

Bi235 Old Testament 2

Lesson Bi235-20 David Sins with Bathsheba

Many Bible stories talk about marriage. In the creation story in the Book of Genesis, Adam and Eve were married—one man and one woman. The writer continued, “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gen 2:24, KJV). Centuries later, Moses predicted that Israel would be ruled by kings in the future. These Israelite kings were forbidden to have multiple wives. Having more than one wife was common in ancient times, in nations surrounding Israel. Ancient Israel’s greatest king, David, took multiple wives and endured chaos and sadness with his wives and children.

We are now considering the fifth period in David’s story, namely, his royal life at Jerusalem. David showed his faithfulness to Yahweh in religious matters. He reinstated the Ark of the Covenant to its central place in Israelite worship. He moved it to Jerusalem to encourage the perception that worship of Yahweh was at the center of the nation’s life. He planned to build a temple as a permanent house of worship. He encouraged worship through choirs, orchestras, and ceremonies. He blessed the people in the name of Yahweh. His public acts were praiseworthy.

On the other hand, his private life was anything but praiseworthy. His marriage to Michal, Saul’s daughter, was unhappy. In fact, Saul took her away from David and married her to another man. David married several times during his years on the run from Saul. Not satisfied, David showed his deep flaws of character in the story of Bathsheba, another man’s wife.

After years of leading his fighters in battle, David decided to stay in Jerusalem. He sent his soldiers to attack the capital city of the Ammonites, east of the Jordan River. One evening, from his palace, he noticed a woman bathing on the flat roof of her nearby house. He thought the woman was beautiful, and he sent a servant to find out about her. The servant said, “She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” Uriah was one of David’s soldiers, and was with the army fighting the Ammonites. Despite the commandment against adultery, David sent messengers to get her. She came to the palace and they slept together. Then she went back home.

Some weeks or months later, Bathsheba sent word to David, “I am pregnant.” Now David increased his sin by trying to conceal his sin (2Sam 11:1-5).

He wrote to General Joab, “Send Uriah the Hittite back to Jerusalem.”

When Uriah arrived at the palace, David talked with him. “How is General Joab doing?” David asked. “How are the soldiers? How is the siege of the city going?” Then David invited Uriah to go down to his house and stay with his wife, Bathsheba. David thought Uriah would want to be with his wife after months away at war. But Uriah didn’t go down to see his wife; instead, he slept at the entrance to David’s palace where David’s servants were housed.

In the morning, David’s servants told him, “Uriah did not go home.”

So David called Uriah to him and asked, “Haven’t you just come back from a military campaign? Why didn’t you go spend time with your wife?”

Uriah replied, “The ark and many people in northern and southern Israel are living in tents. My commander Joab and the king’s men are camped in open country, too. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? I will not do such a thing!”

David ordered him to stay in Jerusalem another day. He invited him for a big meal with lots of drink. After David got him drunk, he thought Uriah was certain to go home to be with Bathsheba. But again Uriah slept on a mat in the servants’ quarters; he did not go home.

David was frustrated; he had failed to get Uriah to go sleep with his wife. There was no way now to conceal his adultery with Bathsheba. He decided to sin even more. He wrote a message to Joab, and ordered Uriah to carry it back to the battle. The message said, “Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die.” Imagine Uriah carrying back to his commander a letter with his own death sentence!

Joab did exactly as David commanded. He put Uriah in a place where he knew the strongest defenders were stationed. When the enemy soldiers came out to fight, many Israelite soldiers were killed, including Uriah. Joab sent David a full account of the battle. Joab warned the messenger that David might become angry when he heard about the casualties. If David got angry, Joab told the messenger to say, “Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.”

After the messenger told David about the battle, David received the news calmly. He told the messenger to tell Joab not to be too upset. “The sword kills one as well as another,” he said. “Tell Joab to press the attack and destroy the city.”

When Uriah’s wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. After the time of mourning was over, David brought her to the palace, and she became his wife. Time passed and she gave birth to a son. But the thing David had done displeased Yahweh (2Sam 11:6-27).

This story is **important** as a warning that even kings make mistakes and sin. The stories in the Book of Judges also warned about leaders who do not obey God.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that no one is immune from temptation. David was idle and thus open to temptation. He didn’t guard his eyes and turn away from watching a woman wash herself. He began to lust after her. He abused his authority by sending for Bathsheba so he could seduce her. To conceal his adultery, he treated a faithful soldier, Uriah, shamefully. He even forced Joab to take part in his criminal cover-up. David’s crime stands out as one of the worst recorded in the Bible.

Let’s **review** this lesson—

1. What was the difference between David as a public figure and a private figure? [Pause]
A. If you said, “As a public figure David was an impressive leader, but in his private life with wives and children he experienced sin and sadness,” you are right.
2. How did David’s adultery with Bathsheba happen? [Pause]
A. If you answered, “David saw her bathing, found her to be desirable, sent for her, and slept with her,” you answered correctly.
3. When Bathsheba became pregnant, what did David do to conceal his sin? [Pause]

A. If you said, “He called Uriah back from the battlefield and tried to get him to spend time with his wife, but when that did not happen, he arranged for Uriah to be killed,” you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it at least three times. As you hear the story each time, see the events in your own mind. Then tell the story in your own words until you feel sure you are repeating the words and events correctly. You should spend at least 45 minutes in learning the story. Then share it with someone else. Discuss with them what David should have done differently.

The Bible clearly teaches that temptations can be resisted. Paul says, “God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). James says, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God, and he will come near to you” (James 4:7-8). Memorize these two verses and use them as you share the story of David and Bathsheba with others.