



# Prophet

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Scripture: [2 Samuel 12](#)

Series: [Open \(14/50\)](#)

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## 2 Samuel 12

Please open your Bible at 2 Samuel 12. What God does in the world can be described in three areas. God reveals, God reconciles, and God rules.

These spheres of the great work of God are represented in three roles or ministries in the Old Testament: The prophet, the priest, and the king.

We have learned about the priest. The priest's ministry focused on God's work of reconciling. The high priest offered the sacrifice, by which atonement was made, and the presence of God came to His people.

We have learned about the king. His work was to protect and defend the people of God. The king's ministry reflected God's work of ruling.

Today, we are going to look at the last of these: the prophet. The prophet received and spoke the Word of God. The ministry of the prophet reflected God's work of revealing.

These three ministries—the prophet, priest and king—show us who Jesus is and why He came into the world. Jesus is our Great High Priest, who offered Himself, once for all, as the sacrifice for our sins. Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of Lords whose kingdom and reign will be forever. Jesus is the One who not only speaks the Word of God, as the prophets did, but He is the Word of God made flesh, who came among us.

*Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature... (Hebrews 1:1-3)*

This is why we do not look for new prophets today. God has not given us an open-ended revelation. He has given us a definitive revelation that points to Jesus Christ who is the Word of God. When the Word of God himself comes, no further word can be added. He is the One to whom the prophets point and the Apostles bear witness.

Today we are going to look at the story of Nathan, who we met last time in 2 Samuel 7, where he is introduced as 'Nathan the prophet,' (2 Samuel 7:2).

The story begins back in 2 Samuel 11:2:

*It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. (2 Samuel 11:2)*

David was the King of Israel. God had lifted him from being an unknown shepherd to the most powerful position in the land. But power brings its own temptations. People in positions of power can easily feel that they are somehow beyond the rules that apply to others.

The king saw a married woman – her name was Bathsheba. He decided that this was the person he wanted. The story reminds us that a heart that loves God can still harbor some strange affections. David loved God. He really did. But, at the same time, he gave way to affections that were utterly offensive to God.

When David found that Bathsheba was pregnant, he scrambled to cover his tracks. His first move was to call Bathsheba's husband, Uriah back from the field of battle. David ordered that Uriah be sent home. If Uriah spent a few nights at home with his wife, he would be identified as the father of the child.

But it didn't work. Uriah was a conscientious soldier, and he did not feel that he should be at home with his wife while others were risking their lives on the field of battle.

So, David had to resort to more desperate measures. He ordered that Uriah be put on the front line of battle, making his death inevitable (2 Samuel 11:5–17).

A short time after Uriah died in battle, David took the recently widowed Bathsheba to be his wife. The whole thing happened without a trace of public knowledge. It was the ultimate cover up. Except for one thing. God knew:

*"But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (2 Samuel 11:27b).*

The question is what will God do?

There were two possibilities.

Either, **God could remain silent**, in which case David's sin would remain secret, but his guilt and the judgment it would bring would also remain.

Or, **God could speak** in which case, David would be confronted with his sin, making repentance, forgiveness, and restoration possible.

He did not remain silent. "The Lord sent Nathan to David," (2 Samuel 12:1a). Nathan spoke God' Word so that sin would not have the last word in David's life.

There are three ‘speakers’ in our story today. God speaks. Nathan speaks. David speaks.

Think of these three in a triangle, with God at the top. God speaks to Nathan. Then, Nathan speaks to David. Then, as a result of that, David speaks to God.

## 1. God Speaks to Nathan (Revelation)

We saw from the story of God’s people at Mount Sinai, that hearing the voice of God directly, without a mediator, was a terrifying experience.

When God spoke at Mount Sinai, even Moses was trembling with fear, and when the people heard the voice of God, they begged that no further word be spoken to them (Hebrews 12:18–21). They felt something of what it will be like for sinners to stand before almighty God without a mediator on the last day. “When God speaks, the earth melts.” (Psalms 46:6)

The people said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die” (Exodus 20:19). So, God spoke to Moses and when Moses came down from the presence of God, he spoke the words of God to the people. That was the beginning of what we call “prophecy.” God sent prophets to bring His Word so that the people would be saved from the terror of hearing God speak to them directly.

**When God sent a prophet, it was always a sign of His grace.** The prophets said some pretty fierce things, but nothing they said could ever come close to the prospect of standing in the presence of God and hearing His voice directly.

What was it like for the prophets to receive the Word of God? The Apostle Peter tells us,

*For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were **carried along** by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:21)*

The best way to grasp what Peter is saying here is through a story in the book of Acts. Paul was under arrest and was being taken by ship as a prisoner to Rome. Luke records,

*...a tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land. And when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were **driven along**. (Acts 27:14-15).*

The word Luke used for the ship being “driven along” by the wind is the same word Peter used for the prophets being “carried along” by the Holy Spirit. How much control do you have when you are in a ship being carried along in a storm? Not much. The direction of the boat is controlled by the wind. In the same way, the message of the prophets was controlled by the Spirit.

The words of the prophets came from the mouth of God. “The word of the Lord came to Nathan,” (2 Samuel 7:4). The prophets spoke the word they received in the first person

*Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, **I anointed** you king over Israel, and **I delivered** you out of the hand of Saul' (2 Samuel 12:7).*

The prophets “spoke from God” (1 Peter 1:21). They did not control the message; the message controlled them. The Word of God came to them like a mighty wind, and they were carried along.

People who are looking to find their way to faith want to know, ‘How do we know who God is? How do we know what truth is?’ Do we all simply come up with an opinion that is shaped by our experience and culture and so forth? No. The answer is that God speaks, but mercifully, He does not speak to us directly.

He spoke through the prophets who were given the unique privilege of standing in the presence of God and hearing the voice of God, so that they could speak the very words of God to the people. The prophets point us forward to the Word made flesh. They spoke the word of God. Jesus is the Word of God.

This is how the prophets could speak about things that otherwise could not have been known. Isaiah spoke about a virgin who would conceive and give birth to a son (Isaiah 9:14). Zechariah spoke about a king who would come to Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). The only way prophets could have known these things centuries in advance of the coming of Jesus was that God told them.

How did Nathan know about David’s adultery? God told him! God spoke to Nathan and blew David’s carefully crafted cover.

Whatever you may think is secret in your life, God knows. Nothing is ever hidden from Him. Before God, all hearts are open and from God no secret is ever hid.

## **2. Nathan Speaks to David (Proclamation)**

Nathan tells the story of a great injustice.

There were two men in a certain city: one rich, the other poor. The rich man had many flocks and herds. The poor man had one little lamb. The poor man loved this lamb. The lamb ate food, drank from his cup and lay in his arms (2 Samuel 12:1-3).

One day, a guest arrived at the rich man’s house. The rich man wanted to lay on a feast, but he was ‘unwilling’ to take a lamb from his own flock, so he ‘took’ the poor man’s lamb and prepared it for the feast (2 Samuel 12:4).

David was outraged when he heard this story.

*Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." (2 Samuel 12:5-6)*

Notice that what angers David so intensely is a reflection of his own sin. The rich man takes what belongs to, and is dearly loved by, another person. That was David's sin. When David sees his own sin in someone else, he hates it, and condemns it

But he is blind to the presence of the same sin in his own life. A.W. Pink says, "It is the inevitable tendency of sin to deaden the conscience and harden the heart."<sup>1</sup>

We live in the age of outrage. When someone else's sin makes you angry, here's what you can do:

First, depersonalize it, and write down what it is: This is greed. This is pride. This is deception. This is idolatry.

Then ask God to show you where in your life you might be guilty of the same thing. **What makes you most angry in others may be hiding in your own heart.**

Notice that it was the Word of God opened David's eyes to the sin that was hiding in his heart. Nathan said to David, 'You are the man!' (2 Samuel 12:7).

The entrance of God's Word gives light. So, use the Bible as a flashlight to help you see the sins that may be lurking in your life so that you can confess them to God and experience forgiveness.

When you read the Bible, ask God to show you the hidden sins that may be lurking in your life so that you can confess them to God.

*Search me and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! See if there is any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24)*

Don't fall into this trap: Don't let admitting you are a sinner become a substitute for confessing your sins and placing them under the blood of Jesus.

Nathan was not done. David knew that he had sinned. David has sinned against Bathsheba and he has sinned against Uriah. But, most of all, Nathan wants **David to know that he has sinned against the Lord.**

*Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, '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 if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. (2 Samuel 12:7)*

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<sup>1</sup> A W Pink, The Life of David, Baker, (vol 2), (Baker, 1981), p. 47

*Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil **in His sight?** (2 Samuel 12:9)*

In David's sight, what he did with Bathsheba was desirable in his sight. In David's sight, what he did with Uriah was necessary. In God's sight, what David did with Bathsheba and Uriah was evil.

So, God says, 'You have despised me,' (2 Samuel 12:10). **Sin, at its heart is an offence against God.** It is to despise His kindness and grace towards us in Jesus Christ. That's why God say to David, 'Look at all I've done for you! Look at how you have responded towards me to do what is evil in my sight.'

The sinfulness of sin is that it is a dispensing of God himself.

Years ago, I came across a poem by John Masefield called The Everlasting Mercy. It tells the story of Saul Kane, a man who knew the truth, but lived in rebellion against it - a liar, a brawler, a cheat, and a foulmouthed drunken carouser. The beginning of this poem lays out the manner of his rebellious life.

Then, a woman by the name of Miss Bourne, a Quaker, was introduced, who used to go around the pubs to reach out to people like Saul Kane

*"There used be a custom then,  
Miss Bourne, the Friend, went round at ten  
To all the pubs in all the place,  
To bring the drunkards' souls to grace;  
Some sulked, of course, and some were stirred,  
But none give her a dirty word."*

One night when Miss Bourne came into the pub, Saul Kane was so far gone he didn't care what he said.

He mocked her. He taunted her. And when in his drunken rage he swore at her, the whole place fell silent.

*The men stood dumb as cattle are,  
They grinned, but thought I'd gone too far,  
There come a hush and no one break it,  
They wondered how Miss Bourne would take it.  
She up to me with black eyes wide,  
She looked as though her spirit cried;  
She took my tumbler from the bar  
Beside where all the matches are  
And poured it out upon the floor dust,*

*Among the fag-ends, spit and saw-dust.*

*"Saul Kane," she said, "when next you drink,  
Do me the gentleness to think,*

*That every drop of drink accursed  
Makes Christ within you die of thirst,*

*That every dirty word you say  
Is one more flint upon his way,*

*Another thorn about His head,  
Another mock by where He tread,*

*Another nail, another cross.*

*All that you are is that Christ's loss."<sup>2</sup>*

That subdued Saul Kane very fast.

When you sin, you sin against the Son of God who loved you and gave Himself for you. And if you have any love in your heart for God that will produce repentance in you.

### **3. David Speaks to God (Restoration)**

*David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD," (2 Samuel 12:13)*

*Against you, you only, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight (Psa 51:4)*

Notice that here is no blaming, no evasion and no excuse here. David could have said, "Nathan, you have to understand that Bathsheba threw herself at me." There may have been some truth in that. He might have said, "Nathan, my marriage has been dead for years." That may also have been true if what we know of David's wife. David could even have said, "Nathan, I know it was wrong but other kings have done worse." That also would have been true.

But David did not pass any blame or seek any excuse. He said, "I have sinned against the Lord."

That simple confession is filled out in Psalm 51, which was written at this time:

*Against you, you only, have I sinned,  
And done what is evil in your sight. (Psalm 51:4)*

But I want you to notice where David begins in that Psalm:

*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love:*

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<sup>2</sup> Masefield, John. *The Everlasting Mercy*. The McMillan Company, New York. 1925.

*according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. (Psalm 51:1)*

He goes back to the great promise of God that we looked at last week. God had said of David's son, Solomon:

*...When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him...  
but my **steadfast love** will not depart from him, (2 Samuel 7:14-15)*

David says to God, 'I cast myself on your steadfast love! I look to your mercy. I dare to believe that your promise is for me. Do not take your steadfast love from me.'

And it was. David came under the discipline of the God, but when he confessed, he found forgiveness.

*David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; (2 Samuel 12:13)*

Where did God put David's sin? He put it on Jesus when He died on the cross. God says to David, 'You shall not die.' But someone did die. Jesus died in David's place.

As we prepare to come around the Lord's Table today, I invite you to join with me in thanking God for three gifts:

## **Conclusion**

### **1. The Gift of God Speaking to You**

How does God speak today? God speaks through His Word and by His Spirit. When God's Word is opened, God's voice is heard.

The Bible says, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart," (Hebrews 3:15)

A thousand years after the time of David, another king named Herod sat on the throne in Jerusalem. Like David, he sinned against the seventh commandment. God spoke to him through a prophet whose name was John the Baptist. But Herod refused to listen to God's Word and in the end, he ordered that the head of John the Baptist be brought to him on a plate.

Sometime later, Herod met Jesus. Pontius Pilate sent our Lord to Herod for trial. Herod had wanted to see Jesus for quite some time, so he is very pleased. Herod plied Jesus with many questions. "But Jesus made no answer," (Luke 23:9).

Herod refused the Word of God to him through John, and Jesus had nothing more to say to him. Right now, Herod awaits the day when he will hear the voice of God without a prophet, and without a Savior.



David made a better choice than Herod. He listened to the Word of God even when it exposed him, and he responded with faith and repentance. God speaking to you through His Word is a gift. Thank God for it! So today, if you hear His word do not harden your heart.

## 2. The Gift of God Convicting You

Anyone in whom the Holy Spirit of God is at work will find that when the Word of God is opened, we regularly feel our own failings, see our own sins, and become aware of our own Shortcomings. Sometimes we can feel the weight of that. But I want you to see that when God convicts of sin it is a wonderful gift. His purpose is never to crush you, but it is always to restore you. It is a sure sign that God has not abandoned you.

The role of the prophet in the Old Testament is fulfilled by the work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. Jesus said, when the Holy Spirit comes, he will “convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment, (John 16:8). It is the work of the Holy Spirit to show you the sin that hides in your heart, so that seeing where you need the cleansing that comes through the blood of Christ, you can receive that cleansing as you come to Him in confession, repentance and faith.

The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to shine the light of truth into your conscience. This is how God speaks to you.

Hearing the truth about your sins is never comfortable. But whenever God speaks it is a sign of his grace. His purpose is always to restore and to bless.

So, how is The Holy Spirit of God speaking to you through the Word today? What sin in your life, needs to be confessed and laid before the cross of Christ in faith and repentance? Thank God for conviction of sin. God reveals what has been hidden to restore what has been lost.

## 3. The Gift of God Forgiving You

*David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.”  
And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has put away your sin...” (2 Samuel 12:13).*

As you confess this morning, dare to believe that God will forgive you Look to the cross of Jesus and hear these words, today. The Lord has put away your sin!

As you look to Christ in faith and repentance today, he will wash the guilt of your sin, he will lift the weight on your awakened conscience, and he will restore the joy of your salvation.

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