It Is Finished

John 19:30

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Jesus Saves Completely

Three of the seven final statements of Jesus on the cross are found in John 19.

* John 19:26-27 is the word of compassion: “Woman, behold, your son!” “Behold, your mother.”
* John 19:28-29 is the word of suffering: “I thirst.”
* John 19:30 is the word of victory: “It is finished.”

You can almost feel the tension between the word of suffering and the word of victory. The word of suffering was not the last word. From the parched lips of this crucified Savior comes a shout of victory: “It is finished!” Jesus did not say, “I am finished.” He said, “It is finished.”

* This is not the concession of a defeated man.
* This is not the resignation of a doomed man.
* This is not the relief of a dying man.

This is the victor’s triumphant shout: “It is finished.” In John 17:4, Jesus prayed, “I have glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.” At the age of thirty-three, most people are saying, “It is only the beginning.” At thirty-three, Jesus declared, “It is finished. But this is about more than the end of His journey. It is about the completion of His mission. A mission that was assigned in heaven and completed on earth.

In Matthew 1:21, the angel told Joseph concerning Mary, “She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” Jesus was born to die. The accomplishment of His death was the purpose of His life.

Since salvation is a finished work, we dare not add anything to it, or take anything from it. This is the message of the sixth work from the cross: Sinners are man right with God only by the finished work of Christ at the cross. Jesus saves completely, exclusively, and eternally.

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John 19:30 says, “When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, ‘It is finished,’ and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” The cry of Jesus translates one Greek word: “Tetelestai.” Charles Spurgeon wrote: “It would need all the other words that ever were spoken, or ever can be spoke, to explain this one word. It is altogether immeasurable. It is high; I cannot attain to it. It is deep; I cannot fathom it.” “Tetelestai” means to finish a task, complete an assignment, or accomplish a goal.

* Servants used this term when they completed their tasks.
* Artists used this term when a work of art is completed
* Soldiers used this term after they prevailed in battle.
* It is the word used after graduating from college.
* It is the word you use after crossing the finish line of a marathon.
* It is the word you use when the stove is cut off and dinner is on the table.

When a person paid a merchant, paid a debt, or paid his taxes, “tetelestai” was written on the receipt. It meant, “Paid in full.” We owed a debt we cannot pay. Jesus paid the debt and He paid it in full.

Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” What sin is keeping you from God? Let me give you the right answer in four words: IT DOES NOT MATTER! When you trust the blood and righteousness of Christ, “tetelestai” is stamped over every sin in your life.

* Abomination. Paid in full!
* Adultery. Paid in full!
* Bribery. Paid it full!
* Disobedience. Paid in full!
* Debauchery. Paid in full!
* Embezzlement. Paid in full!
* Gluttony. Paid in full!
* Homosexuality. Paid in full!
* Murder. Paid in full!
* Pride. Paid in full!
* Slothfulness. Paid in full!

If I left you sin out, add it to the list. Then write “tetelestai” over it. It is paid in full by the finished work of Christ.

Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 2:1-2 says, “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.” The God who finished the work of creation after six days, finished the work of redemption in six hours when Jesus died on the cross.

JESUS SAVES EXCLUSIVELY

A man under conviction showed up late to a gospel crusade. He sought out the evangelist and desperately asked, “What can I do to save myself?” The evangelist replied, “It’s too late! You cannot do anything! The alarmed man asked again, “What can I do to save myself?” The evangelist repeated, “It’s too late. You cannot do anything because it's already done. Jesus paid it all and all we can do is accept it.”

This is the essence of the gospel. Religion teaches what sinners must do to be saved. Christianity asserts there is nothing the sinner can do to be saved. The good news is that it is finished. There is no salvation outside of Christ. We are saved through Him, by Him, and because of Him. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). It is considered foolish, arrogant, narrow-minded to claim there is only one way to God. Yet Jesus emphatically declared that no one comes to God the Father except through him.

What does this mean? What is salvation through Christ alone?

The one who saves must be fully God. Salvation is a divine accomplishment, not a human achievement. John 2:9 says, “Salvation belongs to the Lord.” Scholars call this monergism. Synergism is when different elements work together to produce a different or greater result. Monergism means God does not need any elements to help Him produce salvation. Ephesians 2:9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

The one who saves must be fully human. The holiness, wrath, and justice of God would not permit Him to forgive sin without paying the penalty. Lambs, bulls, and doves could never satisfied God’s demands for justice. A second Adam had to finish what the first Adam messed up. The Savior had to be holy, sinless, and righteous. The Savior also had to be man and God to represent both parties. Only Jesus qualifies. 1 Timothy 2:5 says, “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” Jesus is heaven’s wonder, hell’s worry, and humanity’s way out of sin, guilt, death, hell, and the grave.

There is no salvation outside of the Work of Christ. Jesus took our place on the cross. Christ did not die as our representative. He died as our substitute. Isaiah 53:4-6 says, “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities, upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Ray Pritchard wrote: “If Jesus paid it all, you don’t have to. If you try to pay for your salvation, it means you don’t think he paid it all. There is no middle ground between those two propositions.”

A Christian farmer witnessed to a carpenter who would not trust the finished work of Christ; he believed there were things he had to do to complete it. One day, the farmer asked the carpenter to make him a gate for his fence. When it was finished, the farmer invited the carpenter to see the newly installed gate. When he arrived, the carpenter was shocked to see the farmer standing with an axe in his hand. “What are you doing?” he asked. “I am going to add a few cuts and strokes to your work,” answered the farmer. The carpenter protested, “There is no need for that. The gate is complete just the way it is.” The farmer hacked away until the gate was destroyed. “Look what you have done!” cried the carpenter. “You ruined my work.” “Yes, said the farmer, “and you seek to nullify the finished work of Christ by your miserable additions to it!”

JESUS SAVES ETERNALLY

On May 1, 2003, President George W. Bush landed on the USS Abraham Lincoln, docked near San Diego. He gave an address from the aircraft carrier to announce the end of major combat operations in Iraq. A banner that read “Mission Accomplish” hung in the background. Then guerrilla warfare increased during the Iraqi insurgency. The majority of casualties of the war occurred after the speech. His triumphant celebration of a mission accomplished become an ongoing reminder that there was more to be accomplished before the mission was over.

When Jesus declared, “It is finished,” it was no premature celebration of an incomplete mission. The work of salvation was done. The promise of scripture was fulfilled. The debt of sin was paid.

John 19:30 says, “When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, ‘It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” Having finished his work, Jesus bowed his head, as if resting it on a pillow and voluntarily gave up his spirit in death.

In John 10:17-18, Jesus said, “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life for the sheep. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.” Jesus laid down his life, because his work was finished.

“Tetelestai” is in a grammatical emphasis that means: “It is finished, it stands finished, it will be finished. Our salvation is eternally secure. Salvation is not purchased on an installment plan. Jesus said, “It is finished.” He did not say, “I made a down payment.” The cross of Jesus did not sign a mortgage, it burned the mortgage. It is finished once and for all.