

Exegetical Notes – 2 Samuel 11:1-27

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2 Samuel 11:1-27

Verse 1

¹ In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

- See chapter 10:7. This chapter could be a continuation of the story told in chapter 10. While the army of Israel was in the field facing Israel's enemy, David remained at home safe in his palace. If this is not a continuation of the story from chapter 10, staying at home when the army faced Israel's enemy seems to have become David's practice.
- No matter which is the case, David is not where he should be. When the army is in the field facing the enemy, the king should be with them. By staying at home, David was rejecting his responsibility as Israel's king.

Verses 2-5

² One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, ³ and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite." ⁴ Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. ⁵ The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

- Unable to sleep, David went out on the roof of the palace to enjoy the night. In our time, we would say that he went out on his roof deck.
- From the palace roof, he saw a woman bathing. As houses did not have internal plumbing, the bath tub was often kept on the roof.
- The problem here is that when David saw what his eyes should not have seen, he did not turn away. He continued to watch the woman bathing and he enjoyed the sight.

- He then called his servant to find out who the woman was. He learned that she was named Bathsheba, was the daughter of a prominent Jew, and was married to Uriah. Uriah was not a Jew, but had risen to prominence in David's army. He was, in fact, a soldier in David's army and was where he should be, away with the army fighting Israel's enemies.
- David then sent messengers to bring Bathsheba to the palace. Remember that David was the king and that Bathsheba was a soldier's wife. She was compelled to respond to the king's summons.
- But she had sex with him, which she was not compelled to do! In so doing, both she and he broke the law of Moses.
- She had just had her monthly period and was in the time of purification required by the Law of Moses following it (see Leviticus 15:18). Sex was forbidden during this time. Therefore, the Law of Moses was not broken once, but twice.
- Bathsheba was a willing participant in all this, not David's victim.
- After having sex with David, she went home as if nothing had happened between her and the king.
- When she discovered that she was pregnant, she sent word of the fact to David that she had conceived.
- It is important to note how David got into this situation. First, he was not where he should have been. Second, he neglected his duty. Third, he allowed his eyes to see what he should not see and did not look away. Fourth, he inquired into what he should have left alone. Fifth, he gave way to his lust and did what he should not have done (see James 1:14-15). Death will be the consequence of David's sin with Bathsheba.

Verses 6-9

⁶ So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent him to David. ⁷ When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. ⁸ Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. ⁹ But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house.

- When David heard that Bathsheba was pregnant, he sent word to Joab, the commander of Israel's army to send Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, to him.
- David pretended that he wanted news of how the army was doing in the field, but his real intention was to cover up his sin. He sent Uriah home to

“uncover his feet.” He sent Uriah home, assuming that Uriah would sleep with his wife. Then she could pass off her child as that of her husband.

- However, Uriah did not do as David had told him to do; he slept at the entrance to the palace among David’s servants. He did not go to his house. He did not sleep with his wife. There were witnesses to this fact. Uriah believed that his place was with the soldiers in the field, so he did what he thought was honorable.
- David’s plans to cover up his sin, did not work.

Verses 10-13

¹⁰ David was told, “Uriah did not go home.” So he asked Uriah, “Haven’t you just come from a military campaign? Why didn’t you go home?”

¹¹ Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord’s men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!”

¹² Then David said to him, “Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. ¹³ At David’s invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master’s servants; he did not go home.

- When David learned that his plan had failed, he called Uriah in and asked him why he had not gone to his home.
- Uriah explained that his place was in the field with the army and that it would be dishonorable for him to do what David had suggested he do.
- But David did not give up. He kept Uriah in Jerusalem and got him drunk hoping to weaken Uriah’s resolution.
- But Uriah did not go home and sleep with Bathsheba. David’s plan failed.

Verses 14-15

¹⁴ In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. ¹⁵ In it he wrote, “Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die.”

- David then sent Uriah back to the army with a note to Joab. The note told Joab to see to it that Uriah died in battle. Uriah carried his own death sentence to Joab.

Verses 16-17

¹⁶ So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were. ¹⁷ When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died.

- David had ordered Uriah's murder. Joab obeyed David's orders and Uriah was killed in battle.
- Death was the result of David's sin. But it was the innocent Uriah who died!

Verses 18-21

¹⁸ Joab sent David a full account of the battle. ¹⁹ He instructed the messenger: "When you have finished giving the king this account of the battle, ²⁰ the king's anger may flare up, and he may ask you, 'Why did you get so close to the city to fight? Didn't you know they would shoot arrows from the wall?' ²¹ Who killed Abimelek son of Jerub-Besheth? Didn't a woman drop an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you get so close to the wall?' If he asks you this, then say to him, 'Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.'"

- Joab then sent a message to David about the battle in which Uriah had died. He warned the messenger that David might get angry because of the questionable military tactic Joab had used in the battle. If it was the case that David grew angry, the messenger was to tell the king that Uriah had died in the battle.

Verses 22-24

²² The messenger set out, and when he arrived he told David everything Joab had sent him to say. ²³ The messenger said to David, "The men overpowered us and came out against us in the open, but we drove them back to the entrance of the city gate. ²⁴ Then the archers shot arrows at your servants from the wall, and some of the king's men died. Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead."

- The messenger did not wait to see the king's reaction to the news of the battle. He quickly told the king that Uriah was dead.

Verse 25

²⁵ David told the messenger, "Say this to Joab: 'Don't let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it.' Say this to encourage Joab."

- David told the messenger to tell Joab not to worry. All was well. He told Joab to press the battle and to destroy the city.

Verses 26-27

²⁶ When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. ²⁷ After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the Lord.

- After mourning the death of her husband, Bathsheba was brought into David's house as one of his wives. She then gave birth to a son. Everyone assumed that the child was the son of Uriah. David assumed that the matter was successfully covered up and that no one would know the truth. But, God knew what David had done and He was displeased.
- Additionally, Joab knew that David had ordered Uriah killed.

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