Who was Nathan in the Bible?

Nathan was a prophet in the Bible who lived during the reign of King David in Israel. God spoke to David through Nathan on several occasions. Nathan was a member of David's royal court and one of his closest advisers. Nathan apparently also knew Bathsheba well enough to speak to her about Adonijah's attempt to usurp David's throne from her son, Solomon (1 Kings 1:11) and to enlist her help in bringing the matter to the king. There are three or four stories in the Bible featuring Nathan that occurred during some of the darkest and most emotional times in David's life.

The first mention of Nathan establishes his relationship with David as a trusted adviser. David decides to build God a house, because the king is living in a beautiful cedar palace and thinks it wrong that the Ark of the Covenant should be housed in a lowly tent (the tabernacle). David tells Nathan about his plans to build a house for God, and Nathan says he should go ahead and do it because the Lord is with him (2 Samuel 7:2-3). Then God visits Nathan in a vision and tells him to return to David and inform him that God doesn't need the king to build him a house; rather, God would establish David's dynasty, through his son, forever. His son Solomon would be the one to build God's house (2 Samuel 7:4-17). Nathan relays this important message to the king, and David utters a grateful and beautiful prayer to God for His grace (2 Samuel 7:18-29).

The next time Nathan is mentioned, it is after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and brought about her husband's death to hide her pregnancy (2 Samuel 12:1). At that point, David had made Bathsheba his wife and had seemingly gotten away with his sin, but the Lord knew about it and told Nathan to rebuke David. Nathan went to David and wisely told the king a fable about a rich man and a poor man: the rich man was visited by a traveler, so he took the poor man's only possession, a little ewe lamb that

he loved as a pet, to feed his guest—rather than taking a lamb from his own extensive flocks. David was enraged at the story and declared that the rich man had no pity and deserved to die. Nathan then points to David and says, "You are the man!" (2 Samuel 12:7). Nathan reveals that David's sin was like that of the rich man, because David took away Uriah's wife. Nathan then prophesies to David, in God's own words: "I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife" (2 Samuel 12:7-10). David confesses to Nathan that he has sinned against the Lord, and Nathan comforts him, saying that the Lord has forgiven his sin and that David's life will not be required of him. Nonetheless, David's child by Bathsheba was to die. David, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, pens Psalm 51 after this encounter with Nathan the prophet.

After the death of David's child, his wife Bathsheba became pregnant again, this time with a son whom they named Solomon. The Lord sent Nathan to David again, this time to say that the Lord loved his son Solomon, and they called Solomon "Jedidiah," a name that means "beloved of the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:24-25). Solomon later built God's house, the temple, and became an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ.

First Chronicles 3:5 reveals the fact that King David and Queen Bathsheba named one of their sons born to them in Jerusalem "Nathan." No doubt, the child's name is a

reflection of the royal couple's appreciation for the prophet Nathan's faithfulness, friendship, and tough love through the years.