

Journey to Christmas with the Midwives of the Messiah Temptress or Victim?

By Sharon W. Betters

TODAY'S TREASURE

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. It happened one afternoon when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. And David sent and inquired about the woman. The one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house.

2 Samuel 11:1-4 ESV

Bathsheba, the fourth woman mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus, joins us on our Journey to Christmas. As her story unfolds you might find it hard to imagine how any joy or lasting gift could come from her journey. Let's see if Bathsheba's story opens our eyes to an unbreakable gift that showcases God's redeeming love.

Christians and historians alike have mixed reactions when the names of David and Bathsheba come up in conversation. David is an enigma – a victorious warrior and a disgraced commander, the slayer of Goliath and a fallen adulterer, the protector of the sacred Ark of the Covenant and a violator of the very Law it contained, the conqueror of the Promised Land, and a broken, defeated sinner. For Bathsheba's part, a previously obscure military housewife was suddenly caught up in a whirlwind of celebrity, scandal, and sensationalism. How could a Holy God possibly refer to David as a man after His own heart (1 Samuel 13:14)? Was Bathsheba a temptress as she is typically portrayed, an innocent victim, or something else? How could He assign this tarnished couple a prominent part in the Messiah's family tree? 2 Samuel 11 gives us clues to help us answer these questions.

It's important to note that in 2 Samuel 8-10, the two chapters before we learn about David's adulterous relationship to Bathsheba, God gives us a summary of the very impressive battles that David and his armies had fought. One by one, his enemies fall by the mighty hand of God and through David's obedience to Him. They even arose two at a time and were soundly defeated. David was a proven leader, a giant-killer (e.g.

Goliath) with twenty years of experience. David's people were willing to run through brick walls for him. He had an army comprised of the choicest fighting men, territorial possessions of over sixty thousand square miles, an undefeated battle record and a booming economy. He presided over a vast and developing infrastructure, a healthy treasury, a stellar cabinet, a strong national defense and a designer home with an "enviable" view. He had plans on the drawing board for an elaborate and ornate temple and a clear moral mandate from God to lead His people. What more could possibly be said in admiration of one man? There stood the king of Israel who had everything, gazing down from his balcony and lusting after a married woman, and then abusing his power in order to have sex with her. Joab and the Israelite army were off to war while David slept-in. His eyes should have been on the Ammonites, but instead, they were on Bathsheba.

What happened?

There is a slippery slope of moral failure that is further greased when we find ourselves where we ought not to be, and doing things we ought not to be doing. It is during those moments of deep spiritual vulnerability that we tend to forget the great past victories God has given. It is when our guard is down that the enemy strikes. Every claim God made upon David, every obligation of the high office, and all the fences that divine mercy had built to protect him were ruthlessly trampled underfoot by the fiery lusts now burning within him. What followed was a cascade of consequences that David had never anticipated – but should have. (*Harlots and Heroines, The Midwives of the Messiah*, Page 93)

Instead of leading his men in war, David was relaxing on his roof when he saw a beautiful woman bathing. As we have seen in the other stories of the midwives, the writers of Scripture expose sin simply by reporting facts. David could see into the personal lives of his people just by standing on his roof. The Bible does not describe Bathsheba as a sultry temptress, deliberately exposing her body to the King with hopes of an adulterous relationship. Bathsheba was obediently purifying herself (2 Samuel 11:4). David was a peeping Tom. His lust exploded and he had to have her. Read *Today's Treasure* and notice how the man David sent to find out about Bathsheba, seems to be trying to remind David that Bathsheba is someone's daughter, someone's wife. It's no mistake that by his description, he paints a picture of a woman who is beloved by others and should not be used by the King to alleviate his sinful lust. David ignores the implied exhortation from his servant. Is God warning you today through Bathsheba's story?

PRAYER

Father, There is so much grace in the story of Bathsheba and David. You call David a man after Your own heart! David's repentance, when confronted with his sin, cracks open the door for Your grace to cover him, yet David never forgets his sin as we see in Psalm 51. Thank you that that same grace is available to us sinners, too.