

Who was Uriah the Hittite?

Uriah was a Hittite who had become part of King David's mighty men; he is most known for being the husband of Bathsheba. There is much we can learn from Uriah and the account involving him.

We assume that all who were counted among David's mighty men were men David deemed to be trustworthy. In the account of David, Bathsheba, and Uriah, we see just how honorable Uriah was. The story is found in 2 Samuel 11. During the spring, the usual time for battles, the military forces of Israel went to war under the leadership of General Joab, while King David remained in Jerusalem. As David was walking around one day, he saw Bathsheba bathing on the roof of her house and was intrigued by her beauty. He sent someone to ask about her and discovered she was Uriah's wife. Unfortunately, that knowledge did not dissuade David from acting on his lust; the king summoned Bathsheba to the palace and slept with her. As a result, she became pregnant.

After Bathsheba told David that she was pregnant, he tried to cover up his adultery. His first plan was to call Uriah home from battle. After asking how the battle was going, David told Uriah to go to his house and even sent along a gift for him. The idea was that, while he was home, Uriah would sleep with his wife, and thus he and others would think that the coming child belonged to Uriah. But Uriah was a man of principle. He did not go back to his house but remained at the palace entrance among the king's servants. When David learned of this the next morning, he asked Uriah why he hadn't gone home. "Uriah said to David, 'The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!'" (2 Samuel 11:11). Though Uriah had been granted a temporary reprieve

from battle by the king, he was a true soldier and chose to remain focused on his mission. Uriah could not fathom indulging his own pleasures while his band of brothers were fighting a battle that still needed to be won.

David asked Uriah to stay one more day and invited Uriah to eat and drink with him. David plied him with alcohol, and Uriah got drunk, but that night he still refused to return to his house and his wife's embrace. Even drunk, Uriah retained his honor as a soldier.

Seeing that his plot to make Uriah believe the baby was his was not going to work, David turned to another, even more sinister plan. The king sent Uriah back to the battle bearing an official letter that instructed Joab, the commander of the army, to place Uriah where the fighting was fiercest and then to withdraw from him, leaving Uriah to die at the hands of the enemy. Joab followed orders, and Uriah the Hittite was killed, along with some others of David's army. A messenger brought news of Uriah's death to David, who sent this message back to Joab: "Don't let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another" (2 Samuel 11:25).

Murdering Uriah did not resolve David's problems, of course. After the time for mourning ended, David took Bathsheba to be his wife. "But the thing David had done displeased the LORD" (2 Samuel 11:27). God sent the prophet Nathan to confront David regarding his sin. Nathan told a story of a rich man with many sheep and cattle and a poor man who had only one ewe lamb that was like a daughter to him. The rich man refused to use a sheep of his own to prepare a meal for a traveler and instead took the poor man's ewe. "David burned with anger against the man" and even said the man should die and must pay four times the amount the lamb was worth (2 Samuel 12:5-6). "Then Nathan said to David, 'You are the

man!’” (2 Samuel 12:7). The prophet proceeded to describe all that God had given David and God’s willingness to give more. He asked why David had despised God’s word by doing evil, having Uriah killed and taking Uriah’s wife. Nathan also told David that the sword would never depart from his house, that his wives would be taken from him publicly, and that the son he had conceived with Bathsheba would die. All of this happened.

In a quick summation of David’s life, 1 Kings 15:5 says, “David had done what was right in the eyes of the Lord and had not failed to keep any of the Lord’s commands all the days of his life—except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.” David’s evil scheme against the honorable Uriah was a blot on an otherwise stellar record. Uriah was a casualty of someone else’s sin. He serves as an example of loyalty and honor and a reminder that our sin has consequences beyond ourselves.

We’re glad to note that David repented. Psalm 51 is his confession to God and a beautiful prayer for all of us when we sin. God also chose to give David and Bathsheba another son—Solomon, who would become the next king and an ancestor of Jesus, the Messiah. God forgave David, just as He is willing to forgive us (1 John 1:9).