

It is Finished! – John 19:30

Of Jesus Christ's seven last sayings on the cross, "It is finished!" is surely the most profound. Understanding what Jesus meant with this saying can encourage believers, witness to unbelievers, and clear up bad theology about the gospel of salvation.

The Word Jesus Used

In John 19:30, the Apostle recorded Jesus using only one word, *tetelestai*, from the verb *teleō*, which means to *complete an activity, bring to an end, finish*. In other ancient literature, this word was often written on receipts for rent or taxes that had been paid. The verb is in the perfect tense which indicates a past action with results continuing to the present. In other words, the results of what Jesus finished on the cross are still in effect today. This word in the perfect tense is used only two times in the New Testament, here and in the preceding verse 28: "Jesus, knowing that all things had already been finished (*tetelestai*) to fulfill the scripture said, 'I thirst.'" The subject of the verb in verse 30 is implied and translated "It." Verse 28 indicates that "It" may refer to "all things" that Jesus had finished. The saying seems to be a victorious proclamation (Matt. 27:48-50; Mark 15:36-38) as if to say, "Mission accomplished!" This announcement is addressed not only to those who observed Him at the cross but to all others affected by His work: the Father, Satan, believers, and unbelievers.

What Jesus Finished

With this statement, Jesus declared not only that His life on earth was finished but also that His spiritual accomplishments were. The Bible's full scope shows what Jesus was addressing. Consider these six important spiritual transactions.

1. He sealed Satan's fate. In Genesis 3:15, God told Satan that someone was coming who would destroy him: " 'And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.' " This was a promise of the coming Messiah who would secure the spiritual victory over Satan and his final destruction. Speaking of Jesus Christ's victorious work that was accomplished, Hebrews 2:14 says, "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil," and 1 John 3:8b adds, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."

2. He fulfilled Old Testament prophecies about a final sacrifice for sin. Isaiah 53:5-6 tells of a suffering Servant who would bear the penalty for all mankind's sins. Daniel predicted a Deliverer who would "finish the transgression," "make an end of sins," and "make reconciliation for iniquity" (Dan. 9:24). Jesus Christ was the sacrificial Lamb anticipated in Old Testament sacrifices: "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29). The author of Hebrews affirms this accomplishment: "but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9:26a), and "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*" (Heb. 10:10).



Number 104

3. He fulfilled the requirements of the Mosaic Law. Jesus said that he came to fulfill the Law (Matt. 5:17) as predicted in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms (Luke 24:44). The Apostle Paul writes that by His death on the cross, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13a). No one but Jesus Christ could keep the Law perfectly; everyone else fails, which brings the Law’s curse of condemnation.

4. He satisfied God’s wrath towards sinners. Jesus said that He came to “give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28b; also 1 Peter 1:18-19). God sent Jesus to be the propitiation (appeasement to God) for our sins (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2). He was the atoning sacrifice who paid sin’s penalty for all people, satisfying God’s justice.

5. He accomplished the purpose for which God sent Him. His work on earth was to do God’s will. John 4:34 says, “Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.’” Likewise, in John 17:4 Jesus says, “‘I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work that you have given me to do.’” Both passages use the verb *teleō*. The work He finished was the redemption and reconciliation of all the world. Colossians 1:21-22 says, “21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.”

6. He initiated the New Covenant. In anticipation of His death, Jesus said of the cup at the Last Supper “‘For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins’” (Matt. 27:28). The author of Hebrews explained the necessity of Jesus’ death: “And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:15). The New Covenant, ultimately fulfilled in the future with the nation of Israel, promised spiritual blessings to all who know Jesus Christ as Savior (Jer. 31, 33; Eze. 36-37; Heb. 9).

What this means for salvation

Since Jesus finished the work of redemption for all people, there is nothing left for anyone to do. We are saved by Jesus’ work and obedience, not ours. If we accept, through faith, the pardon for sins that He offers, we have no debt to pay. Instead, God can now give us the free gift of eternal life. We do not need to try to earn that gift with our works, nor do we do we need to prove ourselves worthy of it as if on probation. The penalty for our sins was completely paid for, as Colossians 2:13-14 says: “13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” We who are redeemed by Christ’s finished work also have the final victory over Satan and sin. We can confidently receive and offer people God’s free gift of eternal life and the forgiveness of sins through the gospel.

Conclusion

Never before and never since has a more meaningful word been spoken. God, through Christ, did the work we could never do. Satan and the curse of sin are defeated, and God’s justice is satisfied. With the statement “It is finished!” Jesus proclaimed the truth that separates biblical Christianity from all other religions: There is nothing we must do to be accepted by God; it has been done for us! That is grace.

