

## Bathsheba: The Woman Whose Beauty Resulted In Adultery and Murder

*Be careful for nothing, prayerful for everything, thankful for anything.*

*~Dwight L. Moody*

*A woman takes off her claim to respect along with her garments.*

*~Herodotus*

<b>Her names</b>	“The Seventh Daughter” or “The Daughter of an Oath”
<b>Key Scriptures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Samuel 11:1-12:25, I Kings 1:11-31; 2:13-19; I Chronicles 3:5</li> <li>• Psalm 51 - David’s penitence</li> <li>• Psalm 32 - David’s gratitude to God for His pardoning grace and mercy</li> <li>• Proverbs 31 has been attributed to two unknown authors, Agur and King Lemuel. One late tradition suggests that Lemuel is Solomon and that the lengthy praise of a virtuous woman in Proverbs 31:10-31 was dedicated to his mother, Bathsheba. (8) Still other traditions say that it was Bathsheba who composed Proverbs 31, as an admonition to Solomon on his marriage to Pharaoh’s daughter. If this be so, we can understand all the warnings against the flatteries of strange women with which Proverbs abounds. (2)</li> </ul>
<b>Promises In Scripture</b>	Exodus 34:6-7; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 25:11; Hebrews 8:12

<b>Her Background, Life and Times</b>
<p><b>Ritual Bathing:</b> In Bathsheba’s day, most bathing took place not for the purpose of physical cleanliness - people of that time had little knowledge of the spread of disease and germs through uncleanness. Most bathing took place in order to become ritually clean after a period of being unclean. Bathsheba had just completed her monthly period. The flow of blood was finished; the seven days prescribe in Leviticus 15:19 were past, and she now needed to cleanse herself. She probably stood in or near a basin of water, using a sponge or cloth to clean herself, then either squeezing water over herself as a rinse or pouring water from a pitcher over her body. Scripture mentions cleansing with water hundreds of times, most of them referring to ritual rather than physical cleansing. Cleansing took place after many kinds of skin diseases were healed (Leviticus 14:8), and after men and women had unusual discharges (Leviticus 15:13). Men and women both had to wash themselves after sexual intercourse in order to be ceremonial clean (Leviticus 15:18). Priests cleansed themselves before offering sacrifices (Exodus 29:4; Leviticus 8:6), and the sacrifices themselves were washed before being offered to God (Leviticus 1:90). (1)</p> <p><b>The Bath:</b> The bath in which Bathsheba was washing was in the court-yard secluded from all ordinary observation, but yet visible from the palace roof. (10)</p>
<p><b>Family Connections:</b> Bathsheba came of a God-fearing family. She was the daughter of Eliam or Ammiah, who was the son of Ahithophel. Eliam, whose name means “God is gracious,” was one of David’s gallant officers. Bathsheba became the wife of Uriah, the most loyal of David’s men. After the murder of Uriah, she became the wife of David, and mother of five sons by him. The first died in infancy. The others were Solomon, Shimea, Shobub and Nathan. She is mentioned in our Lord’s genealogy as “her that had been the wife of Uriah” (Matthew 1:6). (2)</p>

<p><b>The Hittite:</b> Probably a professional soldier, Uriah had married a Jewess and served faithfully in Israel's army. Uriah is identified as a Hittite and thus was a resident alien in Israel. By Old Testament Law the <i>gur</i>, or resident alien, was granted most of the rights and obligations of a Hebrew. David was legally as well as morally obligated to treat him much better than he did. (8)</p>
<p><b>Bathsheba's Mourning:</b> As a time of mourning was prescribed, this tells us little of the relationship of Uriah. (8)</p>
<p><b>Why should the child die for the parent's sins:</b> If the child had lived, each time his parents saw him he would have reminded them of their sin. What a terrible burden for a child to bear! He would also have been a symbol of the sin itself, to David and to his nation. Yet God had forgiven the sin, and it was sent away. David and his people must live in the light of forgiveness, not in dark shadow cast by past sins. As for the child, it was no punishment for him to go to paradise and await final redemption with all God's saints. (8)</p>
<p><b>Solomon:</b> God's early declaration of special love for Solomon (2 Samuel 12:24-25) and his intent to give Solomon the throne conveys a wonderful message. David and Bathsheba truly were forgiven, and the proof lies in God's exaltation of their son. No wonder the name chosen means "peace" (<i>shalom</i>). When we accept God's forgiveness, we can count on God's grace enriching our future. (8)</p>

<p><b>Her Character</b> <i>What amazing diversity!!</i></p>
<p><b>Mysterious:</b> Her beauty made her victim to a king's desire. Though it is difficult to discern her true character, she seems to have found the courage to endure tragedy, winning the king's confidence and eventually securing the kingdom for her son Solomon. (1)</p>
<p><b>Queen:</b> That she retained her influence over David until his death is proven by the way she reminded the king of his promise to make their son, Solomon, his successor. (2)</p>
<p><b>Repentant:</b> Co-responsible in David's sin, did her tears of repentance mingle with those of her husband's? It would seem so, because God blessed them with another son whom they called Solomon, meaning, "Beloved of the Lord." Why was not such a son given to one of David's other wives? Given to David and Bathsheba was not Solomon an evidence and expression of God's pardoning love for both? Then, is not Bathsheba's inclusion in the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1) another token that God had put her sins behind His back? Restored to divine favor, and now virtuous and wise as well as beautiful, Bathsheba brought up her son Solomon in all godly diligence and care. Solomon himself came to write, "Train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6), which counsel reflected his own godly upbringing. Tradition says that it was Bathsheba who composed Proverbs 31, as an admonition to Solomon on his marriage to Pharaoh's daughter. If this be so, we can understand all the warnings against the flatteries of strange women with which Proverbs abounds. (2)</p>
<p><b>Guilty or Innocent:</b> <i>There are two very different schools of thought regarding Bathsheba. Was she the conniving temptress or the wronged victim. There seems to be no gray area in this argument: Either she's guilty or she's innocent. Here are the opinions. McG</i></p>
<p><b>The Guilty Argument</b></p> <p><b>Accomplice to sin?:</b> David, ever attracted by lovely women, coveted her, and became guilty of an outrageous disgrace. Although David was to confess that his foul sin was his, and his alone, one wonders how far Bathsheba was the accomplice in such a sin, as well as its provocation. Had she been a careful, modest woman, surely she would have looked around the easily seen adjacent roofs, and if others had been looking her way, she would have been more appropriately modest in bathing herself. Further, when sent for by David, had she been a true wife and a woman of principle she should have refused to obey the king's summons. As she saw David feasting his eyes upon her, did she have a</p>

presentiment of what would happen? If not, then, when before the king, she should have bravely refused to yield to adultery. Later on in the sacred record, a heathen woman - a queen - brave Vashti, stoutly refused to expose herself before wine-inflamed men, and was expelled from court. Had Bathsheba shown the same determination to preserve her dignity, David, the anointed of Israel, would have never sinned as he did. After the adulterous act in the king's bedchamber, Bathsheba manifested no sense of guilt, but after her husband's murder almost immediately went to the palace to supplement David's many wives. (2)

**Exhibitionist:** David may be a voyeur, but Bathsheba is an exhibitionist. A well-bred lady at home alone, with only her maidservants to protect her, would never have risked bathing in full view of her neighbors. Especially not a married woman who was well aware of the ability she had to attract male attention. (6)

**Bad to the Bone?:** Some say she was an "adulterous wife: who "schemed to gain prominence for herself and her child." Rather than resisting, she caved. As such, Bathsheba has been painted as a latter-century Eve, solely responsible for David's demise - "the woman you put here with me," Lord, that kind of thing. There are those who conclude "Bathsheba knew what was right but she did not do it." Hang your head in Shame, Sister B. Obviously that night of illicit passion was all your fault. (6)

### **The Innocent Argument**

**Innocent Lamb:** David's lust for Bathsheba marked the beginning of his long decline. Though God forgave him, he still suffered the consequences of his wrongdoing. His sin was a whirlpool that dragged others into its swirling path. And despite David's prayer and pleading, God allowed the son David had conceived with Bathsheba to die from an illness. But why did Bathsheba have to suffer along with the man who molested her and murdered her husband? Though the story gives us little insight into her true character, it is hardly likely that Bathsheba was in a position to refuse the king. In Nathan's parable, in fact, she is depicted as an innocent lamb. Why, then, have so many people painted her as a seductress? Perhaps Bathsheba's innocence is too painful to face. That a good person can suffer such tragedies, especially at the hands of a godly person, appalls us. Worse yet, God punishes both David and Bathsheba by taking their son. If we can believe that Bathsheba had an affair with David, we can accept her suffering more easily; her guilt makes David's sin seem less grave and God's punishment less cruel. Though Bathsheba may not have understood the reasons for her suffering, God gave her favor with King David, making her both a powerful queen and the mother of David's successor, Solomon, who became famous for his great wisdom. (1)

**Had by the Throne?:** Other scholars insist Bathsheba doesn't "fit the wicked woman image." Instead of being a temptress, she was nothing more than an "innocent victim of his lust," at the mercy of a king who could have any woman he wanted no questions asked. The text suggests that David's men "did not ask her if she wanted to go; they simply took her." Lift your head with pride, Sister B, since David was to blame and none of it was your fault. (6)

**Innocent:** Some have tried to cast Bathsheba as a temptress. But the text affirms the innocence of Bathsheba. Note: 1. David as king should have been at war. 2. Bathsheba was bathing after David was in bed. 3. Bathsheba was in her own courtyard, and could only be seen from the palace roof. 4. David took the initiative to find out who she was. 5. David sent for her. As a woman alone she had no way to reject the demands of a king, who in the ancient Near East had the power of life and death. In essence Bathsheba was forced to come to David's bed, in what was essentially rape. (8)

### **McG's Comments/Opinions regarding Bathsheba's innocence:**

1. Bathsheba had every reason to assume that she had privacy during her bath. The bathing area had to be protected from neighbors or the Bible would have portrayed her as wanton before David ever set eyes on her.
2. That she was visible from the palace roof would not have been a concern for her. The argument

- for enticement just doesn't work. Her husband was away at war, serving his country and his king. She had every right to assume that her king would be away at war, also. The Bible does not state that she had any knowledge of or had ever even met the king. David certainly did not know her directly as he had to have his "people" inquire as to who she was (2 Samuel 11:3).
3. David sought her out. David sent messengers to get her. The Biblical text does not say that they *invited her to come*, or *requested her presence*, or that she was even *asked*, let alone had any choice in the matter. My Bible (ASV) states, "And David sent messengers and *took* her, ..." (2 Samuel 11:4). Sounds pretty forceful to me.
  4. Even if there had been the appearance of a choice when approached by the king's messengers, she had no real option but to answer the summons of her king. "As a woman alone she had no way to reject the demands of a king, who in the ancient Near East had the power of life and death." (8).
  5. As she had no choice but to answer the summons of her king, I believe she had even less of a choice to refuse the king when he made sexual advances to her. I believe that not only was it rape, but she had to remain respectful and subservient to the king throughout it. What a horror.
  6. Bathsheba, according to Biblical accounts, did all that was prescribed by law. The ritual cleansing after her period (2 Samuel 11:2), the purification after her "time" (I say rape) with the king (2 Samuel 11:4), and the mourning of her murdered husband (2 Samuel 11:26). She was obedient to those in authority as well; when David sends her back after the rape (2 Samuel 11:4) and when she is summoned to the palace a second time after her period of mourning was over (2 Samuel 11:27). Even when the prophet Nathan approaches her (I Kings 1:11) she obeys. Where can you find fault? Where does the Bible speak specifically ill of her?
  7. Commentators have spoken ill of Bathsheba for returning home after the initial encounter with David. What should she have done? What could she have done? Did she have fear for herself? Her marriage? Uriah? Had she told Uriah what had happened, what could he have done? Perhaps she went home, as many women do, and tried to just forget it all happened.
  8. With the onset of the pregnancy, again, what could she do? What should she do? Certainly she would have been condemned by all who knew her even in the most casual sense because all certainly knew who her husband was and where he was. Did she still fear she would be summoned again by David? What must the months and weeks have been like, knowing that even the most private of moments - like bathing - were no longer safe for her? Perhaps, in her informing David of the pregnancy, she hoped that he would help her face her husband and the public. Perhaps, she hoped he would have some solution to this nightmare he had gotten her into.
  9. The Bible states, "The thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord" (2 Samuel 11:27). No condemnation is spoken of toward Bathsheba.
  10. The death of the child that resulted in David and Bathsheba's union was an example of the horror of the sin committed. Like the innocent child that died, Bathsheba also was unable to escape the fallout of the consequences of David's sin. If David truly loved Bathsheba, as is evidenced in their relationship in future years, her sorrow in the loss of the child would have been a further burden David would have had to shoulder. He not only caused the death of a child, he caused profound grief for the woman he loved.
  11. Commentators have condemned Bathsheba for her acquiescence when summoned to the palace, her lack of "fight" with the rape, her lack of "injury" over the rape, her lack of emotion over her pregnancy, her lack of "grief" over her husband's murder... I think the Biblical author has left literally all of Bathsheba's emotions out. This was the story of the downfall of one of God's great men, not the story of Bathsheba. It was not her story, but his (as callous as that comes across - to me at least). Even with the death of the child, we hear all about David's grief (2 Samuel 12:16-23) and yet Bathsheba's grief is mentioned this way, "Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her and she gave birth to a son, ..." (2 Samuel 12:24). Surely there was

- more to Bathsheba emotionally than what was recorded!! How could the woman that was the mother of the great King Solomon, who wrote so profoundly of love, been such an emotional void?
12. Despite the sorrow that Bathsheba had to endure from the death of her firstborn child, God rewarded her with four more sons. Furthermore, one of her sons was the great Solomon, and the Bible states “the Lord loved him” (2 Samuel 12:24). Why would Bathsheba be blessed with a child such as this, had God not favored her?
  13. Solomon, walked with the Lord (I Kings 3:6-9), pleased the Lord (I Kings 3:10), and was blessed by the Lord (I Kings 4:20-34). Bathsheba, being his mother, had to have great influence over how he was raised and educated and guided. “Behind every great man.... !!” It was Solomon who wrote, “Train up a child in the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6).
  14. Bathsheba had the support of God’s prophet Nathan (I Kings 1:11-14) - the same prophet that rebuked David for his sin with her (2 Samuel 12: 1-15).
  15. *Of all of David’s wives*, it is Bathsheba and her son (Solomon) who continue the line of David through to the birth of Christ. Why choose her if not to honor her? (Matthew 1:6)
  16. Note, that it is not Bathsheba’s decision to approach David on the subject of his long ago promise to make their son, Solomon, the king. The time was getting close, *David was on his death bed*. It is the prophet Nathan, who approaches Bathsheba and says to her, “Have you not heard that Adonijah, the son of Haggith has become king, and David our lord doesn’t know it? So now come, please let me give you counsel and save your life and the life of your son Solomon.” (I Kings 1:11-12) Had she been a cunning, calculating woman from the start, what exactly was she waiting for after all these years?
  17. She seems to be, like so many women of that time period, merely thought of in that male dominated world as property. Not even the unknown author of the books of Samuel and Kings thought enough of her side of the story to include it in the overall narrative. She was just a necessary focal point, just like the big rock was for Moses (Numbers 20:8-12).
  18. And I ask a question. When David’s son, Amnon, rapes his sister, David’s daughter, Tamar, David - though angry - does absolutely nothing. (2 Samuel 13:21) Why? Did it hit too close to home?
  19. She must have been an amazing woman. Despite their inauspicious beginning, despite her being the focal point for a time in David’s life of his most horrible sin, she remained a powerful and favored influence over him through the remainder of his life - as evidence by their final recorded time together when she secures Solomon’s future as the next king of Israel (I Kings 1:11-2:9).
- (There’s my two cents!! McG)*

**McG’s note regarding Her Sorrows and Her Joys:** *It was very hard to determine her sorrows and her joys because opinions about Bathsheba’s innocence, or lack there of, were so diverse. You’ll have to come to your own conclusions about if the many aspects of her life were sorrows or joys. (!)*

#### Her Sorrow

**Molested?:** To have been molested by a supposedly godly man, who then murdered her husband. To have suffered the loss of one of her sons. (1)

#### Her Joy

**Children:** To have given birth to five sons, one of whom became king of Israel after David’s death. (1)

**Solomon:** I Kings 1:2: Solomon showed himself wise and patient. He acted decisively when necessary, and showed restraint when this was the better course. How we need God’s help to discern

which course we should follow in making our decisions. (8)

**Solomon's Wisdom:** I Kings 3-4: Solomon requested true wisdom, not just intelligence. The Hebrew concept of wisdom always involves the ability to “distinguish between right and wrong.” God responded with three unconditional and one conditional promises. Solomon was guaranteed wisdom, wealth, and honor. He was promised long life “if you will walk in My ways.” We too are given unconditional promises. Yet some blessings remain conditional on our obedience. (8)

**Solomon's Court:** I Kings 4:20-23: The provisions described her would have fed some 4,000-5,000 people though some estimates run as many as 14,000! The figures suggest Solomon developed a large, complex bureaucracy, and the land was wealthy enough to support it. (8)

**Solomon's Intellectual Prowess:** The ancient world produced many kinds of literature and much inquiry into what we would call “the sciences.” Solomon created proverbs (Proverbs), love poetry (Song of Solomon), and philosophical inquiry (Ecclesiastes). To say that Solomon “named” (I Kings 4:33) plants and animals means that he mastered zoology and biology. (8)

### Her Promises, Her Lessons, Her Legacy

**Forgiveness of sin:** The story of David and Bathsheba outlines in graphic detail the horror of sin and where it leads. The first step toward sin led to adultery, lying, deceit, murder, and finally, the death of a son. The link between sin and restoration comes when David admits his sin and Nathan says the Lord has taken it away (2 Samuel 12:13). How much guilt was Bathsheba's isn't clear; however, when God tells them through the prophet Nathan that he loves their son Solomon and wants him called Jedidiah, the restoration is Bathsheba's as well as David's. If God could forgive this terrible sin of David, don't you think he could forgive your sin, whatever it may be? (1)

**Forgiveness:** A lesson we can learn from Bathsheba is that being assured of God's forgiveness she did not let her one sin ruin her entire life. Repentant, she used her mistake as a guide to future, better conduct. When we brood over sins God has said He will remember no more against us, we actually doubt His mercy, and rob ourselves of spiritual power and progress. (2)

**Forgiveness:** Beloved of the Lord, everyone's life is spotted and stained with sin. Yet we women who love God and are loved by Him can enjoy the promise and reality of His forgiveness. As one commentator has written about forgiveness, “When we brood over sins God has said He will remember no more against us, we actually doubt His mercy and rob ourselves of spiritual power and progress.” No single sin, however dark, should ruin an entire life. Instead, acknowledge your transgressions before God, receive His cleansing and forgiveness, and with renewed joy over the salvation you have through Jesus Christ, enter a bright future. (7)

**Prayer:** Our prayers tend to be mostly about us. Are you committing enough of your time to fellowship with God that you can get beyond your own needs and lift up the needs of others? (4)

**Fulfilling our duties:** Putting aside critical responsibilities because of laziness, weariness, or boredom is the first step toward disaster. (6)

**Reality:** Whether she was bad or good, Bathsheba's actions and motives cannot be changed. *But ours can.* That's why we're here, girls. Not to figure out “was *she* bad?” Rather, we need to decide “have *we* been - or might we be - bad in a similar situation?” If the answer is yes, then what should we do about it? That's the real deal. (6)

**Just say no:** She could have said no to the messengers, asking them to bring a written request in the morning, then slipping out to stay safely with a friend. Once at the palace she might have said no to the king, offering any number of valid reasons for not joining him in his bedchambers. When she discovered she was pregnant, she could have said no to involving David further and thrown herself at the mercy of her husband, asking him to forgive them both and claim the child. Seemingly irresistible temptations and almost impossible situations plague us all. I Peter 5:9 Resist (the devil), standing firm

in the faith. (6)

**Plans A, B, and C weren't prompted by God:** I can make lists and write out plans with the best of them - ask my family! But unless my plans line up with *God's* will, certain failure awaits me. I'm not talking about the little stuff - where should we go for dinner tonight? - but the big, life-altering, course-changing stuff. God's will was nowhere to be found in David's plans for Uriah. Deception, drunkenness, and murder are man's way of solving problems, not God's. David learned the hard way and lost his son in the process. David and Bathsheba no longer get to plan their lives over ... but we do. Plan ahead, and put God at the top of your list! Psalm 33:11 But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations. (6)

**Know whose toes you're stepping on:** When Nathan challenged David with "You are the man!" David didn't hesitate for a second to name the one he'd offended most: God. Not even the wrongs he did to Uriah, Bathsheba, and Nathan compared to the shame he brought upon the Lord. When we sin, it is God's forgiveness that matters most. Asking the forgiveness of others comes next. Frankly, that job is much easier when God has washed all our guilt away and given us a clean heart to work with! Psalm 51:4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. (6)

**Bathsheba cleaned up her act ... we can too:** A story that starts with a bath should end with a splash. Bathsheba's certainly did. In spite of David's sinful invitation and her own sin of omission - foolishly omitting the word *no* from her vocabulary - Bathsheba managed to stand next to David as a faithful, godly wife to the end of his life. When she visited the aging, infirm David, he was glad to see her and happy to grant her request. Her youthful beauty was gone. Her girlish charms were packed in mothballs. But she served her king, honored his King, *and* gave birth to a king in the lineage of the King. Not bad for a girl who couldn't say no! Proverbs 31:30 Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. (6)

**Take Care of Business:** (I Kings 1) A lovely line of Scripture prompts us women who love God to adorn our hearts with "the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit" (I Peter 3:4). This is a beautiful concept, but many women wonder, "Does this mean I can never speak up?" In Bathsheba we see once again that there is "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (Ecclesiastes 3:7). Bathsheba acts with discernment according to five principles that signal a time for speaking up: *First, find the right time.* David had promised Bathsheba that their son Solomon would reign as king after him. Yet David lay dying without having named Solomon as his successor and unaware that a political uprising was in progress. It seemed to be the right time to speak. *Second, choose the right issue.* If David's kingly line were to continue through Solomon, he must act. The successor to the throne seemed to be the right issue to speak up about. *Third, act out of the right motive.* God Himself had designated Solomon as the man to build the house of the Lord instead of David (I Chronicles 22:9,10). How could this happen if Solomon weren't on the throne? This grand issue seemed to qualify as a right motive for speaking up. *Fourth, be sensitive to the right prompting.* As Proverbs 20:18 tells us, "By wise counsel wage war." Nathan the prophet had approached Bathsheba, advised her to speak up, and even told her what to say. The counsel of this godly man seemed to be the right prompting. *Fifth, speak in the right manner.* *How* we say what we say is usually more important than *what* we say! And how did Bathsheba say what she had to say? She first bowed respectfully, paying homage to her husband with her face on the ground, and then waited until he asked her to state her business. (7)

**David and Bathsheba:** The I Kings passage reveals a truly loving relationship between David and the woman he betrayed. David had acknowledged his sin, and not only God but also Bathsheba had forgiven him. Together they had four sons, and in his old age concern for Bathsheba's safety (I Kings 1:21) helped shake David from his lethargy. What hope this promises for hurting couples today. If we acknowledge our sins against each other, and accept forgiveness, the love of husbands and wives still can be restored. (8)

**Let Your Intentions Be Known:** When David made known his intention for Solomon to follow him on the throne, the population of Jerusalem accepted his choice enthusiastically. When David had been silent, there had been only confusion. Let's not make people guess what we wish, or what we plan to do. Only clear communications of intentions and desires can maintain harmony. (8)

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