

Message #2

I Kings 1:1-4

Great people of God who have been greatly used by God to accomplish great things for God ultimately get old, slow down, become feeble and then die. It does not matter who the person was or how great the person was, that is the reality.

The greatest influence of my life was John Miles. One night in Florida, I dreamed that he and I were sitting and talking about things and the same night in Georgia my brother had a dream about John Miles. He was an incredible man of God. He studied under Lewis Sperry Chafer in Dallas and then eventually went to Grand Rapids and was president of a theological school that trained more than 6,000 students in the 40 years he was President. He was the greatest man of God I have ever known but back in 2009, he died at the age of 93.

When you lose someone like him, it leaves a void among the people who are left and they must try to pick up the pieces and go on. But when that happens, there are those opportunists who see it as their moment to step in and make a name for themselves.

When a key man dies, there are these power-crazed opportunists who want to jump into things and take it over. They see it as their moment for advancement. They are a Diotrephes type. They want limelight and power.

They see the moment as a moment to gain prominence and power. These people are not led of God; they are tools of the Devil. They want the preeminence and they will destroy everything.

That's what happened to the Grand Rapids School of the Bible and Music. I can put names to this, but I promised Mr. Miles I would never publicly do it, so I won't. But this kind of thing is not new to our day.

In all reality, that is what happened to Israel. When it came time for a key leader of God to die, there were those in the wings just waiting like vultures to get the power.

King David is the most important man in Israel's history. God promised that through him would come the Messiah (II Sam. 7). There is a five star hotel in downtown Jerusalem that is named after him now. He is still an important man in Israel's history.

When it comes time for a man like King David to die and leave this world to go to the next world, it is a major loss. You are not going to replace him. You may be certain of one thing; there will be those who want to try to replace him. There will be those who want to step into his position.

They don't have a clue as to why God so blessed David. They don't have his heart, but they want his honor.

When an important man of God gets ready to leave, it will start a game of politics and power. Most of the players will not be interested in the word of God or will of God. They saw this as their moment to get ahead and become somebody important.

But God was still sovereign and He was still monitoring all of the political shenanigans.

AS DAVID WAS NEARING HIS DEATH, THERE WERE SOME CLOSE TO THE SITUATION WHO SAW IT AS A MOMENT TO TRY TO GAIN LIMELIGHT POLITICAL POWER BECAUSE DAVID WAS IN A WEAKENED CONDITION.

I have actually seen this kind of thing happen in families. A person who loved the Lord is weak and frail and they need someone to help them. Every now and then, some relative will take over finances and take control of everything and they want dominant control of all assets even when it is not the desire or will of the individual.

Years ago, I knew of a very wealthy man who told me he wanted to do certain things with his money but his children had taken charge of it and would not let him do it. He said I don't even have control of my own money anymore. It was my money and not theirs.

That is kind of what is happening to David here. He is in a weakened condition and there are those vultures who are hovering around him, who want to take advantage of things.

As I Kings opens, God wants us to learn seven historical facts about King David, which sets the stage for much of what will happen with the upcoming kings.

FACT #1 - King David was old. 1:1a

David lived to be over 70-years-old. In II Sam. 5:4-5 we read, "David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years, at Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty three years over all Israel and Judah." So we know that David lived into his seventies.

The reason why this is brought out is because his health was failing at 70. Now we don't think of 70 as being a real old age, but back in David's day that was considered to be quite old.

They did not have the medical technology and all the medicine knowledge that God has given us today. They did not have the modern comforts that we enjoy today, so 70 was an old age.

My doctor told me that they have made amazing advancements in understanding aneurisms. He said we are now able to prevent things that years ago would have killed you.

FACT #2 - King David was advanced in age. **1:1b**

Now this seems to be redundant. However, by adding this clause to the fact that he was old, we learn that David was living at a time of the kings when this age was an advanced age. Not too many were living to be his age.

Now what that practically meant to David was that in spite of the battles and struggles and failures and sins of David, God has blessed him and permitted him to live a good, long, productive life on this earth.

Perhaps you have had a setback in your world. Get back on track for God because your setback doesn't have to be the final chapter of your life.

FACT #3 - King David was covered with clothes. **1:1c**

We learn here that David needed some help. He had servants around him who took care of him and some of those servants were helping David, even with things like getting dressed.

The reason this is mentioned is because everything was done humanly speaking to try and make King David comfortable. People around David were trying to do what they could to help him. They brought him the best warm clothing, probably made from wool and did what they could to keep him warm.

This is not a glamorous job, to help an older person get dressed. But it is a job that is noticed by God. God takes notice of those who help older people and do what they can to help make them comfortable.

FACT #4 - King David could not keep warm. **1:1d**

David would have had the best clothing possible. Now people in this time layered clothing and they wore linen and wool. Linen is a very breathable material and was worn next to the skin and wool and animal skins kept one very warm.

The fact that the clothing could not keep David warm suggests he had serious circulation issues. It was not due to a lack of proper clothing. Some have speculated that he had some type of arteriosclerosis.

Leon Wood thinks it is possible that King David was mostly bedridden at this time in his life. If he were not bedridden, he did not have enough strength to generate heat on his own, especially at night. He obviously would get very chilled and could not keep warm.

Now this was not just a simple physiological issue for David. This was a critical psychological issue. He was still King and he needed to make kingly decisions. To do that he needed a sharp mind.

What we may assume is that David was not in the best of health in the closing days of his life.

FACT #5 – David’s servants want to seek a young virgin to keep David warm and become his nurse. **1:2**

Now this may seem foreign to us that they would suggest this, but it is actually not as unusual as one might think.

Josephus (AD 37-100) and the Greek physician Galen (AD 130-200) said that this was a normal practice for maintaining body heat. He was recommended by the medical world.

When I took a mountain survival course, they told us that if someone was becoming hypothermic, one of the best ways to warm them would be to lie down next to them and hug them or snuggle next to them to warm their body temperature. They said the fastest way was to remove clothing and do this.

When we would go Elk hunting, I would tell the guys if you go into hypothermia you will die and I expect you to let me die, too.

Now obviously this would need to be a virgin because no married woman would be in a position to leave her home to lie down next to the king at night.

FACT #6 – David’s servants search all of Israel to find a beautiful girl to become David’s nurse. **1:3a**

Now finding a beautiful girl would not be a problem, but finding one that met the criteria would be very difficult:

- 1) She had to be beautiful - the word yapah means breathtaking beauty at a splendor level (Williams Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*), p. 358.
- 2) She had to be a nurse - the word means to live in the same house and care for the needs- (*Ibid.*, p. 587)
- 3) She had to be a servant - to serve and view it as ministering and serving the Lord- (*Ibid.*, p. 637)
- 4) She had to be a virgin - Hebrew is bitulah which means never been intimate with a man. (*Ibid.*, p. 149)
- 5) She could not be engaged. She had to be a girl who was not engaged or promised to a man.

A girl who would meet all of these prerequisites would not be easy to find. One that met all the criteria would be very rare girl.

Now it was not just beauty they were after. The woman they selected needed beauty, but she also needed a servant’s spirit and some medical skills.

She needed to be an unmarried girl because she would need to spend time with King David and that would require a total commitment. That would not be an easy combination to find.

FACT #7 – David’s servants found a girl named Abishag the Shunammite and brought her to David. **1:3b-4**

A massive search took place to find a girl and one woman was found. Her name was Abishag. She was called a Shunammite, which means she was from an area of Shunem.

The town of Shunem was an area located about seven miles NW of Nazareth, near Mt. Tabor. It was in the territory of Issachar.

There are four stated realities brought out about Abishag:

(Reality #1) - Abishag was very beautiful. **1:4a**

God’s word is telling us that this girl was very beautiful. So this is true from God Himself. This is true from the search committee. This is true from David’s perspective and from Solomon and Adonijah, David’s son. This was a beautiful girl to see.

Many have concluded that Solomon refers to her in Song of Solomon 6:13. He changes the spelling from Shunammite to Shulammitte. If this is the same woman, we learn that she was so beautiful that people enjoyed looking or gazing at her. As the verse says, “Come back, come back, O Shulammitte; come back, come back that we may gaze at you.”

Adonijah, David’s son, was so struck with her beauty that when David died, he wanted her so he asked Bathsheba to ask Solomon if he could have her (I Kings 2:17).

Now it seems to me that Bathsheba was a little jealous of her so when Adonijah wanted her, she went to King Solomon to ask that he let him have her and Solomon had him executed for requesting this (I Kings 2:19-25). It was this request that got him killed (I Kings 2:22-25).

God does make beautiful women and handsome men, so get over it. There are those women God makes who are beautiful and there are those men who are handsome. Some are so jealous of this but they better get over it because God’s word teaches this very point.

When we were in Florida, there was a guy who would exercise in this green area that we could see. He brought two gymnastic rings and slung them up over a bar and would do an impressive workout. He was a good looking man with bulging muscles. One day I was down walking Molly, our dog, and I was talking to him. I said I just want you to know that I am in my 70’s now and when I was young I was very athletic and in my best days I never looked as good as you do, not even close. He got to laughing. Abishag was a beautiful woman. It will be something to see her one day in eternity. But she had more than just physical beauty.

(Reality #2) - Abishag became David's nurse. 1:4b

Abishag became David's personal nurse. She obviously had some medical knowledge and she took good care of David. It is interesting a girl so beautiful had taken some interest in the medical world of her time. Those who work in the medical field to help take care of God's people are special people.

(Reality #3) - Abishag served David. 1:4c

With all of her beauty, she had a servant's heart. She was not a self-centered, ego maniac like many beautiful women are; she was truly a servant and she devoted her time to serving David and helping David.

It is interesting that she is remembered forever as being a nurse and servant. Not as being a model and beauty pageant contestant. Abishag was not just beautiful physically, but she was also a beautiful person with a servant's heart. That is what stands out for all eternity.

(Reality #4) - Abishag did not have any physical relations with David. 1:4d

This is not a story about some sleazy or sinful story of an old man and a younger woman.

There was nothing immoral or improper about this relationship between Abishag and David. This was not about sex; this was about David's survival.

Now Abishag will become a critical person in the power-crazed drama about to unfold.

David's days were winding down and instead of finding the key people praying, we find them plotting, politicking and planning.

Practical Thoughts:

- 1) The key to having the blessings of God after a great man of God is gone is for God to surface a leader who will be as serious about God and His word as the man who is gone.
- 2) The man God will bless and the organization God will bless will be one who honors his predecessor, who was responsible for the blessings of God.
- 3) Being jealous of someone else because of the way he/she looks is a deadly serious sin. Paul lists the sin in the same category as immorality, sorcery and drunkenness (Gal. 5:19-21). This sin is one of the reasons the kings were such disasters.