

All About Adultery

2 Samuel 11:4

Nutshell: David committed adultery. What is adultery? How does it differ from fornication? How is fornication a unique sin? We will seek to answer all these questions and more from the Bible.

I. Context: David seeing and inquiring about Bathsheba.

II. Text

2 Sam 11:4 And David sent messengers, and he took her. And she came to him, and he lay with her. Also, she herself had sanctified herself from her uncleanness. Then she returned to her house.

Literal Standard Version with modifications

The next four outline items, III. - VI., are based on the 4 uses of Scripture listed in 2 Tim 3:16 AND the 3 depictions of preaching in 2 Tim 4:2.

III. Teaching

Review

- A. The Book of Kingdoms, our 1 & 2 Sam + 1 & 2 Kings, is the story of Israel's kings, beginning with the prophet Samuel, who anointed both of the first two kings, Saul and David
 - 1. Samuel warned Israel vs. having a king, 1 Sam 10:19, Hos 13:11
 - 2. **Saul** was apostate *man*'s version of king. God previewed *His* version via **David**, 1 Sam 13:14
- ✿ B. 1 Kings 15:5 tells us that David kept God's commands *except* in the Bathsheba incident. This dramatically shapes our approach to each incident in David's life.
- C. The chronicler presents David as God's chosen king, a *picture* of Messiah, but *not* the Messiah; a *reference point* for all subsequent kings of Judah, e.g., 2 Kings 14:3; 2 Chron 34:2
- D. David becoming king
 - 1. David was anointed king over **Judah**, 2 Sam 2. 2 Sam 2:12-32: trouble between Judah and Israel (the 9 northern tribes) begins.
 - 2. After Ishboseth's assassination, **Israel**'s elders anointed David KING, 2 Sam 5:1-5

E. DAVID'S WAITING BUSINESS AS KING*

1. David finally vanquished Jebus (Jerusalem), 2 Sam 5:6-10, where he had taken Goliath's head, 1 Sam 17:54
 - a. David rebuffed 2 Philistine invasions, 5:17-25
 - b. David retrieved the Ark from its 'wanderings', 6:1-19; first, ignoring God's instructions, leading to a death, then properly, with great joy
2. Now David wants to build a permanent form for the Tabernacle. This will be the Temple, 7:1-3
 - a. God corrected David: "*I'm* building *you* a house, 7:4-11
 - b. Then, "Your son will build the Temple," 7:12-13
- ★ 3. God chose **Abraham** to the people through whom all nations would be blessed. Now He chose **David** as father of the King to bless the nations, 7:14-17. David gratefully received this blessing, 7:18-29.
4. David secured Israel's borders, gaining materials for the Temple, 8:7-14. His govt was "just and moral," 8:15-18
5. David fulfilled his oath to Jonathan through his son Mephibosheth, 9:1-13. *ALL OBLIGATIONS CAUGHT UP.

F. Hanun of Ammon incited war with David, but David's forces under Joab and Abishai won the day, 10:1-19.

G. In 2 Sam 11, the battle with Ammon was resumed

1. David stayed in Jerusalem, as he initially did in the previous battle, 10:7.
2. There, at nightfall, from his roof, he saw beautiful Bathsheba washing herself, presumably in her courtyard
3. He inquired concerning her. God gave him warnings to leave her alone. She was married to one of his chief military officers, daughter of another of them.
4. The incident continues in our verse today

Kid-speak: Remember last time, when David saw beautiful Bathsheba? It looked like trouble, didn't it! And today, *we see the trouble!*

H. 2 Sam 11:4, David sent messengers

1. As we said last time, "sending" "messengers" is a thematic idea throughout this chapter
 - a. 2 Sam 11:1 says "at the time when messengers go out"
 - b. Many translations correct the Masoretic Text in 11:1 by bringing it into conformity with the parallel

- passage, 2 Chron 20:1, where it says “kings” instead of “messengers” (only 2 Hebrew vowel pointings different)
- c. The turn of the year is the time for *both* kings *and* messengers to go forth
 - 2. But now David has sent a messenger to inquire into something he should have left alone
 - a. A more destructive force than a king going to battle!
 - b. A kingdom to be desolated from within!
 - 3. David ‘licks the envelope’ to seal death into his house by sending these messengers
- I. “David sent messengers, and he took her.”
- 1. David is made responsible for taking her
 - 2. When the king summons you, you go
 - 3. Could Bathsheba guess what the invitation was for?

Kid-speak: David sent messengers to Bathsheba’s house and told her the king wanted to see her. She probably had no idea what it was about.

- 4. Would the messengers tell her this was not about her husband dying in battle, or would they just politely summon her?
 - 5. Were multiple messengers required to bring any luggage? Was she being ‘honored’ with a court stay?
 - 6. The text leaves us the raw, essential data: David took her.
- J. “And she came to him”
- 1. This seems to be an answering phrase to David taking her
 - a. He took, but she made the trip willingly
 - b. Surely she had no reason for misgivings
 - 2. How was David’s household set up?
 - a. It would have already been arranged to accommodate the comings and goings of more than one wife
 - b. If Bathsheba came to something like an office, we now move on to their retiring to more private quarters
- K. “And he lay with her”
- 1. Desire was drawn out and it seduced him, Jms 1:14.
 - a. Having conceived (dreadful pun for here!), the desire now brought forth sin, Jms 1:15
 - b. From this point forward, the sin would be working **death**, Jms 1:15

Kid-speak: David wasn't married to Bathsheba, and she was married to someone else, so should they have laid together? No!

2. Of course, we would be right to say that sin was also brought forth when David sent for her, assuming he had definite plans
 - a. It is possible, though, that he told himself he was just curious. If she was standoffish, perhaps he would have shelved the whole idea.
 - b. But committing to the act was a whole next level of sin
3. They were not "one flesh" until he lay with her. Now they were. Now the 'envelope he licked' was sealed.
4. "Lay with" is, strictly speaking, a euphemism. It stands for what they did when they lay together.
5. There is no indication that David forced her
 - a. Our chronicler makes Amnon's force clear in chap 13. We assume he would have recorded it if force David had used force here.
 - b. Remember, David was a *very* handsome fellow, 1 Sam 16:12. He was also a hero with the ladies, 1 Sam 18:7.
 - i. We may assume that Bathsheba was attracted to him
 - ii. Without implying that she had any adulterous intentions before this
6. David has now committed adultery (as has Bathsheba)
7. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT ADULTERY/FORNICATION?
(Plug for systematic, expository preaching: Themes still easily doable within its framework.)

Kid-speak: God made a man and a woman to be married to each other. If either one of them treats somebody else like they're married to them, that's called adultery. Before somebody gets married, if they treat somebody like they're married to them (laying together), that's adultery too.

L. The words for Adultery/ Fornication

1. The OT Heb word for adultery is *na'aph* (31x). It is used mostly of physical adultery.
2. The other Heb. word for sexual misconduct is "fornicate," Heb. *zannah* (93x). This word is used about half the time for Israel's spiritual fornication against God by serving idols

- a. It is often associated with prostitutes
- b. Think of it: Any sexual misconduct IS a ‘selling’ of yourself
- 3. The NT Gk word for adultery is *moicheia* (noun 4x; verb 14x; adulterer, 3x). This one’s only about physical adultery.
- 4. The NT Gk word for fornication is *porneia* (noun 25x; verb 8x; feminine, harlot 12x; fornicator 10x). Here we have a handful of references to spiritual fornication.

M. Definitions of Adultery/ Fornication

- 1. In Matt 5:32, Jesus says that a man who divorces his wife except for “fornication” causes her to “commit adultery” if she marries another man
- 2. *Fornication*, therefore, is not limited to *single* people.
- 3. Sex between *single* people is a dishonoring or rejection of marriage. From that angle, it can also be called *adultery*.
 - a. A consistent definition for fornication, then, is “sin against God’s gift of sexuality,” whether by a married or unmarried person
 - b. A consistent definition of adultery is “sin against God’s covenant of marriage”
- 4. With these definitions, the same act can be considered either fornication or adultery
 - a. It is called *fornication* when sexual sin is mainly in view
 - b. It is called *adultery* when sin against marriage is mainly in view

Kid-speak: Another word for adultery is fornication.

Adultery is about messing up **marriage** by laying with someone besides your husband or wife. Fornication means **laying together** when you’re not married. They’re kind of the same.

- 5. The 7th Word of the Ten Words makes Adultery the broader term, Exod 20:14
 - a. This sees SEXUAL UNION as something God created for marriage
 - b. Any sexual sin is therefore a sin vs. this intention. Sex by unmarried people disregards this boundary God has created for sex.
- 6. Fornication is the more explicit term, focusing on the sexual act itself

N. The Blessing the 7th Command Promotes

1. Commands 6-10 are stated *negatively* ("You shall not"), but they all promote something *positively*
2. The 7th Command promotes marriage

O. **Extensions** of the definitions of Adultery/ Fornication

1. Ezek 23:3 lets us know that *any* sexual touching is fornication. It is not limited to sexual intercourse.
2. Matt 5:28 tells us that adultery is also a sin of intent
 - a. The wrong intent in looking = "Heart Adultery"
 - b. Incidental heart adultery does not *in itself* break the covenant of marriage. Hence, it is not *in itself* grounds for divorce.
3. However, since any sexual touching = fornication (which is grounds for divorce, per Matt 5:32), purposeful, extended LOOKING WITH ADULTEROUS INTENT would constitute a grievance which a righteous judge might consider grounds for divorce
 - a. Here we would consider the Peeping Tom. He is consciously entering into an activity to satisfy his visual/ heart adultery.
 - b. This does not involve physical touching, but it does involve a physical choice: positioning oneself to see with wrong intent. There are laws vs. Voyeurism.
 - c. Since it is even prosecutable in unbelieving courts, I believe Christian elders should support someone bringing such a complaint vs. their spouse, especially if it were a repeated offense.
 - d. By extension, the purposeful use of pornography could rightfully justify divorce, especially when repeated.

P. The **basic nature** of Adultery/ Fornication

1. Sex **joins** two people. Not just if they're married.
2. Paul says fornication = **union** with a harlot, 1 Cor 6:16. He ★ quotes the "one flesh" verse, Gen 2:24 in support of this, even though a man isn't married to the harlot!

Kid-speak: A man and woman are joined together when they are married. The man can still be over here and the wife over there, but when God looks, He says, "They are one/ joined."

3. Adultery/ Fornication are therefore a Joining Vs. God
 - a. Sex is a joining *in keeping with God when within marriage*

- b. But Adultery/ fornication seeks union in the opposite direction of God
- Q. The **Permanence** of Adultery/ Fornication
1. “Shall become one flesh.” How do you undo that? You can’t.
 2. You can be forgiven, but you can’t undo it. Like murder.
- R. The **Danger** of Adultery/ Fornication
1. Prov 2:18-19. “They don’t return.” There’s the danger. UNION with departure from God is self-perpetuating. Prov 6:32-33.
 2. The natural course of adultery is imprisoning. God can release prisoners (not the apostates of Heb 6:4-6, per *His* choice), but adultery is an especially knotty imprisonment.
 3. God says, “*I’m* the one who made it a joining!”

Kid-speak: Adultery and Fornication are sins that are like prisons. Only God can get somebody out of that prison!

- S. Adultery/Fornication: At the **top** of Anti-God lists
1. Just as Love is at the top of most God-affirming lists (e.g., Gal 5:22), so Adultery/ Fornication is at the top of most God-denying lists: 1 Cor 6:9-10; Col 3:5; Gal 5:19-21
 2. We tend to view Adultery as a stereotypical ‘boogeyman’, so can it really be at the top of the Bible bad list- *Yes!*
 3. Love is *God’s* kind of joining. Adultery/fornication is the world’s way of joining.
- T. Fornication is the only sin against the **body**, 1 Cor 6:18- ?
1. What about gluttony? Self-harm?
 2. Paul is saying that those kinds of sins are *inflicted on* the body. Fornication is a distortion of the body’s *inbuilt* joining function. In that sense, it is unique... and uniquely harmful.
 3. Keeping this in mind, consider:
- U. Fornication is a sin **God avenges**
1. 1 Thess 4:6, against Christians!
 2. ‘Hey wait! I thought Jesus’ blood covered that.’
 3. *Exactly.* His blood claimed you. If you bond unrighteously with another, Jesus’ blood demands that you get shredded (one way or another) in the gears of your irreversible choice.
 4. His vengeance doesn’t mean that His mercy won’t be mingled in, but it means that- *merely considering the way God made things-* fornication will have its payback
 - ◆ 5. Sanctification is *equated to* avoiding fornication! 1 Thess 4:3

Kid-speak: God made marriage so that we join to somebody. If we do the joining outside of marriage, our own bodies and souls pay us back *and* God pays us back.

IV. How does this relate to Christ?

The improper joining of adultery threatens our joining with Christ.

V. For the Walking Wounded (1 Thess 5:14, “Uphold the strengthless”) Hopefully, your spiritual ‘limp’ is not from sexual defilement.

VI. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, “Convince, rebuke”): **What have I done wrong?**
How have I lost righteousness?

Do I recognize what God made my body for and NOT for?

VII. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, “Exhort/encourage”):
How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?

I will see the goodness and wisdom in “maintaining my own vessel [body] in sanctification and honor,” 1 Thess 4:4

VIII. Schooling in Righteousness: **How will I avoid the error and follow Christ ?**
God, I will not treat *Fornication* as a weak enemy. I commit to nurturing *Love* as its nemesis.

Wrap-up: Marriage is universal. It affects all mankind.

Fornication is therefore also universal. A king’s adultery will infest and unravel a whole kingdom in 2 Samuel.

Fornication is too harmful to take lightly. Rom 13:14 says, “Make no opportunity for the flesh.” Any opportunity we give to fornication breaks that command.

For some, their phone has become an irresistible pathway to pornography. Time for a flip-phone.

A single person getting alone together with someone they like? Rom 13:14 speaks directly to unchaperoned dating.

Every day, when I pray “Don’t lead me into temptation,” I specify fornication and adultery, of either body or heart, based on 1 Thess 4:3.