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2 Samuel 15–16 | “The Revolt of Absalom”

I. THE REVOLT OF ABSALOM AND FLIGHT OF DAVID. (15)

THE REVOLT OF ABSALOM (v. 1-12)

A. (v. 7)

1. ***“And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron.”***

a. “after forty years”

1) The “forty years” is a difficulty for scholars because we’re not sure what the 40 years are referring to.

a) Some Jewish rabbis say this refers to when the Jews desired a king, but it cannot be 40 years since there was a monarchy in Israel because Saul reigned for 40 years ([Acts 13:21](#)) before David even began to reign.

b) Some rabbis say it refers to 40 years since Saul had all the priests killed in Nob.

c) Some say that this refers to Absalom’s age as being 40 years old. However, he was the third son born in Hebron ([2 Sam. 3:2-3](#)), and David’s whole reign was 40 years ([2 Sam. 5:3-5](#)). Thus, this would have to be David’s final year of his reign, and Absalom would have to have been born in the first year in Hebron.

d) Some scholars say that it began with the private anointing of David by Samuel ([1 Sam. 16](#)), however, if David was 12 years old when he was anointed, then that would have David’s sons as his royal advisers ([2](#)

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Sam. 8:18) at 15 years old, which seems too young since they had to be 20 years old to be in the military (**Num. 1:3**).

- e) Some scholars say this as the 40th year of David’s reign since David’s whole reign was 40 years (**2 Sam. 5:3-5**), and it would be difficult to fit all the remaining events of David’s career into 1 year.
- f) Some have suggested that it had been 40 years earlier that David invaded the Geshurites and slaughtered the men, women, and children (**1 Sam. 27:8-9**).¹
 - i. Absalom’s mother was the daughter of the king of Geshur (**2 Sam. 3:3**), and since Absalom says in our text that he made a vow in Geshur (**2 Sam. 15:8**), so the speculation is that Absalom is partly motivated by revenge against his dad for slaughtering his mother’s people.
- g) Some scholars see the number “*forty*” as a corruption in the Hebrew Text² by a copyist, but that it should read what we find in the Syriac, Arabic, and most Latin Vulgate manuscripts, which say “*four*.” Also, Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, said that “*four*” was probably correct.
 - i. If that’s the case, then the “*four years*” may refer to the time since

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/notes/king-james-bible-debate/2-samuel-157-after-40-or-4-years-hebrew-text-corrupted/10150700973231693/>

² All the Hebrew manuscripts, including the Masoretic, read “*forty*.”

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Absalom came back to Jerusalem and started his rebellion.

- 2) **NOTE:** This is one of those small difficulties of of interpretation and manuscripts, but it doesn't affect any Biblical doctrine. Since the Hebrew texts read “forty,” we'll just go with that, but we're not sure where that 40-year mark begins.

B. (v. 9)

1. **“And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron.”**

a. “Hebron”

- 1) Hebron was the city that David first began his reign, and he reigned there for 7 years (2 Sam. 5:3-5).
- 2) It was when David was reigning in Hebron that Absalom was born (2 Sam. 3:2-3), so Absalom is returning to his birthplace.

C. (v. 11)

1. **“And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing.”**

a. “in their simplicity” - Gr. “innocently”

b. “they knew not anything”

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- 1) These 200 men didn’t know about Absalom’s conspiracy and his plan to overthrow the kingdom of David.

D. (v. 12)

1. ***“And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.”***

a. *“Ahithophel the Gilonite”*

- 1) *“Ahithophel”* - Heb. *“Brother of Folly”*
- 2) *“Gilonite”* - person from the city of Giloh.

b. *“while he offered sacrifices”*

- 1) Absalom is doing his religious duties while conspiring to do evil. That is hypocrisy.
 - a) Too often, there are people that will go to church, lift up their hands in worship, yet have evil intentions throughout the week.
 - i. These are the people that will go to an Easter Sunday service and then leave church, go to his girlfriends house and sleep with her. That kind of deception is tragic and sad.

[DAVID FLEES FROM JERUSALEM \(v. 13-17\)](#)

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E. (v. 17)

1. **“And the king went forth, and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off.”**

- a. *“a place that was far off” - Heb. Beth-ham Marchak - “Far House; House of the Breadth”*
 - 1) This is probably a proper name, but the translators just translated what the name means.
 - 2) This was just outside the gates of Jerusalem before crossing the Kidron Valley.

DAVID AND HIS ROYAL BODYGUARD (v. 18-22)

F. (v. 21)

1. **“And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the LORD liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.”**

- a. Swearing by the Lord, and by the life of king David, Ittai pledged his undying loyalty to David. This was a tremendous commitment of love!
 - 1) Cf. [Ruth 1:16-17](#) - This is much like what Ruth said to Naomi when she said, *“Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.”*

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- 2) Cf. **Philippians 1:20-21** - This is much the same commitment of the Apostle Paul to Christ, when he wrote, *“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”*

DAVID AND ZADOK (v. 23-29)

G. (v. 25-26)

1. “And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city:...”

a. In bringing the Ark of the Covenant, they probably thought, “We’ll have God with us if we bring the Ark.”

1) We remember back to the days of Samuel (**1 Sam. 3:3-5**), and the children of Israel took the Ark into battle with the Philistines thinking it would be a good-luck charm that would give them victory. However, they lost the battle and the Philistines took the Ark (**1 Sam. 3:11**).

a) **NOTE:** They thought there was a power and protection from the Ark, but there was no power in the Ark of the Covenant.

b) **KEY:** There are people today that feel that there is some kind of spiritual power in religious relics (a cross over their doors, statues of Mary, etc.), but there is no power in religious relics. The power really is in a relationship with God!

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- i. It seems that there is always a desire to take something that reminds me of the work of God, of the power of God, and sort of make a shrine out of it.
- c) Cf. **2 Kings 18:4** - During the days of Hezekiah, he had to destroy the Brass Serpent that Moses raised up in the wilderness because they were beginning to worship it as an idol, and he broke the thing in pieces and said, “Nhushtah!”, which in Hebrew means “a thing of brass”!

2. “...if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation: But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.”

- a. This is David’s FULL COMMITMENT to God.
 - 1) Cf. **Job 13:15** - Job said, “*Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.*”
 - 2) Cf. **Daniel 3:16-18** - This reminds me of the full commitment of the 3 Jewish teenagers Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Babylon. They wouldn’t bow before the great image, and Nebuchadnezzar told them that they better bow or he’ll throw them into the fiery furnace. Well, they said, “*O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not,*”

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be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”

- a) In other words, “Even if God doesn’t deliver us, we’ll take those consequences! Our lives are in His hands to do what He wants!”

DAVID AND HUSHAI (v. 30-37)

H. (v. 30)

1. “And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.”

- a. “And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up”
 - 1) They crossed the Kidron Valley, and went up the Mount of Olives *and wept as he went up*.
 - a) Many centuries later, the Descendant of David, the Messiah, would descend down the Mount of Olives on Palm Sunday, and He also was weeping because they did not recognize Him as the King, and He knew that judgment would come to them.
 - b) Then, later on that Passion Week, after the Last Supper, Jesus and His disciples “*sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives*” (Mark 14:26). It was there in the Garden of Gethsemane, we read, “And

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when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” (Luke 22:40-44)

- 2) Here we see David, as a foreshadowing of the Greater than David, that would ascend up the Mount of Olives, rejected by man, yet still anointed of God.

I. (v. 31)

1. “And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.”

- a. David hears of Ahithophel’s defection, and then prays!
 - 1) **NOTE:** He heard the problem, and then instantly prayed!
 - 2) **Q** = What’s the first thing you do when you hear of a problem?...
 - a) Do you call your friend?
 - b) Do you seek advice from someone else?

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- c) Do you complain and groan?
- 3) **KEY:** Whenever you encounter a problem, the first thing you should do is pray!! Take it to the Lord!
 - a) Cf. **Philippians 4:6-7** - *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”*
 - b) Cf. **1 Peter 5:7** - *“Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.”*
- b. There are 2 Psalms where David makes reference to Ahithophel’s defection.
 - 1) Cf. **Psalm 55:1-7, 12-14** - *“Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication. Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise; Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me. My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah. ... For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: But it was*

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thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.”

- 2) Cf. **Psalm 41:9** - “*Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.*”
 - a) This reference by David is about Ahithophel, but it is quoted in the New Testament as a prophecy of the betrayal of Jesus Christ by Judas Iscariot.
 - b) Cf. **John 13:18-21** - “I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.”
 - c. Also, there were 2 other Psalms that were written at this same time as David is ascending the Mount of Olives weeping as he is fleeing from Absalom (**Psalms 3 & 4**). So you can read those psalms and put them in their context.

J. (v. 32)

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1. **“And it came to pass, that when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped God, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat rent, and earth upon his head:”**
 - a. *“Hushai the Archite”*
 - 1) *“Hushai”* - Heb. *“Hasty; Happy”*
 - 2) *“Archite”* - Heb.

II. ABSALOM IN JERUSALEM. (16)

DAVID AND ZIBA (v. 1-4)

A. (v. 1)

1. **“And when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine.”**
 - a. *“And when David was a little past the top of the hill”*
 - 1) He has now gone over the top of the Mount of Olives, and is heading down east towards Jericho.
 - b. *“Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth”*
 - 1) Cf. **2 Samuel 9** - Ziba was Saul’s servant, and you remember when David wanted to show

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kindness to the house of Saul in order to keep his covenant with Jonathan, he called in Ziba, who told David about Mephibosheth. So, David brought in Mephibosheth and gave him all that belonged to his grandfather Saul, and since Mephibosheth was lame in his feet from a childhood accident, David had him eat at the king’s table. Then, David told Ziba to be his servant and that he and his family would till the fields for Mephibosheth.

B. (v. 3)

1. ***“And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father.”***

- a. This is a boldface LIE!!! David will find out later, but right now, this is just adding to his misery!

DAVID AND SHIMEI (v. 5-14)

C. (v. 10)

1. ***“And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?”***

- a. In other words, “How do we know but what God hasn’t said, Go out and curse David!”
- b. David has committed himself totally to God.

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- 1) He’s not defending himself, but just trusting the Lord to take care of it.
- 2) Cf. **1 Peter 2:21-23** - Peter wrote in his first epistle, *“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:”*
 - a) **KEY:** I think that there are times it is right to stand up and not let people walk all over you, but there are also times that we just need to let the Lord be our defense. He does a much better job than I could ever do!!
- 3) **Illust.** - Many years ago, when I was an intern at a church that I served at, I worked hard in cleaning the sanctuary, the bathrooms, and the church facilities, all by myself. I would also counsel people that came into the office, led worship, fed the homeless, etc... Well, this lady made a comment that I was lazy, and it really upset me. Then, the pastor said, “Don’t defend yourself. Let the Lord take care of it. Maybe ask Him to check your heart and see if there is any truth to it. And if not, then let it go and let the Lord take care of it.” That was so freeing!!! So, I just committed it to the Lord and let my life be a testimony that I do serve the Lord.
 - c. Cf. **1 Kings 2:8-9** - Later on, when David was turning the kingdom over to Solomon, he said, “You know

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when I left Jerusalem, and I was in all that hardship, this guy Shimei came out and cursed me. Take care of him son”. So, David at this point is willing to commit it to the Lord, but later on, he had Solomon take care of it!

ABSALOM’S ARRIVAL (v. 15-19)

ABSALOM’S AND DAVID’S CONCUBINE (v. 20-23)

D. (v. 22)

1. ***“So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.”***

- a. In those days, whenever a man succeeded a king, the king’s harem actually became the property of the new king. So, Absalom is establishing himself as the new king of Israel.
- b. Cf. [2 Samuel 12:11-12](#) - Sadly, this is in fulfillment of what God said earlier by the prophet Nathan, *“Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.”*
- c. At this point, there is no turning back as far as Absalom is concerned.
 - 1) Up to this point, the people may have thought, “Maybe Absalom will make peace with his dad,

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and then all of us will be in trouble once David is back on the throne.” But, now they’re thinking, “We don’t have to worry about that now! Absalom is all in, and his dad will never have a treaty at this point!”

- d. So, Absalom has burned the bridge, and the people are behind him! Yet, the Lord is still with David.