

David Jeffrey, Interpreting the Bible in Art: Rembrandt's Bathsheba

Lecture Listening Guides

by John Beukema

Lecturer: David Jeffrey

Title: Interpreting the Bible in Art: Rembrandt's Bathsheba

Date: 10/07/2017

Prepared by John Beukema

1. When it comes to biblical commentary and exegesis on the story of David and Bathsheba, what seems to be the main focus?
2. Regarding the artistic point of view, what seems to be most significant in the story?
3. In order to focus on Bathsheba, what does that do to the biblical narrative?
4. How do early etymologies of Bathsheba's name give hints about how the story is imaginatively amplified?

5. What does the shift of names from Bath-sheba (daughter of fullness) in 2 Samuel to Bath-shua (daughter of opulence) in Chronicles signify?
6. Why did early and medieval Christian commentary remember Bathsheba only minimally, as the occasion of a great sin by an otherwise noble king?
7. What does the spaniel (Bathsheba's dog) represent and how does that change in iconography?
8. How did Gregory the Great's allegorical strategy connect Bathsheba to Beersheba and to Jesus?
9. When the Patristic authors represent Bathsheba as a type of the law, what does her marriage to King David then signify?
10. How did Lutheran illustrations suggest a more explicit, though not literal, depiction of Bathsheba bathing?
11. Why did Catholic painters continue to provide explicit renditions of this scene even after the Council of Trent warned against it?
12. Why is Reuben's painting seen as a secular work of art,

rather than religious?

13. What items of iconography in Reuben's "Bathsheba" advances this idea?
14. How does Rembrandt's 1654 depiction differ from Reuben's?
15. Which ethical point of view does Rembrandt represent?
16. How does Rembrandt show his interest in the biblical text?
17. Jeffrey grapples with the reasons for suspicion of art in the evangelical tradition. What two reasons does he list for that?
18. What two answers does Jeffrey give for ignoring those evangelical suspicions and embracing religious art?
19. What truth is expressed in the common depiction of Mary at the Annunciation during the 1400-1700 period?
20. According to Jeffrey, in what sense are we made in the image of God?

