

John 19:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.

Analysis

Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him (ἦλθον οὖν οἱ στρατιῶται καὶ τοῦ μὲν πρώτου κατέαξαν τὰ σκέλη καὶ τοῦ ἄλλου τοῦ συσταυρωθέντος αὐτῷ, ἔλθον οὖν οἱ στρατιῶται καὶ τοῦ μὲν πρώτου κατέαξαν τὰ σκέλη καὶ τοῦ ἄλλου τοῦ συσταυρωθέντος αὐτῷ)—The Roman soldiers systematically broke the legs (κατέαξαν τὰ σκέλη, kateaxan ta skelē) of both thieves crucified with Jesus. The verb κατάγνυμι (katagnymi) means to 'break in pieces, shatter.' This brutal act fulfilled its purpose: hastening death through respiratory failure when victims could no longer lift themselves to exhale.

These two criminals—one who repented (Luke 23:40-43), one who blasphemed (Luke 23:39)—represent humanity's response to Christ. Both witnessed His innocence, heard His prayer for His executioners, experienced His presence in suffering. One found paradise; one died in his sins. Proximity to Jesus doesn't save; faith does.

Historical Context

Luke records the 'penitent thief' dialogue (Luke 23:39-43), showing one thief's deathbed conversion. Crucifixion victims typically survived 24-72 hours; breaking legs reduced this to minutes. The soldiers' efficiency in breaking both thieves' legs highlights the exception made for Jesus (verse 33).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How do the two thieves illustrate the two possible responses to Christ—rejection or repentance?
2. What does the penitent thief's immediate salvation teach about grace, faith, and the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice?
3. Why is proximity to Christ or Christian environments insufficient for salvation without personal faith?

Interlinear Text

ἦλθον οὖν τοῦ στρατιῶται καὶ τοῦ μὲν πρώτου
came **Then** **which** **the soldiers** **and** **which** **of the** **first**
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κατέαξαν τοῦ σκέλη καὶ τοῦ ἄλλου τοῦ
brake **which** **the legs** **and** **which** **of the other** **which**
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συσταυρωθέντος αὐτῷ·
was crucified with **him**
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Additional Cross-References

John 19:18 (Cross): Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.