

# David *and* Bathsheba: Adultery *and* After



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** 2 Samuel 11, 12.

**Memory Text:** “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10).

**T**he marriage of David and Bathsheba is a model for how to do almost everything wrong. Born out of adultery, then complicated with deception and murder, it's a sordid account of just how fallen humanity has become.

In the incident with Bathsheba, David broke the sixth commandment, “Thou shalt not kill”; the seventh commandment, “Thou shalt not commit adultery”; the ninth commandment, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour”; and the tenth commandment, “Thou shalt not covet” (*Exod. 20:1–17*). Whatever pressures David put on her, Bathsheba put herself in a very vulnerable position when she washed herself in sight of the king's house. Whoever imagined that a little bath water could be so dangerous? Whether a deliberate ploy to entice the king or just an unfortunate lapse in judgment, her indiscretion ended in dire consequences for them both.

In the end, the fact that David received forgiveness stands as a powerful testimony of God's grace for even the most inexcusable sins, sins that weren't just sins but crimes. While we marvel at how low David stooped, what's even more marvelous is that God's grace extended even to the depths of human depravity. How fortunate for us.

**The Week at a Glance:** The story of David and Bathsheba ever bears witness to how even the most godly people, unless careful, can fall into the worst of sin. How fortunate that we have a God who forgives the unforgivable.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 8.*

## Precursor to a Fall

**Read** 2 Samuel 3:1–5 and 2 Samuel 5:13. What’s in these texts that helps us understand why David would do what he did with Bathsheba and, on the other hand, helps us understand why his act of adultery was even more heinous?

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Proverbs says that “the eyes of man are never satisfied” (*Prov. 27:20*). How true in the case of David. By the time he lusted after Bathsheba, he already had more than six wives and who knows how many concubines. *And yet that was not enough?* And worse, to satisfy his lusts he had to take another man’s wife?

We shouldn’t miss the important principle here: Any deviation from the will of God opens the soul up to more and more folly and deception. By transgressing God’s will, David opened himself to more temptation. The indulgence of a passion, far from removing the passion, only makes that passion stronger and stronger. Had David followed God’s ideal, one man, one wife, he would have been less open to Satan’s temptations. In this case the floodgates were opened, and David was swept away in the deluge.

**Read** James 1:12–15. What warning to us is the Lord giving here?

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Those who have ever struggled with addiction, with uncontrollable desires of any kind, know how sin is never satisfied. The more you indulge it, the more you want it; and the more you want it, the easier it is to make excuses for it until you are enslaved by it. As Jesus said, “‘Everyone who sins is a slave to sin’” (*John 8:34, NIV*).

**What has been your own experience with powerful temptations, with addictions, with drives that seem to control you rather than vice versa? What promises do we have for victory? What choices do you have to make in order to make those promises real in your own life?**

## The Fall

**Read** 2 Samuel 11:1–5. What were the steps that led to David’s fall? At what points in the progression of events could he have stopped before sinning? What Old Testament stories would he have known about that he could have drawn inspiration from? *See, for instance, Gen. 39:7–14.*

The initial temptation from “seeing” comes to all of us. This may be involuntary and is not sin. The next step is stopping to investigate. This could be treading on very dangerous ground and may be sin in the mind. It could be very difficult to keep from getting into the next and final step, the actual misdeed.

It’s clear, though, that right from the start David knew exactly what he was doing. He had inquired about who she was, and even though he was told, directly, that she was the wife of another man, he, nevertheless, had her brought to him in order to fulfill his own lusts. What other reason did he have to do this? She was already married, so he wasn’t interested in making her a wife. He wasn’t interested in falling in love with her. He was, it seems, driven purely by passion.

Plus, was he not the king? Was he not used to getting whatever he wanted? Why not, then, this woman, as well?

**Read** again 2 Samuel 11:4. What can we tell about Bathsheba and how she responded to David’s seduction?

Was she flattered by the attention of the king, or did she try to resist his advances? Might she have been purposely washing herself in his sight, or was she taking for granted that the king would be off fighting with his army, as was the custom in the spring, according to the Bible (2 Sam. 11:1)? The text makes no indication that the king had forced her, such as in Ammon’s rape of Tamar (2 Sam. 13:14). Nor does it say that she willingly gave herself to him. Whatever the details, David—who should have known better—took advantage of this young woman and led them both into sin.

**Sexual drives can be very strong. How careful are we not to take advantage of these weaknesses in others and exploit them for personal satisfaction or gain? What kind of messages are you sending by your words, your dress, your body language?**

## The Cover-up

In 2 Samuel 11:5, Bathsheba tells David that she's pregnant. That she just assumed David was the father indicates that she probably hadn't been with anyone else, including her own husband.

**Read** 2 Samuel 11:6–25. Does Bathsheba play a role in the cover-up of her husband? Explain.

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We have no indication whatsoever that Bathsheba knew of David's plans for her husband. He probably wanted it that way. The fact, however, that David tried to get Uriah to go home to his wife probably indicated that David was sure that she wasn't going to tell her husband that she got pregnant by the king.

**Why not?** See Lev. 20:10.

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David had her in a bind. Had she confessed, she would have faced the possibility of death. And had it come down to it, David would have denied everything (after all, he committed murder in order to try to get out of it). How much easier if all he had to do was tell a lie! *Why would I, with all these wives and concubines, take the wife of one of my most trusted and valiant soldiers?* And Bathsheba, pregnant with another man's baby, would have had no way to prove his guilt either. Who would believe her word against a beloved and powerful king with all these women at his disposal? She was totally helpless.

Thus, from her perspective, what would she gain from confessing? David apparently knew this, which was why he felt safe in trying to get Uriah into her presence. As it turned out, of course, that never happened.

**Look at how quickly one moment of uncontrolled passion led to a spiral of sin and crime in a man of God. How carefully are you controlling your passions, your desires? How can you better place yourself in a position where you are less tempted by things that can lead you down this same horrid path?**

## The Wages of Sin

**Read** 2 Samuel 11:26, 27. What does this tell us about both David and Bathsheba?

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Bathsheba mourned for her dead husband. What might have made her grief even worse was the knowledge that, perhaps, she was implicated in his death. How much she knew, at that time, regarding David's deeds we don't know, but eventually the rumors started spreading about David's sins. Meanwhile, David did the only "honorable" thing he could and took her to him as a wife. Let's assume that she needed at least a month to know that she was pregnant; let's assume, too, that she mourned for her husband 30 days (*Num. 20:29*). Depending, then, on how long it took David to get Uriah killed, it's still hard to see how anyone could not have known something was amiss regarding the timing of this child's birth.

**Read** 2 Samuel 12:13–23. What principle do we see operating here?

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It's hard to understand why an innocent baby should suffer for sins he had nothing to do with. But this is the horrible nature of sin. It leads to the suffering of others, even those who might have had nothing to do with the sin. How many spouses and children have suffered terribly because of the sin of adultery committed by a parent? Sin never happens in isolation. Sooner or later, in one way or another, the consequences appear. *What other examples can you find in the Bible of this same principle?*

**Read** 2 Samuel 12:24. What does this tell us about the relationship between David and Bathsheba?

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Theirs was, from the start, a marriage that never should have been. David, though, shows here compassion for her, and they eventually have another child together.

**Forgiven sin can bring about horrible consequences anyway. What lesson can you take from this story as you daily confront temptations to sin?**

## David and Bathsheba: The Final Days

After the birth of Solomon, Bathsheba disappears from the pages of the Bible until years later, at the end of David's reign. She would have become simply another one of David's wives had it not been for the fact that their next son, Solomon, was destined to take the throne of Israel. In 1 Chronicles 22:5–9, David stated that the Lord told him that Solomon was to be the next king.

**Read** 1 Kings 1:1–27. What is happening here? Why would Adonijah believe that he should have the throne before Solomon? See 2 Samuel 3:4.

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For whatever reason, God chose Solomon to be the heir to the throne. Bathsheba, after the birth of Solomon, doesn't appear again until Adonijah's revolt, where she and Nathan inform David of what is happening. Both she and Nathan know that Solomon, not Adonijah, was the Lord's choice.

David comforts Bathsheba after their son dies. And now as the kingdom is poised on the brink of civil war, more than ever, Bathsheba needs the king's assurance to secure the succession of their son.

**Read** 1 Kings 1:28–31. Notice her response to the king after he gives her the reassurance she longs for. What might that say about their relationship, as well? How does Bathsheba's approach and respect for the king, her husband, model how we, as a church, should approach our King, Jesus, with our petitions?

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Any kind of a good relationship—marriage, friendship, or one between a parent and child—needs nurturing. What immediate relationships of yours need some mending, some nurture, some work? What steps can you take to make that relationship better?

**Further Study:** Read Ellen G. White, “Moral Standards,” pp. 326–339, in *The Adventist Home*.

“Many have murmured at what they called God’s injustice in sparing David, whose guilt was so great, after having rejected Saul for what appear to them to be far less flagrant sins. But David humbled himself and confessed his sin, while Saul despised reproof and hardened his heart in impenitence. . . .

“Whoever under the reproof of God will humble the soul with confession and repentance, as did David, may be sure that there is hope for him. Whoever will in faith accept God’s promises, will find pardon. The Lord will never cast away one truly repentant soul. He has given this promise: ‘Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me.’ Isaiah 27:5. ‘Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.’ Isaiah 55:7.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 726.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 Read the story of Nathan with David (*2 Sam. 12:1–8*). Notice how obvious it should have been to David, right from the start, that this story was about him. And yet, he totally missed it. What lessons can we take from this about how easy it is to deceive ourselves regarding sin? As a class, talk about what precautions we can take to protect ourselves, and each other, from falling into such gross self-deception.
- 2 As a class, read Psalm 51 together. Discuss the elements of the gospel of Jesus Christ that are found there. What does it teach us about the power of God’s grace in our lives?
- 3 What practical spiritual truths can we learn from the story of David and Bathsheba that can help us avoid the kind of mistakes made here? What can we do to help each other avoid the kind of pit that David fell into?

**Summary:** Take heed—even the mightiest among us can fall; and the mightier they are, the worse the consequences. The story of David and Bathsheba contains a powerful message about the cost of sin, as well as the greatness of God’s grace.

# The Pain That Saved

by DASS KUMAR

Ganesan grew up in a family that was devoted to the idols they worshiped in their hometown in India. They spent much time and money decorating the idols and praying to them. Ganesan continued the family devotion into adulthood.

One day as he was working, he was struck by an intense pain in his cheek so severe that he fell down. The pain subsided, but it often returned, disrupting his work, his sleep, his entire life. Doctors could not relieve the pain, so for months Ganesan went to the temple to offer gifts and pray for relief. But the pain returned day after day. At times it grew so severe that Ganesan thought only death would bring relief.

One day a cousin learned of Ganesan's trouble and invited him to visit her church to let the members pray for him. Ganesan went, and the members prayed, but the pain continued. He wanted to understand more about Jesus, whom Christians worshiped, but he found the pastor's words difficult to understand.

Then one day as he sat reading his Bible, some visitors knocked at his door. They saw his New Testament and asked him about his faith. Ganesan said he was searching for God and for healing from the pain that was destroying his life. The visitors offered to return and study the Bible with him, and Ganesan agreed.

As Ganesan and his sister Mohana studied their Bible, they realized they had wasted so much time and money worshipping idols that could not hear or speak or answer prayers. They removed the idols from their home and committed themselves to worship the only true God.

Mohana and Ganesan attended evangelistic meetings and were among the first to commit their lives to Christ in baptism. As Ganesan was immersed in baptism, he felt something touch him. Soon he realized that the pain in his cheek that had plagued him for months was gone.



Ganesan changed his name to Jacob, one who wrestled with God. He and his sister now share their faith and their testimonies with their neighbors and invite them to come and see that Jesus is the living, all-powerful God.

JACOB GANESAN (left). DASS KUMAR is a pastor in Chennai (Madras), India.