

David is guilty and the Lord intends to confront him with his sin. He chooses his intermediary Nathan for the task. The direct route would be for Nathan to read the sixth and seventh commandments from the Law and pronounce David guilty of violating them.

But Nathan instead tells a parable about two men and a ewe lamb. A parable is a story that indirectly conveys some truth. This particular parable is a simile—a simple story where the characters and their actions tell us something about ourselves or about God. The parable of the sower and the seed is also simile.

The Lord Jesus, as we know, preached often through parables. Why? According to Matthew 13:15-16, it is so that most of his listeners, hardened against belief, will not understand. "... lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart ... But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear." It's

like a radio signal that can only be picked up by a receiver tuned to the right frequency (another simile).

But why a parable instead of plain speech? Well, there is no speech more unambiguous than a legal document, but legal documents hardly inspire us. A story, on the other hand, has the power to reach the heart, to reach the receiver that God has put into men

Nathan tells a parable that bypasses David's natural defenses and touches the royal strings of his heart -- his love of justice. The treatment of the fictitious poor man stirs his righteous indignation. And once aroused, Nathan turns that indignation back on David with the simple words, "You are the man." David can only acknowledge his guilt before God.

Notes

12:30 A talent of gold weighed about 75 pounds.

Questions for study and discussion:

1. In the story told by Nathan, who is represented by each of these characters:

The rich man

The poor man

The lamb

The traveler (extra credit)

2. What sentence did David pronounce on the rich man of the story? Was it carried out?

3. Why does David say only that he has sinned against the Lord? What about Uriah and the other victims of David's schemes?

4. In verse 9 Nathan tells David he has despised the word of the Lord. How? In what ways can we despise the word of the Lord?
5. How will the terrible prophecies of verses 10 and 11 come to pass?
6. How does God show grace here?
7. What can we learn from verse 23?
8. Has David been restored to the Lord's favor by the end of this chapter?