

# **The Forty Years of Absalom**

# The Forty Years of Absalom

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

Matthew 11:25-26

At that time Jesus answered and said,  
I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth,  
because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent,  
and hast revealed them unto babes.

Even so, Father: for so it seemed  
good in thy sight.

Matthew 11:25-26

# The Forty Years of Absalom

God convicted me to help your Bible confidence.

Can we trust our King James Bibles against other Bibles?

Can we trust simple rules of Bible study to solve hard verses?

Let us check Bible history to figure out an obscure verse.

This simple study exalts the KJV and rule of context.

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

**This is similar to**

***Israel in Egypt – Exodus 12:40***

<https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2025/israel-in-egypt/>

<https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2025/how-long-were-the-children-of-israel-in-egypt/>

This is similar to

***Bible Babel – I Samuel 13:1***

<https://letgodbetrue.com/sermons/index/year-2013/bible-babel/>

<https://letgodbetrue.com/bible-topics/index/scripture/the-bible-babel/>

**This is similar to**

***Ahaziah's Age of 22 and 42***

<https://letgodbettrue.com/bible-topics/index/scripture/ahaziah-contradiction/>

This is similar to

***Proverbs Babel – Dark Sayings***

<https://letgodbetrue.com/sermons/index/year-2015/proverbs-babel/>

<https://letgodbetrue.com/sermons/index/year-2009/proverbs-babel/>

**This is similar to**

***Baptism for Dead – I Cor 15:29***

<https://letgodbettrue.com/bible-topics/index/baptism/difficult-baptism-verses/i-corinthians-15-29/>

This is similar to

***Wash Away Dirt – 1 Peter 3:21***

<https://letgodbettrue.com/bible-topics/index/baptism/modern-bibles-corrupt-best-verse-on-baptism/>

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

# A Rough Timeline

- 0 ... David born in Bethlehem to Jesse.
- 15 ... David anointed as king by Samuel.
- 20 ... David killed Goliath and became famous.
- 30 ... David became king in Hebron over Judah.
- 35 ... Absalom born, David's third son by third wife.
- 60 ... Absalom committed treason and was killed.
- 70 ... David died in a good old age, full of days.

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

***David reigned a total of only forty years.***

***Absalom was born after David was king.***

***Absalom died before David's reign ended.***

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

***David did not begin to reign until 30.***

***Absalom would only be 5 years old.***

***Absalom's treason has David past 60.***

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

***David reigned as king for forty years.***

***Absalom's treason was within his reign.***

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

***Absalom's treason was toward David's death.***

***The time cannot exceed the stated 40 years.***

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

***The forty years ... cannot be forty days.***

***Absalom winning Israel took longer than that.***

***This foolish idea is from faulty manuscripts.***

***Israel was often fickle but not that fast.***

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

# Does this Bore You or Excite You?

- Everyone is tired tonight, but what is important to you?
- I would not waste your time with a wild goose chase.
- We will defend God's preserved words and Bible study.
- Do not relax focus. Keep your mind on God's words.
- If you get lost a little, you can review later, so listen.

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 Bible Translators Do?

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

## 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.

## Homan Christian Standard

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.

## 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.

## New Living Translation

After four years, Absalom said to the king, “Let me go to Hebron to offer a sacrifice to the LORD and fulfill a vow I made to him.

## Revised Standard Version

At the end of four years Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go to Hebron and pay the vow that I have made to the Lord.

## New Revised Standard Version

And at the end of four years Ab'salom said to the king, "Pray let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to the LORD, in Hebron.

## The Bible in Basic English

Now at the end of four years, Absalom said to the king, Let me go to Hebron and give effect to the oath which I made to the Lord:

## Common English Bible

At the end of four years, Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go to Hebron so I can fulfill a promise I made to the LORD.

## Good News Translation

After four years Absalom said to King David, "Sir, let me go to Hebron and keep a promise I made to the Lord.

## New Century Version

After four years Absalom said to King David, "Please let me go to Hebron. I want to carry out my promise that I made to the Lord

## GOD'S WORD Translation

Four years later Absalom said to the king, "Let me go to Hebron and keep the vow I made to the LORD."

## New International Reader's Version

After Absalom had lived in Jerusalem for four years, he went and spoke to the king. He said, "Let me go to Hebron. I want to keep a promise I made to the Lord.

## The Message Bible

After four years of this, Absalom spoke to the king, "Let me go to Hebron to pay a vow that I made to God.

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 Did Our Translators Do?

- They kept the obvious and clear Hebrew *forty* intact.
- They did not care what some Syriac translation had.
- They trusted God's words as preserved in Hebrew.
- They did not invent a scribal error of *four ... to forty*.
- As in six similar examples, they held to God's words.

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 thank God for His words by ... *faith, fruit, facts, fools*.
- We give God the benefit of the doubt ... then figure it out.
- He did not make a mistake ... so we study to reconcile it.
- This is **BELIEVING BIBLE STUDY** by trusting God over us.
- A book by Edward F. Hills (*Yale, Westminster, Columbia, Harvard*).

# Commentators We Sometimes Check

Matthew Poole

Albert Barnes

Matthew Henry

John Gill

Adam Clarke

Geneva Bible

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.***

**Geneva Bible**

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

**JFB**

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

**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.***

**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.***

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that Absalom said unto the king,  
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II Samuel 15:7

## Other Sources (1)

Josephus

Jerome

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).***

**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.

**Let's ask AI the Question!**

***What of Absalom's 40 years in II Samuel 15:7?***

Why are you so confident against the King James Version that has had 40 years since 1611?

+ New Chat

I apologize for any confusion in my previous responses. Let's clarify the specific text from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. In **2 Samuel 15:7**, the KJV indeed states, "And it came to pass after **four** full years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow," which confirms the **four years** duration.

There may be other biblical passages that reference durations or reigns that could mention "40 years," particularly relating to David's reign or other contexts, but in the case of **2 Samuel 15:7**, the mention is specifically **four years** in both the KJV and other translations.

If there have been discussions around '40 years' within a specific context right after this, it would typically relate to another historical timeframe rather than Absalom's waiting period.

Thank you for pointing this out, and I appreciate your understanding. If you have further details or contexts in mind that mention '40 years' regarding Absalom, please share, and I would be glad to help clarify further!

You are wrong. The King James Version in II Samuel 15:7 clearly reads forty years.

+ New Chat

You are correct, and I apologize for the oversight. In the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible, **2 Samuel 15:7** indeed reads: "And it came to pass after **forty years** that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow."

This verse indicates that Absalom's actions occurred **forty years** after something significant, often interpreted as **forty years of David's reign**. This is a point of debate and interpretation among scholars, particularly regarding whether the **forty years** directly refers to David's reign or another chronological reference.

Again, I apologize for the confusion and appreciate your patience in clarifying this matter. Thank you for bringing it to my attention.

How and why did you not know the text of the King James Version Bible?

+ New Chat

I appreciate your understanding as I clarify the earlier miscommunication. While I strive to provide accurate and reliable information from various translations of the Bible, errors can occur, especially when interpreting data about specific verses and their wording.

Regarding **2 Samuel 15:7**, my initial statements were based on a mix of translations and interpretations, and I appreciate your persistence in pointing out the specifics of the King James Version.

The KJV translation may differ in wording and context from more recent translations, leading to confusion about what certain verses state.

Thank you for your patience, and if you have further questions or need more information about biblical passages, I'll do my best to provide accurate insights!

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.”*

# Context – How Did I Beat My Wife?

- Getting home from work?
- Checking our mailbox?
- At checkers or chess?
- On the treadmill?
- Finishing supper?
- To a phone call?
- Apologizing?
- Into bed?
- To sleep?



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**We are slaves to context.**

**We must serve this master.**

*“I beat my wife last night.”*

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

**TEXT** = Bible verse being studied

**CONTEXT** = Verses around the verse

**PRETEXT** = A false or incorrect answer.

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

<https://letgodbettrue.com/sermons/index/year-2006/slaves-to-context/>  
<https://letgodbettrue.com/sermons/index/year-2018/rightly-dividing-the-bible/>  
<https://letgodbettrue.com/sermons/index/year-2010/hermeneutics/rule-2/>

**Our two-step process of interpretation:**

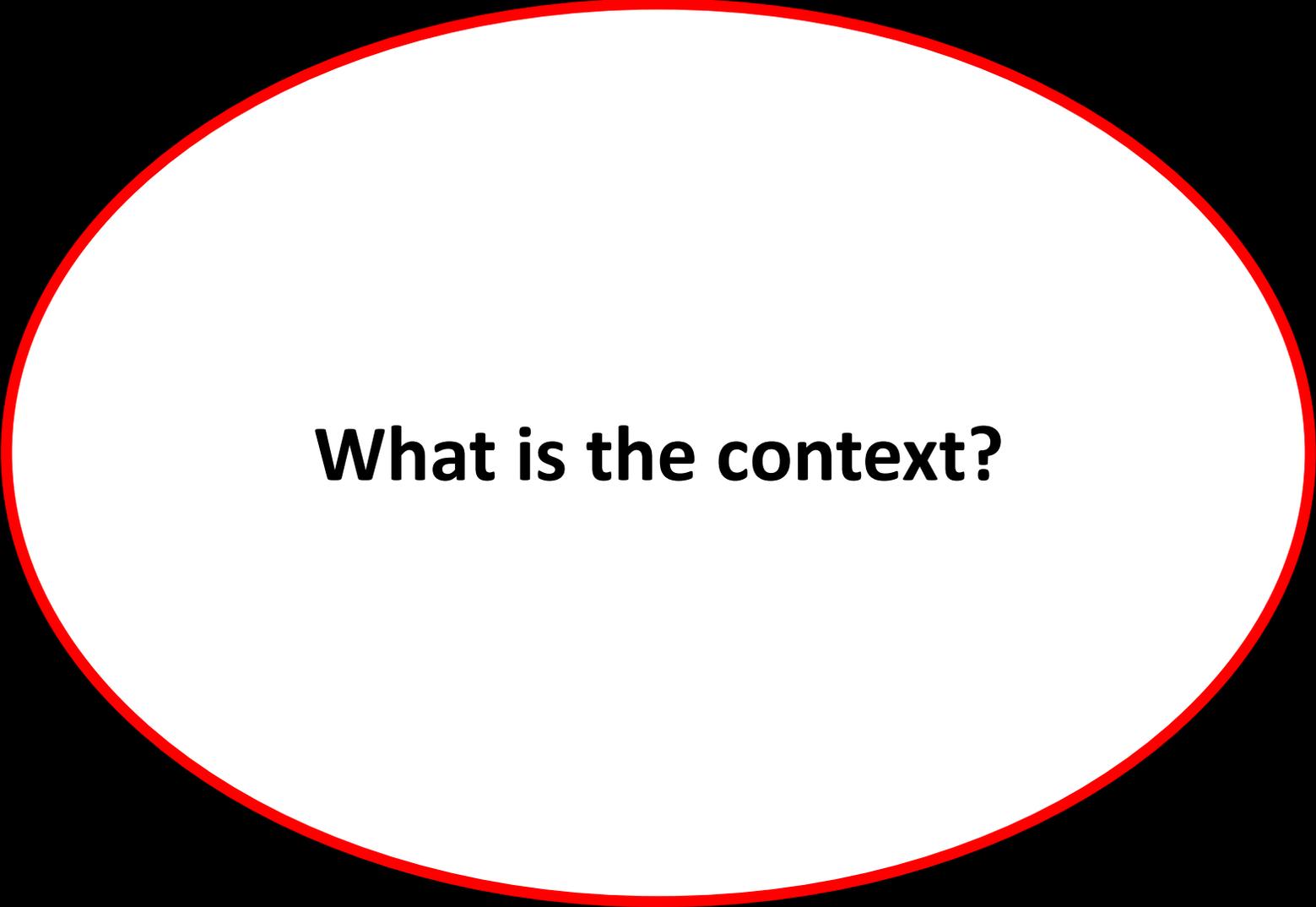
***First, we prove what a verse cannot mean.***

***Then, we prove what the verse must mean.***

**We proved what it  
cannot mean earlier.**

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?**

**We only looked at  
the verse itself.**

**We should look at the  
verses around our verse.**

**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 before the 40  
years describe Absalom  
stealing Israel's hearts.**

**The context says the  
hearts of Israel are  
the event to attach.**

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

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

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.

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

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.**  
**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 15:6-7

**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.**

He chose David also his servant,  
and took him from the sheepfolds:  
From following the ewes great with young  
he brought him to feed Jacob his people,  
and Israel his inheritance.

So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart;  
and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

Psalm 78:70-72

**How long had  
David had their hearts?**

**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

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.  
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

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 Timeline

0 ... David born in Bethlehem to Jesse.

15 ... David anointed as king by Samuel.

20 ... David killed Goliath and won Israel's hearts.

30 ... David became king in Hebron over Judah.

35 ... Absalom born, David's third son by third wife.

60 ... Absalom conspired and stole Israel's hearts.

70 ... David died in a good old age, full of days.

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60 ... Absalom conspired and stole Israel's hearts.

70 ... David died in a good old age, full of days.

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!**

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

- Proving the King James Version ... PPT Sermon (2010) ...** <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2010/proving-the-kjv/>
- Who Killed Goliath in Your Bible? ... Document ...** <https://letgodbetruer.com/bible-topics/index/scripture/who-killed-goliath/>
- The Bible Babel (I Samuel 13:1) ... PPT Sermon (2013) ...** <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2013/bible-babel/>
- The Bible Babel (I Samuel 13:1) ... Sermon Outline ...** <https://letgodbetruer.com/bible-topics/index/scripture/the-bible-babel/>
- Proverbs Babel ... PPT Sermon (2015) ...** <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2015/proverbs-babel/>
- Proverbs Babel ... Sermon Outline ...** <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2009/proverbs-babel/>
- Bible Hermeneutics ... Document (2010) ...** <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2010/hermeneutics/>
- The New King James Version ... Document ...** <https://letgodbetruer.com/bible-topics/index/scripture/the-new-king-james-version/>
- The Battle for the Bible ... Sermons (2005) ...** <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2005/the-battle-for-the-bible/>
- Every Word of God ... Sermon Outline (2015) ...** <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2015/every-word-of-god/>
- One-Word Arguments ... PPT Sermon (2015) ...** <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2015/one-word-arguments/>
- Ahaziah Contradiction ... Sermon Outline ...** <https://letgodbetruer.com/bible-topics/index/scripture/ahaziah-contradiction/>
- Best Baptism Verse Corrupted ...** <https://letgodbetruer.com/bible-topics/index/baptism/modern-bibles-corrupt-best-verse-on-baptism/>
- Is God Author of Confusion? ... Sermon & Outline ...** <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/year-2002/is-god-the-author-of-confusion/>
- Baptism for the Dead ... Document ...** <https://letgodbetruer.com/bible-topics/index/baptism/difficult-baptism-verses/i-corinthians-15-29/>
- Starting Decree of 70 Weeks ... Document ...** <https://letgodbetruer.com/bible-topics/index/prophecy/cyrus-decree-to-rebuild/>
- Various Documents about the Bible ...** <https://letgodbetruer.com/bible-topics/index/scripture/>
- Various Sermons about the Bible ...** <https://letgodbetruer.com/sermons/index/scripture/>