



## **John 19:31–37**

31 Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. 32 The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. 33 But when they came to Jesus and found that

he was already dead, they did not break his legs. 34 Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. 35 The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. 36 These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: 'Not one of his bones will be broken,' 37 and, as another scripture says, 'They will look on the one they have pierced.'

## **Reflection**

Today's passage comes from John 19:31–37,

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that you also may believe. 36 These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: ‘Not one of his bones will be broken,’ 37 and, as another scripture says, ‘They will look on the one they have pierced.’

1 Corinthians 15:3 tells us,

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures

And Paul in writing this is drawing our attention to a very important fact. The Old Testament Scriptures prophesied in detail about Jesus’ death. God set down intimate details of his saving plan in the death and resurrection of Jesus hundreds of years before these events occurred. In yesterday’s passage Jesus fulfilled Psalm 69:21,

written a thousand years before his death.

Psalm 69:21

21 They put gall in my food  
and gave me vinegar for my thirst.

We read yesterday in John 19:28–29,

28 Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, ‘I am thirsty.’ 29 A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips.

But there is even deeper fulfilment here than just the words of Psalm 69. It’s the

Passover, the Jewish festival that celebrates the exodus from Egypt, around 1300 years before Jesus, the foundational period in Israel's history when God saved his people from slavery and death in Egypt and led them to the Promised Land. The Passover festival, that's coming to its annual climax right now as Jesus dies on the cross, remembers especially the evening of the last plague that God sent to convince Pharaoh to let his people go. The final plague that loosed Pharaoh's stubborn grip was the plague of death. God sent his angel of death who visited death on the firstborn son of every household in Egypt, except those who had demonstrated faith in God by doing what Moses had instructed. Moses had given them very specific instructions about taking a lamb without blemish, sacrificing it, and paint-

ing its blood on the doorframes of their houses using a hyssop branch for a brush (Ex 12:22) as a sign, so that the angel of death would 'pass over' their household, before sharing in the first Passover meal together. The hyssop plant used by the soldiers to give Jesus the wine vinegar recalls these events which were a type and shadow, a foreshadowing, that points forward to and explains what is happening on the cross. Jesus, the Passover Lamb of God, without sin or blemish, is being sacrificed for the sins of the world so that whoever believes in him might be free from slavery to Satan, sin and death and be led by him, the firstborn from the dead, to the Eternal Promised Land of heaven. Jesus death marks a new and greater exodus, the exodus of people from every tribe and nation, redeemed from slavery to sin and

death by the death of God's firstborn son in their place. And so the Passover meal becomes the Lord's Supper, the lamb exchanged for the body of Christ, eaten as a constant reminder of God's faithfulness to his people. 'The body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for you, preserve thy body and thy soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat, in remembrance that Christ died for you.'

In today's passage Scripture continues to be fulfilled.

Jesus' dead body hangs limp on the cross. The two thieves on either side of him fight on in agony. Normal Roman practice was to leave crucified men and women on the cross until they died. This could take days. And then when they did finally die the Ro-



mans would leave their rotting corpses for the vultures to pick at, as a reminder of the fate of those who would defy Rome. But the holiest day of the Passover beings at sundown this evening and to the Jews it would be an abomination to have these bodies desecrate the land on this special Passover Sabbath. And so the soldiers have been instructed to smash the legs of the victims with an iron mallet; no longer able to push themselves up to open their chest cavities and breath, this would induce death. But when they soldiers came to Jesus they found that he had already died. Expert executioners that they were, one of them drove his spear into Jesus side, just to make sure. The sudden flow of blood and water confirmed that Jesus was truly dead. Remembering that John, 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' was standing

right there, his next words in our passage stand all the more strongly,

35 The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe.

John follows on,

36 These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: ‘Not one of his bones will be broken,’  
37 and, as another scripture says, ‘They will look on the one they have pierced.’

More prophecy fulfilled. More ancient predictions come true. More hard evidence

that Jesus truly is the son of the God who came to die for the sins of the world.

Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12 – no bone of the Passover Lamb may be broken. Psalm 34:20,

20 he protects all his bones,  
not one of them will be broken.

Isaiah 53:5,

he was pierced for our transgressions,

he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us  
peace was on him,

and by his wounds we are healed.

Zechariah 12:10,

10 ‘They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn. In Mark’s gospel one of the soldiers seeing how Jesus died cries out, ‘Surely this man was the Son of God!’ One day, all will look on the one we have pierced when he comes again in glory to judge the living and dead. On that day, all will look on him and mourn, whether in deep contrition or in grim despair.

**Think**

We are saved by grace alone through faith alone, a powerful work in our hearts brought about by the Holy Spirit. What we believe is foolishness to those who are perishing, those who have not received the gift of faith. And yet, today's passage would refer us to compelling evidence for the truth of the Bible's claims. If one investigates Christianity deeply enough, it is hard not to be convicted by ancient prophecies written hundreds of years beforehand, by more than thirty different authors writing in different languages spread across three continents; authors who never met each other and often had no record of each other's work, all writing in startling detail about events yet to unfold; events that were fulfilled to the letter in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

# Pray

Pray this morning for opportunities to share the gospel. Pray that God would equip you with knowledge of his word. Pray that God would fill you with his Holy Spirit so that you might speak with power. And pray that God would convict the hearts and convince the minds of those you speak with. May you bring great glory to him as you share the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed in this day that our Lord has made.