

Bi235 Old Testament 2

Lesson Bi235-21 The Prophet Nathan Rebukes David

When Israel was ruled by kings, Yahweh spoke to the kings through prophets. The prophets would speak to kings, and the kings would then lead the nation in obedience to Yahweh. This was God's plan, but people who disobeyed sometimes disrupted God's plan. You have seen how the prophet Samuel approved and later disapproved of King Saul. Samuel later anointed David to succeed Saul as king. Early in David's reign, the prophet Nathan spoke God's words of encouragement to David, as you learned in Lesson 19.

In today's lesson, we see a different side of the prophet. Remember the last line of Lesson 20, "But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD." The next line of Scripture says, "The LORD sent Nathan to David" (2Sam 12:1). Nathan proceeded to tell David a story. This story was meant to bring David to repentance.

"There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

"Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him."

When he heard this, David burned with anger. "As surely as the LORD lives," he said to Nathan, "this man must die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."

Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master's house to you. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own' (2Sam 12:1-10).

Through Nathan God also promised disaster within David's family. "You did this in secret, but someone in your own family will abuse your wives in broad daylight. And you will watch it happen, and not be able to stop it."

What happened next reveals the character of David. As a powerful ruler, he could have silenced Nathan on the spot—perhaps by killing him. But he did not. Instead he repented. "I have sinned against the LORD," he said to Nathan. These few words of repentance were probably accompanied by deep remorse and perhaps even tears.

Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because your actions have shown contempt for the LORD, the son born to you [and Bathsheba] will die."

After Nathan had gone home, the child born to David and Bathsheba became ill. David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and spent the nights lying in sackcloth on the ground. These actions were to emphasize his repentance and grief before God. His ministers tried to get him to get up and eat, but David refused.

Seven days later the child died. David noticed that his attendants were whispering among themselves, and he realized the child was dead. “Is the child dead?” he asked.

“Yes,” they replied, “he is dead.”

Then David got up from the ground. He washed, put on lotions, and changed his clothes. He went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house and ate some food.

His attendants asked him, “Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!”

David answered, “While the child was alive, I thought, ‘Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live.’ But now that he is dead, why should I go on fasting? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me” (2Sam 12:11-23).

Some time passed while David comforted Bathsheba on the death of their son. Later, she bore another son to David, and they named him Solomon. The LORD loved this child, and sent word through Nathan the prophet that he should be called ‘Jedidiah’ which means ‘loved by the LORD.’

This story is **important** because it teaches that no one, not even a powerful king, is above God’s law. God was with David in his successes, but also held him accountable for his failures.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that even secret sins will sometime be revealed. God used Nathan to reveal to David that God was aware of what he had done. God held David and Bathsheba accountable for their sin. In response, David repented. He did not try to justify his sin.

Let’s **review** this lesson—

1. How did Yahweh guide Israel’s kings? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, “Yahweh sent prophets to counsel the kings according to his directions,” you are correct.
2. Why did Nathan tell David a story about a rich man and a poor man? [Pause]
 - A. If you answered, “Nathan’s story was directed by God to convict David of his sin with Bathsheba,” you answered correctly.
3. What were the consequences of God’s judgment on David’s sins? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, “The child born of his adultery died, and God promised disaster within his family,” you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it at least three times, until you can tell the story in your own words. Then re-tell it until you feel sure you are repeating the words and actions correctly. You should spend at least 45 minutes in learning the story.

Psalm 51 is David's prayer of repentance. "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin....Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me" (Ps 51:1-2, 10-12). Ask God to show you whether or not you need to pray David's prayer.

Tell the story of Nathan and David to your group of believers or at least to one other person. Assure them that when they repent, God is faithful to forgive their sins and to cleanse them.