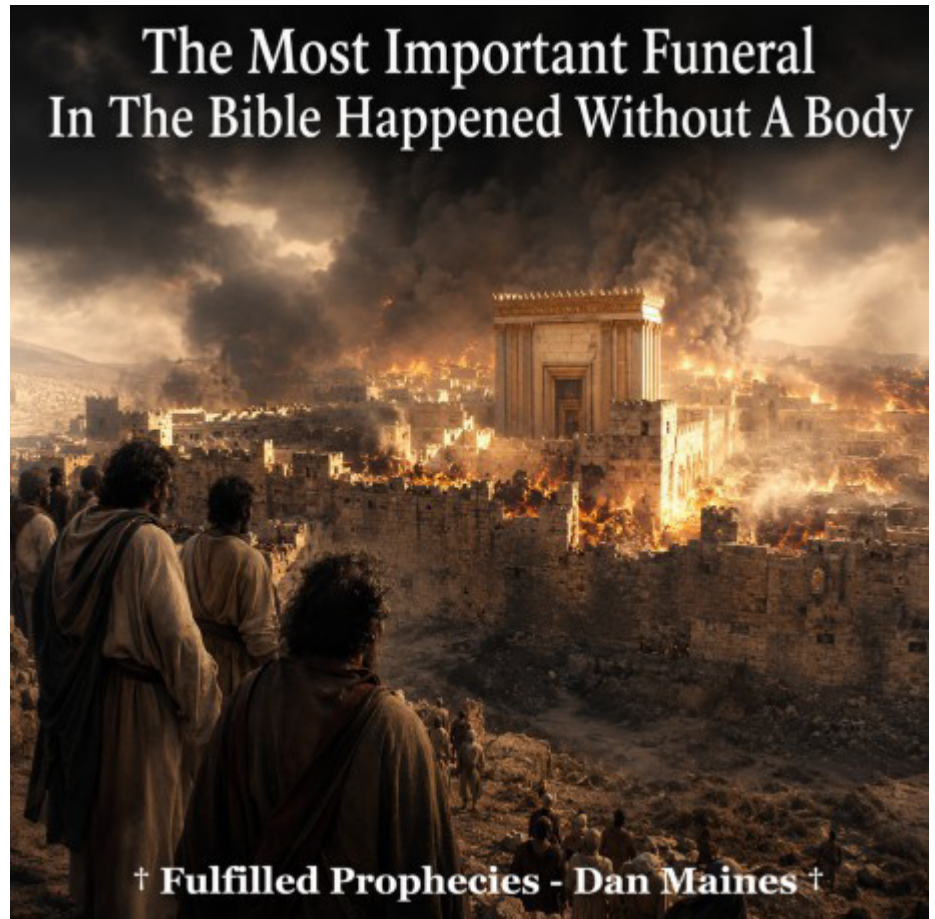


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The Most Important Funeral In The Bible Happened Without A Body



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† One of the most important funerals in the Bible happened without a physical body, without a coffin, and without a grave.

† What died was a covenant world, the Old Covenant order centered on the earthly sanctuary, Levitical priesthood, sacrifices, and the earthly Jerusalem.

† Its death wasn't instantaneous in its historical administration. Jesus established the New Covenant through His blood, but the

old system remained standing during a period of transition until its visible removal in AD 70 (Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 9:8).

† Hebrews describes this transition with remarkably precise language. The Old Covenant was becoming obsolete, growing old, and ready to disappear.

† That language sounds almost like an obituary written before the funeral.

† By the time Hebrews was written, the Old Covenant world was still physically visible, but spiritually it had already been surpassed by something infinitely greater.

† The temple still stood. Priests still served. Sacrifices were still offered. Jerusalem still functioned as the center of Jewish worship.

† Yet God had already announced that the entire covenant order was ready to disappear.

† AD 70 was therefore more than the destruction of buildings. It was the public, historical removal of an obsolete covenant administration whose replacement had already arrived in Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 8:13

When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is about to disappear.

† This verse gives us the language behind the funeral. The writer didn't describe the Old Covenant as healthy, permanent, or waiting for restoration. He described it as becoming obsolete, growing old, and ready to disappear.

† Notice the transitional language. The New Covenant had already been established, while the Old Covenant system was still visibly present and approaching its final removal (Hebrews 9:8-10).

† The writer was living between the establishment of the New Covenant through Christ and the historical disappearance of the old temple order.

† This explains why Hebrews speaks with both accomplished and approaching language. Christ's sacrifice was finished, but

the obsolete covenant structure was still standing for a short time (Hebrews 10:9-14).

† The question isn't whether the Old Covenant would disappear. Hebrews says it was ready to disappear. The question is when that visible disappearance occurred, and history gives us the unmistakable answer, AD 70.

Hebrews 9:8-10

The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing, which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, since they relate only to food, drink, and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation.

† The first tabernacle represented more than a building. It represented an entire covenant arrangement that was still standing when Hebrews was written.

† The writer specifically called it a figure for the time then present. That places his discussion inside a first-century transition, not thousands of years in the future.

† The old ordinances had an expiration point. They were imposed until the time of reformation, showing that God never intended the Mosaic covenant administration to continue forever (Hebrews 7:11-12).

† Christ had already entered the greater and more perfect tabernacle, so the earthly copy had served its purpose (Hebrews 9:11-12).

† The continued existence of the earthly temple didn't prove the Old Covenant still possessed divine permanence. It proved the transition hadn't yet reached its historical conclusion.

Hebrews 10:9-10

then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will." He takes away the first in order to establish the second. By this will, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all time.

† The order couldn't be clearer. God removed the first so that He could establish the second.

† Jesus didn't come to repair the Mosaic covenant, extend it, or place Christianity beside it. He brought the covenant purpose to its intended fulfillment and established the better covenant (Hebrews 8:6).

† The sacrifice that established this new reality wasn't another animal sacrifice. It was the once-for-all offering of Jesus Christ.

† The cross settled the sacrificial issue completely. There was no theological reason for the old sacrificial system to continue because the perfect sacrifice had already been offered (Hebrews 10:11-14).

† What remained after the cross was a fading covenant administration awaiting its final historical removal.

Hebrews 12:26-28

And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven." This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let's show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;

† Hebrews moves from something growing old to something being shaken and removed. These aren't disconnected ideas. They describe the passing of the temporary covenant order and the permanence of Christ's kingdom.

† The shaking wasn't the destruction of the physical universe. Its purpose was the removal of things that could be shaken so that the unshakable kingdom would remain.

† The believers weren't waiting thousands of years to receive that kingdom. The writer says they were receiving it.

† The contrast is between temporary and permanent, earthly shadow and heavenly reality, Sinai and Zion, Old Covenant and New Covenant (Hebrews 12:18-24).

† When Jerusalem and the temple fell in AD 70, the visible

center of the Old Covenant world was shaken out of existence, but Christ's kingdom remained untouched.

Matthew 24:1-2

Jesus left the temple area and was going on His way when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. But He responded and said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down."

† Jesus personally announced the coming destruction of the temple. The magnificent structure admired by the disciples had a divine sentence hanging over it.

† This wasn't a vague prediction about someday. The rest of the discourse identifies the generation that would witness these events (Matthew 24:34).

† The temple's destruction therefore belongs directly in the covenant transition described by Hebrews.

† Hebrews said the old order was ready to disappear. Jesus said the temple would be completely demolished. History records both realities converging in the same first-century catastrophe.

† The funeral had been announced before Rome ever surrounded Jerusalem.

Luke 21:20-22

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are inside the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of punishment, so that all things which have been written will be fulfilled.

† Jesus gave His disciples a visible sign, Jerusalem surrounded by armies.

† He called what followed the days of vengeance and connected them with the fulfillment of what had been written.

† This judgment wasn't disconnected from covenant history. Jerusalem was the city of the temple, priesthood, sacrifices, and

the Old Covenant administration that Hebrews said was ready to disappear.

† When the armies arrived, the generation Jesus warned was facing the covenant judgment He had repeatedly announced (Luke 19:41-44; Matthew 23:34-36).

† The disappearance described in Hebrews wasn't an invisible abstraction. The old covenant world had a visible center, and that center was about to be devastated.

Galatians 4:25-26

Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is enslaved with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.

† Paul identifies two Jerusalems representing two covenant realities.

† The Jerusalem then existing on earth was associated with Sinai and bondage, while the Jerusalem above represented freedom.

† This makes the covenant transition unmistakable. God's redemptive movement wasn't toward preserving earthly Jerusalem as the permanent center of His kingdom. It was toward the heavenly Jerusalem revealed through the New Covenant (Hebrews 12:22).

† Earthly Jerusalem could fall without destroying God's kingdom because God's people belonged to a city that Roman armies couldn't touch.

† The old Jerusalem could have its funeral because the Jerusalem above was already the believer's mother.

Revelation 21:1-2

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

† Revelation completes the covenant picture with the passing of the former world and the revelation of the New Jerusalem.

† This language follows the prophetic pattern of describing covenantal transformation through cosmic imagery (Isaiah 65:17-18).

† The disappearance of the old wasn't the annihilation of planet Earth. It was the passing of the former covenant world and the full manifestation of the New Covenant order.

† This is why the Bible's most important funeral didn't need a physical body. A covenant age was being buried.

† The Old Covenant world grew old, became obsolete, was shaken, judged, and finally disappeared, while the kingdom of Jesus Christ remained.

† What disappeared wasn't God's faithfulness. Its disappearance demonstrated God's faithfulness because the temporary shadows had accomplished their purpose and the promised reality had come in Christ.

Historical References

† Josephus witnessed and recorded the Jewish-Roman war that ended with Jerusalem and the temple being destroyed in AD 70. His account describes famine, internal violence, Roman siege operations, the burning of the temple, and the devastation of the city, providing an extraordinary historical witness to the world Jesus said would fall.

† Josephus records Titus and the Roman forces taking Jerusalem and the sanctuary being consumed during the catastrophe. Whatever theological interpretation someone places on those events, the historical destruction of the temple system is beyond dispute.

† Tacitus also records the Roman conflict with Jerusalem and confirms the historical setting of the Jewish war and the Roman campaign against the city.

† Eusebius later connected Jerusalem's destruction with the judgment foretold by Jesus and preserved the early Christian tradition that believers escaped the city before the catastrophe.

† These writers don't establish biblical doctrine, Scripture does. Their importance is that they provide historical testimony that the temple, city, priestly center, and sacrificial world described in

the New Testament actually came crashing down in the first century.

How It Applies To Us Today

† We aren't living beside a dying Old Covenant. We're living in the established reality of the New Covenant.

† We don't need another earthly temple because Christ is greater than the temple and God's people are His dwelling place (Ephesians 2:19-22).

† We don't need another Levitical priesthood because Jesus is our permanent High Priest (Hebrews 7:23-25).

† We don't need another animal sacrifice because Christ offered Himself once for all (Hebrews 10:10-14).

† We don't need to wait for the Old Covenant world to disappear. Hebrews said it was ready to disappear in their day, and history records exactly what happened to its earthly center in AD 70.

† We don't live among the shadows waiting for reality. We have Christ.

† The funeral is over. The obsolete covenant order isn't coming back from the grave.

† Our calling isn't to rebuild what God removed, but to live faithfully in the unshakable kingdom we've received through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:28).

Q & A Appendix

Q: What exactly died if there wasn't a physical body?

A: The Old Covenant administration, its earthly sanctuary system, Levitical order, sacrifices, and covenant world reached their appointed end. Hebrews describes that order as becoming obsolete and ready to disappear (Hebrews 8:13).

Q: Did the Old Covenant end at the cross or in AD 70?

A: Christ established the New Covenant through His sacrifice and removed the first covenant as the basis of access to God, while Hebrews shows that the old system remained visibly standing during a transitional period and was ready to

disappear (Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 9:8; Hebrews 10:9-10). AD 70 brought the historical destruction of its temple-centered administration.

Q: Why did God allow the temple to remain after Jesus died?

A: The New Testament presents a transition in which the finished work of Christ had already established the new reality while the old temple system remained temporarily visible. Hebrews specifically speaks of the first tabernacle still standing while describing the old covenant as ready to disappear (Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 9:8).

Q: Does this mean the physical earth ended in AD 70?

A: No. The language describes covenantal removal and renewal. Hebrews speaks of removing what could be shaken so that the unshakable kingdom would remain, and Revelation contrasts the passing former order with New Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:26-28; Revelation 21:1-2).

Q: Could the Old Covenant temple system someday be restored by God?

A: A rebuilt temple couldn't improve on Christ's finished work. Hebrews presents Jesus' sacrifice as once for all and the former covenant as obsolete and disappearing, not temporarily suspended until a future restoration (Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 10:10-14).

Q: So what was the most important funeral without a body?

A: It was the disappearance of the Old Covenant world. It grew old, became obsolete, was shaken, and its earthly center was destroyed, while the New Covenant kingdom established in Christ remained (Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 12:26-28).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 9:8-10; Hebrews 10:9-10; Hebrews 12:26-28; Matthew 24:1-2; Luke 21:20-22; Galatians 4:25-26; Revelation 21:1-2

† Historical writers: Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Books 5-7; Tacitus, Histories, Book 5; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3

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