

# Deuteronomy 21:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

## Analysis

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Burial requirement: 'His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.' Executed criminals hung on trees/poles must be buried same day. The phrase 'he that is hanged is accursed of God' (קִלְלַת אֱלֹהִים תָּלוּי, qilelat elohim talui) indicates divine curse on the sin/criminal. Leaving corpses overnight defiles the land. This shows even criminals retain human dignity—created in God's image. Quick burial limits public shame while maintaining justice. Paul applies this to Christ: 'cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree' (Galatians 3:13)—Jesus bore covenant curse for sinners, becoming cursed on the cross.

## Historical Context

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Ancient warfare often displayed enemy corpses as deterrent. Israel was forbidden such practice. Joshua hung five kings but removed them at sunset (Joshua 10:26-27). Jesus's crucifixion occurred before Passover; Jews requested removal before Sabbath (John 19:31), fulfilling this law. Christ's burial before nightfall satisfied Deuteronomic requirement. His bearing the curse ('he that is hanged is accursed') means believers escape curse—He took our condemnation. The law's

mercy (burial requirement) foreshadowed gospel grace (Christ bearing curse so we're blessed).

## **Related Passages**

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**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## **Study Questions**

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1. How does even criminals requiring dignified burial reflect universal human dignity as image-bearers?
2. What does Christ becoming 'cursed' on the tree mean for believers' legal standing before God?
3. How does the cross transform the symbol of ultimate curse into the means of ultimate blessing?

## Interlinear Text

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לֹא	תֵּלֵךְ יָן	גִּבְלֹתָו	עַל	הָעֵץ	כִּי	תִקְבֹּרְנוּ
H3808	shall not remain all night	His body	H5921	upon the tree	H3588	bury
	H3885	H5038		H6086		H6912
תִּקְבֹּרְנוּ	בַּיּוֹם	כִּי הָיָא	קִלְלָת	אֱלֹהֵי		
bury	him that day	H1931	H3588	is accursed	of God	
H6912	H3117		H7045	H430		
תֵּלֵךְ וְ	וְלֹא	תִטְמָא	אֶת	אֶדְמַתְךָ	אֲשֶׁר	
for he that is hanged	H3808	be not defiled	H853	that thy land	H834	
H8518		H2930		H127		
יְהוָה הַ	אֱלֹהֵי יְ	נָתַן	לְךָ	נַחֲלָה:		
which the LORD	of God	giveth	H0	thee for an inheritance		
H3068	H430	H5414		H5159		

## Additional Cross-References

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**Galatians 3:13** (Curse): Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

**John 19:31** (Parallel theme): The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

**2 Corinthians 5:21** (References God): For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

**Romans 9:3** (Curse): For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

**Leviticus 18:25** (Parallel theme): And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.

**Numbers 25:4** (References Lord): And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.

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