

links Russia and Rome. This is important, because previous chapters of Daniel (2, 7, 8 and 9) foretell that Rome will be on the world stage at the time of the end. Moscow has been called the 'Third Rome', the second Rome being Constantinople. The "Michael" of Daniel 12:1 is discussed, as is the "time of trouble" of verse 2. The time periods in chapter 12 also receive attention on page 67, and the reader is referred to Brother Green's book for other possible interpretations.

Brother Lewis ends with a fine summary, "The message of Daniel". What a wonderful man Daniel was—a sojourner in a strange country, whose faith raised him to great heights, and who was privileged to be given the broad sweep of God's plan for the earth, centred on the sacrifice of the Lord

Jesus! What a fine example he and his friends are, for did not Daniel "[purpose] in his heart" not to eat of the king's food, just as centuries later his Messiah and Lord "stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Lk. 9:51) and the death of the cross?

This book deserves to be read widely, especially by the younger members of our Brotherhood, who will truly find it a study *guide*. It will also help to consolidate and refresh those who have studied Daniel before, and they can be assured that they will not have to struggle with terms like the "Greco-Roman dragon" and the "Latino-Greek power in its pagan constitution"! Brother Michael is to be thanked for all the work he has put into writing this book and making Daniel so accessible to a new generation of Bible students.

# David and Bathsheba

## A case study in repentance

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*The Divine record of David's life illustrates both the triumph of faith and the depths of iniquity. Each aspect is presented to teach those who come after. In this incident we learn that repentance and confession are essential for forgiveness. Given that response, God is very gracious to forgive.*

**B**IBLE HISTORY is not just a record of historical facts; it is a record designed to instruct us in the way of life. For that reason it does not idolise individuals, but presents their positive and their negative attributes for our exhortation. David is a great and faithful character, beloved of God, but he was also flawed, and we can learn from his errors just as we can learn from his successes.

### **Temptations and failure**

In 2 Samuel 10 and 11, when David went to war against the Ammonites after they spurned his grace, he committed a heinous act against an innocent man in an effort to cover up his own iniquity. 2 Samuel 11 records David's sin with Bathsheba. It is a bald and stark record of iniquity. David's failure starts in the very first verse, when, rather

than engaging wholeheartedly in the work of God, he allowed others to go forth while he tarried behind:

"And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the

children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem. And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bath-sheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house. And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child" (vv. 1-5).

Here is "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 Jno. 2:16) at work

in David.<sup>4</sup> Idleness so often is the precursor to evil. Bathsheba's husband was away fighting the battle that David should have been overseeing, and the consequence of their indulgence is the conception of a child. Uriah, a Gentile, acted more faithfully than the anointed of the Lord. When David was unable to convince Uriah to be reunited with his wife so that it might be assumed he was the father of the child Bathsheba was carrying, David decided to do away with him. When Uriah returned to the battle David arranged for Joab to place Uriah in a perilous position before Ammon. This was a grievous mistake in two ways:

- first, it was a grave moral mistake because it was the betrayal of an innocent man; and
- secondly, it was a serious tactical mistake because it placed David in Joab's debt. It was unwise of David to put Joab in such a powerful position.

### Confrontation

In 2 Samuel 12 Nathan is sent to confront David and bring his sin out into the open. This occurs many months after David's adultery and his betrayal of Uriah, for it seems that the baby that had been conceived had now been born (11:27). All that time David concealed his iniquity from the people and did not seek forgiveness from God. In a parable Nathan portrayed the evil of what David had done:

"And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him" (12:1-4).

Who could not see the injustice here? David, a man ordinarily compassionate, gracious and deeply conscious of equity, was incensed:

"And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: and he shall restore the

lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity" (vv. 5,6).

A man with a strong commitment to justice, David's mind went straight to the Law of Moses: fourfold restitution was required for one who had stolen a sheep (Ex. 22:1). But his sin blinded him to the obvious implications of the parable until Nathan pulled him up short in the next verse: "Thou art the man".

What a stingingly direct rebuke! God gave David all he could want (v. 8), yet David conspired to rob Uriah of both his wife and his life. Nathan does not spare David. In verse 9 he accuses David of murder and adultery—and rightly so. These sins were punishable by death. Although forgiven by God, in a sense David suffered that death sentence vicariously through the sword that blighted his household afterwards and the death of the child.

### Accepting responsibility

David's immediate response was to acknowledge his sin: "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD" (v. 13). David had betrayed Uriah, but he recognised something all of us must recognise. All sin, no matter who the victim might be, ultimately is a sin against God. When we commit a sin against another person it is right that we should pursue restoration with the individual concerned; we must not deceive ourselves, however, that it is a matter between ourselves only. All sin is a sin against God, and we must repent before God if we wish to be forgiven. David is forgiven, and the penalty of death is stayed: "Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die" (v. 13). In this there is a type of the deliverance from death that is available to the faithful through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, great David's greater son. But the fact that we may be forgiven does not necessarily mean that we will be spared the consequences of our sins. In David's case his family was to be disrupted and the baby was to die (v. 14).

We are perhaps reminded of the words of James: "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1:14,15).

1. Is Bathsheba also partly to blame by placing herself in a position where she could be seen? We cannot be sure; there is certainly no Divinely pronounced condemnation of her action as there is in David's case.

Here was a literal and specific manifestation of that principle, which has its wider outworking in our own lives.

David poured out his soul to God (2 Sam. 12:15-17), but the die had been cast, and the baby died. When the child died David abandoned his vigil and returned to his normal duties. His servants were surprised by David's response to the death of the infant, but it is apparent that David understood the Divine principle that God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy.

### Seeking forgiveness

Psalm 51 reveals the thoughts of David at this time. He shows us the attitude that must be ours if we are to be forgiven by God. The title of the psalm ("A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba") confirms that it is related to the remorse David felt after Nathan exposed his crimes. He commenced by recognising that forgiveness is entirely the prerogative of God, and not something on which we can presume; it is available only to those who own and acknowledge their sin:

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me" (vv. 1-3).

We need to be washed by God, washed in the blood of the Lamb, but this is only possible if we confess our sin and repent. In verse 4, as in 2 Samuel 12, David recognised that all our sins are transgressions against God: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight". The psalm goes on to speak of the response of those whom God forgives. Having been forgiven, they have a duty before God. In verse 14 the AV introduces this theme using a wonderfully expressive word that was especially appropriate in view of his crime against Uriah:

"Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness. O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth Thy praise" (vv. 14,15).

We have all been delivered from "bloodguiltiness". Let us, then, with David, sing of God's righteousness, expressed through the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us praise God for His mercy, and share that wonderful knowledge with all who would listen. But, most of all, let us respond to the mercy

extended to us by offering that sacrifice which is most precious to Almighty God, the offering of our broken and contrite heart.

### Written for our learning

In spite of the grievous sins in 2 Samuel 11, there was no ritual offering in 2 Samuel 12 when David confessed his sin. He tells us why in Psalm 51:

"For Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (vv. 16,17).

Although no bullock or lamb was offered on the altar, there was the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart. That is an offering which generates an especially sweet-smelling savour in the nostrils of Almighty God. It is the offering each of us must offer who are united with the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world.

Psalm 32 is another psalm that relates to this period in David's life. We can discern this from the fact that it speaks of a sin which is concealed for a considerable time, and from the way in which Paul quotes the psalm in Romans 4. David described the joy of forgiveness and compared it with the agony associated with unconfessed sin:

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer" (Ps. 32:1-4).

For all those months while Bathsheba carried their child David concealed the sin, but it gnawed at his very being. He could have no peace. Compassionate by nature, he was tormented by his secret. When finally exposed, David was able to confess, and to experience the wonderful relief that comes with forgiveness (vv. 5,10,11).

Our God is gracious and willing to forgive if only we would repent and ask for forgiveness. No matter how dark may be the circumstances—and what could be blacker than adultery and murder?—God is willing to forgive those who confess and repent. Then we may rejoice and shout for joy. We may not be immune to trouble any more than David was, but we can trust in the Lord and know that we will not be forsaken. That is the lesson we can learn from David's sin with Bathsheba, and we thank God that He preserved this sad tale for our exhortation.