



# FEED MY SHEEP

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## David's Fornication

This is what we will begin to witness in this month's issue:

**James 1: 14** But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

**15** Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

David is one of the leading characters in the Bible, and when it comes to what people remember most about David, there are two incidents which come to mind. First, many Christians are taught as children about David the giant-killer. Secondly, since children are not mature enough to understand what fornication is all about, this second famous incident about David is generally passed over in children's Sunday School lessons. In our studies of the lives of Saul and David we now come to this blackest blot in the life of David.

Thus far in our perusal of David, we have seen great contrasts between his character and that of Saul. Up until this point, David has, for the most part, exemplified the good, the noble, the virtuous, the meritorious, the honorable, the commendable, and the praiseworthy traits of character with very few clear instances of vice. With our study of David and Bathsheba, though, that all changes. We will find a man who succumbs to temptation, to the lust of the flesh, and who then compounds the sin with dire consequences. Yes, David is a type of the overcomers. He is the pre-eminent type of Christ. But many of the character qualities exhibited in this story are about as far from Christ-like character as one can get. For we find in our study text, David's fall into fornication, and then into lying,

deceit, and murder to cover up that initial sin. In so doing, David manifests such wickedness as was never found in Saul.

In many issues of FMS we have noted that David is a role model for us. It should go without saying, but just for the record, let no one ever think that just because David sinned in this manner and that he became an overcomer, that it in any way legitimizes or gives the green light for an aspiring overcomer to follow this same path. Now the story.

**2 Samuel 11:1** 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.

Here we note that the nation had now become unified and powerful enough to the point that David no longer had to personally lead the troops in battle. He stayed back at the capital and only came out to the battlefield when all that remained was the formal surrender ceremony of an enemy, as we will see towards the end of this story.

**2** 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.

We remember that back in 2 Samuel 5:9, just after David had captured from the Jebusites the high

stronghold of what was later called Zion, that David built there what I would call housing subdivisions around his own house. In other words, the houses were probably like we find in many suburban developments today, in that one homeowner's exterior bedroom wall is only about 30 feet from the neighbor's exterior living room wall.

In the city of David, all the roofs were flat and they served as patios and additional living area, as well as pleasant places to sleep in the hot summer months. As was customary in those semi-tropical regions, many of the people took siestas in the heat of the day and arose somewhere in the mid- to late afternoon, when it was beginning to cool off. So that was the situation. David got up from his nap and was walking about on his rooftop, probably enjoying a cool breeze, when he looked down toward his neighbor's house and he noticed this beautiful woman washing herself.

*he saw a woman washing herself...* There are debates about Bathsheba's relative guilt or innocence in David's initial temptation. Where was the area in which she was bathing? Was it in a garden, like an exterior patio surrounded by lots of trees, bushes and other plants? Or was it in a room, an interior bathing chamber where there was an open window? Was she totally innocent? Or was she careless in not pulling a window curtain closed?

Others have suggested that she was conniving and that she deliberately, but not *too* obviously, exposed herself. After all, this argument goes, living next door to the king, she would have been familiar with the king's habit of taking an afternoon nap, followed by stretching his legs in a brief walk around the perimeter of his rooftop patio. It would have been very easy for her to position herself and for her to time her bath so that David would "accidentally" see her. I do not see enough information in the Scripture to judge one way or the other on this matter.

But David's first and no doubt, accidental glimpse of this naked woman led to his lingering gaze upon her. At that point, it was lust. It led immediately to David's breaking of the tenth commandment because he coveted his neighbor's wife. Some might say that technically, David did not know she was married, but I think otherwise. We will prove that forthwith, but nonetheless, David did not stop at the mental sin of coveting. He *acted* upon his desire.

**3 And David sent and enquired after the woman. And *one* said, *Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?***

Certainly, even if he did not know previously, he found out very quickly who she was, and that she was in fact married. David was perhaps not all that different from other Eastern monarchs of his day when it came to women. Kings had harems. If a particular female caught his fancy, the king simply took her as another wife or concubine. Previously, just after David had driven out the Jebusites, it says in...

**2 Samuel 5:13 And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David.**

Evidently, David already had a harem. We also had noted previously God's prohibition against kings multiplying wives unto themselves. This is David's Achilles' heel. The area of sexuality was David's area of greatest weakness. David now finds himself caught up in a vortex of lust. He did not *care* if she was married or not. His illicit desire to have her overrode his desire to obey God's law.

**4 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.**

The facts in this verse are straightforward—except for that phrase *for she was purified from her uncleanness...* Why was this fact inserted, and what exactly is it referring to? There are two possibilities here. If we take the word "for" to mean "because" ("he lay with her because she was purified from her uncleanness...") then it would seem to be referring to the law in Leviticus 18:19.

**KJV Leviticus 18:19 Also thou shalt not approach unto a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is put apart for her uncleanness.**

To put it into modern English, I think the NIV and the New American Standard are correct here when they give:

**NIV Leviticus 18:19 "Do not approach a woman to have sexual relations during the uncleanness of her monthly period.**

**NAS Leviticus 18:19 'Also you shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness during her menstrual impurity.**

I find it very strange that most of the so-called Bible authorities characterize this and similar laws as “ceremonial” or “ritual” and that therefore the woman is ceremonially and ritually unclean. They follow up by saying that all the ceremonial laws have been done away with since Calvary. Frankly, I don’t see anything ceremonial about this law. To me, it is clearly a law of good hygiene. God gave it to us for our good. It is like the food laws. If we eat things like pork products, which are unclean and not fit for food, then we will eventually pay the price in terms of arthritis and other debilitating and life-shortening diseases. Likewise, if couples do not abstain from sexual relations during the wife’s period, then I believe that the health of both of them will suffer as a result...maybe not next week or next year; but like eating unclean animals, it will manifest itself years down the road.

So in the first possible explanation: this might be saying that David lay with Bathsheba because she was not on her period. The second possible explanation involves the law found in Leviticus 15. In the phrase *for she was purified from her uncleanness...* it has been suggested that “for” could have been translated “when,” or “and.” Hold those meanings in mind as we look at the law in Leviticus 15.

**Leviticus 15:18 The woman also with whom man shall lie with seed of copulation, they shall both bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the even.**

Basically, again this is just good hygiene. It means that, after intercourse, couples should not simply get up and go about other business, but that they should take a shower or bathe first. So if the meaning of the word *for* is really *and* or *when*, then it would simply mean that after Bathsheba and David had sexual relations, she got up and bathed and then went home. However, if that is the meaning, do you see the irony and hypocrisy in that action? It would imply that having just polluted themselves spiritually, having just committed an act of immorality, that nonetheless, Bathsheba is careful to comply with the *letter* of the law regarding physical uncleanness.

But is this not characteristic of sinners even today? ... that having committed flagrant sins and

thereby darkened their souls, they exert themselves all the more to give the appearance of outward conformity to the law—even to scrupulous and meticulous observance of the letter of the law in other areas? This has been portrayed so often in Mafia movies like *The Godfather* that it has almost become a cliché. For example, we recall scenes where the Mafioso has just blown away his competition or “fitted him with cement tennis shoes for a walk in the lake,” and then he goes to Mass so it appears as though he is a good Catholic. Well, obviously some weeks had to have passed before Bathsheba missed her period and she was then certain she was pregnant. She informs David.

**2 Samuel 11:5 And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.**

As you know, the Bible often condenses much activity into one brief statement. This is especially obvious when one reads the book of Jasher and compares those expanded stories with the biblical account. The point is that we do not know for certain whether or not David and Bathsheba carried on their affair for some length of time or if it was only a “one-night stand,” to use common parlance. I tend to think it was carried on over a period of time for the simple reason that it appears that David did in fact love Bathsheba. Regardless of whether it was a single instance or repeated instances of fornication, God’s law is clear on the penalty for such an act.

**Leviticus 20:10 And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.**

The question that most of us would have at this point is: **Why did God, or how could God let David and Bathsheba “get away with it?”** We will come back to that question in due course. Some time after Bathsheba notifies David of her pregnancy, David decides upon a course of action.

**2 Samuel 11: 6 And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David.**

Who was this fellow, Uriah the Hittite? First of all, the verse identifies him as a Hittite. The Hittites were descendants of Heth. Heth was the second son of Canaan. So Uriah was a Canaanite, evidently of the

remnant of those who were not driven out of the land. But that's not all he was. We read in ...

**2 Samuel 23:1 Now these *be* the last words of David. ...**

For a number of verses, it goes on with David's deathbed statements, but as we look at verse 8, we must remember that 2 Samuel is not necessarily and always written in chronological order. Because now comes a listing of David's mighty men, the elite soldiers who had distinguished themselves in service to David, going back many years to when he was still fleeing from King Saul. It goes on in what we would call "flashback-style" to relate several stories of the deeds of the mighty men. In the course of the rest of this chapter, it mentions there were three men superior to the rest, and there were thirty other "mighty men," and then it concludes that there were 37 mighty men in all. We are not concerned at this time about explaining that discrepancy, but we want to point out several things in this passage which will give us greater insight concerning several characters who play prominently in this story or in the stories which lie just ahead. First, look at verse 13. This flashes back to a battle we covered previously in our lecture studies.

**2 Samuel 23:13 And three of the thirty chief [men] went down, and came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim.**

**14 And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem.**

Then it goes on to tell how three of David's mighty men valiantly battled into Bethlehem to get a glass of water for David from the well in Bethlehem—that was his hometown, you will recall. As I say, that story is related here, but we're simply pointing out that it connects back to 2 Samuel 5.

**2 Samuel 5:17 But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the hold.**

**18 The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.**

By this connection, we are merely establishing the fact that this incident occurred many years before, when David had first become king over both Israel and Judah, and that these mighty men had been with

David and *close to David for a long time*. Now back to 2 Samuel 23 where, as we read through the list of mighty men, we find that it includes at least two non-Israelites.

**2 Samuel 23:37 Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite, armourbearer to Joab the son of Zeruiah,**

**38 Ira an Ithrite, Gareb an Ithrite,**

**39 Uriah the Hittite: thirty and seven in all.**

Does it not seem reasonable to assume that David not only was acquainted with his mighty men, but that he knew them all very, very well? The point is that Uriah the Hittite was not the average, anonymous, rank-and-file soldier who had never met the king. As one of the 37 mighty men who had been with David from way back, Uriah had undoubtedly been in the top ranks of David's army for many years, and David and he were *very well acquainted*.

The next revelation is that Bathsheba was no stranger to David either! She was not merely a new resident in the neighborhood.

**2 Samuel 23:34 Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maachathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite,**

Among David's elite warriors, it includes "Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite." Bathsheba was the daughter of Eliam. This means that Bathsheba's *father* was one of David's mighty men also. Therefore, I find it highly unlikely that David did not know that the daughter of one of his mighty men lived right next door to him, and that she was married to another of his mighty men. Therefore, when David sent a messenger to Joab to have Uriah sent back to the palace, we now know that all these characters were well acquainted with one another. There is even more, but we have now set the stage for the tale of David's cover-up crime. "...and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

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