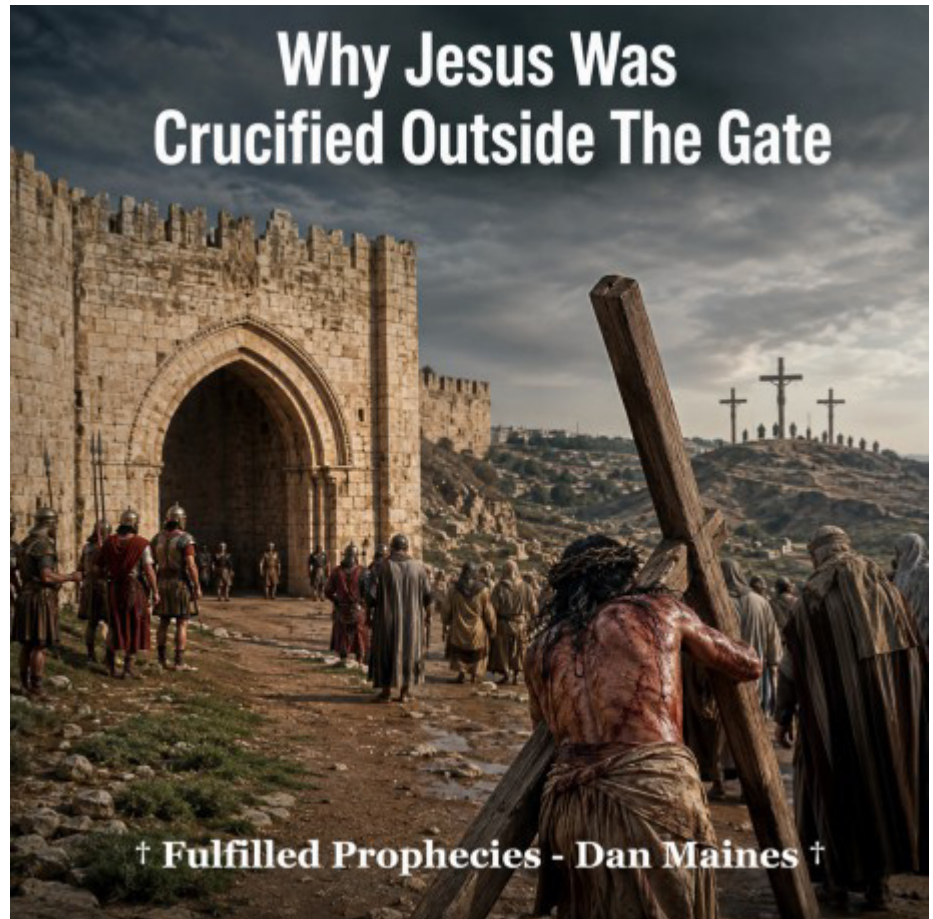


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Covenant - Why Jesus Was Crucified Outside The Gate



By Dan Maines

Why Jesus Was Crucified Outside The Gate

Introduction

† Jesus being crucified outside Jerusalem wasn't an accidental detail. The location itself carried covenant meaning.

† Under the Law of Moses, certain sacrificial animals were taken outside the camp and burned. Jesus fulfilled that pattern when He suffered outside the gate of Jerusalem.

† Hebrews doesn't stop with the location of Jesus' suffering. It immediately calls its first-century readers to go out to Him outside the camp.

† The camp represented more than a physical location. It represented the covenant order centered in Jerusalem, the earthly sanctuary, the Levitical priesthood, and the sacrifices that were becoming obsolete (Hebrews 8:13).

† Jesus went outside the gate first, then His people were called to follow Him out. They weren't being called to abandon God. They were being called to leave an obsolete covenant system and identify completely with Christ.

† This is the wow moment in Hebrews 13. The cross stood outside the gate, and the New Covenant people were told to go outside the camp because the lasting city they were seeking wasn't earthly Jerusalem.

Hebrews 13:11-14

For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the Holy Place by the high priest as an offering for sin are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the gate, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood. So then, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.

† Hebrews deliberately connects Jesus' death with the Old Covenant sacrifices whose bodies were burned outside the camp. Jesus fulfilled the pattern by suffering outside Jerusalem.

† Then comes the command to go to Jesus outside the camp. The readers weren't merely being taught where Jesus died. They were being told where they now belonged.

† Their loyalty could no longer remain with the covenant order centered in earthly Jerusalem. They were to identify with Jesus even when doing so brought rejection and reproach (Hebrews 10:32-34).

† The statement, For we have not here an abiding city, is especially powerful. Hebrews was written to people living while earthly Jerusalem still stood, yet they were told that city wasn't their lasting city.

† They were seeking the city that was coming, the heavenly Jerusalem and unshakable kingdom already described earlier in

Hebrews (Hebrews 12:22-28).

Leviticus 16:27

But the bull of the sin offering and the goat of the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be taken outside the camp, and they shall burn their hides, their flesh, and their refuse in the fire.

† The background of Hebrews 13 is found directly in the Day of Atonement. The blood entered the holy place, but the bodies of the sin offerings were carried outside the camp.

† Jesus fulfilled what those sacrifices pictured. His blood accomplished what animal blood could never accomplish permanently (Hebrews 10:1-4).

† The pattern is striking. What happened symbolically under the Old Covenant happened finally in Christ.

† The place outside the camp was associated with rejection and removal, yet that became the place where God's final sacrifice for sin was accomplished.

John 19:17-18

They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, carrying His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which in Hebrew is called, Golgotha. There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between.

† John specifically tells us that Jesus went out to the place where He was crucified. Hebrews gives that geographical fact its covenant significance.

† Jesus was rejected by the leadership of the very covenant nation to which He came, and He suffered outside the city associated with that covenant administration (John 1:11).

† The Messiah was outside the gate while the religious establishment continued inside. That contrast becomes even more significant when Hebrews later tells believers to go out to Him.

† Following Jesus meant choosing Him over the system that rejected Him. They couldn't cling to the old order while refusing

the reproach associated with 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 establishes the covenant setting of Hebrews. The first covenant had become obsolete and was near disappearance.

† Hebrews wasn't describing an Old Covenant system that would remain alongside the New Covenant forever. It was aging and approaching its historical removal.

† This explains the urgency behind the command to go outside the camp. Why remain attached to an order that God declared obsolete and near its end?

† The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70 visibly ended the sacrificial and priestly order that had defined Israel's covenant life for centuries.

† Going outside the camp was therefore a decisive covenant separation. Their confidence was no longer in Jerusalem, the temple, animal sacrifices, or the Levitical priesthood. Their confidence was in Christ alone (Hebrews 10:19-23).

Hebrews 12:22-24

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

† Hebrews had already identified the city to which believers truly belonged. They had come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

† Notice the contrast. They were being called out of the camp associated with earthly Jerusalem because they had already come to the heavenly Jerusalem.

† Their covenant identity had changed. Jesus was the mediator of the New Covenant, and His blood spoke better things than the blood associated with the former system.

† The movement in Hebrews isn't from earth to another geographical location. It's from the temporary covenant order to the permanent kingdom established through Christ.

† This is why losing earthly Jerusalem wasn't the loss of God's city. God's people had received something greater.

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 a temporary covenant arrangement. Its regulations were imposed until the time of reformation.

† Jesus brought the reality to which that system pointed. The shadows couldn't remain the governing covenant order after the substance had arrived (Hebrews 10:1).

† Hebrews consistently moves its readers away from dependence upon the earthly sanctuary and toward the finished work of Christ.

† The call to go outside the camp fits this entire argument. The temporary order had served its purpose, and God's people were being gathered around Christ rather than the earthly sanctuary.

Hebrews 10:19-22

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let's approach God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an

evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

† Under the former system, access to the holy place was restricted. Through Jesus, God's people received direct covenant access through His blood.

† They didn't need to return to the earthly priesthood because they already had the greater High Priest over the house of God.

† They didn't need another animal sacrifice because Jesus had opened the new and living way.

† Going outside the camp wasn't walking away from God's presence. It was drawing nearer to God through the only sacrifice and priesthood that could actually provide complete access.

Matthew 23:37-38

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who have been sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!

† Jesus had already pronounced judgment upon Jerusalem and its house. The city that rejected the prophets would also reject the Son.

† Notice the change in language. Jesus called the temple your house as He announced its coming desolation.

† Hebrews later tells believers not to treat that earthly city as their lasting city. Jesus had already announced what was coming upon it (Matthew 24:1-2).

† The call to leave the camp therefore fits the approaching judgment upon the Old Covenant center. God's people weren't to place their hope in a house that Jesus had declared desolate.

Historical References

† Josephus described the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70 in *The Wars of the Jews*. His account records the catastrophic end of the city and sanctuary that had stood at the center of Jewish national and religious life.

† Josephus also described the Roman siege, famine, internal

conflict, and eventual burning of the temple, providing an important first-century historical witness to Jerusalem's destruction.

† Eusebius later reported that believers in Jerusalem departed from the city before the war and went to Pella. His account is significant because early Christians understood that their security wasn't found by remaining attached to Jerusalem.

† These historical witnesses don't establish the meaning of Scripture, but they show the historical setting in which the warnings of Jesus and the covenant argument of Hebrews reached their dramatic conclusion.

How It Applies To Us Today

† We don't need to go outside a literal first-century Jerusalem today. The original command belonged to believers facing the transition from the Old Covenant order to the fully established New Covenant age.

† But the truth behind the passage remains powerful. Our relationship with God isn't centered in an earthly temple, human priesthood, geographical holy city, or sacrificial system.

† We come to God through Jesus Christ. He is our sacrifice, our High Priest, our mediator, and our access to the Father (Hebrews 7:25).

† We don't need to rebuild what Christ fulfilled. We don't need another temple, another Levitical priesthood, or another animal sacrifice.

† The first-century believers were called outside the camp because something better had arrived. We live in the reality of that better covenant today.

† Jesus suffered outside the gate, the believers were called outside the camp, and earthly Jerusalem wasn't their lasting city. Those statements belong together.

† The cross wasn't merely outside Jerusalem geographically. It marked the transition away from the shadows and toward the covenant reality found in Christ.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Why does Hebrews emphasize that Jesus suffered outside the gate?

A: Because His location fulfilled the pattern of the sin offerings taken outside the camp and became the basis for calling believers to go outside the camp to Him (Leviticus 16:27; Hebrews 13:11-13).

Q: What did the camp represent in Hebrews 13?

A: In the argument of Hebrews, it represented the covenant order from which these believers were being separated, including its earthly sanctuary, priesthood, sacrifices, and identification with Jerusalem (Hebrews 8:13; 9:8-10; 13:13-14).

Q: Why did Hebrews say they had no lasting city there?

A: Because earthly Jerusalem wasn't the permanent city of God's New Covenant people. They had come to the heavenly Jerusalem and were receiving an unshakable kingdom (Hebrews 12:22-28; 13:14).

Q: Was going outside the camp a rejection of God?

A: No. It was exactly the opposite. They were going out to Jesus because access to God was now through Him and His blood rather than through the obsolete covenant system (Hebrews 10:19-22; 13:13).

Q: Does Hebrews 13 teach Christians today to physically leave Jerusalem?

A: No. The command addressed believers in that first-century covenant transition. We live in the New Covenant reality to which they were being called (Hebrews 8:13; 12:22-24).

Q: What is the great covenant picture in this passage?

A: Jesus went outside the gate, then His followers were called outside the camp. The sacrifice had been completed, the first covenant was becoming obsolete, and God's people were being identified with Christ and the heavenly Jerusalem rather than the earthly covenant order (Hebrews 8:13; 13:11-14).

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

Source Index

† Hebrews 13:11-14; Leviticus 16:27; John 19:17-18; Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 12:22-24; Hebrews 9:8-10; Hebrews 10:19-22; Matthew 23:37-38

† Historical writers: Josephus, The Wars of the Jews; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

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