

John 19:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:

Analysis

But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs (ἐπὶ δὲ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐλθόντες, ὡς εἶδον ἥδη αὐτὸν τεθνηκότα, οὐ κατέαξαν αὐτοῦ τὰ σκέλη, epi de ton Iēsoun elthontes, hōs eidon ēdē auton tethnēkota, ou kateaxan autou ta skelē)—The soldiers' observation (εἶδον, eidon, 'they saw') that Jesus was τεθνηκότα (tethnēkota, 'already dead') prevented them from breaking His legs. This was unexpected; crucifixion victims rarely died within six hours (Jesus was crucified at 9am and died at 3pm, Mark 15:25, 34). His rapid death may have resulted from the physical trauma of scourging, emotional agony in Gethsemane (Luke 22:44), and voluntarily yielding His spirit (John 19:30).

Providence guided this seemingly random military decision. The soldiers had no theological knowledge, yet their pragmatic choice fulfilled prophecy (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; Psalm 34:20)—the Paschal Lamb's bones remained unbroken. God sovereignly orchestrates even minute details to accomplish His redemptive purposes.

Historical Context

Roman soldiers were experienced executioners who could determine death reliably. Jesus's unusually rapid death surprised even Pilate (Mark 15:44). Medical theories suggest cardiac rupture, hemopericardium, or hypovolemic shock from scourging and crucifixion. Regardless of physiological mechanism, Jesus voluntarily dismissed His spirit (John 10:18).

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's rapid, voluntary death demonstrate His sovereign control even during crucifixion?
2. What does the fulfillment of detailed prophecy about unbroken bones teach about Scripture's inspiration and God's sovereign control?
3. How should believers trust God's providence when circumstances seem random or meaningless?

Interlinear Text

Ἐπὶ δὲ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐλθόντες ὡς εἶδον αὐτοῦ ἥδη
to But G3588 Jesus they came when and saw his already
G1909 G1161 G2424 G2064 G5613 G1492 G846 G2235

τεθνηκότα οὐ κατέαξαν αὐτοῦ τὰ σκέλη
was dead not they brake his legs
G2348 G3756 G2608 G846 G3588 G4628

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org