

women IN SCRIPTure

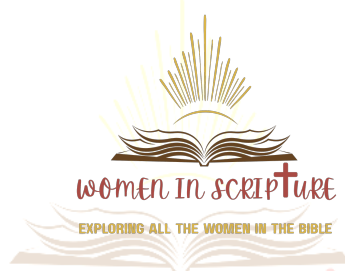
EXPLORING ALL THE WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

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Bathsheba: Purpose in Scandal

by Stephanie Catmull



Bathsheba was a faithful Hebrew woman who understood what it meant to receive wise counsel, and who related to the warrior, priestly life.

Bathsheba, wife of King David and mother of King Solomon, was God's chosen

woman to be the ancestor of Jesus Christ. Her pedigree was flawless; her character undeniably virtuous; her timeless beauty beyond compare. King David doted on her, ferociously loved her, and protected her with the vigilance of the great Lion of Judah. Proverbs were written about her; songs were sung about her. Her wisdom, courage, piety, and leadership were exemplary. God ensured that His Everlasting Kingdom would be continued through **Bathsheba alone**, because of her marriage to King David and her motherhood of King Solomon.

Yet, Bathsheba's reputation had been embroiled in controversy. She was, at times, thought to be a manipulative seductress, using her feminine wiles as a calculating, ambitious adulteress who selfishly sought the throne of Jerusalem for herself. She has notoriously been accused of being the bathtub temptress, purposefully washing herself on the rooftop to instill an uncontrollable lust in David, and becoming pregnant in order to trap the great Warrior King into marriage.

On another hand, Bathsheba has been categorized as a victim of rape: a woman who, by no fault of her own, was brutally violated by the King. By some scholars, she was thought to be an unwilling partner in an adulterous affair: a silent, voiceless victim at the mercy of her King. Numerous scholars assert that Bathsheba was innocently performing a Hebrew cleansing ritual; she was not responsible for the effect it had on the lecherous gaze of the King. And she certainly had no right to refuse any command of the King, immoral or otherwise.

So who was the real Bathsheba? Who was this woman, specifically chosen by God, to be the ancestral mother of His Son, Jesus Christ? What was it about this woman that endeared herself to Almighty God, that set her apart from all others?

To begin the journey, look at the circumstances when Bathsheba enters history. David already had six wives (and multiple concubines) by way of treaties with neighboring countries, and spoils of war. Yet in God's eyes, none of these women measured up to His standards; none of these women were worthy to be stewards of King David's priestly seed that would ultimately culminate in God's Son, Jesus Christ, and Savior of the World.

A prime example is that of Michal, daughter of King Saul and David's first wife, who despised King David as he danced, sang and worshiped his God during his victorious parade into Jerusalem after his defeat of the Philistines. With God's precious Ark of the Covenant in tow,

"Then David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was wearing a linen ephod." (2 Samuel 6:14)

Michal spat on David's worship, and by extension God Himself, as she was

thoroughly embarrassed by David's unabashed outpouring of praise and worship, and his nearly naked tribute and wild gesticulations to God in front of the entire city. David threw off all hindrances, and enthusiastically gave himself over completely to the praise and glory of his Creator. It is no wonder that God chose not to use her, or any of the other wives, to further His Kingdom. God desired to use only those who loved Him wholeheartedly, and gave their lives unquestionably to His glory and honor. Michal was not that woman.

Enter now Bathsheba. She was none other than the granddaughter of Ahithophel the Gilonite – King David's closest counselor and advisor. She also was the daughter of Eliam, one of David's Mighty Men. As such, she was a young Hebrew woman, raised within the strict Jewish tradition, since birth in the courts of Jerusalem, enjoying unparalleled privilege of social and economic status.

Bathsheba was as beautiful as David was handsome. She was highly educated in God's law. She was reared under the tutelage of her grandfather in God's wisdom, and understood the warrior mentality from Eliam, her father. Bathsheba thus already embodied both the wisdom and warrior virtues of a queen.

Before puberty, Bathsheba was wed to Uriah the Hittite, another one of David's Mighty Men - an arranged and obvious marriage during ancient Biblical times. Yet because of her prepubescent age, she did not bear Uriah any children. It was her first menstrual cycle that brought her to the Hebrew cleansing ritual upon the rooftop while Uriah was away at war. She was merely adhering to Jewish custom, and because of the screen covering her body for privacy, she was quite unaware of David's voyeuristic gaze upon her.

Did David recognize Bathsheba as Uriah's wife? Did he recognize her as Eliam's daughter? Did he recognize her as Ahithophel's granddaughter? Most likely Bathsheba was a familiar face in his courts. Yet he was blinded by her beauty, and requested that she be brought to his chamber in 2 Samuel 11:2-4. His senses were awakened by the girl, now a young woman, and he could not resist the temptation. David was not just in lust; he was in **love** with this woman of his dreams. David sought to consummate this overpowering love, sinning against his beloved God in order to do so.

Bathsheba, in turn, *knew* King David. She feared him as the warrior King. She esteemed his music and worship to God. She was drawn to his renowned handsome features. She honored the fact that he was God's chosen leader of the Israelites. She knew of his majesty, and shared his devotion to Yahweh. She was in awe of his mighty reign, and when she was summoned by him, she obeyed as would any subject to his throne, and bowed to the powerful man before her. It was not within the slightest realm of possibility for her to refuse.

David did not rape Bathsheba, as evidenced by his subsequent actions. *He vehemently loved her*, as purported by the famous historian Josephus (Antiquities of the Jews, Book 7, Chapter 4, verse 154). Nowhere else in Scripture was it mentioned that David loves any of his other wives. God had already chosen Bathsheba for him to conceive Solomon – David, however, did not wait on God’s perfect timing and later suffered God’s justified wrath.

Notice the reaction of David’s son Amnon when Amnon raped his half-sister Tamar: Amnon mercilessly abandoned Tamar as a blemished, worthless, tainted woman. Once his lust was satisfied, he threw her away like a piece of unwanted garbage. But David did not do this to Bathsheba. Quite the contrary. When Bathsheba informed David that she was pregnant with David’s baby, she was deathly afraid, with good reason, that she would be stoned to death for adultery.

David here had the chance to dismiss Bathsheba, and allow her to be killed as Jewish law would dictate. As a matter of fact, this essentially would have “solved” the problem for him, and no one would have been the wiser. Instead, David *protected* his beloved Bathsheba. Piling sin upon sin, David gave the order for the murder of her husband Uriah, in order that King David could marry her instead.

Bathsheba, now a pregnant widow, sorrowfully weeped for Uriah during the Jewish required 30- day period of mourning. She was completely ignorant of the fact that David was the one who had her husband killed. Bathsheba knew only that her husband died in battle, a death not entirely unexpected for a soldier. She genuinely grieved for her husband, and was a testament to her deeply held affection for him. She was not yet aware of David’s plans for her to be his bride, and was understandably worried over her undecided future. Yet, she placed her life into the loving arms of God, patiently and faithfully trusting Him to take care of her, and took no action on her own.

Quite out of God’s established order, yet still accomplishing God’s Will and Purpose, David married the woman that God intended to be the ancestral mother of Jesus. Yet this child conceived through adultery would not and could not be the son to carry on the priestly line. This child suffered the punishment of David’s sin, and perished when he was only seven days old because,

“David has given the enemies of the Lord great occasion to blaspheme.” (2 Samuel 12:14)

David and Bathsheba’s second son, conceived through a legitimate marriage, would be named Solomon, destined to succeed the throne of Israel and continue the seed of David.

Notice here that God did not require repentance or punishment from Bathsheba for the act of adultery – only David. It was David's – not Bathsheba's - sin against God, and it was David's blatant disregard for God's law that drew His wrath and punishment upon him. The prophet Nathan is sent only to David to declare judgment. It was David who stated, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:13) and took the responsibility upon himself only. If Bathsheba had been the seductress, she would have been blamed, and her lineage would not have continued. Bathsheba would have been erased from history from that moment on. God's punishment for David, however, was that he will,

"suffer adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun." (2 Samuel 12: 11-12)

God's judgment against David would be proclaimed openly, as nothing was secret with God. David's illicit behavior would be exposed, and as a consequence, someone in David's family would attempt to overthrow him by sleeping with one of his wives or concubines.

In conjunction with this doomsday prophecy, Bathsheba herself experienced tragedy. Bathsheba, within the same year of burying Uriah, mourned yet again for the death of her illegitimate son who died when he was seven days old. David, forgiven and restored to right relationship to God, comforted Bathsheba out of love, tenderness, compassion and repentance, and it was in this bittersweet, exquisite moment that Solomon was conceived. The Bible stated that,

"The Lord loved him, and He sent word by the hand of Nathan the prophet: So he called his name Jedidiah [also known as Solomon, Beloved of the Lord], because of the Lord." (2 Samuel 12: 24-25)

And,

"Behold, a son shall be born to you [David], who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies all around. His name shall be Solomon, for I will give peace and quietness to Israel in his days. He shall build a house for My name, and he shall be My son, and I will be his Father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever." (1 Chronicles 22: 9-10)

From this point forward, Bathsheba was the only one of David's wives mentioned throughout the Old Testament; the other six faded quietly into the background, never to be heard from again. Bathsheba was instrumental to David and Solomon's reign, and became the only recognized authority and queen

throughout Israel.

During the next twenty years of David's reign, Bathsheba and Solomon became close spectators to David's dysfunctional "first family" as the fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy unfolded. They watched as David's son Amnon raped his half-sister Tamar, while David did nothing.

They watched as Absalom, Tamar's brother, later killed his half-brother Amnon out of revenge for Tamar, since David refused to rectify the situation. They watched as Absalom eventually became an agitator against his father, resulting in a failed attempted coup of his father's throne.

They witnessed David's complete and utter grief as Ahithophel – David's closest advisor and Bathsheba's grandfather – betrayed him as he defected to the side of Absalom. Incidentally, this was a distinct foreshadowing of how Jesus, too, would be betrayed by one of his closest friends:

"So David went up by the Ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered and went barefoot. And all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up. Then someone told David, saying, 'Athithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.'" (2 Samuel 15: 30-31)

Bathsheba, during this time of corruption and upheaval, closely reared Solomon in the ways of the Lord their God. She instructed him firmly, mentored him, took him under her motherly wing and became the moral, guiding compass of his youth. She kept him from being touched by the disorder swirling around them, and instead focused Solomon's faith on God. Meanwhile, David became further immersed in the consequences of his sin.

As much as David tried unsuccessfully to control his elder sons and his increasingly disoriented empire, he did have many redeeming qualities, including genuine repentance and humility towards God. David truly was a man after God's own heart, and as such left behind his greatest accomplishment: his son Solomon, who would be considered the wisest ruler of all time.

David had already once proclaimed Solomon as King in 1 Chronicles 28 when he instructed Solomon to build the great Temple of Jerusalem:

"And of all my sons (for the Lord has given me many sons) He has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel. Now He said to me, 'It is your son Solomon who shall build My house and My courts; for I have chosen him to be My son, and I will be his Father. Moreover I will establish

his kingdom forever, if he is steadfast to observe My commandments and My judgments, as it is this day.” (1 Chronicles 28: 5-7)

Yet, Bathsheba had to take assertive steps to secure Solomon's kingship when Adonijah, one of David's unruly sons from another wife, amassed an army with plans to exalt himself as king over Israel. In accordance with Nathan the prophet's counsel, Bathsheba entered David's chamber, bowing and doing homage to her husband and king. Following her advice, David again proclaimed Solomon as king a second time:

“And the king took an oath and said, ‘As the Lord lives, who has redeemed my life from every distress, just as I swore to you by the Lord God of Israel, saying, ‘Assuredly Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he shall sit on my throne in my place,’ so I certainly will do this day.” (1 Kings 29-30)

Solomon had now been anointed twice as David's successor to the throne of Israel. The situation, though, was not finished, for Adonijah still lived and adamantly refused to give up. David wrongfully assumed that because he declared Solomon as king, the matter was settled. David's enduring weakness was his flawed inability to discipline his sons.

Bathsheba, then, must ultimately secure Solomon's role as successor a **second** time when Adonijah made yet another attempt to abdicate the throne once David was deceased. Adonijah tried to sleep with Abishag, one of David's concubines, clearly marking his territory as that of king. This was a clear step in ancient Biblical times when a person claimed his rights to titles and authority by securing the “property” of the land. And Abishag was that property.

Bathsheba immediately countered with quick, decisive action. She requested an audience with Solomon with the same worship and respect as she did her late husband, David. She carefully framed her words in order to ensure that Solomon would have no choice but to take care of David's first family situation once and for all - a situation that David failed to remedy. As Bathsheba approached,

“The king [Solomon] rose up to meet her and bowed down to her, sat down on his throne and had a throne set for the king's mother so she sat at his right hand.” (1 Kings 2:19)

Clearly, Solomon continued to adore and admire his mother, even after he was the King of Israel. Bathsheba merely relayed Adonijah's request of acquiring Abishag; Solomon only had to take it from there. Bathsheba wisely allowed herself to be “used” as Adonijah's pawn, knowing full well what Solomon's reaction would be. Solomon executed Adonijah, and

any future threat to the throne was effectively eliminated.

Afterwards,

“And they made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed him before the Lord to be the leader, and Zadok to be priest. Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him. All the leaders and the mighty men, and also the sons of King David, submitted themselves to King Solomon. So the Lord exalted Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed on him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel. (1 Chronicles 29: 22-25)

Bathsheba was a faithful Hebrew woman who understood what it meant to receive wise counsel, and who related to the warrior, priestly life. God rightfully chose Bathsheba for the qualities He desired in a woman to lead His Kingdom Family into eternity.

King Solomon, the author of Proverbs, later recognized Bathsheba's crucial role in his life as he writes,

“When I was my father's son, tender and the only one in the sight of my mother”

(Proverbs 4:3) Other proverbs penned by Solomon were in deference to

Bathsheba as well:

“My son, keep your father's command and do not forsake the law of your mother” (Proverbs 6:20)

“A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother”

(Proverbs 10:1) *“A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises*

his mother” (Proverbs 15:20)

“Whoever curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in deep darkness” (Proverbs 20:20)

Yet the ultimate sign of love and endearment was Solomon's famous Proverbs 31, where he described “The Virtuous Woman” – all of the characteristics embodied and inspired by Bathsheba as a perfect wife and mother. Solomon clearly understood how Bathsheba stood by her husband's side during David's troublesome years. Solomon discerned the tremendous love she had for



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David, and the respect she unwaveringly gave David as her husband and King.

Solomon also remembered how Bathsheba devoted her life to raising him, especially as a woman who feared the Lord. He recognized how she assertively protected him and his right to God's throne. Proverbs 31, written towards the end of his life, was essentially Solomon's eulogy to Bathsheba:



"Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life...Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land...she opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: many daughters have done well, but you excel them all." Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates." (Proverbs 31: 10-31)

Amen.



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