



"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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George L. Faull, Editor

Dear Brother Faull,

I was at a seminar last weekend. A gentleman asked the following question: "The KJV and NKJV of **2 Samuel 15:7** says '40 years' and the NIV says, '4 years', which is the correct number?"

KJV 2 Samuel 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."

NIV 2 Samuel 15:7, "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."

I discussed with him that the Septuagint, Syriac, Westcott & Hort, and Textus Receptus, Alexandrian (Nestle) and the Byzantine (Majority ext) etc, all play a factor in the translations we read. I was unable to give a specific answer on his question.

ANSWER:

I do not know:

If it was forty years from the time that Samuel had first anointed David as King (Saul continued his reign, in spite of the fact that he had been told "This day is the kingdom taken from you") and if so, this would be about 30 years into David's actual reign.

Or – if it was four years from the time Absalom was reconciled to his father when he was allowed to return home from exile.

Or – if it was four days after he was allowed to return home that he pretended to go and fulfill his vow.

It depends on which manuscripts you accept. The Vulgate, Septuagint, and Chaldee has forty years. The

Syriac, Arabic, Josephus, Theodoret, the Sixteen Edition of the Vulgate, and several of its versions read four years.

No Hebrew manuscript has four years though some have forty days instead of forty years.

I do not know that it matters. The books of the Bible in its originals were perfect, but that is not to say there could not be copyist errors in translating from one language to another.

God did not inspire the translators. This may be a good example of a number that was copied wrong. It is not an earth-shaking error.

Does it make any difference in our salvation through Jesus Christ? No – yet of all copyist errors, numbers are the most common ones to be made.

Won't it be a sad day when at judgment men complain that they could not tell if it was four years, forty years, or forty days when Absalom made his request to his father. Yet these are the very things that atheists, agnostics, and weak believers stumble over.

One should expect every preacher to perfectly teach the Bible as to expect every copyist to be error-free. He does not inspire every man who speaks, or every copyist who picks up a quill to copy a manuscript.

I feel like one fellow who said, "I am not worried about the things in the Bible that I do not understand, but the thing that bothers me are the things in the Bible that I do understand that I am not doing."