

# John 19:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

## Analysis

**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,)** (Οἱ οὖν Ἰουδαῖοι, ἐπεὶ παρασκευὴ ἦν, ἵνα μὴ μείνῃ ἐπὶ τοῦ σταυροῦ τὰ σώματα ἐν τῷ σαββάτῳ, ἦν γὰρ μεγάλη ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκείνου τοῦ σαββάτου, Hoi oun Ioudaioi, epei paraskeuē ēn, hina mē meinē epi tou staurou ta sōmata en tō sabbatō, ēn gar megalē hē hēmera ekeinou tou sabbatou)—Jewish law forbade leaving bodies on crosses overnight (Deuteronomy 21:23), especially before a Sabbath. This was ἡ παρασκευή (hē paraskeuē, 'the Preparation'), Friday before Sabbath. Moreover, ἦν γὰρ μεγάλη ἡ ἡμέρα (ēn gar megalē hē hēmera, 'it was a high day')—Passover Sabbath coinciding with weekly Sabbath. **Besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away—** crurifragium (breaking legs) hastened death by preventing victims from pushing up to breathe, causing rapid asphyxiation.

The irony is brutal: religious leaders who orchestrated Jesus's execution now concern themselves with ritual purity, wanting bodies removed before Sabbath. They strain at gnats while swallowing camels (Matthew 23:24)—meticulous about ceremonial law while murdering the Messiah. This exposes how religion without heart can coexist with horrific evil.

## Historical Context

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Roman crucifixion normally left bodies to rot as deterrent, but Romans accommodated Jewish sensibilities in Judea. Archaeological evidence from first-century Jerusalem (Yehohanan ben Hagkol, discovered 1968) confirms crucifixion practices and leg-breaking. Passover Sabbath (15 Nisan) was especially sacred, making this a 'high' Sabbath.

## Related Passages

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

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

## Study Questions

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1. How does concern for ritual purity while orchestrating murder demonstrate the danger of external religion without heart transformation?
2. What modern forms of 'straining at gnats while swallowing camels' do religious people practice today?
3. How should Christians guard against prioritizing religious observance over justice, mercy, and faithfulness?

## Interlinear Text

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Oἱ οὖν Ἰουδαῖοι ἵνα μὴ μείνῃ ἐπὶ τοῦ σταυροῦ  
G3588 therefore The Jews that G3361 remain upon G3588 the cross  
G3767 G2453 G2443 G3306 G1909 G4716

τὰ σώματα ἐν τῷ σαββάτου ἐπεὶ παρασκευὴ ἦν  
G3588 the bodies on G3588 sabbath day because the preparation it was  
G4983 G1722 G4521 G1893 G3904 G2258

ἦν γὰρ μεγάλη ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκείνου τοῦ σαββάτου  
it was for an high G3588 day that G3588 sabbath day  
G2258 G1063 G3173 G2250 G1565 G4521

ἡρώτησαν τὸν Πιλᾶτον ἵνα κατεαγῶσιν αὐτῶν τὰ  
besought G3588 Pilate that might be broken their G3588  
G2065 G4091 G2443 G2608 G846

σκέλη καὶ ἀρθῶσιν  
legs and that they might be taken away  
G4628 G2532 G142

## Additional Cross-References

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**John 19:14** (Parallel theme): And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!

**John 19:42** (Parallel theme): There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

**Mark 15:42** (Parallel theme): And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,

**Proverbs 12:10** (Parallel theme): A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

**Exodus 12:16** (Parallel theme): And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.

**John 19:1** (Parallel theme): Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.

**Joshua 8:29** (Parallel theme): And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcase down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, that remaineth unto this day.

**Micah 3:3** (Parallel theme): Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron.

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