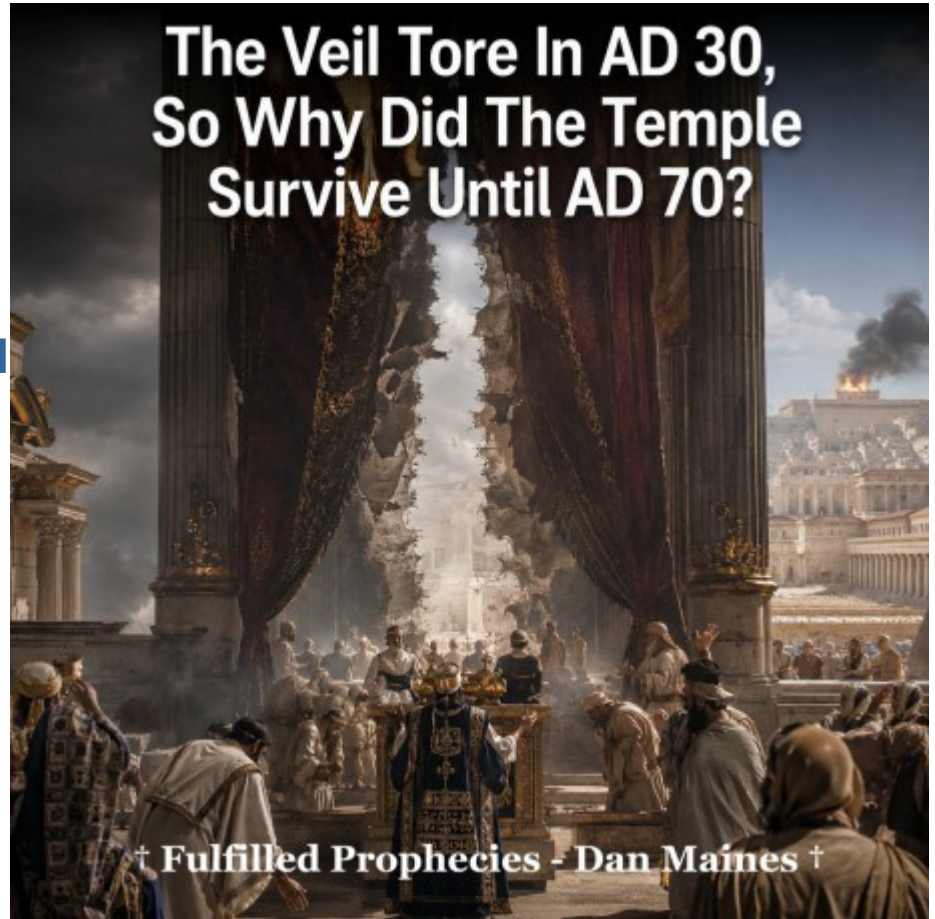


# Fulfilled Prophecies

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**Covenant - The Veil Tore In AD 30, So Why Did The Temple Survive Until AD 70?**



By Dan Maines

**The Veil Tore In AD 30, So Why Did The Temple Survive Until AD 70?**

## Introduction

† When Jesus died, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. God didn't wait until AD 70 to announce that access to Him had changed. The tearing of the veil declared that the old system had lost its exclusive place before God.

† Yet the temple didn't disappear that afternoon. Priests continued serving, sacrifices continued being offered, and the temple remained standing for approximately another forty years.

This raises an important question. If Christ fulfilled the sacrificial system at the cross, why did God allow the temple to remain until AD 70?

† The answer is found in the New Testament itself. The cross accomplished the redemptive work, the New Covenant was established through Christ, and the old system entered its final period of passing away. What was accomplished through Christ was then historically demonstrated in the judgment that brought the old temple order to its irreversible end.

† This is why the New Testament can speak of something already accomplished in Christ while also speaking of the Old Covenant as ready to disappear (Hebrews 8:13).

† The forty-year period wasn't evidence that the cross failed to end the old sacrificial order. It was the transition between Christ's finished sacrifice and the historical removal of the covenant system that had rejected Him.

### **Matthew 27:50-51**

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and gave up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.

† Notice who tore the veil. The text says it was torn from top to bottom. The symbolism is unmistakable. Access to God was no longer centered in the earthly sanctuary and its priestly system (Hebrews 10:19-22).

† Jesus had just died when the veil tore. The theological meaning of the temple system had been fulfilled through the sacrifice to which it had always pointed (Hebrews 9:11-12).

† Yet the physical temple was still standing. That distinction matters. A covenant institution could lose its divine function before the building associated with it was physically destroyed (John 4:21-24).

† The torn veil announced what Christ had accomplished. AD 70 would publicly demonstrate the consequences for the covenant order that continued after its fulfillment in Christ (Matthew 23:36-38).

## **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 needed to understand the period between the cross and AD 70. The writer says the first covenant had been made old, yet he also says it was becoming old and was near disappearing.

† There was an accomplished reality and an approaching historical conclusion. The New Covenant wasn't waiting for AD 70 to become valid, but the old covenantal world was still approaching its visible removal (Hebrews 9:8-10).

† The words near disappearing are extremely important. The writer wasn't describing something that would remain alongside the New Covenant for thousands of years. He described something approaching its end (Hebrews 10:37).

† The temple's continued existence didn't prove that the Old Covenant remained God's continuing redemptive system. It showed that the historical structure associated with that covenant hadn't yet been removed.

## **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.

† Hebrews directly connects the standing sanctuary with the old order. The writer was living during the period when the temple system still operated, yet he called it a figure connected with the time then present.

† Those sacrifices couldn't perfect the conscience. Their continuation didn't mean they still possessed the redemptive significance they once had. Christ had already entered the greater and more perfect tabernacle and obtained eternal

redemption (Hebrews 9:11-12).

† Notice the word until. The ordinances belonged to a system imposed until the time of reformation. They were temporary shadows pointing toward the reality found in Christ (Colossians 2:16-17).

† The physical continuation of sacrifice after the cross doesn't mean Christ's sacrifice was incomplete. It means people continued practicing a system whose fulfillment had already arrived.

### **Hebrews 10:9-14**

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. Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies are made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

† Here is the theological end of the sacrificial system. Jesus offered one sacrifice. Nothing performed afterward in the earthly temple could improve, repeat, or complete His work.

† Hebrews deliberately contrasts the priests who continued standing and offering sacrifices with Christ, who offered one sacrifice and sat down. The old priests kept working because their sacrifices could never accomplish what Christ accomplished (Hebrews 7:27).

† This explains how temple sacrifices could continue after the cross without possessing continuing covenant authority. Human beings continued performing them, but God had provided the final sacrifice.

† The first was taken away so that the second could be established. The temple could remain physically standing without remaining the divinely appointed means of approaching

God (Ephesians 2:18).

### **Acts 6:13-14**

They put forward false witnesses who said, "This man does not stop speaking against this holy place and the Law; for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses handed down to us."

† Even after the cross, Jerusalem remained intensely attached to the temple and Mosaic customs. The conflict recorded in Acts shows that the old religious establishment continued operating during the apostolic generation.

† Stephen's preaching challenged the idea that God could be confined to a temple made with human hands (Acts 7:48-50).

† The continued existence of the temple therefore became part of the first-century conflict between the fading covenant order and the reality revealed in Christ.

† God gave that generation time in which the gospel was preached throughout the world of their day before Jerusalem's judgment arrived (Matthew 24:14, Colossians 1:23).

### **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 Himself identified the historical event that would bring Jerusalem's desolation. He told His disciples what they would see, Jerusalem surrounded by armies.

† He didn't describe an event thousands of years beyond His audience. He gave instructions to people in Judea to flee when they saw the approaching armies (Luke 21:21).

† Jesus called these the days of vengeance and connected them with fulfillment. Jerusalem's destruction wasn't an unrelated political accident. It was the covenant judgment Jesus had repeatedly announced (Matthew 23:34-38).

† The temple survived from the cross until AD 70 because its physical destruction belonged to the coming judgment upon that generation. Jesus had already declared that judgment before His death (Matthew 24:1-2, 34).

### **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 didn't say the temple would disappear the moment He died. He specifically prophesied its coming physical destruction.

† The cross and the destruction of Jerusalem therefore shouldn't be forced into the same moment. The cross fulfilled the sacrificial reality, while the destruction Jesus predicted removed the old temple structure within that generation (Matthew 24:34).

† This helps explain the forty-year period. The veil could tear at the cross because Christ had opened the way to God, while the building could remain until the judgment Jesus had pronounced arrived.

† The standing temple during those years became a visible reminder of an order that had reached its fulfillment but hadn't yet experienced its announced historical destruction.

### **John 4:21-24**

Jesus said to her, "Believe Me, woman, that a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. But a time is coming, and even now has arrived, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

† Jesus announced the end of location-centered worship before the temple was destroyed. Worship wouldn't remain tied to

Jerusalem.

† Notice His words, the hour comes, and now is. The transformation had already begun in His ministry, even though the Jerusalem temple was still physically standing.

† This demonstrates the same pattern we see throughout the New Testament. Spiritual and covenant realities could arrive before the physical structures associated with the former order disappeared.

† After Christ, God's dwelling wasn't defined by a building in Jerusalem. God's people themselves were being built together as His dwelling in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22).

## **Historical References**

† Josephus was an eyewitness to the Jewish-Roman War and described the destruction of Jerusalem and the burning of the temple in AD 70. His account confirms that the temple continued functioning during the decades after Jesus' crucifixion and was finally destroyed during the Roman siege (Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 6).

† Josephus described the temple being set on fire during the Roman assault and the devastation that followed. Whatever theological meaning people continued assigning to that sanctuary, its physical existence came to a catastrophic end in the very generation to which Jesus had spoken (Josephus, Wars of the Jews, 6.4).

† Josephus also recorded extraordinary signs and warnings associated with the period leading to Jerusalem's destruction. His descriptions show how deeply the coming catastrophe affected the Jewish religious world centered upon the temple (Josephus, Wars of the Jews, 6.5.3).

† Eusebius later recorded the tradition that believers in Jerusalem left the city before the war and went to Pella. This fits the historical setting of Jesus' warning that those in Judea should flee when the danger approached (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 3.5).

† These historical writers don't establish our theology, Scripture does. Their value is historical. They confirm that the temple

continued after the cross and that Jerusalem and its sanctuary were devastated in the first-century Roman war.

### **Why Forty Years?**

† The approximately forty years between the cross and AD 70 shouldn't be treated as an embarrassing gap. The New Testament was written within this transition and repeatedly reflects it.

† Christ's sacrifice was complete. The gospel was going throughout the nations. The apostles were announcing the New Covenant reality while the old temple establishment continued operating (Romans 15:18-19).

† During those years, believers were being taught to leave confidence in the earthly system and come to Christ. Hebrews eventually told its readers to go outside the camp to Him (Hebrews 13:13-14).

† The forty-year period also parallels Israel's earlier wilderness transition in an important way. Israel left Egypt before entering the promised land. Deliverance had occurred, yet a historical transition followed before the former generation and its wilderness period were completely behind them (1 Corinthians 10:1-11).

† We shouldn't make every detail of the Exodus identical to the AD 30 to AD 70 period, but the biblical pattern is clear. God can accomplish a decisive act and then bring His people through a period in which the implications of that act unfold historically.

### **The Veil And The Temple Tell Two Parts Of The Same Story**

† The torn veil said access to God had been opened through Christ (Hebrews 10:19-22).

† The continuing temple showed that the old historical structure hadn't yet experienced the judgment Jesus predicted (Luke 19:41-44).

† The one sacrifice of Christ said the sacrificial shadows had reached their reality (Hebrews 10:11-14).

† The destruction in AD 70 said the temple age that rejected its Messiah wouldn't continue indefinitely (Matthew 23:36-38).



† There is no contradiction. The veil and the destruction of the temple belong to the same covenant story, but they mark different moments within that story.

† At the cross, Christ accomplished what animal sacrifices could never accomplish. During the following generation, the gospel announced that reality. In AD 70, the temple system that had continued operating after its fulfillment met the judgment Jesus had foretold.

## **How It Applies To Us Today**

† We don't need an earthly temple to approach God. Through Christ we have access to the Father (Ephesians 2:18).

† We don't need another priesthood offering animal sacrifices. Jesus' sacrifice was once for all and doesn't need repetition (Hebrews 10:10-14).

† We don't need Jerusalem to become the center of worship again. Jesus said true worship isn't defined by an earthly mountain or city but by worship in spirit and truth (John 4:21-24).

† We shouldn't rebuild prophetically what Christ fulfilled covenantally. The New Testament directs our attention toward Christ, not backward toward the shadows that pointed to Him (Colossians 2:16-17).

† The torn veil tells us that access has been opened. The destroyed temple tells us that the former covenant order wasn't coming back. Christ is the reality to which the entire system pointed.

† We live on the fulfilled side of that transition. Our confidence isn't in an earthly sanctuary, an earthly priesthood, or repeated sacrifices. Our confidence is in Jesus Christ and His completed work.

## **Q & A Appendix**

**Q:** If the veil tore when Jesus died, why didn't the temple fall immediately?

**A:** Because the tearing of the veil and the physical destruction of the temple communicated related but distinct realities. The

veil announced what Christ's sacrifice had accomplished. Jesus had separately predicted that the temple itself would be destroyed within that generation (Matthew 24:1-2, 34).

**Q:** Does the temple continuing after the cross mean the Old Covenant was still God's saving system?

**A:** No. Hebrews says Christ offered the effective sacrifice once for all, while priests were still standing daily and offering sacrifices that could never take away sins (Hebrews 10:9-14). The activity continued, but Christ had fulfilled what those sacrifices represented.

**Q:** Then what was happening between AD 30 and AD 70?

**A:** It was the apostolic transition in which the New Covenant reality accomplished by Christ was being proclaimed while the old covenantal structure was approaching its announced disappearance (Hebrews 8:13).

**Q:** Why is Hebrews 8:13 so important to this discussion?

**A:** Because it describes the first covenant as made old while also saying it was becoming old and near disappearing. That language perfectly explains why the New Covenant could already be established while the old temple structure still physically existed.

**Q:** Was AD 70 another sacrifice or another act of redemption?

**A:** No. Jesus' sacrifice was once for all (Hebrews 10:10). AD 70 didn't add anything to the cross. It was the historical judgment Jesus had already announced against Jerusalem and the temple establishment (Matthew 23:36-38, Luke 21:20-22).

**Q:** Should Christians expect a rebuilt temple and restored animal sacrifices to complete God's prophetic plan?

**A:** No. That would move backward from the reality to the shadow. Christ is the final sacrifice, believers have access to God through Him, and worship is no longer centered in

Jerusalem (Hebrews 10:19-22, John 4:21-24).

**Q:** So what did AD 30 and AD 70 each signify?

**A:** AD 30 points us to Christ's completed sacrifice and the opening of access to God. AD 70 marks the historical destruction of Jerusalem and its temple exactly as Jesus had foretold. The first accomplished redemption, the second brought the announced judgment upon the old temple order (Matthew 27:50-51, Matthew 24:1-2, 34).

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

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### **Source Index**

† Matthew 27:50-51; Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 9:8-10; Hebrews 10:9-14; Acts 6:13-14; Luke 21:20-22; Matthew 24:1-2; John 4:21-24

† Historical writers: Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 6, 6.4, 6.5.3; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 3.5

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