

Some issues in interpreting 2 Samuel 11-12

OVERALL ISSUES

1. Where does the unit start/end?
2. Is the unit part of the “original” David story or was it added later?
3. Do the events that frame the story (i.e., the Ammonite war) fit the chronology of the story?
4. Is the perspective on David/monarchy consistent with earlier/later sections or different?
5. What is the relationship between this story and some similar others, e.g., 1 Kings 21 (Naboth’s vineyard), 1 Samuel 15 (Saul’s transgression/punishment), 1 Samuel 25 (David’s taking of Abigail and the death of her man, Nabal); Genesis 34 (a “taking” of a woman sexually and the deadly aftermath) or Genesis 39 (Potiphar’s woman’s sexual advance on Joseph)?

ISSUES SPECIFIC TO INTERPRETING CHAPTER 11

6. In 11.1, whose time of year is it to go into battle, kings or messengers?
7. In 11.1, why does David stay in Jerusalem while the army is at war?
8. In 11.2, 4, what exactly does David see Bathsheba doing? Where is she?
9. Do we assume that they already know each other, as royal neighbors?
10. In 11.4, why does Bathsheba go to David? Is she a “victim” or a “schemer”?
11. Who is Uriah the Hittite in relation to David and his monarchy? What do we make of his being a “Hittite”?
12. Who are the messengers we find throughout? Should we trust them? Should David? Should Joab?
13. In 11.8ff, what do we imagine Uriah knows? What do we imagine David *thinks* Uriah knows?
14. In 11.16ff, do we assume Joab knows about the Bathsheba incident/pregnancy? How do we imagine Joab interpreting the “letter” sent by David?
15. In 11.18-25, Joab gives the messenger a message for David, but the messenger changes it. Why? What is the effect on David of the revised message?
16. In 11.25, David sends a message back to Joab: how do we imagine Joab interprets it?
17. In 11.26, do we imagine that Bathsheba’s mourning for Uriah is sincere or not?
18. In 11.27, she bears a son. How are we to imagine the time of her pregnancy? Where are David’s other women (Abigail, Ahinoam, etc.)? What might they be thinking/feeling about David now?

ISSUES SPECIFIC TO INTERPRETING CHAPTER 12

19. As he tells the “parable” to David, what do we imagine Nathan knows about how David ended up with Bathsheba?
20. In 12.1-4, how do we interpret the parable: allegorically? Otherwise?
21. In 12.1-4, how do we interpret the ewe lamb that eats and drinks with the man and lies “in his bosom” and “was like a daughter to him”?
22. In 12.5, why do we imagine David is so angry at hearing the story? Why does he call an apparent thief a “son of death”?

23. In 12.7-12, Nathan offers YHWH's response. What "evil" does YHWH accuse David of doing?
24. In 12.11-12, how do we interpret the image of "this very sun" and "before the sun"?
25. In 12.13, David confesses his "sin." What do we imagine he is confessing specifically?
26. In 12.13-14, why does Nathan say that David will not die, but the child will?
27. In 12.15, "YHWH struck the child" who becomes ill and dies. What does this say about the character of YHWH?
28. In 12.16-23, David fasts and prays, but when the child dies, he eats and refreshes himself. How do we interpret his actions?
29. How might Bathsheba feel about the death of her child? About David?
30. In 12.24-25, David names the son "Solomon" but Nathan (?) names him "Jedidiah"? Why would a court prophet feel empowered to change the name of a royal son? Why does he do it?
31. In 12.26-31, David joins Joab and the army at Rabbah to continue the Ammonite war. Are we to imagine Joab's been there all this time fighting the war?