

2 SAMUEL 5–7; 11–12

Historical Context

Upon Saul's death, the land is in turmoil. The people of Judah and the people of Israel are divided. David is anointed king of Judah (the southern region of the land). Abner, the captain of Saul's army, makes Saul's son Ish-boshet (Ishbosheth) the king of Israel (the land north of Jerusalem). Ish-boshet is betrayed and killed by his captains, and David rises in power.

2 Samuel 5:1–3

According to 2 Samuel 3:17–19, Abner, the captain of Saul's army, had prepared the elders of Israel to accept David as their king. Without a king, these elders functioned as tribal leaders, seeking out the best interests of their people. Their place of meeting was in Hebron,¹ where the Lord had previously commanded David to gather with his men and which had become his home and capital (2 Samuel 2:1, 3, 11; 3:2). David was chosen because of his familial ties and divine calling and because he was a military leader (see Deuteronomy 17:15; 1 Samuel 18:30).

Although the quote by the Lord in 2 Samuel 5:2 is not recorded in any other passage of scripture, it does reflect a principle of leadership: that of leaders as shepherds.² In the Gospel of John, Jesus Christ gave similar

¹ Hebron means “association” or “alliance,” which is fitting for the situation. However, some have attempted to identify Hebron as the city of the Habiru, a group of mercenaries with whom David and the Hebrews have been associated. See J. W. Jack, *The Date of the Exodus: In the Light of External Evidence* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017), 146.

² This is a common theme in the ancient Near East. See J. Scott Duval and J. Daniel Hays, eds., *The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 2020), 280.

instructions to Peter after His Resurrection: “Feed my sheep” (John 21:15–17). Jeremiah would also prophesy of the coming pastors who would feed with “knowledge and understanding” (Jeremiah 3:15).

In the Old Testament, three roles were accompanied by anointings: those of prophet, priest, and king.³ Before, David had been anointed by the prophet Samuel (see 1 Samuel 16:12–13), and now he is anointed by the elders of Israel.

2 Samuel 5:4–5

These two verses do not appear in the Dead Sea Scrolls,⁴ documents from a much later period in Israel’s history. This may mean they were a later addition to the text. Seven years (of David’s reign in Hebron) plus thirty-three years (of his reign in Jerusalem) is forty. David’s reign of forty years is an ideal number as seen throughout the Bible.

2 Samuel 5:6–10

Despite the support given to him by the tribes of Israel, King David approached Jerusalem with “his men.” These men were loyal to David and had accompanied him on other endeavors (see 2 Samuel 23:8–39). Their target was Jerusalem,⁵ the Jebusite city. In the Table of Nations, found in Genesis 10, the Jebusites are associated with Sidon and the Hitites⁶ (Heth) in the north (Genesis 10:15–16).

This may have been a politically neutral decision. Jerusalem is directly between the lands of Judah and Israel,⁷ which up to this point in Saul and David’s story have been presented as two separate entities.⁸ Before its conquest, it was neither under Judahite nor Israelite rule. By establishing Jerusalem as a capital, David was wisely staying neutral between the southern and northern territories.

The end of verse 6 is meant to be an insult. The Jebusites were claiming that they could protect their city from David with their injured or lame. In contrast, David’s defeat of the Jebusites was rather swift. Zion

3 See 1 Kings 19:16; Exodus 28:41; 1 Samuel 15:1.

4 4QSama. These verses are also missing from 1 Chronicles 11. See A. Graeme Auld, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 394, ft 4a.

5 Jerusalem is mentioned in early documents, for example the Ebla archives (around 2500 BC), execration texts from Egypt (nineteenth century BC), and the Amarna letters (fourteenth century BC). See Tony W. Cartledge, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2001), 412.

6 This will become an important factor in the Uriah and Bathsheba story (2 Samuel 11).

7 Jerusalem was in the land allotted to Benjamin. See Joshua 18:28.

8 See 1 Samuel 17:52; 18:16; 2 Samuel 11:11; 21:2, 24:1.

was the name of the stronghold or fortress believed to have been at the top of the hill. In the future, the location for the Zion fortress would become the temple grounds (see Isaiah 8:18; Psalm 74:2). David named the city, or a portion of it, after himself, communicating his dominance. The “gutter,” or water shaft, that dates to the time of David has not been discovered.

2 Samuel 5:11–12

Tyre is located in the north, on the coast of the Mediterranean. The people of Tyre were merchants by trade, having access to the sea. As David grew in power and the tribes became more united, Hiram the king found favor with David. Sending his builders and materials may imply that Hiram was creating an alliance between the kingdoms. The same alliance will show its fruits in Solomon’s story (see 1 Kings 5). David only perceived the Lord’s support after other nations (like Tyre) acknowledged his kingdom. This should not be understood as a lack of faith on David’s part. It is very human to desire tangible evidence of a promised blessing. Moreover, David’s perception was precise because he knew that his kingdom had been established not for him but “for his people Israel’s sake.” This knowledge of the Lord’s support will diminish in David’s future.

2 Samuel 5:13–16

Anciently men of power (like kings) would show their power with how many women (concubines or wives) they could support financially. In other words, now that David’s power had grown through his alliance with Tyre, David’s kingdom and family would expand. Deuteronomy 17:17 mandates that a king shall not “multiply wives to himself,” but David was apparently unaware of such a statement.⁹ It was not until the seventh century BC, two hundred years in the future, that priests and scribes under King Josiah rediscovered laws that resemble Deuteronomy (2 Kings 22:8).

The genealogy in the Gospel of Luke shows Mary’s line through Nathan (Luke 3:31), whereas the genealogy in the Gospel of Matthew shows how Joseph descended from Solomon (Matthew 1:6).

2 Samuel 5:17–21

In 1 Samuel 27, the Philistines had every reason to believe that David worked for them under what is often called a vassal treaty. When they saw David grow in power as king of all of Israel, their immediate

⁹ The redaction of Deuteronomy 17 is generally understood to have been in the seventh to sixth centuries BC. See Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2007), 139–140.

response was to seek David for answers. The text says they approached the man David, not the new kingdom. The Philistines may have believed that David was still a rogue warrior. Having been recently taken, Jerusalem may not have been a fortified city yet. This may explain the Philistine's sudden maneuver to the area. David heard of this plan, implying that he had a strong communication system. As a military leader, he immediately moved to the stronghold. David's engagements with Philistines (and also with Saul) had prepared him as a military leader. The Philistines, being to the west of Jerusalem on the coast of the Mediterranean, drew near to the Valley of Rephaim, which is southwest of Jerusalem.

Despite his preparation, David did not forget the Lord. Not only did David resort to prayer but he knew how to recognize the Lord's voice. We see a similar expression of faith with Captain Moroni and Alma (see Alma 43:23–24). With God's reply that Israel would prevail, David made war against and killed the Philistines and attributes the victory to the Lord. In the past, the Philistines had taken the ark from Israel (see 1 Samuel 4:11). However, now David burned the Philistine idols that had been left behind.

2 Samuel 5:22–25

The Philistines returned and employed the same strategy as before—that is, they used the Valley of Rephaim as a vantage point. It would have been tempting for David to rely on the previous instructions and to attack head-on. Nevertheless, David prayed to the Lord and received new directions. David was to stay behind the trees to wait for a sign. The Israelites' dependence on God's sign (the sound of wind rushing through leaves) required that David not rely on his own talent. The Lord was in control. Upon hearing the sign, David's soldiers were to rush in for the attack. By waiting on the Lord and attacking only when instructed, they were able to push the Philistines back to their own land in Gazer. Jesus Christ taught in John 3:8 that listening to the Spirit is like listening to the wind because you never know where it will come from.

2 Samuel 6:1–5

With a new capital at the center of the northern and southern territories, the next step was to make Jerusalem the religious center of the kingdom. Baale of Judah may be the same location as Kirjath-jearim, where the ark had last been deposited.¹⁰ The ark often represents the presence of the Lord (1 Samuel 4:21–22) and is connected to temple imagery (see Exodus 25:22). The “new cart” to transport the ark reflects language from other passages. In Genesis 2:5, the reader is told that “there was not a man to till the ground” in the garden temple. This was a new plot of land, and no one had been there before. At the end of the Gospel of John, there is another garden—“in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid” (John 19:41).

¹⁰ 1 Samuel 6:21. See also Joshua 15:9, 60.

This was a procession, attested in surrounding cultures,¹¹ perhaps comparable to the modern cultural celebrations before a temple dedication.¹² As today, music and dancing were part of David's celebration.

2 Samuel 6:6–11

Although the location of Nachon's threshing floor has been lost to history, its mention may indicate what time of year this ceremony took place. Threshing floors were used after the harvest for separating grain from straw. Symbolically, the act of separating wheat (grain) from chaff (straw) has been compared to the day of judgment. After describing the authority of Jesus Christ and how the baptism He performs by the Holy Spirit is compared to fire, John the Baptist stated, "[His] fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12). John drew a distinction between his water baptism and Jesus's mightier baptism by fire (implying Jesus had a higher priesthood authority). This passage in 2 Samuel 6 shows a similar motif, and the reader also learns of authority. Uzzah was most likely a Levite who was only authorized to transport, not touch, the ark.¹³ This language has been used in modern times to address the issue of overstepping one's authority (see Doctrine and Covenants 85:8).

David's displeasure can be compared to Aaron's attitude when his sons were killed (see Leviticus 10).

Afraid, David took the ark to the house of Obed-edom. Although this could be a name (compare to Obediah), this is most likely a title meaning "servant or priest of Edom." The text does not elaborate on this individual. Here he is called a Gittite (see also 1 Chronicles 13:13). However, a later text has included him among the Levites (1 Chronicles 15:18, 21, 24). Being a servant of Edom, a place with which the Lord is associated in multiple passages, may have permitted Obed-edom to house the ark.¹⁴

2 Samuel 6:12–16

This was a joyous experience; the kingdom and place of sacrifice had been centralized in Jerusalem (see Deuteronomy 12:13–14). As part of this ceremonial procession, David performed sacrifices after every six paces and was "girded with a linen ephod" (2 Samuel 6:14). Sacrifices and the donning of the ephod were generally understood to be performed only by the Levites (see Exodus 28:4). However, priesthood

11 See J. Scott Duval and J. Daniel Hays, eds. *The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 2020), 281.

12 See Mindy Raye Holmes "Celebrating Temples around the World," *New Era*, April 2011, 29.

13 See Numbers 4:15; Deuteronomy 31:9; Joshua 3:3, 6; 1 Chronicles 15:14–15.

14 See Deuteronomy 33:2; Judges 5:4–5; Habakkuk 3:3.

and its functions have been associated with other tribes also. Samuel of Ephraim had become the high priest of the tabernacle (see 1 Samuel 1:1–2, 20), and both Lehi and Sariah of Manasseh offered “sacrifice and burnt offerings unto the Lord.”¹⁵ Later, in priestly fashion, David “washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped” (2 Samuel 12:20). It is possible that as king, David had the priesthood of the kingly priests like Melchizedek¹⁶.

David’s dancing upset his wife Michal. Although we cannot know the exact reason, culture can draw more light to the situation. Large ceremonies throughout Mesopotamia and Egypt were often accompanied by dancing, usually done by many female dancers. The root of the verb translated as “danced” and “dancing” and its cognates in other languages imply heavy hand and arm movement. Perhaps Michal believed this type of rejoicing was inappropriate for the present crowd.¹⁷

Even though “oxen and fatlings”¹⁸ as sacrifices are not mentioned in the sacrifice laws in Exodus through Deuteronomy, the priesthood function of offering these animals involved both women and men. That women were involved in this practice may have been a remnant of a higher law (compare Leviticus 7:6–10).

2 Samuel 6:17–19

David was clearly in charge of this priestly event. Although he certainly was not the only one to have “pitched” the tabernacle, this action is attributed to him. Just as David performed the burnt and peace offerings, he also participated in setting up the tabernacle. David is indirectly shown to have had greater priesthood than Uzzah the Levite.

Sacrifices are a demonstration of the people’s commitment to the Lord. David’s priesthood response was to bless the people, acting with authority “in the name of the Lord” (2 Samuel 6:18).

2 Samuel 6:20–23

On David’s dancing and Michal’s reaction, see comment on verse 16.

There are few instances in scripture when the interactions between a wife and husband are narrated. These should be gleaned for lessons. David believed his actions were correct and justified before the Lord.

¹⁵ 1 Nephi 5:1, 9. See also 1 Nephi 5:14; Alma 10:4.

¹⁶ See Genesis 14:18. See also 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10.

¹⁷ See 2 Samuel 6:20. See also John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *Comentario del contexto cultural de la Biblia: Antiguo Testamento* (El Paso, TX: Editorial Mundo Hispano, 2004), 364–365.

¹⁸ The terms in Hebrew are not associated with Levitical sacrifices.

His response to his spouse may be interpreted as forceful, stating his calling and his understanding of a positive response from the “maidservants.” David did not concede to his wife’s concerns.

An opposite interaction is found in the Book of Mormon. When the children of Sariah and Lehi did not return when expected, she “complained against [Lehi], telling him that he was a *visionary man*” (1 Nephi 5:2; emphasis added). Lehi’s response demonstrates how well he had listened to her, offering a reflection on her words. He began by saying, “I know that I am a *visionary man*,” and proceeded to address her concerns in a positive light (1 Nephi 5:4; emphasis added). By using Sariah’s own language, he acknowledged her concerns. David did not do this: “And I will be yet more vile than thus” (2 Samuel 6:22).

2 Samuel 7:1–3

The concept of rest as presented in this passage is paralleled word-for-word in Deuteronomy 12:10. After establishing Jerusalem and being free from war, David could direct his resources toward a new goal. At this point, David was beginning to form his own court, evidenced by the prophet Nathan, not mentioned before. Notice how the prophet was also “in his house.” David’s desires were good, and he built a dwelling place for the ark. Nathan apparently agreed with David but did not consult the Lord. David and Nathan may have become complacent as peace was reached, believing the Lord would be behind all of their decisions. By the end of the chapter, David was motivated to pray (2 Samuel 7:27).

2 Samuel 7:4–11

When the Lord spoke to Nathan that night, He gave the prophet a historical recap of the tabernacle and of David’s journey. This is common when the Lord speaks to his servants.¹⁹

The recap focuses on David. His receiving “a great name” refers back to the people at the tower of Babel, who wanted to make themselves a name or reputation (see Genesis 11:4). David’s blessing would last and have eternal consequences for everyone. The tower of Babel fell and would never be raised again. On the other hand, the Lord promised David that he would have a house, a family, and descendants.

2 Samuel 7:12–17

In this passage, the Lord is more specific. This promise deals with the Messiah, who would come through the line of David. He would come from the “bowel” of David (Matthew 1:1) and would establish a kingdom (John 18:36). Solomon, son of David, would build a house (a temple; 1 Kings 9:1), but his throne would

¹⁹ See Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 32:8–10; Hosea 9:10.

not last forever. The body of Jesus Christ would be the temple (John 2:19–22), and He will be the temple during the Millennium (Revelation 21:22). Despite Solomon’s being mentioned in 2 Samuel 5:14, he would not be born until 2 Samuel 12:24.

The Lord portrayed Himself as a father to David’s son. The book of Hebrews attributes this language typologically to Jesus Christ. Here, regarding David, the message retains its impact. Saul had not received this promise from the Lord (1 Samuel 9:16–17). Even though Saul had a direct connection with Samuel, his house, offspring, or kingdom did not receive any special blessings. Yet for David, a father’s support would not come without its stipulations: “I will chasten him with the rod of men.” Disobedience among the promised Davidic line was not to be exonerated because of genealogy. When Jerusalem was destroyed, Jeremiah wrote, “I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath” (Lamentations 3:1). Judah, the tribe of the Davidic promise, did not escape unscathed.

2 Samuel 7:18–29

Learning that he would not be building a house for the Lord, David entered the temporary tabernacle for the ark (see 2 Samuel 6:17). The phrase to go “before the Lord” has consistently been employed for forms of worship in the tabernacle sanctuary.²⁰

While in the tabernacle sanctuary, David openly expressed his gratitude and humility. In the past, Saul simply said, “Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel?” (1 Samuel 9:21). David, however, expressed his gratitude for particular blessings: his house (family)—both presently and in the future—God’s sovereignty, God’s singularity, Israel, its redemption, God’s goodness, and so forth. In addition, having heard the Lord (through Nathan) rehearse the story of Egypt, David repeated it, perhaps to “remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men” (Moroni 10:3).

2 Samuel 11:1

The purpose of this verse is to paint a picture. David had been known as a military leader who stood and fought by his soldiers (1 Samuel 18:7). Spring was the start of the Israelite new year, and since it was no longer cold out, it was also the time for kings to “go forth to battle.” However, Israel’s king had not done so. Instead, David sent Joab, the commander of the army (2 Samuel 8:16). Joab and the servants were victorious over the Ammonites while David stayed at home without any task to do. This is very different from what the Lord instructs in Doctrine and Covenants 58:27—that is, to be “anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of [our] own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness.” We find a

²⁰ See Exodus 28:29–30; Numbers 16:40; 17:7. See also 2 Samuel 12:20.

positive example of this in Enoch. The Spirit of the Lord descended upon Enoch, and the Lord spoke to him as he “journeyed in the land, among the people” (Moses 6:26). The Lord inspires His disciples when they are actively serving Him and their neighbors.

2 Samuel 11:2–5

Not having gone to war, David began to pace on the rooftop in the evening. Only he was on a roof; it is important to notice that the text does not say that Bath-sheba was on a roof. In other words, she was not purposefully displaying herself to the king. The detail of her bathing herself serves two purposes. First, she was exposed to David’s gaze. The verb “to see” and the adjective “beautiful” in verse 2 are the same in the original language as those used in Genesis 3:6. Whereas Eve had *seen* what was *good* for her future, David *saw* what is *good/beautiful* only for his personal lust. Second, in an ancient culture that didn’t have the practice of bathing regularly, what Bath-sheba was doing can be understood as a purification bath. In Leviticus 15:19–24, women are told to bathe (the same verb) after their menstrual cycle. In other words, the narrator is indirectly telling the reader that Bath-sheba was not and could not have been pregnant at this time. Notice how David was able to “lay with her” because she had already been “purified from her uncleanness.”

David never left his house. He sent messengers who took Bath-sheba to David, and later she returned alone to her home. The verb “to take” can also be translated as “take away,” which may resolve a long-standing question of interpretation. The Doctrine and Covenants states that “David’s wives and concubines were given unto him of me, by the hand of Nathan, my servant,” adding that “in none of these things did he sin against me save in the case of Uriah and his wife” (Doctrine and Covenants 132:39). In the Book of Mormon, Jacob taught that “David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord” (Jacob 2:24). Some detractors have seen this as a contradiction. However, Doctrine and Covenants 132 is consistent with 2 Samuel 12:8, where the prophet Nathan does say that the Lord had given David his wives. Jacob’s statement should not be isolated. When comparing the Nephites’ sin to David’s abomination, the Lord is quoted as saying that the people should not “lead away captive the daughters of my people because of their tenderness” (Jacob 2:33). This can be interpreted as an indirect description of what David had done with Bath-sheba. David took or lead away Bath-sheba because of her beauty (see also 2 Samuel 12:10). Therefore, both Doctrine and Covenants and Jacob are consistent in that “in none of these things did he sin against me save in the case of Uriah and his wife” (Doctrine and Covenants 132:39).

2 Samuel 11:6–13

David became darker and darker in his machinations. Once David sent for Uriah, he asked a question, but he did not appear to care about its answer. David demanded to know about Joab and the army, but

Uriah's response is not recorded. The narrative quickly moves to David's command for Uriah to spend time at home with his wife. We are not told whether Uriah ever gave an answer. David either spoke before Uriah could respond or did not bother in assessing Uriah's response.

Uriah proved to be more righteous than David. The king had not gone to battle, preferring to stay home (verse 1). Uriah, on the other hand, did not want to go to his home because the ark, his commander, and the army were out on the battlefield. In fact, Uriah spent the night with the "all the servants of his lord." One might expect these to be David's servants. However, Uriah clearly stated that his lord was Joab, implying these were servants of Joab. These servants would have been the army's reserves or those injured in battle who were sent back to the city, meaning that Uriah stayed with the soldiers despite being so near to his own home. His words thunder a dark reality: "As thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing" (verse 11). He testified or made an oath on David's life and soul that he would not be selfish. His selfless service would bring about his death, and David would remain alive.

2 Samuel 11:14–17

David made Uriah carry the letter that would betray him and result in his own death. The command to Joab was to send Uriah in front of the worst section of the battle, only to retreat and leave him to die alone. Yet, he was not the only one to die; the others who died were not simply "servants of David" but were the "valiant men" (verses 16–17). Although two distinct terms in the original language, these valiant servants were most likely David's "mighty men," or personal army. In 2 Samuel 23, Uriah is also specifically identified as one of David's mighty men (23:8, 39). David had sunk to the level of killing his personal army, men he knew well, in order to justify his illegitimate relationship with Bath-sheba.

2 Samuel 11:18–21

As the commander of the army, Joab reported to the king the state of the war, and his comparison here of David to Abimelech was precise. Although he told the messenger to be prepared for David's response, his description highlights David's sin. The story of Abimelech can be found in Judges 9. Abimelech had gotten too close to the city wall, and a woman threw a millstone on his head (Judges 9:50–57). Likewise because of a woman, David commanded the army to make a rash decision, causing the death of his valiant soldiers. In addition, the discerning Joab knew that ultimately David only wanted to know whether Uriah was still alive.

2 Samuel 11:22–25

The messenger gave David Joab's report, describing the intensity of the battle. He reported to David that the "king's servants" also perished. Although speaking to Joab (through the messenger), David's reply is practically placating his own moral dilemma. He told Joab that it shouldn't displease him that Uriah and the others died, "for the sword devoureth one as well as another" (verse 25). Finally, he encouraged the army to remain in the battle while he stayed back in the comfort of his home.

2 Samuel 11:26–27

The text does not reveal whether Bath-sheba ever knew how and why her husband was killed. Mourning is the natural process of loss. She had not only lost her husband but also her past circumstances. Her life and position in society would change from this point forward.

Almost waiting for her to stop mourning, just as he had waited for her to be purified from her uncleanness (verse 4), David sent for her. Again, David did not leave his house. Although David decided to bring Bath-sheba into the royal house to raise their child there, the Lord was still displeased with David's previous actions.

2 Samuel 12:1–6

Nathan had not been a part of the previous story, meaning that his knowledge of David's actions was certainly revealed to him by the Lord. The case study he presented is fitting, whether these were actual events or a pedagogical parable. The rich man had many flocks and herds; David's wives, concubines, and children had been enumerated in 2 Samuel 5:13–16. The poor man only had one lamb; the narrator only describes one wife for Uriah, and there is no mention of his having children. Notwithstanding the lack of detail regarding Bath-sheba's relationship with her husband, the fact that she mourned her loss communicates a strong bond (11:26). David, on the other hand, had been involved in a dispute with one of his wives in a previous story, implying the lack of any true relationship with her (see 6:20–23). Also, just as the rich man in the story provided for the traveler (who was not a member of his own household), so too David loved his friend Jonathan, whereas it is never said that he loved any of his wives.²¹

In anger, David demanded the harshest of punishments for the rich man: death. Restoration was due "fourfold" (Exodus 22:1). Unfortunately, Uriah could not be restored, and David's injustice was exposed.

²¹ See 1 Samuel 20:15, 17; 2 Samuel 1:26.

2 Samuel 12:7–14

Nathan boldly revealed to David that he was the rich man from the story. David offered no response and was dead silent. Nathan continued with words directly from the Lord recounting the king's history of blessings. David had been anointed and protected from Saul, and he had received Saul's house (see note on 2 Samuel 11:2–5) and been placed over the house of Israel and of Judah. Nathan also included David's shortcomings, revealing to him that he could not escape divine justice: "The sword shall never depart from thine house" (12:10). Again, the concept of *taking* Uriah's wife is repeated (see 11:4; compare Jacob 2:33).

Although David had sinned in secret (and kept Bath-sheba's pregnancy from Uriah), David would be humiliated before all Israel. In the ancient world men of power could provide for bigger families—that is, more wives. To lose one's wives was to lose one's power. As the story progresses, one of David's sons would do this very thing, usurping power and taking his father's wives (2 Samuel 16:21–22). When that day would come, David would be powerless.

David responded with a repentant declaration, acknowledging his error. However, his condemnation of the rich man in Nathan's story would come back to haunt him. In verse 5 of this chapter, David had spouted that the rich man "shall surely die." Though David would live, the Lord declares that the child from Bath-sheba "shall surely die" (verse 14).

2 Samuel 12:15–23

The narrator often states his position. After Nathan departed David's quarters in the house, the narrator continues to identify Bath-sheba as "Uriah's wife."

At this point, David had developed a relationship with the child and his mother. When the child became sick, David handed himself over to God in prayer and fasting. Elders on their own initiative went to offer support, but David was not responsive. When the child died after seven days, the elders were afraid to approach David. Although David was guilty of this displeasing behavior, after fasting for several days he was able to perceive and discern that the baby died. In other words, his sudden dedication to prayer and fasting had not changed the foretold results.

David's subsequent actions in the tabernacle may reflect his kingly priesthood. David washed, was anointed, changed his clothes, and went to God's house—that is, the tabernacle (see 2 Samuel 6:17). Notwithstanding the Levites' monopoly on sacerdotal privileges, David was allowed to participate in this ritual washing and anointing in priestly fashion.

2 Samuel 12:24–25

After the death of the child, David stepped up to his role as a husband. He comforted Bath-sheba—different from the David who would send for and send away Bath-sheba depending on his desire (see 2 Samuel 11:4, 27). Notwithstanding the rough start of this relationship, David and Bath-sheba’s next child, Solomon, was loved by the Lord, which is the meaning of the name David gave him (that is, Jedidiah). Solomon, on a certain level, is a type for Christ. Solomon was loved, and Jesus is the “beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

2 Samuel 12:26–31

Joab had not skipped a beat or had a break. The entire time David had been dealing with personal matters, Joab was on the battlefield. Rabbah was the capital of the Ammonites, and the defeated “city of waters” is certainly a reference to a city by the Jabbok River (compare Numbers 21:24). In his humility, Joab camped outside the capital so that his name was not attributed to the victory. David then came and took the city as if he was the great war hero. He took the Ammonite king’s crown, wore it upon his head as if he alone was responsible for the victory, and proceeded to slaughter the people. He expressed no gratitude to Joab for his diligence and strategic agility.

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