When someone stole a lamb, the thief had to pay four sheep for the one stolen lamb (cf. Ex 22:1).

**12:7–8.** Nathan then applied the story directly to David: **You are the man!** Nathan continued to speak to David, using the prophetic formula, **Thus says the LORD**. Nathan reminded David of the specific ways in which He had blessed him, and He **would have** done even **more** of the same for David (v. 8).

**12:9–10.** In light of what the Lord had done for David, Nathan asked David a searching question: **Why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight?** To "despise the LORD" suggests holding His Word in contempt and disrespect. David's contemptible actions with Bathsheba and Uriah were senseless. Although Joab carried out David's order to set Uriah up to be killed, the Lord said David struck him down because David gave the order. Although Ammonites killed Uriah in battle, the Lord said David killed him with an Ammonite sword (v. 9). David took Uriah's wife to be his wife (v. 10). David had taken; he had stolen; he had abused his power. Interestingly, the Lord referred twice to Bathsheba as Uriah's wife (vv. 9, 10; cf. Mt 1:6).

Since David killed Uriah with the sword, **the sword would never depart** from David's **house**. As a consequence of his sin, three of David's oldest sons would die violent deaths: Amnon (cf. 13:28–32), Absalom (cf. 18:6–15), and Adonijah (cf. 1Kg 2:19–25). It is possible that the death of David's unnamed son by his adulterous act with Bathsheba is the fourth part of the "fourfold" restitution (v. 6) David had unknowingly pronounced against himself (Youngblood, "1, 2 Samuel," 445; Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 372).

**12:13–15a.** The Lord does not diminish in the slightest way His sovereign hand in bringing about consequences for sin. In vv. 1–12, David had listened to his indictment and judgment, speaking only before he knew he was the guilty party. Now he responded to God's searching judgment with the words, **I have sinned**

**against the LORD** (v. 13). After almost a year, David confessed his sin. Then Nathan uttered some of the most gracious words in the OT: **The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die**. Under the OT theocracy, the penalty for adultery and murder was death (cf. Ex 21:12, 14; Lv 20:10). David may have expected to be put to death. But God had already put away David's sin and forgiven him. David acknowledged in Ps 51:16 that the law provided no sacrifice for murder and adultery, which were capital offenses. All David could offer were the sacrifices of a "broken spirit" and a "broken and a contrite heart" (Ps 51:17).

However, forgiveness does not eliminate consequences. David's sins caused the Lord's **enemies ... to blaspheme** (v. 14). News of David's secret leaked out to pagans, causing them, the Lord's enemies, to speak ill of the Lord. So, because of the Lord's honor and glory, David's recently born son would die. The text leaves no doubt about the severity and certainty of the consequence.

## **2. David's Baby Dies**

**12:15b–19. The LORD struck the child that Uriah's widow [lit., "wife"] bore to David** (v. 15). The author emphasized that Bathsheba did not belong to David; she was Uriah's wife.

Although David had sinned grievously, he knew the Lord. And so, he prayed and fasted for a week for his son's life. However, on the seventh day of David's fasting, the baby died (vv. 16–19).

**LESSON NUGGET** – God gave David opportunity for repentance, but he refused to yield. Chastening proves God's love to us; our yielding proves our love to Him. The Law said that both David and Bathsheba should die (Lev. 20:10). In His grace, God forgave their sins; but in His government, He permitted them to reap what they had sown. 1 John 1:9 is a great promise, but it is not an excuse for sin. Remember, there are sad consequences of forgiven sin.

**Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary***