

Chapter 16 -The Prophet in the Crisis of David (2 Samuel 12:1-12)

Today the label of "prophet" has become prevalent among Christians and non-Christians. According to Matthew and Benjamin, the label was given to psychics who read the future, activists who bring social change, poets who warn society of impending doom, a speaker who delivers the Word of the Lord, and a precursor who identifies Jesus as the Messiah. However, Prophets in the Bible spoke for God, receiving the message through visions, dreams, and ecstasies. Nonetheless, some were closely aligned with their Monarchs. Others were aligned with village households. When things were going badly, they identified and arrested the abuses of royal power by charging the royal house with covenant disloyalty and irresponsibility (Widbin, 107). Hence the label of a prophet should be viewed from the meaning, as one that speaks forth by the inspiration of God.

2 Samuel 12:1-2 the story of King David and Bathsheba, the prophet Nathan is an example of a prophet who spoke on behalf of God. The story begins with King David staying behind in Jerusalem while the army of the Israelites went out to fight. 2 Samuel 11:1 states it was a time when kings usually went out to war. The state in the world of the Bible was a society designed to feed and protect its people, which was the king's responsibility, in this case, David (Matthew and Benjamin (159). However, he fails in this regard when he remains in Jerusalem, where he sees a woman named Bathsheba bathing on her roof. David was immediately drawn to her and sent messengers to inquire further. This led David into a compromising circumstance when he slept with her. According to Matthew and Benjamin, rape must occur in the context of some activity connected with fertility, such as harvesting; in this case, it was after she was purified from her menstruation. Despite knowing Bathsheba was the daughter of Eliam and the

wife of Uriah, he chose to dishonor her as the virginity of a state wife (Matthew and Benjamin, 180).

Therefore, Bathsheba's marriage to Uriah was in danger because sexual relationships in ancient Israel were a measure of the honor and shame of the household. Bathsheba could no longer keep her covenant to enrich land and children for her husband's household. Instead, shame was brought upon her by having sexual relations with another man. After David's assault on Bathsheba, he tried to return Uriah to his wife since David's household has now become the legal guardian for the shamed household. He negotiated to realign its resources and responsibilities by sending Uriah home to be with his wife (Matthew and Benjamin, 181). As a result, David in 2 Samuel 11:10 urged Uriah to go home, but he refused to sleep with his wife while his fellow men were off fighting. David became angry that his plan to return Bathsheba to Uriah did not work. So David sent a note by messenger to the army commander with instructions to put Uriah on the frontline while the others withdrew. This act resulted in Uriah's death, leaving his household without an heir and the production of land to cease.

Consequently, Bathsheba mourned her husband's death and was then brought to David to be his wife. Hence, as the reigning monarch, David was not allowed to play a direct role in the competition between his households and the household of Uriah for political power in the state (Matthew and Benjamin, 180). Therefore, David had Uriah killed. He challenges his father's authority and controls his land and children by taking Bathsheba as his wife. This act abused royal power, so Yahweh sent the prophet Nathan to charge the royal house with covenant disloyalty and irresponsibility to protect and provide for the state.

God wants the royal house to rebuild covenant faith and kingdom society for His people through religious reform, social reform, and acknowledgment of divine sovereignty (Widbin, 134). Hence, the word of God came from the prophet Nathan to David in 2 Samuel 12:1 "So the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to tell David this story; there were two men in a certain town. One was rich, and one was poor". He used the parable of the ewe lamb to show David his failure to provide for and protect the people he was to serve. The parable was an educational instrument in ancient Israel used in its broadest sense to refer to an expanded analogy. Such analogies, first and foremost, are comparisons or contrasts used to explain or convince (Snodgrass). As such, Nathan's parable considers the rich and the poor. The prophets in Israel frequently spoke out on behalf of the poor, so it would not be out of the norm for the prophet Nathan to use this particular example. Furthermore, giving material assistance to the poor is a central ethical principle in the world of the Bible. The parable came directly from Yahweh and not from the prophet himself. Therefore Monarchs of Israel and Judah negotiate covenants in a sincere effort to fulfill their commission as the stewards of Yahweh (Matthew, Benjamin). Monarchs like David were subject to Yahweh's divine will and power, which anointed him as king. As guardians of the theocracy as God's spokesman, the role of the prophet was not only an advisor to the king but a representative of the divine assembly.

After the prophet, Nathan ended the parable of the rich man that took not only the poor man's lamb but killed it and prepared it for his guest. David became furious, according to 2 Samuel 12:4-5. It was easy for David to see the sins of others without applying the same standard to his situation; Samuel 12:5 "As surely as the Lord lives, he vowed any man who would do such a thing deserves to die. He must repay four lambs to the poor man for the one he stole and for having no pity". It was the monarch's responsibility as a lawgiver for the success and peace of

the state. Therefore David's verdict would have been ideal if he was not the assailant. As a result, the prophet rendered this verdict as a representative of the divine assembly and told David he was the one that disobeyed the law of God and state (2 Samuel 12:7). Nathan, as God's spokesman, begins to speak on Yahweh's behalf in 2 Samuel 12: 7-12 "The Lord, the God of Israel, says: "I anointed you king of Israel and saved you from the power of Saul. I gave you your master's house and his wives and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you much, much more. Why, then, have you despised the word of the Lord and done this horrible deed? For you have murdered Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the Ammonites and stolen his wife. From this time on, your family will live by the sword because you have despised me by taking Uriah's wife to be your own". The monarch's role was not above the law of God that states, "Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery, and thou shalt not covet. Hence the prophet Nathan was sent to let David know the child's death resulted from the offense with Bathsheba, the sin of his household, and the civil war that would follow was the judgment pronounced on David and his household. He was never to rest again fully. Therefore, Nathan the prophet exercised power as the monarch's loyal opposition, who challenged the diplomatic policies of the state (Matthew and Benjamin, 214).

The prophet was a representative of the divine assembly and delivered the legal verdict. They proclaimed messages given to them by God. They spoke God's truth to his people bringing a covenant model of kingdom building to the royal power by charging the king with covenant loyalty and responsibility. In addition, the Bible labels a variety of officials as prophets. Some were classical prophets, prophets to monarchs, and false prophets known as professional prophets. Hence, the role of the prophet was social as well as political. Monarchs and prophets

were both committed to fulfilling Yahweh's covenant with Israel. They shared the traditions stressing that only Yahweh ultimately fed and protected Israel (Matthew and Benjamin, 211).

Although Nathan was not mentioned other than a prophet to David, he still served as a spokesman of God who shared the traditions that only Yahweh fed and protected Israel. Hence, the prophet's role helped shape my understanding of 2 Samuel 12:1-12. The protocol for the prophets was to analyze the short-term consequences of the state decisions of its monarch to impose taxes, negotiate covenants, and wage war (Matthew and Benjamin, 211). Therefore, the prophet Nathan in this text was sent to analyze David's decision to challenge the household of Uriah by having him killed and taking his wife. The monarch's abuse of power allowed Yahweh to intervene as the divine assembly that the prophet represented. After the prophet spoke to David on behalf of God, he genuinely grieved and repented (Psalms 51:3-4); however, the child born out of the adultery became grievously ill and died. As a result, this was a part of the verdict Yahweh gave David through the prophet Nathan. Monarchs were delegated to negotiate covenants and prophets to monitor the state's compliance with its covenants. Therefore David's assault on Bathsheba violated the state's compliance with its Covenants since it was a synonym for marriage in the world of the Bible (Matthew and Benjamin, 217). Hence, this was one of the many texts in the world of the Bible where the prophets were sent to be the mouthpiece for Yahweh. Therefore, the label of prophet should be reserved for those who speak on behalf of God to bring order and restoration to his people.