

A Study of 2 Samuel 15

I. Outlines.

1. Proud Absalom begins his work of gaining the support needed to lead a rebellion against David (1-6).
2. As part of his strategy, Absalom asks David to allow him to move to Hebron (7-9).
3. Boldly, Absalom, having won the hearts of the people, prepares the people for his announcement that he now rules as king in Hebron (10-12).
4. David receives an announcement of what Absalom has done and makes quick preparation to escape safely from Jerusalem with his servants and bodyguards (13-18; cf., Psalm 3).
5. Ittai, the Gittite, out of deep loyalty to David was determined to go with the King into the wilderness (19-23).
6. Honorably, David refuses to treat the Ark as his personal protection plan and orders it returned to the city, sending back the priests as well (24-29).
7. A description of the sad state of David and his supporters (30).
8. David prays to God that the advice given Absalom from co-conspirator Ahithophel will prove to be foolishness (31).
9. David not only prays for foolish advice for Absalom, but sends another loyal friend, Hushai, to spy against Absalom and send him word through the priests' sons (32-37).

From the **OUTLINE BIBLE**:

- I. **THE PLOT EXECUTED (15:1-12)**: David's own son Absalom organizes a rebellion against him.
 - A. **The politics of the plot** (15:1-6): Absalom captures the people's hearts by assuring them that his kingship would bring about a far more just society than did his father's.
 - B. **The place of the plot** (15:7-12): The rebellion begins in the city of Hebron. He also sends messengers to other parts of Israel to stir up trouble.
- II. **THE PEOPLE ENJOINED (15:13-29)**: David learns of the rebellion. As he flees Jerusalem to escape Absalom, he gives commands to three men who flee with him.
 - A. **Ittai** (15:17-22)
 1. *The leader* (15:17-20): Ittai is the captain of the 600 Gittite soldiers who have joined David. David urges him to return to Jerusalem, since he and his men have only just arrived in Israel.
 2. *The loyal* (15:21-22): Ittai vows to support David whatever the cost, so David welcomes him.
 - B. **Zadok and Abiathar** (15:23-29): David instructs a priest named Zadok to return the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem and send word to him before he disappears into the wilderness.
- III. **THE PEOPLE ENCOUNTERED (15:30-16:19)**: David also encounters some people as he flees from Absalom.
 - A. **Hushai** (15:30-37; 16:15-19)
 1. *Hushai and David* (15:30-37): A faithful friend named Hushai is waiting for David on the Mount of Olives. David instructs him to return to Jerusalem and offer himself as Absalom's adviser, pretending he has turned against David, so he can offer Absalom wrong advice on how to conduct the rebellion.
 2. *Hushai and Absalom* (16:15-19): Hushai and Ahithophel, David's former adviser who has turned against him, eventually meet with Absalom. After Hushai explains that he has turned against David, it appears that Absalom accepts him as his adviser.

- B. **Ziba** (16:1–4): David encounters Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, who reports that his master has turned against David as well. So David grants Ziba all that he had formerly granted Mephibosheth.
- C. **Shimei** (16:5–14): David meets Shimei, a member of Saul’s family.
1. *The reviling* (16:5–8): Shimei curses David and throws stones at him as he calls him a murderer and tells him that the Lord is repaying him for stealing Saul’s throne.
 2. *The restraint* (16:9–14): David forbids his soldiers to harm Shimei, saying that his actions are understandable since he is Saul’s relative.

II. Summary.

It is so sad to see a son plotting against his own father, but that is the subject matter of this chapter. Besides lust for power, perhaps revenge upon his father had something to do with Absalom’s shameful actions. Absalom had the advantage of the tremendous blessings that came to him as a result of David being his father. He had the advantage of being physically attractive. From someone he had learned the questionable skill of flattery (?) very well (c.f., verses 4-6; Job 17.5). There were many advantages he could have used profitably with the idea of being a more effective servant to the people of God, in whatever way God would choose to use him. However, he shows himself interested, primarily, in self. He was too impatient to wait for an opportunity to be called upon to be king. Here we find him using all of the advantages he had to **impose himself** upon the nation that already had a king by presenting himself as best choice to replace his father. Jacob Isaacs wrote the following about this incident: “*Absalom considered himself the heir to the throne, for now that Amnon was dead, he was the next in line of succession. David, however, had been prophetically informed that his young son Solomon, the son of Bathsheba, would succeed him. Absalom must have suspected this from his father’s attitude, and he secretly prepared a revolt. When his plans had matured, he induced the king to allow him to go to Hebron for the fulfillment of a vow which he professed to have made while living in Geshur. He went southward with two hundred unsuspecting followers. In Hebron he sounded the trumpet-call. Alas! the ungrateful people readily forgot the great king who had been anointed at that very place, and who had gloriously reigned over them for 37 years, and they came flocking to the standard of Absalom. Even Ahithophel the Gilonite, David’s wise counsellor, declared for his son and gave to the rebellion the weight of his name and experience.*”

III. Chronology/Lists/Links.

BIBLE PERIOD: The Period of the United Kingdom.

If you are not familiar with the **15 Bible Periods**, please click here: <https://tinyurl.com/wl79hp7>

Perhaps around the 37th year of David’s reign [cf., Jacob Isaacs, below].

LISTS:

The 15 Steps in Absalom’s Rebellion:

- 1) He prepared chariots and horses and fifty men to run before him (1).
- 2) He arose early and stood in the way of the gate (2).
- 3) Every man who came to David for justice was approached and the cause of his coming to the king inquired about. Absalom would flatter the man and tell him his cause was just, but there was no one appointed by the king to give him justice. Then Absalom would declare that if he were king he would see to it that everyone received justice (2-4).

- 4) He posed as the real champion of the people, kissing every man who came to him and stealing the hearts of the people of Israel (5-6).
- 5) He begged leave of David to go to Hebron that he might pay vows to God and serve the Lord, as he had promised while in exile (7-8).
- 6) He set up headquarters in Hebron and sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say that Absalom reigns in Hebron" (10).
- 7) He took two hundred men from Jerusalem to help him, but kept all plans secret from them (11).
- 8) He sent for Ahithophel, David's counselor and the grandfather of Bathsheba with whom David had sinned. Ahithophel was now ready to turn against David to avenge the harm done to his son's family. The conspiracy was then strong enough to cause David much trouble (12).
- 9) Absalom and the rebels with him marched on Jerusalem to take over the city (16.15-19).
- 10) He asked counsel of Ahithophel who advised him to lie with his father's concubines so that all Israel would know that he was abhorred by his father; then all followers would be strong for him (16.20-21).
- 11) He laid with his father's concubines, as advised (16.22-23).
- 12) He asked counsel of Ahithophel and Hushai regarding the next step to take in the rebellion (17.1-14).
- 13) He mobilized all Israel (17.11-14).
- 14) He pursued David across the Jordan and camped in the land of Gilead (17.24-26).
- 15) He fought David and his men in Mount Ephraim and was killed, thus ending the rebellion (18.1-18).

--Dake Study Bible

LINKS:

- 1) "Absalom's Revolt," by Jacob Isaacs, Kehot Publication Society:
https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/463978/jewish/Absaloms-Revolt.htm
- 2) Link includes some photos of the area:
<https://www.thebiblejourney.org/biblejourney2/30-israel-becomes-a-kingdom-under-saul-and-david/absaloms-flight-amp-his-rebellion-against-david/>
- 3) Coffman on 2 Samuel 15:
<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/2-samuel-15.html>
- 4) Some helpful insights from *The Pulpit Commentary*:
<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/2-samuel-15.html>

IV. Thoughts on the text.

1. **Proud Absalom begins his work of gaining the support needed to lead a rebellion against David (1-6).**
 - Absalom had been able to manipulate his way back into the presence of the king, but was not satisfied.
 - Amnon was dead—Absalom had killed him; Chileab, (2 Sam 3.3) was either dead, or not able to govern for some reason. That leaves Absalom next in line for the throne.

- We have to acknowledge the persuasive ability and magnetism that allowed Absalom to be so successful in rounding up such support as he was able to gather together.
 - There is no doubt that Absalom was highly capable with many skills that would have been so useful in the high position he aspired to occupy.
 - CHARIOTS AND HORSES (v. 1)... Here is a note from the *NEW AMERICAN COMMENTARY*: *The biblical narratives stretching from Exodus through this point in 2 Samuel are surprisinaly neagative in their portraval of horses and chariots. The texts consistently depict only enemies of the Lord and his covenant people as having them. The Egyptians (cf. Ex 14:9–15:21; Deut 11:4; Josh 24:6), northern Canaanites (Josh 11:4–9; Jdg 4:15; 5:19–22), and Arameans (8:4; 10:18) all used them unsuccessfully in battle against Israel. Thus, when Absalom linked them with himself, he was joining his ambitions with symbols of hostility against the Lord and Israel, and with ultimate failure.*
 - Much business was conducted in those times at the gate of the city (cf., Ruth 4.1).
 - When Absalom asked where the people lived, he was making it appear that he cared for them as individuals.
 - The implication from the fact that he told ALL of them their matters were good and right is that he was a flatterer, because surely some of them were not (v. 3).
 - By encouraging the idea that King David was uncaring about their problems, Absalom was creating an atmosphere that would be helpful to his own cause (v. 3).
 - The craftiness of Absalom can be seen in that he does not ask to be KING (a treasonous act), but only a judge (v. 4).
 - He would not allow the people to bow before him, thus further gaining the favor of many (v. 5).
 - ISRAEL in these chapters is usually “Absalom’s side,” while David’s side is: “David’s servants,” or “the army.” –ESV-SB.
2. **As part of his strategy, Absalom asks David to allow him to move to Hebron (7-9).**
- One form of the LXX, the Syriac version, and Josephus read FOUR here instead of FORTY, and ESV has FOUR (v. 7).
 - Whether or not he had made such a vow is highly suspect, since the Bible teaches that vows were to be fulfilled QUICKLY (Deut 23.21).
 - Hebron would place Absalom about 20 miles from David and behind strong walls.
 - David told him to go in peace, yet what he actually did was depart to prepare for rebellion and war. –Zondervan KJV-SB.
3. **Boldly, Absalom, having won the hearts of the people, prepares the people for his announcement that he now rules as king in Hebron (10-12).**
- What Absalom was expecting from Israel when the trumpet sounded was to be prepared to fight under Absalom against David.
 - The RAM’S HORN (shofar) of those days was softened in hot water and then bent and flattened to produce its distinctive shape. –IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary.
 - Bergen writes: One of the most brilliant aspects of Absalom’s plot to overthrow his father may have been his success in emptying Jerusalem of some of its most valuable administrators at the very time when David needed them most. “Two hundred men from Jerusalem had accompanied Absalom to Hebron” (v. 11). Each one had been hand-picked by Absalom and had come “quite innocently,” being only “invited guests.” Once inside

the walls of Hebron, however, they became his hostages. Because these two hundred men were unable to assist David in his efforts to respond to the national emergency, the king was put at a severe disadvantage from the very beginning. Furthermore, if any of the two hundred men openly expressed support for David while in Hebron, they risked being killed¹.

4. **David receives an announcement of what Absalom has done and makes quick preparation to escape safely from Jerusalem with his servants and bodyguards (13-18; cf., Psalm 3).** In the Hebrew, JERUSALEM contains the word for peace, and David wanted no part of war in the city of Jerusalem. He had been caught unaware and was not sure of how broad the support Absalom had been able to gather. Likely, he considered what was happening could be part of the fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy of judgment on him for his sin. David was able to use a small number of people to help him by staying in Jerusalem. He takes with him his bodyguards and servants.
5. **Ittai, the Gittite, out of deep loyalty to David was determined to go with the King into the wilderness (19-23). BROOK KIDRON...** This mountain ravine commences a little more than a mile northwest of Jerusalem, runs more than a mile in an easterly direction, and then turns southward and passes directly below the walls of the city on the east. To the south of the city it joins with the valley of Hinnom, and runs off in a southeasterly direction, through a deep, wild gorge, to the Dead Sea. It contains the bed of a streamlet, but no water runs in it except after heavy rains have fallen on the surrounding hills—Steele & Terry.
6. **Honorably, David refuses to treat the Ark as his personal protection plan and orders it returned to the city, sending back the priests as well (24-29).** David had been good to the priests and Levites of God's people and they were loyal to him on this sad occasion. The statement of verse 26: LET HIM DO TO ME AS SEEMETH GOOD UNTO HIM—is indicative of the heart of David as he understands the judgment that God might be meting out to him for his past sins.
7. **A description of the sad state of David and his supporters (30).**
8. **David prays to God that the advice given Absalom from co-conspirator Ahithophel will prove to be foolishness (31).**
 - Steele & Terry suggest that these words are an allusion to the name AHITHOPHEL, meaning BROTHER OF FOLLY. David dreaded the far-reaching counsel of this wisest of his former friends.
 - OH LORD, I PRAY THEE... David was powerless except to PRAY that God will defeat the conspiracy of which Ahithophel has become a key man.
9. **David not only prays for foolish advice for Absalom, but sends another loyal friend, Hushai, actively to spy against Absalom and send him word through the priests' sons (32-37).**
 - Hushai would be a burden to David if he came along; however, there was another way that he could do something for David that no one else could—keep him informed of Absalom's plans.
 - Hushai in accepting David's challenge was, of course, risking his life for the King.

¹ Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, vol. 7, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 398.

V. Lessons & Applications.

John MacArthur suggests these lessons from the text of 2 Samuel 15.

- 1) **David wrote Psalm 3 and, likely, Psalm 63 after Absalom's rebellion** forced him to flee Jerusalem. Read these psalms and note the key words and phrases.
- 2) **We are to humble ourselves, not to exalt ourselves.** With good looks and a magnetic personality, Absalom had great potential to be a great leader for God in Israel. He tried to lift HIMSELF up and ended up being CAST DOWN. The world teaches us to look out for ourselves because nobody else will. The Bible teaches the opposite. Rather, we can depend upon God to care for us.
- 3) **Rebellion against God's king is never ultimately successful.** The Jewish leaders of the 1st Century learned this lesson. They rejected Jesus as Messiah. Absalom teaches that lesson here and the chapters that follow.
- 4) **Guard your heart against the world's seductions.** Even today, there are many forces that make promises which cannot be fulfilled. We must be discriminatingly careful as we hear them today.

--MacArthur, John F. 2 Samuel (MacArthur Bible Studies) (p. 90). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

VI. Questions.**True or False**

01. _____ Absalom told the king he needed to go to Hebron to find a wife.
02. _____ This chapter contains a reference to SPIES.
03. _____ The place David was headed was described as nearby.
04. _____ The ark was taken with David, carried by the Levites.
05. _____ Hushai was identified as David's friend.

I Found it in Verse(s)

06. _____ David's plan to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel.
07. _____ Where David planned to tarry.
08. _____ A number of men mentioned.
09. _____ What David told his servants in Jerusalem.
10. _____ What Absalom stole.

Short Answer

11. The place Absalom went to greet the people who had a controversy.
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12. The ten David left behind were David's:
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13. Three named groups of people who left Jerusalem with David:

14. Question David asked Zadok.

15. Where we find Absalom at the end of the chapter.

Each Question is worth 7 Points

My Score is: _____

Answers will be found on next week's handout

ANSWERS to 2 Samuel 14 Questions... **01**—True, 27; **02**—False (25); **03**—False (13); **04**—True (7); **05**—False (2); **06**—5; **07**—11; **08**—19; **09**—26; **10**—30; **11**—2 full years (28); **12**—Geshur (23); **13**—As water spilt on the ground (14); **14**—Say on (12); **15**—Fell on her face to the ground, and did Obeisance (4).

VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle. The words may be backwards, diagonal, upside down, etc. See if you can find them all. The more you use the words of the Bible, the greater blessed you will be! You might be surprised at how much this little exercise will help you retain important truths. THANK YOU for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. –DRL 5.82Wx6.32H

V J E R U S A L E M L
M U G T O I B A I R S
L D I H S C I T Y T P
O G T E A O A H E A R
R E T R I U T H E N I
D N I E D N H C A M E
A N T A B S A L O M S
V Y E E S E R V A N T
I S R A E L O T L K A
D D L P A S S E S I R
P E O P L E E I O N R
L C A R R Y N E V G Y

ABIATHAR	ABSALOM	ALSO	AROSE	CAME
CARRY	CITY	COUNSEL	DAVID	GITTITE
HEAR	ISRAEL	JERUSALEM	JUDGE	KING
LORD	PASS	PEOPLE	PRIEST	SAID
SERVANT	TARRY	THEN	THERE	

VIII. Crossword Puzzle.

2 Samuel 15 (KJV): From Your Friends at Maple Hill Church of Christ
 3960 Scale RD, Benton, KY 42025 <http://maplehillchurchofchrist.blog>

- ACROSS**
- 05) He was one of the conspirators.
 - 08) Absalom was interested in dealing with those who had one.
 - 09) The brook over which David and his supporters passed.
 - 10) Absalom said: "Oh that I were made ____ in the land."
 - 12) Absalom's signal to the spies was the sound of one.
 - 13) He stole the hearts of the men of Israel.
 - 14) David headed toward it as he left Jerusalem.

- DOWN**
- 01) David went up Mount Olivet in this fashion.
 - 02) David wanted Ahithophel's counsel turned into...
 - 03) Was told by David to carry back the ark into the city.
 - 04) The ____ said: "Art not thou a seer?"
 - 06) Position Ahithophel held under David.
 - 07) David left ____ of his concubines to keep the house.
 - 11) ____ told Ittai to go and pass over.