

The Forty Years of Absalom

The Forty Years of Absalom

A Bible verse confounding the wise and prudent to reveal truth to babes.

Matthew 11:25

**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.**

II Samuel 15:7

What Is the Problem?

- Textual critics have no idea about the 40 years.
- So they corrupt the Hebrew text to be 4 instead.
- Bible commentators have no idea about the 40.
- So they do as the critics to alter the Hebrew to 4.
- Both parties claim the originals as final authority.

This is similar to

Bible Babel – I Sam 13:1

<http://www.letgodbettrue.com/bible/scripture/bible-babel.php>

This is similar to

Ahaziah's Age

<http://www.letgodbetruer.com/bible/scripture/ahaziah-contradiction.php>

This is similar to

Baptism for the Dead

<http://www.letgodbettrue.com/bible/baptism/1cor-15-29.php>

**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.**

II Samuel 15:7

The forty years ... cannot be Absalom's age.

David reigned a total of only forty years.

Absalom was born after David was king.

David also reigned after Absalom's death.

The forty years ... cannot be David's age.

David did not begin to reign until 30.

Absalom would be 9 years old at most.

The forty years ... cannot be David's reign.

David reigned a total of forty years.

Absalom's rebellion was within his reign.

The forty years ... cannot be David's anointing.

Two of three anointings were within his reign.

The first, by Samuel, had David about 15.

Absalom's life requires him older than 20.

The forty years ... cannot start prior to David.

Absalom's rebellion was near David's death.

The time cannot exceed the stated 40 years.

Saul reigned forty years as first king (Acts 13:21).

**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.**

II Samuel 15:7

What Do Translators Do?

- They alter the verse to read *four* years, not *forty*.
- This in spite of fawning devotion to the *originals*.
- They find a few obscure translations in support.
- There is no Hebrew text of any kind with *four*.
- Josephus wrote *four* also, for it also stumped him.

New American Standard Version

Now it came about at the end of forty years that Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go and pay my vow which I have vowed to the LORD, in Hebron.

New International Version

At the end of four years, Absalom said to the king, "Let me go to Hebron and fulfill a vow I made to the LORD.

English Standard Version

And at the end of four years Absalom said to the king, “Please let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to the LORD, in Hebron.

Holman Christian Standard Bible

When four years had passed, Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go to Hebron to fulfill a vow I made to the LORD.

International Standard Version

And so it was that forty years after Israel had demanded a king, Absalom asked the king, "Please let me go to Hebron so I can pay my vow that I made to the LORD,

**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.**

II Samuel 15:7

Commentators We Often Trust

Matthew Poole

Albert Barnes

Matthew Henry

John Gill

Adam Clarke

JFB

John Trapp

Matthew Poole

Suggests from David's anointing as king.

Matthew Poole

Suggests from the beginning of Saul's reign, viewing 40 years as merely an epoch.

Matthew Poole

***Prefers from the beginning of David's reign
and works hard to make the impossible fit.***

Matthew Henry

Suggests from David's anointing as king, which he claims was seven years before he reigned.

Matthew Henry

Prefers from the people desiring a king, which he claims was about ten years before David began to reign.

Albert Barnes

“An obvious clerical error, though a very ancient one for four years....”

Adam Clarke

***“There is no doubt this reading is corrupt....”
He quotes numerous sources defending four.***

John Trapp

Suggests from David's anointing, agreeing with Matthew Poole and others.

John Trapp

Refers to other commentators that suggest from Israel's first request for a king.

JFB

They suggest four years, choosing the copyist's error as their explanation.

John Gill

Suggests from Israel's first request for a king.

John Gill

Suggests Absalom's age or David's reign, both of which he knows are chronologically impossible.

John Gill

Observes that Theodoret, the Syriac version, and the Arabic version all go with 4, not 40.

John Gill

Concludes that it is a mistake and should be 4.

**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.**

II Samuel 15:7

Other Sources (1)

Josephus

Jerome

Geneva Bible

John Hales

Treasury

Scotfield Bible

KJV Today

Other Sources (2)

Martin Anstey

Peter Ruckman

KJB Technology

Brand Plucked

Contradictions

Josephus

It is a copyist's error; it should be 4, which was dated from Absalom's reconciliation to David.

Jerome (347 – 420)

***From when Saul and Doeg slew the priests at
Nob (per John Gill at II Samuel 15:7).***

Geneva Bible

“Counting from the time that the Israelites had asked a king of Samuel.”

John Hales

There is no way to know the start point, so it is safe to go with Josephus and a copyist's error.

Treasury of Scripture Knowledge

“As David reigned in the whole only forty years, this reading is evidently corrupt, though supported by the commonly printed Vulgate, LXX., and Chaldee. But the Syriac, Arabic, Josephus, Theodoret, the Sixtine edition of the Vulgate, and several MSS. of the same version, read four years; and it is highly probable that arbaim, forty, is an error for arba, four, though not supported by any Hebrew MS. yet discovered. Two of those collated by Dr. Kennicott, however, have yom, ‘day,’ instead of shanah, ‘year,’ i.e., forty days instead of forty years; but this is not sufficient to outweigh the other authorities.”

Scofield Reference Bible

“Some authorities read ‘four.’”

KJV Today

Generally a good KJV source, his explanation here is very weak – a general period of time indicating transition, maybe from David being anointed as king by Samuel ([here](#)).

Martin Anstey

Though a valuable source for most chronology questions, he is worthless here, leaving this timed event out of his chronological tables.

Peter Ruckman

From the birth of Absalom, this being his age.

KJB Textual Technology

Very weak, a general period of time indicating transition, maybe from David being anointed as king by Samuel ([here](#)).

Brand Plucked

Prefers from David defeating the Geshurites, from whom Absalom's mother came, thus he was motivated by revenge ([here](#)).

Contradictions

David actually reigned 40.5 years, so it is from the beginning of his reign, for Absalom pulled off the coup and lost it back to David in a month ([here](#)).

What Do Critics and Commentators Do?

- They alter the verse to read *four* years, not *forty*.
- They alter the verse to read *forty days*, not *years*.
- This in spite of fawning devotion to the *originals*.
- There is no known Hebrew manuscript with *four*.
- They suggest various impossible starting points.

**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.**

II Samuel 15:7

What Do We Do?

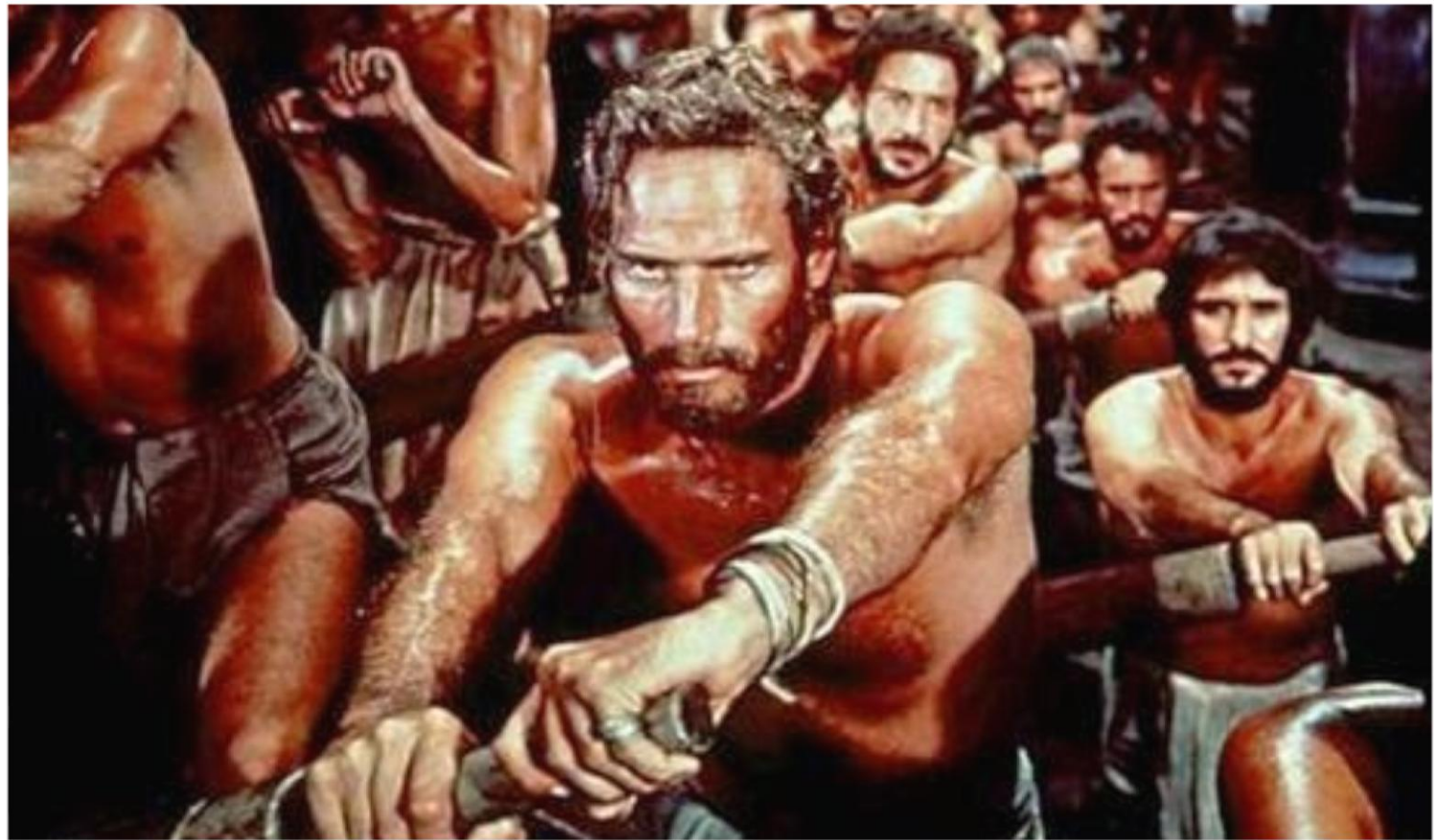
- We give God the glory and trust every KJV word.
- We know a Bible difficulty is our fault, not God's.
- We follow Elihu's faith about great men (Job 32:6-10).
- We follow David's faith about ancients (Ps 119:98-100).
- We obey rules of reading and Bible hermeneutics.



We are slaves to context.

We must serve this master.

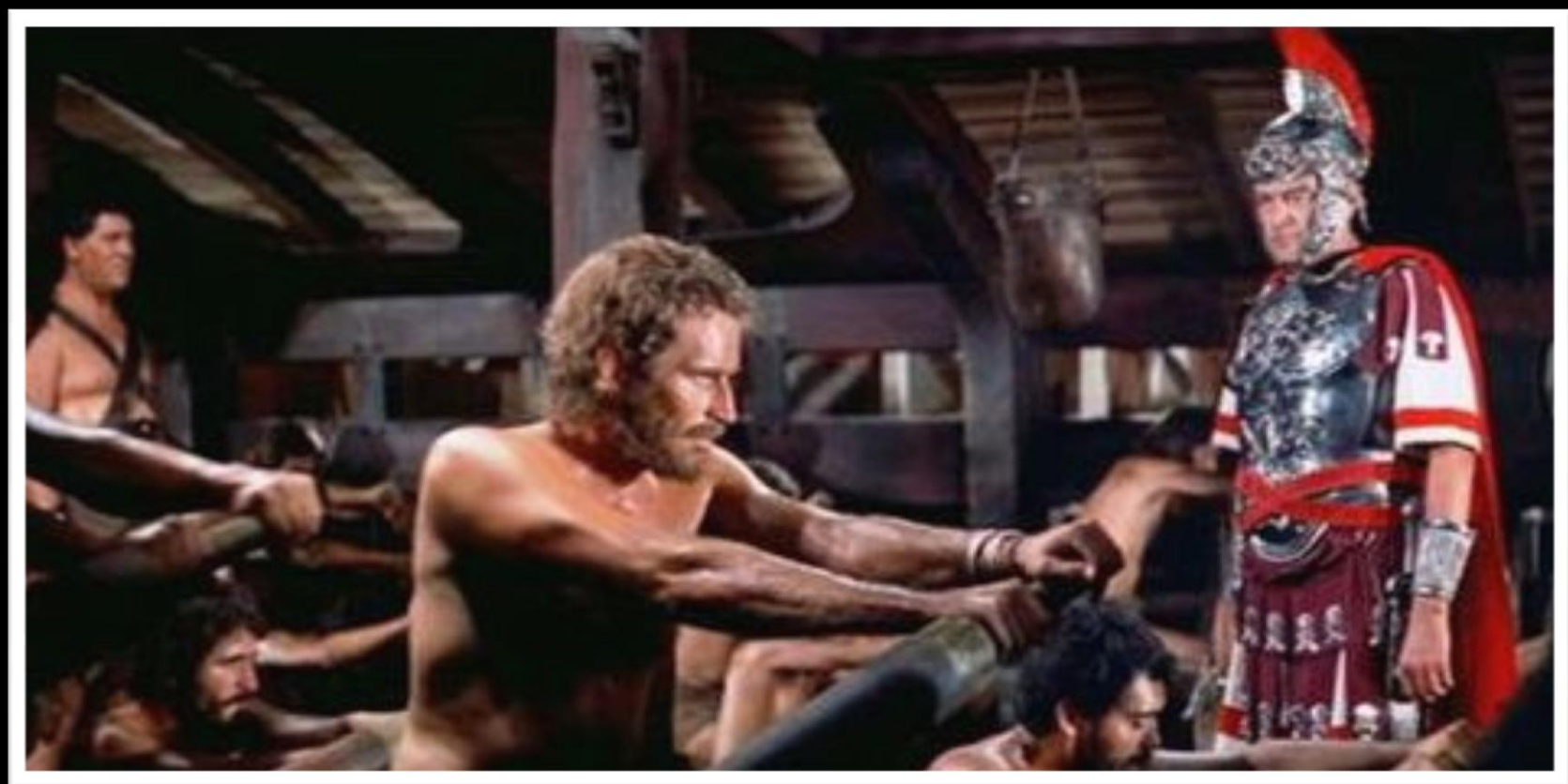
“I beat my wife last night.”



We are slaves to context.

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“I beat my wife last night.”



We are slaves to context.

We must serve this master.

“I beat my wife last night.”

**A text ...
used out of context
... is a pretext.**

**For wonderful detail
about Bible context ...**

Rule #2 here ...

<http://www.letgodbetruer.com/bible/scripture/knowning-the-scriptures.php>

Our two-step process of interpretation:

First, we prove what a verse cannot mean.

Then, we prove what the verse must mean.

**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.**

II Samuel 15:7

What is the context?

**What event should be
connected to the
40 years?**

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.

II Samuel 15:6

**The words immediately
before the 40 years
describe Absalom
stealing hearts.**

**The connected context
tells us the hearts of
the men of Israel were
the event to consider.**

1 And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

II Samuel 15:1

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.

II Samuel 15:2

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.

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!

II Samuel 15:3-4

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.

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.

II Samuel 15:5-6

**It does not say Absalom
won the men's hearts.**

It says he stole them.

**From whom did
he steal them?**

He stole them from David.

**How long had
David had them?**

40 Years!

**When did David win the
hearts of Israel's men?**

**When he killed Goliath
and Israel loved him.**

**And the men of Israel and of Judah
arose, and shouted, and pursued the
Philistines, until thou come to the valley,
and to the gates of Ekron. And the
wounded of the Philistines fell down by
the way to Shaaraim, even unto Gath,
and unto Ekron.**

I Samuel 17:52

1 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

I Samuel 18:1-2

And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

I Samuel 18:5

6 And it came to pass ... when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick.

I Samuel 18:6

And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

I Samuel 18:7

**But all Israel and Judah loved David,
because he went out and came in before
them.**

I Samuel 18:16

Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by.

I Samuel 18:30

Our two-step process of interpretation:

The 40 years cannot be what critics guess.

It was 40 years since David won the hearts.

A Rough Chronology

- 0 ... Saul became the first king of Israel.
- 10 ... David born in Bethlehem to Jesse.
- 25 ... David anointed as king by Samuel.
- 30 ... David killed Goliath and won Israel's hearts.
- 40 ... David became king in Hebron over Judah.
- 45 ... Absalom born, David's third son by third wife.
- 70 ... Absalom conspired and stole Israel's hearts.
- 80 ... David died after two kings reigned (40 + 40).

We appreciate two faithful teachers:

Floyd Nolen Jones

Chronology of the Old Testament

J.A. Moorman

Bible Chronology: The Two Great Divides

**You should ...
love every word of God,
have Elihu and David's
confidence over men,
and love Bible study.**

**How else could you ...
or should you ...
benefit?**

**Are you winning the
hearts of all around you
by an exceptional life?**

It is a command!

It is a choice!

3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:

4 So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

Proverbs 3:3-4

A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.

Proverbs 22:1

For Further Study

- **Bible Babel (I Sam 13:1) ...** <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/bible/scripture/bible-babel.php>.
- **Ahaziah's Age ...** <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/bible/scripture/ahaziah-contradiction.php>.
- **Baptism for the Dead (I Cor 15:29) ...** <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/bible/baptism/1cor-15-29.php>.
- **Who Killed Goliath? ...** <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/questions/goliath.php>.
- **Author of Confusion ...** <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/god/is-god-the-author-of-confusion/sermon.php>.
- **Bible Hermeneutics ...** <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/bible/scripture/knowning-the-scriptures.php>.
- **Starting Event of 70 Weeks ...** <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/bible/prophecy/cyrus-decree-to-rebuild.php>.
- **One-Word Arguments ...** <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/one-word-arguments-titus.pdf>.

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