

## Day 307 - FRIDAY: December 8th

### 2 Samuel 11:1-27 NKJV

It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house. And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, "I am with child." Then David sent to Joab, saying, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered. And David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah departed from the king's house, and a gift of food from the king followed him. 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. So when they told David, saying, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Did you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?" And Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing." Then David said to Uriah, "Wait here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. Now when David called him, he ate and drank before him; and he made him drunk. And at evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house. In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he

wrote in the letter, saying, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die." So it was, while Joab besieged the city, that he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew there were valiant men. Then the men of the city came out and fought with Joab. And some of the people of the servants of David fell; and Uriah the Hittite died also. Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war, and charged the messenger, saying, "When you have finished telling the matters of the war to the king, if it happens that the king's wrath rises, and he says to you: 'Why did you approach so near to the city when you fought? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? Who struck Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Was it not a woman who cast a piece of a millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you go near the wall?'—then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.' " So the messenger went, and came and told David all that Joab had sent by him. And the messenger said to David, "Surely the men prevailed against us and came out to us in the field; then we drove them back as far as the entrance of the gate. The archers shot from the wall at your servants; and some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also." Then David said to the messenger, "Thus you shall say to Joab: 'Do not let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another. Strengthen your attack against the city, and overthrow it.' So encourage him." When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. And when her 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.

### **Daily Deep Dive:**

The UCG reading program states: "Often, it is when we are on top of the world that we are most vulnerable to temptation. As the apostle Paul warns: "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). What an incredible position David now appears to be in. He sits enthroned as one of the most powerful rulers on earth.

Under this flush of greatness, with tremendous wealth now pouring in, spiritual danger looms. For riches and power can lead one to deny God and disregard Him (Proverbs 30:8-9; Deuteronomy 8). We enter here into the darkest period of David's personal spiritual life. It is of note that David was around 50 years old at this point, after decades of close association with God and experiencing God's hand in his life.

The story opens with the fight against the Ammonites to finish the matter begun in our previous reading. Reference is made to the spring as the time of year when kings go out to battle. There are three reasons for this. 1) Winter in the region is the rainy season. Its end assures troops dry conditions for battle. 2) The rainy season is the time for planting. By the spring, the barley is ready for harvesting and the wheat harvest is well along—freeing up more men to go out to fight. 3) These harvested grains are needed to feed the troops.

David sends Joab to besiege the Ammonite capital of Rabbah (what is today a part of Amman, the modern capital of Jordan). Though so involved with his past battles, David now decides to stay home at Jerusalem. It would seem that he should be with his men on the scene—particularly when the account says kings normally go out with their armies at this time and even the ark of God was at the scene of the battle (verse 11). But with his newfound greatness, perhaps he has begun to deem himself above that. Perhaps he thinks, *We're so powerful now that I don't need to be there. Besides, why place myself in unnecessary danger. I'm the king. I'm too important.* Whether this assessment is accurate or not, events that follow indicate that some sort of spiritual lethargy has set in with David, weakening his character for the time being—the fruit of which soon becomes evident.

One would think the fight with Ammon would be over almost immediately—with the incredible victory David's army has just accomplished. But, though there are some chronological sequence

questions in 2 Samuel 12, it doesn't appear to happen that way—the siege, we will see, seems to take a very long time. If so, why? Besides the fact that ancient sieges could last months or even years depending on the resources of those within the city under siege, the real answer may perhaps be found in the blessings and curses pronounced in the time of Moses. God promised that the Israelites would be blessed with military victory when they were obedient—and would suffer reverses when they were not (see Deuteronomy 28:1-7, 15-25). David's amazing victories over the awesome coalition arrayed against him came from God at a time when David was seeking Him. But now it would appear that, with David's present spiritual letdown, God allows the Israelite military to accomplish very little, making it slow going at Rabbah.

Surprisingly, the book of Chronicles does not record what happens when David remains at Jerusalem. Chronicles, it seems, has a different focus, primarily emphasizing the strength of David and his dynasty. (As we will see, it does not delve into all the turmoil of David's house during his lifetime, such as the rebellion of Absalom.) But God's Word does not skip over David's great sin—for, though it does not appear in Chronicles, we find it in 2 Samuel 11. David looks out from the rooftop of his palace and sees a beautiful woman bathing herself. Although the account says he inquires about her, the nature of this inquiry is unclear as she is almost certainly someone he already knows. She is "Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite" (verse 3). Eliam and Uriah are two of David's elite mighty men, with whom he has spent untold hours around the campfires over the years (see 2 Samuel 23:34, 39). Indeed, Eliam—also known as Ammiel (see 1 Chronicles 3:5)—is the son of Ahithophel (2 Samuel 23:34), whom we will later learn is one of David's chief advisers, something like a prime minister or chief of staff. Living next to the royal palace, probably by David's own granting, these were very important people who would have been regular guests at

the king's table. Perhaps David in his inquiry just wants to make sure she will be alone—that there will be no one to inform Uriah.

Though he now reigns over a powerful kingdom, dominating a sizable part of the Middle East, David is unable to reign over his own passions. Having seen this beautiful woman bathing, he lusts after her—coveting his neighbor's wife in violation of the Tenth Commandment. God admonishes us in enticing situations to flee from the stimulus that is before us (see 1 Corinthians 6:18; 2 Timothy 2:22). If David were to now walk by this rule, considerable suffering would be avoided. But, as it is, he uses his power as king to take advantage of Uriah's wife—he "took her" (verse 4). What part Bathsheba herself played in all this is difficult to ascertain. Did she know David would see her bathing? We don't know. She, of course, has sinned in the matter as well, for adultery is a two-way street. But David, as spiritual leader and premier civil authority in the land, has greater accountability. Furthermore, this sordid situation is made worse by the fact that David fathers a child by her. What a terrible betrayal this is against Uriah. Many refer to this whole episode as that of "David and Bathsheba." But God does not. He calls it "the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kings 15:5). The name Uriah means "Flame of the Eternal" or "The Eternal Is Light." As he is called a Hittite, it is apparent that he is probably a foreign mercenary who became a worshiper of the God of Israel. For years, he has devoted his life to the service of David. And this is the treacherous payback he receives from the king—but, sadly, adultery is not the end of it. With Uriah off fighting the Ammonites, Bathsheba's pregnancy would expose her as an adulteress—and it would probably not take long to learn the father's identity. David's attempts to cover up his sin by getting Uriah together with his wife are not successful. Unlike David, while Uriah's comrades are still in the field, the ever-dedicated soldier refuses to enjoy the comforts of home. What can David do? He makes a fateful

decision. "Failing to cover up sin, David plotted the loyal soldier's death. Perhaps David could not face the shame of seeing Uriah after the warrior had learned that David had slept with his wife" ("An Innocent Victim," *The Nelson Study Bible*, 1997, p. 524). So he despicably sends with Uriah a message to Joab containing orders that essentially constitute Uriah's death sentence—all the while so trusting of Uriah's honor that he knows he won't read it.

Joab does not follow David's orders exactly. "David had told Joab to have Uriah killed by withdrawing soldiers from around him, leaving him to face the enemy alone. Perhaps Joab thought that this would be an obvious betrayal and would be difficult to explain to the other officers in the army. Instead, he devised a plan to have the soldiers fight near the wall. This maneuver endangered more soldiers and resulted in greater loss of life" (*Nelson*, note on 2 Samuel 11:23-24). Joab expects David to explode at him over his foolish military tactic, but he tells his messenger to explain to the king that Uriah was killed in the engagement—knowing that David will then understand why Joab did what he did.

Thus, David has committed two heinous sins against God—adultery and murder. David's sin began with a thought in his mind—the sin of lust. He then brought that thought to action by actually committing the act of adultery. He then tried deception to cover up his sin. When that did not work, he had Uriah killed. This is the way sin often works—sin begets sin begets sin. In his further drift from God, David's message to Joab is utterly disgusting. Regarding the loss of a number of his particularly valiant soldiers in the murder of Uriah, he basically says, "Oh, don't worry about it—these things happen. Now get back to work" (compare verse 25). The fact that such a righteous man as King David could sink to this level of sin should serve as a warning to us all to always remain close to God. For if this happened with David, it could, as easily if not more so, happen with us—if we are not vigilant in staying close to God.

To perpetuate his cover-up, David takes Bathsheba as his wife as soon as possible to make it appear that their child is legitimate. It may even be that he intends the marrying of his friend's widow to appear an act of beneficence on his part. But the child is born considerably less than nine months later, taking into account the several weeks that lapsed until Bathsheba discovered she was pregnant, the episode of trying to get Uriah to visit his wife, the deployment of the scheme to kill Uriah, and then Bathsheba's period of mourning, which was customarily a month. But babies are sometimes born prematurely, and David perhaps hopes his sin remains concealed. Yet besides the supposedly short pregnancy, the rushed marriage no doubt makes everyone suspicious. Still, it appears to David that he has gotten away with everything. And he may have for a while. "But," as the account tells us, "the thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (verse 27). Nothing is hidden from *God*—a fact we must all remember when it comes to our own lives." [END]

Verse 4 – I feel we must be very careful in applying shared blame to Bathsheba. There is no indication in scripture that Bathsheba encouraged or invited this attention from David. After getting pregnant, there is no indication of her conspiring with David on a plan. Instead we see in scripture that “David looked, David sent, David inquired, David’s men “took her”. In tomorrow’s reading, when Nathan confronts David about “his” sin, notice how in Nathan’s story he focuses on a “rich man” with power who takes what he wants. There is no focus on Bathsheba or the “lamb” in the story doing anything improper. David had all the power, Bathsheba did not.

Back in verse 2, we find David up at the time when the light was fading. Regarding him being able to see Bathsheba bathing, the Ellicott’s commentary states “This palace was on the height of Mount Zion, and looked down upon the open courts of the houses in the lower city. In one

of these he saw a beautiful woman bathing. In the courts of the houses it was common to have a basin of water, and the place was probably entirely concealed from every other point of observation than the roof of the palace, from which no harm was suspected.” [END]

The Pulpit Commentary states “We are told that it is regarded in the East as improper for one neighbour to look over the battlement of his house into the inner court of the next dwelling (Philippson). Considering the jealousy with which Orientals guard the female members of their family from intrusion, it was a wrong act on the king's part to spy into what was going on in the recesses of the adjoining house. But he did so, and suffered for it years of disgrace and misery. For he saw a beautiful woman, the wife of one of his high officers, bathing, probably to purify herself from some legal uncleanness, such as those mentioned in Leviticus 15. No blame, so far, must be attached to her. The place was regarded as perfectly secluded, and probably neither she nor Uriah had ever suspected that what went on there could be observed from the roof of the king's palace. 2 Samuel 11:2” [END]

Verse 4 continued – This verse says that Bathsheba was “cleansed from her impurity”. It’s difficult to tell what this bathing/cleansing is referring to. I’ve seen both in commentaries. One possibility is that it’s a reference that when she was bathing and David saw her, she was cleansed from her monthly cycle and with her cleansed from that, David had sex with her. Another possibility, is that after David had sex with her, she cleansed herself from that before heading home (compare Leviticus 15:18). I lean toward that it is referring to Leviticus 15:18, since it is included at this location in the narrative and not up in verse 2.

Leviticus 20:10 tells us that God required both the man and woman to be put to death.



Verse 11 – Uriah’s integrity in this situation is greatly commendable.

Verse 27 – It is assumed in commentaries that she observed a mourning period of seven days.