

How did King David die?

King David died of old age at 70. The only malady the Bible mentions regarding David in his old age is the inability to stay warm (1 Kings 1:1). The Bible says he “slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David” (1 Kings 2:10).

On the night before David’s death, the old king gave advice and instruction to his son Solomon, who would succeed him as king over Israel: “‘I am about to go the way of all the earth,’ he said. ‘So be strong, act like a man, and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in obedience to him, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and regulations, as written in the Law of Moses. Do this so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go and that the LORD may keep his promise to me: “If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel”’” (1 Kings 2:2-4).

David’s deathbed speech began with positive spiritual counsel but ended with dark warnings. He cautioned Solomon that the Lord’s promise of a continuing dynasty was conditioned on the faithfulness of his descendants. After that, David instructed Solomon to deal with a few items of unfinished business: the murders committed by Joab were to be avenged, the sons of Barzillai were to be repaid for their loyalty, and Shimei was to be punished for cursing David during Absalom’s rebellion. The dying king expressed confidence in his son’s wisdom, trusting that Solomon would know the best way to handle these matters. David’s final words in Scripture are followed by a formal notice of the king’s death and burial, a custom seen regularly in the historical books (1 Kings 2:10-12).

The book of 1 Chronicles expands on the end of David's life: "David son of Jesse was king over all Israel. He ruled over Israel forty years—seven in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem. He died at a good old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth and honor. His son Solomon succeeded him as king" (1 Chronicles 29:26-28).

Before he died, King David gave a charge to Solomon, telling his son to "acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever" (1 Chronicles 28:9). Then David left Solomon with detailed instructions for building the temple in Jerusalem, organizing its priests and Levites, and finishing all the work needing to be done in the Lord's house of worship (verses 11-19).

First Chronicles 28:20-21 records these inspiring and reassuring words of King David as he prepared to hand his throne to Solomon: "Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the LORD is finished. The divisions of the priests and Levites are ready for all the work on the temple of God, and every willing person skilled in any craft will help you in all the work. The officials and all the people will obey your every command" (1 Chronicles 28:20-21).

God blessed King David with a long and prosperous life. He survived a battle with a giant, multiple attempts by King Saul to murder him, various wars, and a coup led by one of his own sons. In the end, he died of old age. Scripture leaves no doubt that David was of sound mind when he died. Knowing his death was imminent, David was able to give

support and guidance to his heir and successor. Despite his many faults, David was admired and respected as a hero by the people of Israel. His dedication to God, loyalty in the face of ill-treatment, courage in war, benevolence in conquest, and faithfulness in friendship were so extraordinary that he would forever be viewed as an ideal king and a man after God's own heart.