

# NATHAN AS A PREACHER

*Thomas F. Eaves*

## NATHAN THE MAN

Nathan is first introduced in 2 Samuel 7:1 as a prophet. His name means gift<sup>1</sup>, and very little is known of this court prophet or his family. 1 Kings 4:5 mentions a Nathan who is the father of Azariah and Zabud who were chief officers of Solomon. Some think that this was Nathan the prophet whom we have under consideration.<sup>2</sup>

1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29 refer to “The Words” or rather “The Acts of Nathan the Prophet” as well as those of Samuel and Gad. “There can be no doubt that these are nothing more than references to the narratives in which Samuel, Nathan, and Gad are mentioned in our books of Samuel.” (Curtis on 1 Chron. 29:29). In 1 Chron. 29:25, sanction is claimed for Levitical temple-music as being commanded by God through Nathan and Gad.<sup>3</sup>

It has also been noted that Nathan is always referred to as a “**prophet**” in Samuel and Kings and never as a “seer.”<sup>4</sup>

Nathan is mentioned several times in the Old Testament but there are only three main events recorded concerning him. In two of the three instances he had a message from God to be delivered to the King of Israel (2 Sam. 7 and 12). In the third account he was an active participant in anointing Solomon to be King over Israel (1 Kin. 1:32-40).

## NATHAN'S MESSAGES

### ***First Message: “Thou shalt not build...”***

From the parallel accounts of this event (2 Sam. 7:1f; 1 Chr. 17:1-15) we learn that king David desired to build a house for Jehovah. After the ark had been brought to Jerusalem David became aware of the inconsistency of the picture. He dwelt in a house of cedar while the ark of Jehovah God was residing in curtains. Making his plans known to Nathan the prophet he received words of encouragement. **“And Nathan said to the King, Go do all that is in thy heart: for Jehovah is with thee”** (2 Sam. 7:3).

That night, however, God appeared to Nathan with a message for David. **“...Thou shalt not build me a house to dwell in”** (1 Chr. 17:4). The reason for this refusal is stated in 1 Kings 5:3 and 1 Chronicles 28:2-3. David had been a man of war and had shed blood. God revealed unto David that his dynasty would continue and that one of his sons would build the house for Jehovah (1 Sam. 7:13).

Nathan, the prophet of God, faithfully fulfilled his mission. **“According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David”** (2 Sam. 7:17). How difficult it must have been for Nathan to take this negative message to the King who had set his heart on building a house for God.

### ***Second Message: “Thou Art The Man.”***

David, the son of Jesse, is described by God himself as, **“a man after my heart”** (Acts 13:22). Without a doubt one of the darkest days in the life of David was when he sinned with Uriah's wife Bathsheba.

**And it came to pass at eventide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and inquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam—the wife of**

**Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her (for she was purified from her uncleanness); and she returned unto her house. And the woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, I am with child (2 Sam. 11:2-5).**

Following Bathsheba's message David immediately attempted to cover his sin. However, in the swift moving events that followed he only succeeded in piling sin upon sin. David the King: lied (2 Sam. 11:6-12); made Uriah drunk (2 Sam. 11:13); plotted and ordered Uriah's death (2 Sam. 11:14-15-Uriah, returning to the army and Joab, carried his own death warrant); and after Uriah's death David lied again when he sent word to Joab saying, **"let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another"** (2 Sam. 11:25). Uriah was not simply slain in battle, he was killed in an attempt to cover sin. No matter how hard David attempted to cover his sin with Bathsheba, David was unsuccessful and 2 Samuel 11 closes with the words, "But the thing that David had done displeased Jehovah" (v. 27b).

The inspired record in 2 Samuel 12:1-7 tells us that Jehovah God once again sends Nathan to David with a message.

**And Jehovah sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own morsel, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As Jehovah liveth, the man that hath done this is worthy to die: and he shall restore the lamb four-fold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man.**

After he had delivered God's message to David, established guilt, and identified David as the guilty party Nathan reveals the punishment to be meted out to David.

- 1) The sword shall never depart from thy house (12:10).
- 2) I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house (12:11).
- 3) I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor (12:11).
- 4) The child to be born to Bathsheba would die (12:14).

Once again Nathan delivers God's message to David with great boldness.

### **NATHAN AS A PREACHER**

The word preacher is translated from the Greek *kērux* which means a herald or proclaimer of public proclamations.<sup>5</sup> Barclay says of this word "Kērux is the Greek word for herald, and the herald was the man who brought a message direct from the King."<sup>6</sup> This word describes the preaching of Jesus, Paul, Peter and many others and should describe the preaching of today. Barclay describes the herald in the following manner.

- 1) The herald had in his voice a note of *certainty*. There was no doubt about his message; he did not come with perhapses and maybes and probabyls; he came with a definite and indisputable message.

2) The herald had in his voice the note of *authority*. He was speaking for the King; he was laying down and announcing the king's law, the king's commands, and the king's decision.

3) The herald's message came from a source beyond himself it came from the king. Preaching speaks from a source beyond the preacher: It is not the expression of one man's personal opinions; it is the voice of God transmitted through one man to the people.<sup>7</sup>

Look carefully at the work of Nathan through the meaning of the word preacher.

1. Nathan's message came from a source beyond himself. **"...the word of Jehovah came unto Nathan..."** (2 Sam. 7:4), and **"...Jehovah sent Nathan unto David"** (2 Sam. 12:1).

2. Nathan had in his voice a note of authority, **"God said."**

3. Nathan had in his voice a note of certainty. There was no way David could misunderstand. **"Thou shalt not build me a house to dwell in"** (1 Chr. 17:4), and **"...thou art the man"** (2 Sam. 12:7).

No one can view the life and work of Nathan without discovering the characteristics of a dedicated life. Nathan loved God and was courageous in obeying the instructions of God.

### HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

Those of us who are faithfully preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ today are heralds of King Jesus. We have been sent by the king. **"Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"** (Mat. 28:19). **"Preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and teaching"** (2 Tim. 4:2).

The King has commanded, "GO" and "PREACH." Brethren, we, like Nathan, have a message. We are to proclaim God's Word (2 Tim. 4:2), the only way of salvation for the sinner (Rom. 1:16), and the only way of life for the Christian (Rom. 12:1-2). As we study the work of Nathan, we should be concerned with one question: Are we delivering the message as Nathan did, or are we like the hireling of John 10:12-13?

### GOD'S MESSAGE TODAY

Our message is a message of salvation to those who are out of Jesus Christ. This message should be preached boldly in love to all of God's Creation. As heralds of God we have no authority to change the message in any way but must as Peter on Pentecost declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 2). Peter: preached Jesus (Acts 2:29-35); He declared Jesus to be both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36); He convicted his hearers of guilt (Acts 2:36, 37; and He instructed them how to rid themselves of sin (Acts 2:38-41). This is God's only message of salvation to the sinner. Some who profess to be heralds of the King today boast, "I never preach on 'first principles' or the 'plan of salvation.'" Then my brother you are not proclaiming all of the King's message and may the day hasten when you realize your tragic mistake.

Our message is a message of morality to those in and out of the Kingdom. Today, we live in a society of Bathshebas and they battle in worship to the god sun. What are we doing with the King's message? Our King says, "dress in modest apparel" (1 Tim. 2:9), **"...let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven"** (Mat. 5:16). ARE WE HEARALDING THE MESSAGE?

We live in a society where adultery is practiced openly, defended by many under pseudo respectable terms such as the LTA, swinging, making love, or the blasphemous description, "trial marriages." While the world jokes about this sinful relationship, novels are written to guide minds through the valley of illicit affairs while movies and television programs are produced to glorify this degrading act. Meanwhile in the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ some professing Christians openly practice adultery without being disciplined and some so-called-preachers teach God's children to commit adultery (as Jezebel of old, Rev. 2:20) because of their man-satisfying doctrine on marriage, divorce and remarriage.

The Kings message is clear: Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 19:1-9; Romans 7:1-4; and 1 Corinthians 7:39. Brethren, let's be faithful in proclaiming it.

The time has already passed when God's heralds should forcefully teach that the Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20) and the use or mis-use of anything which is detrimental to the physical body is a sin and hinders our effectiveness as we work in the Kingdom of God (Mat. 5:16)

"But, brother Eaves, if we condemn worldliness we will be at odds with the most influential brethren within the congregation." Brethren let's be like Nathan and go to the King himself if the occasion demands it! There may be some kings and queens in the church today, but God's message MUST be PREACHED! Paul states in 1 Corinthians 9:16, "**for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.**"

Nathan stood with God against ALL. Nathan faithfully delivered God's message. I pray that God will raise up more preachers cut from the same mold as Nathan, and that he will give us the strength and courage to be like Nathan the preacher.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. David Francis Roberts, "Nathan," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia IV* (1955), 2120.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 2121
3. *Ibid.*, p. 2121
4. *Ibid.*, p. 2121
5. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament* (Chicago; University of Chicago Press), p. 432.
6. William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958) vol. 1, p. 69.
7. *Ibid*, pp. 69-70.~

*Deceased*