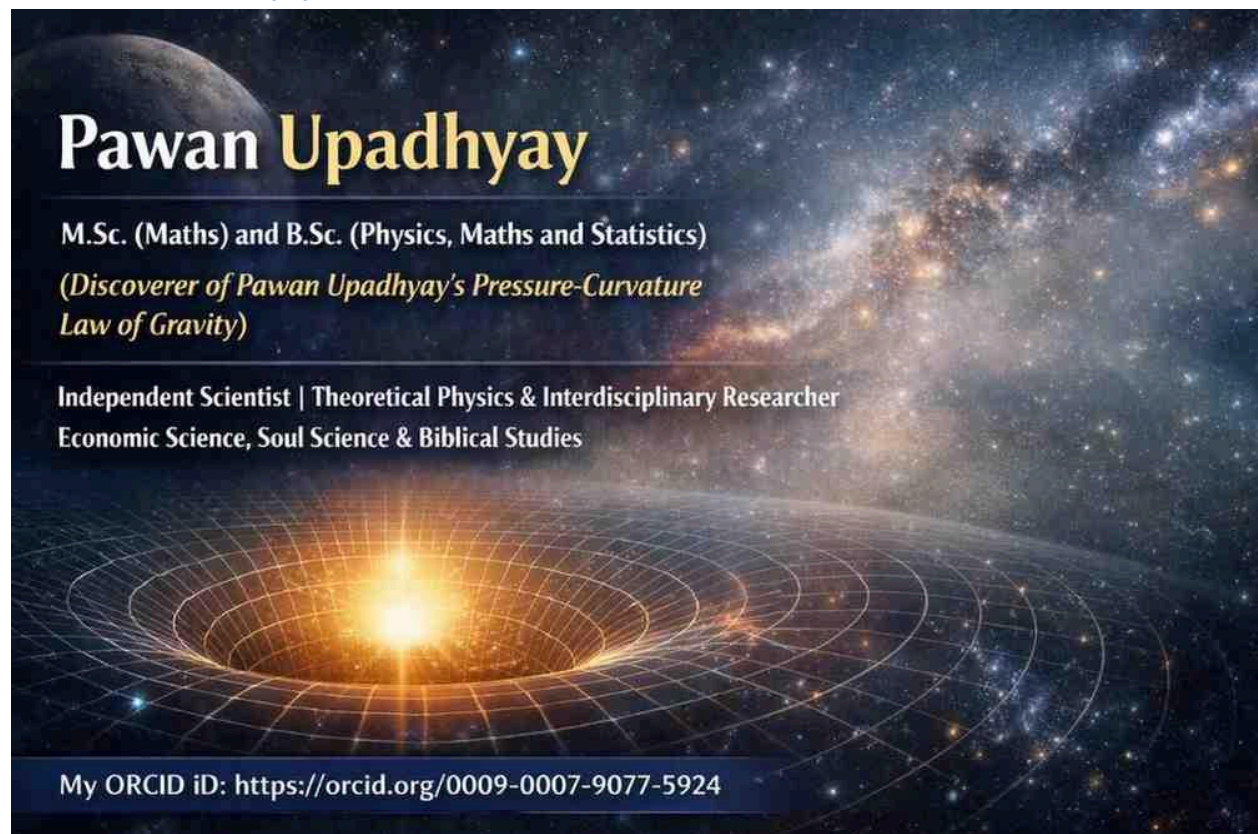


# The Death of Jesus Christ and the Two Criminals: A Biblical and Historical Analysis

**Author:** Pawan Upadhyay

**Affiliation:** Independent Researcher

**Email:** [pawanupadhyay28@hotmail.com](mailto:pawanupadhyay28@hotmail.com)



## Abstract

This research paper examines the crucifixion of Jesus Christ alongside two criminals, focusing on the sequence of death, Roman execution practices, and the theological significance of Jesus dying first. Drawing primarily from the Gospel of John and the Synoptic Gospels, the study highlights the voluntary nature of Christ's death, the breaking of the criminals' legs to hasten death, and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. The paper aims to clarify historical facts and theological meaning within the Passion narrative.

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# 1. Introduction

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is one of the most documented events in the New Testament. All four Gospels testify that Jesus was crucified between two criminals. While the event is often summarized devotionally, careful textual analysis reveals an important sequence: Jesus died first, and the two criminals died later as a result of Roman intervention. This paper analyzes that sequence and its theological implications.

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## 2. Jesus Christ Crucified Between Two Criminals

The Gospel writers unanimously affirm that Jesus was crucified with two criminals, one on His right and one on His left.

- Luke 23:32–33 records that two criminals were led away to be executed with Jesus.

This placement fulfilled prophetic symbolism, identifying Jesus with sinners while remaining sinless Himself.

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## 3. The Voluntary Death of Jesus Christ

The Gospel of John emphasizes that Jesus' death was not forced but voluntary.

- John 19:30 states that Jesus "gave up His spirit."

This wording indicates intentional surrender rather than physical collapse. Jesus exercised divine authority even in death, laying down His life willingly.

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## 4. Roman Practice of Crurifragium

Crurifragium, the breaking of the legs, was a Roman method used to hasten death by preventing the crucified person from lifting the body to breathe.

- John 19:31 explains that this action was taken because the Sabbath was approaching.

This historical practice confirms the realism of the Gospel accounts.

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## 5. Death of the Two Criminals

After Jesus had already died, Roman soldiers broke the legs of the two criminals.

- John 19:32 records that the soldiers broke the legs of the first and then the other criminal.

Unable to support themselves for breathing, the criminals died shortly afterward.

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## 6. Jesus' Legs Were Not Broken

When the soldiers came to Jesus, they observed that He was already dead.

- John 19:33 states that His legs were not broken.

This action fulfilled Old Testament prophecy:

- Psalm 34:20 affirms that none of His bones would be broken.
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## 7. Theological Significance

The sequence of events carries deep theological meaning:

- Jesus died first, showing sovereign authority over life and death.
  - The criminals died later through enforced means.
  - Jesus' unbroken bones identify Him as the Passover Lamb.
  - His death was an act of obedience and mercy, not defeat.
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## 8. Moral and Redemptive Context

One of the criminals repented and acknowledged Jesus' innocence, while the other rejected Him.

- Luke 23:40–43 illustrates repentance, mercy, and immediate promise of Paradise.

This contrast highlights human responsibility even at the moment of death.

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## 9. Historical Reliability of the Gospel Account

The detailed description of Roman execution methods, timing before the Sabbath, and fulfillment of prophecy support the historical credibility of the Gospel narratives.

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## 10. Conclusion

The crucifixion narrative reveals that Jesus Christ died first on the Cross by voluntarily surrendering His spirit. The two criminals crucified with Him were later executed through leg-breaking, a common Roman practice to hasten death. Jesus' legs were not broken, fulfilling Scripture and emphasizing His unique role in salvation history. This sequence underscores the authority, mercy, and redemptive purpose of Christ's death.

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## Keywords

Crucifixion, Jesus Christ, Roman execution, crurifragium, two criminals, Passion narrative

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