

Should David have been Stoned?



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ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES

In Leviticus 20:10, the Bible records: “The man who commits adultery with another man’s wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.” In 2 Samuel 11:3-4, the Bible declares that David took Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, and committed adultery with her. In chapter 12 of that same book, the prophet Nathan confronted David about his sin, thereby convicting David of his sin and bringing him to repentance. There is, however, no record that David was stoned or put to death because of his adulterous union with Bathsheba. In fact, David was allowed to continue his reign as king of Israel. Skeptics have pointed to this scenario and accused God of being a “respector of persons,” claiming that He showed David more mercy than the Levitical Law allowed. Certain Bible believers have done the same, claiming that God simply had mercy on David in spite of what was written in the Law.

A close look at the actual Law of Moses shows that these conclusions are incorrect. God did not jettison the Law of Moses in order to keep David alive. Mosaic regulations specifically stated that a person could be executed only if there were two or more witnesses to the crime (Deuteronomy 19:15). One witness was insufficient to invoke the death penalty (Deuteronomy 17:6). When we look at the situation between David and Bathsheba, we do not find that even one eyewitness was present to verify the adultery. In fact, it seems that the entire adulterous affair was quite hidden from the general populace. Only with the arrival of Nathan, the prophet, who was sent by God, did the details surface concerning David’s adultery. Nathan, however, could not be a witness against David, since there is no record of his having been at the scene of the crime. And even though he apparently got the information directly from God, that still would not fall under the ordinance mentioned in Deuteronomy 19:15. Furthermore, he still would need one more witness in order for David to be stoned.

In truth, if those under the Law of Moses were condemned based on whether or not God knew of their crimes, then far more deaths would have occurred, since “the eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good” (Proverbs 15:3). We find, then, that the Mosaic Law was not ignored in David’s case; nor is this an instance of God showing partiality. Yet, even if there had been witnesses, and the Israelites had not properly followed the judicial procedures as set forth in the Law of Moses, it would not have been God’s fault, but the fault of the Israelites who failed to obey God’s commandments.

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