
2SAMUEL 11: 1 At the return of the year, at the time when kings go out, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem.

David sends Joab against the Ammonites, who besieges the city of Rabbah, 2Sam 11:1. He sees Bath-sheba, the wife of Uriah, bathing; is enamoured of her; sends for and takes her to his bed, 2Sam 11:2-4. She conceives, and informs David, 2Sam 11:5. David sends to Joab, and orders him to send to him Uriah, 2Sam 11:6. He arrives; and David having inquired the state of the army, dismisses him, desiring him to go to his own house, 2Sam 11:7, 2Sam 11:8. Uriah sleeps at the door of the king's house, 2Sam 11:9. The next day the king urges him to go to his house; but he refuses to go, and gives the most pious and loyal reasons for his refusal, 2Sam 11:10-11. David after two days sends him back to the army, with a letter to Joab, desiring him to place Uriah in the front of the battle, that he may be slain, 2Sam 11:12-15. He does so; and Uriah falls, 2Sam 11:16, 2Sam 11:17. Joab communicates this news in an artful message to David, 2Sam 11:18-25. David sends for Bath-sheba and takes her to wife, and she bears him a son, 2Sam 11:26, 2Sam 11:27.

Verse 1

When kings go forth - This was about a year after the war with the Syrians spoken of before, and about the spring of the year, as the most proper season for military operations. Calmet thinks they made two campaigns, one in autumn and the other in spring; the winter being in many respects inconvenient, and the summer too hot.

2SAMUEL 11: 2 At evening, David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. From the roof, he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful to look at.

Verse 2

In an evening-tide - David arose - He had been reposing on the roof of his house, to enjoy the breeze, as the noonday was too hot for the performance of business. This is still a constant custom on the flat-roofed houses in the East.

He saw a woman washing herself - How could any woman of delicacy expose herself where she could be so fully and openly viewed? Did she not know that she was at least in view of the king's terrace? Was there no design in all this? *Et fugit ad salices, et se cupit ante videri.* In a Bengal town pools of water are to be seen everywhere, and women may be seen morning and evening bathing in them, and carrying water home. Thus David might have seen Bath-sheba, and no blame attach to her. 2Sam 11:4 shows us that this washing was at the termination of a particular period.

2SAMUEL 11: 3 David sent and inquired after the woman. One said, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"

Verse 3

The daughter of Eliam - Called, 1Chr 3:5, Ammiel; a word of the same meaning, The people of my God, The God of my people. This name expressed the covenant - I will be your God; We will be thy people.

2SAMUEL 11: 4 David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in to him, and he lay with her (for she was purified from her uncleanness); and she returned to her house.

Verse 4

And she came in unto him - We hear nothing of her reluctance, and there is no evidence that she was taken by force.

2SAMUEL 11: 5 The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, "I am with child."

Verse 5

And the woman conceived - A proof of the observation on 2Sam 11:4; as that is the time in which women are most apt to conceive.

2SAMUEL 11: 6 David sent to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." Joab sent Uriah to David.

2SAMUEL 11: 7 When Uriah had come to him, David asked of him how Joab did, and how the people fared, and how the war prospered.

2SAMUEL 11: 8 David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet." Uriah departed out of the king's house, and a gift from the king was sent after him.

Verse 8

Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet - Uriah had come off a journey, and needed this refreshment; but David's design was that he should go and lie with his wife, that the child now conceived should pass for his, the honor of Bath-sheba be screened, and his own crime concealed. At this time he had no design of the murder of Uriah, nor of taking Bath-sheba to wife.

A mess of meat from the king - All this was artfully contrived.

2SAMUEL 11: 9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and didn't go down to his house.

Verse 9

Slept at the door - That is, in one of the apartments or niches in the court of the king's house. But in Bengal servants and others generally sleep on the verandahs or porches in face of their master's house.

2SAMUEL 11: 10 When they had told David, saying, "Uriah didn't go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Haven't you come from a journey? Why didn't you go down to your house?"

Verse 10

Camest thou not from thy journey? - It is not thy duty to keep watch or guard; thou art come from a journey, and needest rest and refreshment.

2SAMUEL 11: 11 Uriah said to David, "The ark, Israel, and Judah, are staying in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open field. Shall I then go into my house to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing!"

Verse 11

The ark, and Israel - abide in tents - It appears therefore that they had taken the ark with them to battle.

This was the answer of a brave, generous and disinterested man. I will not indulge myself while all my fellow soldiers are exposed to hardships, and even the ark of the Lord in danger. Had Uriah no suspicion of what had been done in his absence?

2SAMUEL 11: 12 David said to Uriah, "Stay here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart." So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day, and the next day.

2SAMUEL 11: 13 When David had called him, he ate and drink before him; and he made him drunk. At evening, he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but didn't go down to his house.

Verse 13

He made him drunk - Supposing that in this state he would have been off his guard, and hastened down to his house.

2SAMUEL 11: 14 In the morning, David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah.

Verse 14

David wrote a letter - This was the sum of treachery and villany. He made this most noble man the carrier of letters which prescribed the mode in which he was to be murdered. This case some have likened to that of Bellerophon, son of Glaucus, king of Ephyra, who being in the court of Proetus, king of the Argives, his queen Antia, or as others Sthenoboea, fell violently in love with him; but he, refusing to gratify her criminal passions, was in revenge accused by her to Proetus her husband, as having attempted to corrupt her. Proetus not willing to violate the laws of hospitality by slaying him in his own house, wrote letters to Jobates, king of Lycia, the father of Sthenoboea, and sent them by the hand of Bellerophon, stating his crime, and desiring Jobates to put him to death. To meet the wishes of his son-in-law, and keep his own hands innocent of blood, he sent him with a small force against a very warlike people called the Solymi; but, contrary to all expectation, he not only escaped with his life, but gained a complete victory over them. He was afterwards sent upon several equally dangerous and hopeless expeditions, but still came off with success; and to reward him Jobates gave him one of his daughters to wife, and a part of his kingdom. Sthenoboea, hearing this, through rage and despair killed herself.

I have given this history at large, because many have thought it not only to be parallel to that of Uriah, but to be a fabulous formation from the Scripture fact: for my own part, I scarcely see in them any correspondence, but in the simple circumstance that both carried those letters which contained their own condemnation. From the fable of Bellerophon came the proverb, Bellerophontis literas portare, "to carry one's own condemnation".

2SAMUEL 11: 15 He wrote in the letter, saying, "Send Uriah to the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck, and die."

2SAMUEL 11: 16 When Joab kept watch on the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew that valiant men were.

2SAMUEL 11: 17 The men of the city went out, and fought with Joab. Some of the people fell, even of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also.

Verse 17

Uriah the Hittite died also - He was led to the attack of a place defended by valiant men; and in the heat of the assault, Joab and his men retired from this brave soldier, who cheerfully gave up his life for his king and his country.

2SAMUEL 11: 18 Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war;

2SAMUEL 11: 19 and he commanded the messenger, saying, "When you have finished telling all the things concerning the war to the king,

2SAMUEL 11: 20 it shall be that, if the king's wrath arise, and he asks you, 'Why did you go so near to the city to fight? Didn't you know that they would shoot from the wall?'

Verse 20

If - the king's wrath arise - It is likely that Joab had by some indiscretion suffered loss about this time;; and he contrived to get rid of the odium by connecting the transaction with the death of Uriah, which he knew would be so pleasing to the king.

2SAMUEL 11: 21 who struck Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Didn't a woman cast an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?' then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.'"

2SAMUEL 11: 22 So the messenger went, and came and showed David all that Joab had sent him for.

2SAMUEL 11: 23 The messenger said to David, "The men prevailed against us, and came out to us into the field, and we were on them even to the entrance of the gate.

2SAMUEL 11: 24 The shooters shot at your servants from off the wall; and some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also."

2SAMUEL 11: 25 Then David said to the messenger, "Thus you shall tell Joab, 'Don't let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another. Make your battle stronger against the city, and overthrow it.' Encourage him."

Verse 25

The sword devoureth one as well as another - What abominable hypocrisy was here! He well knew that Uriah's death was no chance-medley; he was by his own order thrust on the edge of the sword.

2SAMUEL 11: 26 When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she made lamentation for her husband.

Verse 26

She mourned for her husband - The whole of her conduct indicates that she observed the form without feeling the power of sorrow.

She lost a captain and got a king for her spouse; this must have been deep affliction indeed: and therefore: - - *Lachrymas non sponte cadentes Effudit; gemitusque expressit pectore laeto.* "She shed reluctant tears, and forced out groans from a joyful heart.

2SAMUEL 11: 27 When the mourning was past, David sent and took her home to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

Verse 27

When the mourning was past - Probably it lasted only seven days.

She became his wife - This hurried marriage was no doubt intended on both sides to cover the pregnancy.

But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord - It was necessary to add this, lest the splendor of David's former virtues should induce any to suppose his crimes were passed over, or looked on with an indulgent eye, by the God of purity and justice. Sorely he sinned, and sorely did he suffer for it; he sowed one grain of sweet, and reaped a long harvest of calamity and wo.

On a review of the whole, I hesitate not to say that the preceding chapter is an illustrious proof of the truth of the sacred writings. Who that intended to deceive, by trumping up a religion which he designed to father on the purity of God, would have inserted such an account of one of its most zealous advocates, and once its brightest ornament? God alone, whose character is impartiality, has done it, to show that his religion, *librata ponderibus suis*, will ever stand independently of the conduct of its professors.

Drs. Delaney, Chandler, and others, have taken great pains to excuse and varnish this conduct of David; and while I admire their ingenuity, I abhor the tendency of their doctrine, being fully convinced that he who writes on this subject should write like the inspired penman, who tells the Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing But The Truth.

David may be pitied because he had fallen from great eminence; but who can help deploring the fate of the brave, the faithful, the incorruptible Uriah? Bath-sheba was probably first in the transgression, by a too public display of her charms; by which accidentally, the heart of David was affected wounded, and blinded. He committed one crime which he employed many shifts to conceal; these all failing, he is led from step to step to the highest degree of guilt. Not only does he feel that his and her honor, but even their lives, are at stake; for death, by the law of Moses, was the punishment of adultery. He thought therefore that either Uriah must die, or he and Bath-sheba perish for their iniquity; for that law had made no provision to save the life of even a king who transgressed its precepts. He must not imbrue his own hands in the blood of this brave man; but he employs him on a service from which his bravery would not permit him to shrink; and it which, from the nature of his circumstances, he must inevitably perish. The awful trial is made, and it succeeds. The criminal king and his criminal paramour are for a moment concealed; and one of the bravest of men falls an affectionate victim for the safety and support of him by whom his spotless blood is shed! But what shall we say of Joab, the wicked executor of the base commands of his fallen master? He was a ruffian, not a soldier; base and barbarous beyond example, in his calling; a pander to the vices of his monarch, while he was aware that he was outraging every law of religion, piety, honor, and arms! It is difficult to state the characters, and sum up and apportion the quantity of vice chargeable on each.

Let David, once a pious, noble, generous, and benevolent hero, who, when almost perishing with thirst, would not taste the water which his brave men had acquired at the hazard of their lives; let this David, I say, be considered an awful example of apostasy from religion, justice, and virtue; Bath-sheba, of lightness and conjugal infidelity; Joab, of base, unmanly, and cold-blooded cruelty; Uriah, of untarnished heroism, inflexible fidelity, and unspotted virtue; and then justice will be done to each character. For my own part, I must say, I pity David; I venerate Uriah; I detest Joab, and think meanly of Bath-sheba. Similar crimes have been repeatedly committed in similar circumstances. I shall take my leave of the whole with: -

Id commune malum; semel insanivimus omnes;

Aut sumus, aut fuimus, aut possumus, omne quod hic est.

God of purity and mercy! save the reader from the ευπεριστατος ἄμαρτια, well circumstanced sin; and let him learn, "Where many mightier have been slain,

By thee unsaved, he falls."

See the notes on the succeeding chapter, 2 Samuel 12 (note).