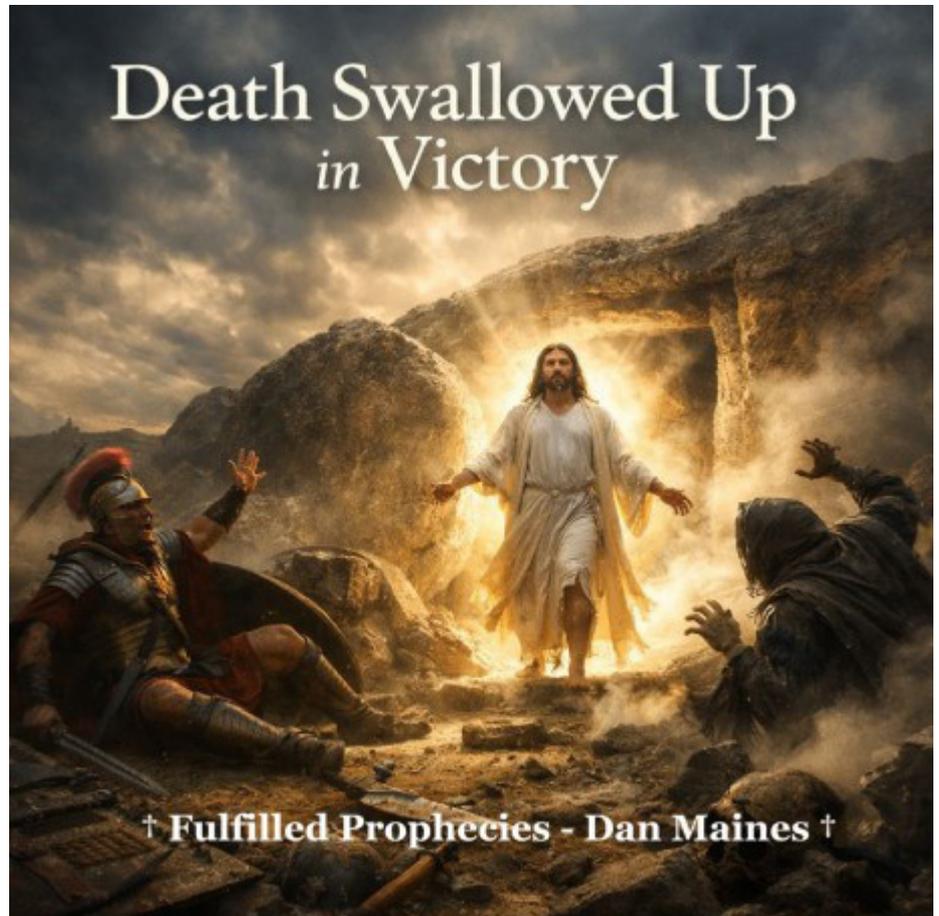


# Fulfilled Prophecies

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## Death Swallowed Up in Victory



By Dan Maines

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### Introduction

† Paul's teaching on death in 1 Corinthians 15 is one of the most misunderstood passages in Scripture, not because Paul was unclear, but because the kind of death he identified is often assumed instead of defined (1 Corinthians 15:54-56).

† When death is misidentified as biological death, the entire framework of resurrection, fulfillment, and eschatology becomes distorted.

† Paul does not leave the meaning of this death open to speculation, he explains it directly and repeatedly throughout his letters.

I believe the death Paul spoke of was not biological death, it was covenant death, separation from God under sin and the Law. That death entered through Adam, was empowered by the Law, and was swallowed up when Christ fulfilled the Law and removed condemnation, bringing covenant life and immortality to light in the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:54-56; Romans 5:12; Romans 7:9-10; 2 Corinthians 3:6-7; Colossians 2:14; 2 Timothy 1:10).

Misidentifying that death as physical death is what causes so much confusion in eschatology.

### **1 Corinthians 15:54-56**

But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

† Paul defines the death that is swallowed up by identifying its sting and its power, not by appealing to biology (1 Corinthians 15:56).

† Death's sting is sin, and sin's power is the Law, which places this death squarely within a covenantal framework (Romans 7:9-11).

† Physical death existed before the Law and continued after Christ, therefore it cannot be the death empowered by the Law (Romans 5:13-14).

† The victory Paul describes is not over dying bodies but over condemnation and separation caused by sin under the Law (Romans 8:1-2).

## **1 Corinthians 15:21-22**

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

† Paul locates the entrance of death in Adam, not in biology alone but in covenantal consequence (Romans 5:12).

† The life brought by Christ answers the same kind of death that entered through Adam (1 Corinthians 15:22).

† This confirms that the resurrection Paul speaks of addresses covenant death, not merely physical mortality.

## **Romans 7:9-10**

And I was alive apart from the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died; and the commandment, which was unto life, this I found to be unto death.

† Paul speaks of dying while physically alive, proving this death was not biological (Romans 7:9).

† This death occurred when the Law brought sin to life and produced condemnation (Romans 7:10).

† This is the same death described in 1 Corinthians 15, empowered by sin through the Law (1 Corinthians 15:56).

## **2 Corinthians 3:6-7, 9**

Who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

But if the ministration of death, written, and engraven on stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not look stedfastly upon the face of Moses for the glory of his face; which glory was passing away;

For if the ministration of condemnation hath glory, much rather doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

† Paul explicitly calls the Mosaic covenant the ministry of death and condemnation (2 Corinthians 3:7, 9).

† This ministry was passing away, not eternal, and was replaced by the ministry of righteousness in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:11).

† The death being abolished must therefore be covenantal death tied to the Old Covenant system.

### **Colossians 2:14**

having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross;

† Paul explains how death was abolished, by removing the Law that empowered sin and condemnation.

† The bond written in ordinances is the same Law identified as the power of sin (1 Corinthians 15:56).

† With the Law removed, covenant death could no longer exist.

### **2 Timothy 1:10**

but hath now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

† The gospel abolished death, yet believers continued to physically die after Christ's appearing, proving the death abolished was not biological (Hebrews 9:27).

† What was abolished was separation and condemnation under sin and the Law (Romans 8:2).

† Life and immortality were revealed covenantally, not anatomically (John 5:24).

### **Hebrews 2:14-15**

Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

† Covenant death produced fear and bondage under condemnation, not fear of biology.

† Christ's victory removed the power behind that death, not the existence of physical dying.

† Deliverance is covenantal freedom, not anatomical immortality.

### **1 Corinthians 15:51-54**

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed,

in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

† The change described is corporate and covenantal, not a biological transformation of individual bodies (Ephesians 2:1-6).

† This moment marks the transition from death in Adam and under the Law to life in Christ (Romans 5:18).

† The victory over death is the removal of condemnation and separation, not the elimination of physical dying (Romans 8:10).

### **Historical References**

† Josephus described the destruction of Jerusalem as the end of the Old Covenant world tied to the Law and Temple, the very system Paul called the ministry of death (Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 6).

† Eusebius identified the passing of the old order as the fulfillment of apostolic expectation, not a postponed hope

(Ecclesiastical History, Book 3).

† Early Christian writers consistently spoke of life in Christ as present possession, not postponed biology (Ignatius, Letter to the Magnesians).

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

† Believers are not living under death, condemnation, or separation from God, that death has already been abolished (Romans 8:1).

† Our confidence rests in covenant life now, not fear of a future victory over biology (John 11:26).

† Understanding the correct death restores clarity to resurrection, fulfillment, and hope (Colossians 2:12-14).

## **Q & A Appendix**

**Q** What death did Paul say was abolished?

**A** Covenant death, separation from God under sin and the Law (1 Corinthians 15:56; 2 Corinthians 3:7, 9; 2 Timothy 1:10).

**Q** Why can't this be physical death?

**A** Because physical death existed before the Law and continued after Christ (Romans 5:13-14; Hebrews 9:27).

**Q** What was swallowed up in victory?

**A** Condemnation and separation caused by sin through the Law (Romans 7:9-10; Romans 8:1-2; Colossians 2:14).

**Q** When did this victory occur?

**A** When Christ fulfilled the Law and established the New Covenant (Matthew 5:17; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:13).

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

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## Source Index

† 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, 51-56; Romans 5:12-18; Romans 7:9-11; 2 Corinthians 3:6-11; Colossians 2:14; 2 Timothy 1:10; Hebrews 2:14-15; Romans 8:1-10; John 5:24; John 11:26  
† Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 6  
† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3  
† Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Magnesians

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