

**2Samuel 15:1 ¶ And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.**

**2Samuel 15:2 And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city *art* thou? And he said, Thy servant *is* of one of the tribes of Israel.**

**2Samuel 15:3 And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters *are* good and right; but *there is* no man *deputed* of the king to hear thee.**

**2Samuel 15:4 Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!**

**2Samuel 15:5 And it was *so*, that when any man came nigh *to him* to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him.**

**2Samuel 15:6 And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.**

Having gained his freedom to move about the city, Absalom wasted no time in acquiring a chariot and horses and gathering together a group of fifty men to run ahead of him. I think this was part of his plan to present himself to the people as the heir to the throne.

The IVP Commentary provides this note concerning the chariot: “The word used here suggests an ornamental chariot of the sort used both in Egypt and Mesopotamia. The luxury transportation of the day, these were typically gilded with all variety of gold, lapis lazuli and precious stones.”

He would get up early each morning and position himself at the gate of the city so as to be able to ingratiate himself to those coming to the city. It was the custom of that day for the people to conduct legal matters at the gate of the city.

Whenever he encountered a man coming to the city seeking judicial help from the king, Absalom would ask them what city they were from. Upon being told a specific city, Absalom would affirm that the man had a legitimate case to present; but, unfortunately, there was no designated judge available to hear his case. Absalom would then declare that if he were made the judge in the land, every man would be able to come to him and receive justice. When any man sought to bow before him, he would reach out to hug him instead.

It is obvious that Absalom aspired to dethrone his father, and it wasn't long before the men of Israel began to wish the same.

**2Samuel 15:7 ¶ 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.**

**2Samuel 15:8 For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.**

**2Samuel 15:9 And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron.**

Commentators agree that there is a textual error in verse 7. Both the Septuagint and Josephus translate the forty as four years. That certainly makes sense in context with the rest of the book.

So, it would seem that Absalom kept up his presence at the gate for two years before deciding it was time to take action to dethrone his father. He first approached his father and asked permission to go to Hebron and make good on a vow he had made to the LORD. He explained that while he was in Geshur in Syria, he had promised the LORD that he would serve/worship Him if He would bring him home again to Jerusalem.

David readily agreed to his son's request and sent him away in peace.

Guzik has a pertinent observation regarding the phrase, "Go in peace" – "Ironically, these were David's last words to Absalom. Upon hearing these, Absalom went to carry on the plot to overthrow David's kingdom."

**2Samuel 15:10** But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.

**2Samuel 15:11** 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.

**2Samuel 15:12** 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.

It seems that Absalom went to Hebron, but not to pay a vow to the LORD. He was prepared to make himself king over Israel. Absalom had apparently gathered a great number of men who were willing to help him achieve his goal. He sent messengers or "tale-bearers" throughout Israel that were instructed to declare him king in Hebron when they heard the trumpet signal.

The IVP Commentary offers some insight on why Absalom probably chose Hebron: "It is shrewd political maneuver on Absalom's part to be crowned in Hebron (nineteen miles southeast of Jerusalem). In addition to being the site of the ancestral burial cave at Machpelah, it was also David's capital city when he was king of Judah. Absalom thereby associates himself with the covenant and the roots of David's original power center. He also puts enough space between himself and Jerusalem to prevent interference and set the stage for his march on the capital."

When Absalom left Jerusalem, 200 men accompanied him who had no clue what he was planning. JFB suggests that these men were men of repute that were chosen to lend credence to his claim. One can't help but wonder what excuse he used to get these men to go with him on what was supposedly such a personal matter.

Absalom also sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor who lived in Giloh, to come and join him in offering sacrifices. Reminder: Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather. From the following context, we can assume that he still harbored ill will against the king for his sin with his granddaughter.

Isn't it interesting how men can think that the LORD will honor their sacrifices even as they choose to rebel against His will? I can't help but think of people who "claim" to be Christians today that practice sin that is specifically identified in His word—e.g., living together without benefit of marriage, using deceitful business practices, denying the truth of scripture, denying God as Creator, etc.—and expect the LORD to answer their prayers.

JFB provided an interesting observation: "The rapid accession of one place after another in all parts of the kingdom to the party of the insurgents, shows that deep and general dissatisfaction existed at this time against the person and government of David."

I think that observation is probably valid considering David's response as shown below.

**2Samuel 15:13 ¶ And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.**

**2Samuel 15:14 And David said unto all his servants that *were* with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not *else* escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.**

**2Samuel 15:15 And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint.**

It wasn't long until a messenger came to David warning him that his government was in danger because the people were turning their allegiance to Absalom. David, the mighty warrior, responded in a spirit of defeat rather than confront his son. He told his servants in Jerusalem to prepare to flee because they would not be able to escape Absalom. What a change from the young man that faced the giant Goliath in the name of the LORD. This tells me that David's guilt over his past sins had probably affected his faith and his confidence that the LORD would be with him.

David urged his servants to hurry before Absalom and his troops could make a surprise attack and devastate the city. He was convinced they would not be able to defeat the attacker. The king's servants assured David that they were ready to do his bidding.

Frankly, it is a bit of a miracle in and of itself that David's servants were ready to follow him in retreating. I believe these were probably men that held to the truth that David was the LORD's anointed and that their flight was temporary.

**2Samuel 15:16 And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women, *which were* concubines, to keep the house.**

**2Samuel 15:17** And the king went forth, and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off.

**2Samuel 15:18** And all his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men which came after him from Gath, passed on before the king.

King David headed out with all of his household except for ten concubines that he left behind to take care of the palace. The king led his people to a place at the outskirts of the city and then waited as his servants passed before him, including those who were of foreign descent—the Cherethites, the Pelethites, the Gittites, and 600 men from Gath.

**2Samuel 15:19** Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king: for thou *art* a stranger, and also an exile.

**2Samuel 15:20** Whereas thou camest *but* yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth *be* with thee.

**2Samuel 15:21** 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.

**2Samuel 15:22** And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that *were* with him.

When the king saw Ittai the Gittite, he asked him why he was with them. He had just come to Jerusalem the day before seeking exile. David told Ittai that he should take his kinsmen back to the city with him and make a life under the new king. He even pronounced a blessing of mercy and truth to go with him.

It seems that David was ready to cede the kingdom to Absalom without a fight.

Ittai quickly told David that he was his king, and he would live or die with him. This statement brought to mind Ruth's statement to Naomi when she was determined to return to Bethlehem with her.

*Ruth 1:16–17 “And Ruth 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.”*

So David allowed Ittai and his family to pass by.

**2Samuel 15:23** And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness.

To see the king departing from Jerusalem with all his servants caused great mourning throughout the countryside. They eventually passed over the brook

Kidron and headed toward the wilderness.

The IVP Commentary provides more geographic detail: "David leaves Jerusalem traveling east across the Kidron Valley toward the Mount of Olives, the hill across the valley from Jerusalem. He then continues northeast to Bahurim following the Jerusalem to Jericho road to the Jordan Valley across the region the text refers to as the wilderness. He eventually would have crossed the Jordan at the fords of Jericho and then proceeded north to Mahanaim."

**2Samuel 15:24 ¶ And lo Zadok also, and all the Levites *were* with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city.**

**2Samuel 15:25 And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me *both* it, and his habitation:**

**2Samuel 15:26 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.**

It seems that Abithar, Zadok and the Levites that served with them at the tabernacle followed David's entourage bearing the ark of the covenant of God. David told Zadok to take the ark of God back to Jerusalem. He reasoned that if he had found favor in the eyes of the LORD, He would restore him to his position. If, however, he no longer delighted in David, he was ready to yield to God's will. The ark belonged to Israel; it was not David's personal possession.

**2Samuel 15:27 The king said also unto Zadok the priest, *Art not* thou a seer? return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz thy son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar.**

**2Samuel 15:28 See, I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness, until there come word from you to certify me.**

**2Samuel 15:29 Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem: and they tarried there.**

David then asked Zadok to confirm that he was also a seer, a prophet, a man of great insight. He then asked the two priests to return to the city in peace along with their sons Ahimaaz and Jonathan. David would wait in the wilderness until he received a message informing him about what was happening. Zadok and Abiathar did as David asked.

**2Samuel 15:30 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.**

As David went up the Mount of Olives, he wept; his head was covered and he walked barefoot to mark his grief. All the people traveling with him covered their heads and wept along with him.

**2Samuel 15:31 ¶ 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.**

One of the men traveling with him told David that Ahithophel was one of those conspiring with Absalom. David responded by asking the LORD to turn the counsel of Ahithophel to foolishness—in other words, make it unprofitable and frustrate the plans of his son.

**2Samuel 15:32** 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:

**2Samuel 15:33** Unto whom David said, If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me:

**2Samuel 15:34** But if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; *as I have been thy father's servant hitherto, so will I now also be thy servant:* then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel.

**2Samuel 15:35** And *hast thou* not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests? therefore it shall be, *that* what thing soever thou shalt hear out of the king's house, thou shalt tell *it* to Zadok and Abiathar the priests.

**2Samuel 15:36** Behold, *they have* there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz Zadok's son, and Jonathan Abiathar's son; and by them ye shall send unto me every thing that ye can hear.

**2Samuel 15:37** So Hushai David's friend came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem.

Once David reached the top of the Mount of Olives, he worshipped God. Hushai the Archite came out to meet him with his coat rent and dirt on his head showing his solidarity with David. David basically told Hushai that he could better serve him by returning to the city and declaring his allegiance to Absalom. That would position him to help David defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. He could inform Zadok and Abiathar the priests of all that he heard from the king's house, and their sons could then serve as messengers to take the information to David. Hushai evidently realized how much his service in Jerusalem would profit David and returned to the city.

Absalom returned to the city about the same time that Hushai returned.

It should be noted that Psalm 3 is specifically identified as being a psalm of David composed at this time.

*Psalms 3:0–8 “A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.*

*LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah. But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah. I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people.*

*Selah.*"

The tone of this psalm indicates that David was not afraid for himself. He was, however, feeling the pressure of his situation. He still trusted that the LORD would be his shield and protection, but he also recognized that such provision would be in His timing and according to His purposes. I think this is a lesson that David learned while on the run for so many years from Saul. He had learned the hard way that God's ways and thoughts are often far different from our ways and thoughts. Sadly it is this very truth that poses the greatest threat to the faith of God's people. It's hard to see through pain and/or sorrow to understand that such pain and/or sorrow is meant for the greater good and God's glory.