

2 Samuel 15

Verses 1 - 6

Now it came about after this that Absalom provided for himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run ahead of him. ² And Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the road to the gate; and when any man who had a lawsuit was to come before the king for judgment, Absalom would call out to him and say, "From what city are you?" And he would say, "Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel." ³ Then Absalom would say to him, "See, your claims are good and right, but you have no one to listen to you on the part of the king." ⁴ Moreover, Absalom would say, "Oh that someone would appoint me judge in the land, then every man who has a lawsuit or claim could come to me, and I would give him justice!" ⁵ And whenever a man approached to prostrate himself before him, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him. ⁶ Absalom dealt this way with all Israel who came to the king for judgment; so Absalom stole the hearts of the people of Israel.

Now it came about after this that Absalom provided for himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run ahead of him.

Absalom wanted to be king of Israel so he devised a plan to make it happen.

1. He made himself look like an important ruler in Israel by riding in a chariot with a large procession leading the way.

This should have alerted David or someone in his administration that Absalom was not satisfied with being a servant of the king but God had promised to raise up evil against David from his own household and it was going to happen.

See 2 Samuel 12:

¹¹ This is what the Lord says: 'Behold, I am going to raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give *them* to your companion, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight.

2. The next thing he needed to do was win the hearts and minds of the people.

This is spelled out in verses 2 thru 6.

⁴ Moreover, Absalom would say, “Oh that someone would appoint me judge in the land, then every man who has a lawsuit or claim could come to me, and I would give him justice!”

Rather than letting the justice system work as it was intended, Absalom killed a half-brother for raping his sister. How can someone who knows little about true justice judge the affairs of others?

Like many Politian’s Absalom had little concern about justice or what the right judgment should be in their lawsuits. He gave a lot of lip service to the point that he could deliver real justice, when in fact he only cared about himself.

⁵ And whenever a man approached to prostrate himself before him, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him. ⁶ Absalom dealt this way with all Israel who came to the king for judgment; so Absalom stole the hearts of the people of Israel.

When a good looking man treats others like a best friend and promises everyone that he will give them whatever they want regardless of the merits of their case, many people are fooled by this kind of charlatan. The simple fact is he had not delivered on any of his promises.

Things haven’t changed much in 3,000 years when it comes to politics and the ability of charlatans to fool much of the public.

Verses 7 - 12

⁷ Now it came about at the end of four years that Absalom said to the king, “Please let me go and pay my vow which I have made to the Lord, in Hebron. ⁸ For your servant made a vow while I was living in Geshur in Aram, saying, ‘If the Lord will indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the Lord.’” ⁹ The king said to him, “Go in peace.” So he got up and went to Hebron. ¹⁰ But Absalom sent spies throughout the tribes of Israel, saying, “As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, ‘Absalom is king in Hebron!’” ¹¹ Then two hundred men went with Absalom from Jerusalem, who were invited and went innocently, for they did not know anything. ¹² And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David’s counselor, from his city Giloh, while he was offering the sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong, for the people continually increased with Absalom.

⁷ Now it came about at the end of four years that Absalom said to the king, “Please let me go and pay my vow which I have made to the Lord, in Hebron”

Absalom launched his coup 4 years after he had returned to Jerusalem and two years after he was reconciled to David.

Some bibles have a footnote that states that some ancient manuscripts say 40 years. We know it has to be 4 so this is not a difficult decision to make concerning which number is correct.

Absalom was born in Hebron and might have had many friends there. While the people of Hebron might have borne a grudge against David since he had moved the seat of the government to Jerusalem.

See map 1505



⁹ The king said to him, “Go in peace.” So he got up and went to Hebron. ¹⁰ But Absalom sent spies throughout the tribes of Israel, saying, “As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, ‘Absalom is king in Hebron!’”

Elaborate preparations had been made by Absalom to seize the throne and it is amazing that word of this never got back to David.

11 Then two hundred men went with Absalom from Jerusalem, who were invited and went innocently, for they did not know anything.

These 200 invited guests were probably the most influential and powerful men in Jerusalem. They were not co-conspirators with Absalom but the citizens of Hebron would have thought these people were loyal to Absalom. This was a clever maneuver on the part of Absalom.

12 And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city Giloh, while he was offering the sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong, for the people continually increased with Absalom.

Ahithophel was the grandfather of Bathsheba. He was a very wise man and if Absalom had followed his counsel, he might have triumphed over David.

He was from the city of Giloh.

See Map 1510



Verses 13 - 18

¹³ Then a messenger came to David, saying, “The hearts of the people of Israel are with Absalom.” ¹⁴ So David said to all his servants who were with him in Jerusalem, “Arise and let’s flee, for *otherwise* none of us will escape from Absalom. Go quickly, or he will hurry and overtake us, and bring disaster on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword.” ¹⁵ Then the king’s servants said to the king, “Behold, your servants *will do whatever* my lord the king chooses.” ¹⁶ So the king left, and all his household with him; but the king left ten concubines behind to take care of the house. ¹⁷ The king left, and all the people with him, and they stopped at the last house. ¹⁸ Now all of his servants passed by beside him, and all the Cherethites, all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men who had come with him from Gath, passed by before the king.

¹⁴ So David said to all his servants who were with him in Jerusalem, “Arise and let’s flee, for *otherwise* none of us will escape from Absalom.

David had two choices – fight or flee. He chose to flee. If he stayed in Jerusalem, the people and the city would be put in danger and he did not wish to see it subjected to the horrors of a siege.

David and his men knew how to survive in the open country having done it for many years before he became king.

¹⁶ So the king left, and all his household with him; but the king left ten concubines behind to take care of the house.

We don’t know how many concubines David had but he left 10 of them behind. It was customary for a new King to take care of any wives and/or concubines of the previous king so they were not in any real danger.

¹⁸ Now all of his servants passed by beside him, and all the Cherethites, all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men who had come with him from Gath, passed by before the king.

These are the six hundred men who gathered around David during the days of his flight from Saul. By this time these men were skilled soldiers capable of defeating an army ten times their size. David led the group out of town, but then stopped at the edge of town and let all his followers pass by.

Verses 19 - 23

¹⁹ Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, “Why should you go with us too? Return and stay with your king, since you are a foreigner and an exile as well; *return to your own place.* ²⁰ You came *only* yesterday, so should I make you wander with us today, while I go wherever I go? Return and take your brothers back; mercy and truth be with you.” ²¹ But Ittai answered the king and said, “As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether for death or for life, there assuredly shall your servant be!” ²² Then David said to Ittai, “Go and cross over *the brook Kidron.*” So Ittai the Gittite crossed over with all his men and all the little ones who *were* with him. ²³ While all the country was weeping with a loud voice, all the people were crossing over. The king was also crossing over the brook Kidron, and all the people were crossing over toward the way of the wilderness.

¹⁹ Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, “Why should you go with us too? Return and stay with your king, since you are a foreigner and an exile as well; *return to your own place.*

Ittai and his company was not part of the 600 men and their families but he was a skilled general. David placed him in command of a 1/3 of the army that defeated Absalom.

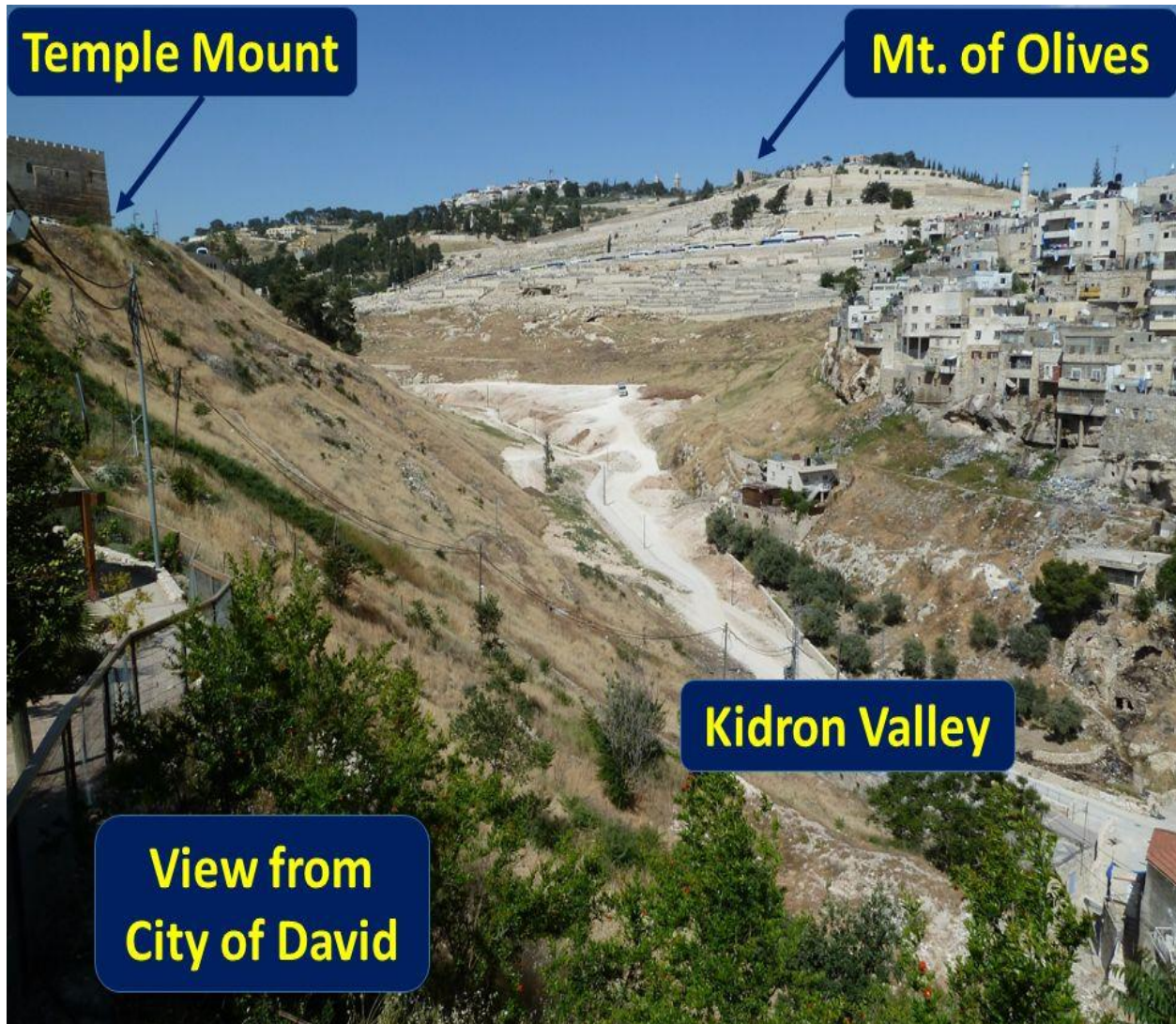
See 2 Samuel 18:2

² And David sent the people out, a third under the command of Joab, a third under the command of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab’s brother, and a third under the command of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the people, “I myself will certainly go out with you also.”

²³ While all the country was weeping with a loud voice, all the people were crossing over. The king was also crossing over the brook Kidron, and all the people were crossing over toward the way of the wilderness.

The Kidron Valley is on the eastern side of Jerusalem. It continues towards the Dead Sea, descending 4,000 feet along its 20-mile course. Normally this is a dry river bed but it can become a swiftly moving stream when it rains.

See Map 1515



Verses 24 - 29

²⁴ Now behold, Zadok also *came*, and all the Levites with him, carrying the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God, and Abiathar came up until all the people had finished crossing over from the city. ²⁵ And the king said to Zadok, “Return the ark of God to the city. If I find favor in the sight of the Lord, then He will bring me back and show me *both* it and His habitation. ²⁶ But if He says this: ‘I have no delight in you,’ *then* here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him.” ²⁷ The king also said to Zadok the priest, “Are you *not* a seer? Return to the city in peace, and your two sons with you, your son Ahimaaz and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. ²⁸ See, I am going to wait at the river crossing places of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me.” ²⁹ So Zadok and Abiathar returned the ark of God to Jerusalem and remained there.

²⁴ Now behold, Zadok also came, and all the Levites with him, carrying the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God, and Abiathar came up until all the people had finished crossing over from the city.

Abiathar was the high priest and Zadok was a priest and a seer.

The Levites mentioned here were the Kohathites because it was their job to carry the ark from place to place.

See Numbers 3:31

²⁹ The families of the sons of Kohath were to camp on the south side of the tabernacle, ³⁰ and the leader of the fathers' households of the Kohathite families: Elizaphan the son of Uzziel. ³¹ Now their duties included the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the utensils of the sanctuary with which they minister, the curtain, and all the service concerning them; ³² and Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest was the head of the leaders of Levi, and he had the supervision of those who performed the duties of the sanctuary.

Only the Ark was in Jerusalem at this time, in a tent that David had erected, while the tabernacle was in Gibeon.

²⁵ And the king said to Zadok, "Return the ark of God to the city. If I find favor in the sight of the Lord, then He will bring me back and show me *both* it and His habitation.

Important as that Ark of the Covenant was, David relied on God to deliver him from this situation.

David knew he was being punished for his sin but he hoped that he would one day be restored to the kingship.

²⁶ But if He says this: 'I have no delight in you,' *then* here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him."

David didn't know if God would restore him and he was willing to accept that outcome if it was God's will to do so.

²⁷ The king also said to Zadok the priest, “Are you *not* a seer? Return to the city in peace, and your two sons with you, your son Ahimaaz and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. ²⁸ See, I am going to wait at the river crossing places of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me.”

David would require information on Absalom's movements and other developments of the rebellion. He would obtain this information via the sons of the two priests.

Verses 30 - 31

³⁰ And David was going up the ascent of the *Mount of Olives*, weeping as he went, and his head was covered, and he was walking barefoot. Then all the people who were with him each covered his own head, and they were going up, weeping as they went. ³¹ Now *someone* informed David, saying, “Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.” And David said, “Lord, please make the advice of Ahithophel foolish.”

³⁰ And David was going up the ascent of the *Mount of Olives*, weeping as he went, and his head was covered, and he was walking barefoot.

David knew this humiliation came from the Lord because of his sin with Bathsheba and the killing of her husband. The weeping, his head covered, and walking barefoot was an acknowledgment that he had sinned and was deserving of this punishment.

But it is also instructive

Our sin often hurts those we love and care about very much

³¹ Now *someone* informed David, saying, “Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.” And David said, “Lord, please make the advice of Ahithophel foolish.”

David responded to the bad news with a prayer that God would punish Ahithophel by turning the advice of this wise and trusted adviser into foolishness.

Even though God said he would raise up evil from out of David's own house those you did the evil would suffer the consequences of their actions. Ahithophel had a God given gift of wisdom that had been misused in this coup and God will punish him for misusing that gift.

Verses 32 - 37

³² It happened as David was coming to the summit, where God was worshiped, that behold, Hushai the Archite met him with his coat torn, and dust on his head.

³³ And David said to him, “If you go over with me, then you will become a burden to me. ³⁴ But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, ‘I will be your servant, O king; even as I was your father’s servant in time past, so now I will also be your servant,’ then you can foil the advice of Ahithophel for me. ³⁵ Are Zadok and Abiathar the priests not with you there? So it shall be that whatever you hear from the king’s house, you shall report to Zadok and Abiathar the priests.

³⁶ Behold their two sons are there with them, Ahimaaz, Zadok’s *son* and Jonathan, Abiathar’s *son*; and by them you shall send me everything that you hear.” ³⁷ So Hushai, David’s friend, came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem.

³² It happened as David was coming to the summit, where God was worshiped, that behold, Hushai the Archite met him with his coat torn, and dust on his head.

David had just prayed to God to frustrate the counsel of Ahithophel and God answered that prayer almost immediately. Hushai came to David and agreed to return to Jerusalem to keep David informed and to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel.

Psalms 3 reflects the pain David experienced when he fled from Absalom and Psalm 41 shows David’s anguish over close friends that treat him like an enemy as Ahithophel had done by his treachery.

³⁵ Are Zadok and Abiathar the priests not with you there? So it shall be that whatever you hear from the king’s house, you shall report to Zadok and Abiathar the priests.

News about what Absalom plans to do will be reported to David through the priesthood via the High Priests (two during the time of David) and their two sons (Ahimaaz, Zadok’s *son* and Jonathan, Abiathar’s *son*).

At this time the Ark was in Jerusalem and the Tabernacle was in Gibeon and there were two High Priests

See charts 1520 and 1525 below.

Location of the Tabernacle after the Israelites crossed the Jordan River?

| Scripture | Place | Began | Ended | Years |
|-------------------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Joshua 5:10 | Gilgal | 1406 | 1396 | 10 |
| Joshua 18:1 | Shiloh | 1396 | 1070 | 326 |
| Jeremiah 7:14 | Shiloh destroyed | 1070 | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | Not sure | 1070 | 1020 | 50 |
| I Sam 21 | Nob | 1020 | 1000 | 20 |
| I Chron. 16:39-40 | Gibeon | 1000 | 959 | 40 |
| I Kings 8:3-4 | Temple | 959 | | |

Location of the Ark after the Israelites crossed the Jordan River

| Scripture | Place | Began | Ended | Years |
|----------------|--------------------|-------|-------|-----------|
| I Sam 4:3 | Shiloh | 1396 | 1070 | 326 |
| I Sam 4:5 | Battle at Ebenezer | 1070 | 1070 | Days |
| I Sam 4:11 | Ark Captured | 1070 | 1070 | |
| I Sam 5:1 | Ashdod | 1070 | 1070 | 7 months |
| I Sam 5:8 | Gath | 1070 | 1070 | in |
| I Sam 5:10 | Ekron | 1070 | 1070 | Philistia |
| I Sam 6:12 | Beth Shemesh | 1070 | 1070 | |
| I Sam 7:2 | Kiriath Jearim | 1070 | 1050 | 20 |
| | Not sure | 1050 | 1000 | 50 |
| I Chron. 13:13 | Obed Edom | 1000 | 1000 | 3 months |
| I Chron. 16:1 | City of Jerusalem | 1000 | 959 | 40 |
| I Kings 8:3-4 | In the Temple | 959 | | |

Ark separated from the Tabernacle for 110 years

See chart 1525

