



[John 19:28-37](#)

(28) After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" (29) Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put *it* on hyssop, and put *it* to His mouth. (30) So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. (31) Therefore, because it was the Preparation *Day*, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away. (32) Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. (33) But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. (34) But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. (35) And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. (36) For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, "*Not one of His bones shall be broken.*" (37) And again another Scripture says, "*They shall look on Him whom they pierced.*"

New King James Version

The apostle John's account of [the crucifixion](#) of our Savior includes significant details that the other gospels omit. John filled his gospel with signs and proofs that [Jesus](#) was the Messiah, often drawing attention to His fulfillment of various scriptures. For example, in verse 28, John records Jesus saying, "I thirst!" in reference to [Psalm 22:15](#), a well-known Messianic psalm. He prefaces this quotation with "that the Scripture might be fulfilled." Previous chapters contain numerous examples of this.

Notice, however, verse 36, which adds a crucial detail: "For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, 'Not one of His bones shall be broken.'" Part of the cruelty of crucifixion was the position of the arms in relation to the rest of the body. Because the victim was nailed up with his arms above his head, his upper ribcage was compressed, making it hard for him to breathe. Anyone who has hung from a branch or a bar knows that his lungs became constricted. The longer a person hangs without pulling up—especially if his hands are close together—the more he feels like he will run out of air.

In a crucifixion, the victim was severely abused before being nailed up, so he, already weakened, would have difficulty pulling himself up to breathe. But not wanting the misery to end too soon, the executioners would give him some painful help by nailing his feet to the stake, too. In this way, if he could suffer the agony of putting all his weight on his impaled feet, he could push himself up with his legs and breathe easier for as long as he could endure that position.

However, if the execution needed to end more quickly, the executioners would break the victim's legs so he could not push himself up. Death followed shortly thereafter. This leg-breaking is what almost happened with Jesus. The Jews, hypocritically not wanting their murder of the Son of [God](#) to interfere with their keeping of the holy day, requested that the Romans break the legs of those being crucified. When they came to Jesus, however, He was already dead. They pierced Him instead, and a Messianic prophecy was fulfilled. And in leaving Christ's legs unbroken, another scripture, [Psalm 34:20](#), was fulfilled.

— David C. Grabbe

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