

Tetelestai

Tetelestai is a Greek word that is a declaration; translated into English, it is three words, "It is finished."

We understand the importance of declarations every year in America. We celebrate Independence Day and remember the signing of the Declaration of Independence. However, the most important declaration ever made in all of history is "Tetelestai" because what was "finished" was impossible for anyone to accomplish on their own.

According to Genesis 1, God created all things good and for His glory. Since God is holy (meaning pure) and set apart from everything else, He declared that everything He made was good. After completing creation with man, made in His image, God declared His entire creation to be "very good." Being made in God's image does not mean that man physically looks like God but that human beings have an eternal soul. In this original condition, man was pure and able to "walk with God," to be in the actual presence of God.

God told the man, whose name was Adam, "You can eat of ALL the trees and plants in the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you must not eat, for in the day you eat of it, you will surely die." (Genesis 2:17)

God warned Adam that eating from the forbidden tree would bring death. Unfortunately, Adam rejected God's warning. He and Eve ate the fruit from the forbidden tree. They didn't *physically* die at that moment, but they immediately died *spiritually*. That is, they were separated from the peace and fellowship of God that they had always known and were filled with guilt, fear, and dread of God, which they had never before experienced.

God came to the man and his wife in the garden and told them the consequences of their disobedience. They would live in sin, and their children would be born with sinful natures. Since Adam was the head of the human race, every person ever born into the world after him would be born into a fallen condition or sinful state, separated from the holiness and presence of God ([Romans 5:12](#)). Because the sin nature was now a part of their very being, nothing they could EVER do, whether right or wrong, would be "good" in God's sight; every action would be polluted by sin. This is bad news, but it gets worse.

In addition to having a fallen nature, all people who came after Adam have been credited with (held responsible for) the guilt of Adam's sin. This is called the first imputation; Adam's sin was attributed or credited to us. This imputed sin affects our standing before God; we are guilty and deserving of the same punishment for sin as Adam: death.

Death is separation. Physical death is the separation of the soul from the body. Spiritual death, of even greater significance, is the separation of the soul from God in this present life and eternity to come ([Ephesians 2:1-3](#)). Imputed sin makes us subject to God's judgment. Those who persist in this state of separation from God for their entire lives will experience the "second death," which is eternal ([Revelation 20:11-15](#)).

What can we do to change our hopeless, fallen, inherited status and live in the way we were intended to live? Nothing. The Bible declares that no one is good, not even one. ([Psalm 53:3](#)) In God's sight, we are worthless rebels. Not only are we born into sin, but we each continue to sin every day.

Thankfully, almost immediately after Adam and his wife Eve ate the forbidden fruit, God declared a message of hope, promising them that He would send one of their own offspring, another “Adam,” the Redeemer who would defeat the forces of sin, death, and the devil ([Genesis 3:15; Romans 5:18-19](#)).

A few thousand years later, God's written Law came through Moses, making it clear how people should live. It also became clear that no one is able, much less willing, to keep God's Law.

Then, at the perfect, appointed time, God the Father sent His Son to the earth, through the power of the Holy Spirit and a virgin named Mary, to be born in a stable in Bethlehem. Jesus was, and is, fully Man (born of a woman) and fully God (conceived by the Holy Spirit). He is a man with a physical body like our own and, at the same time, fully God in every sense.

Jesus lived perfectly for 33 years, never violating God's law on any account. Jesus endured physical beating with rods and whips by the Romans, was spat upon by His own creation, mocked by those who claimed to love God, and delivered to death by His own neighbors. He willingly endured the punishment that we all rightly deserved for violating God's law. We deserve eternal death, eternal separation from God's peace and presence, eternal suffering in hell, a place of “weeping and gnashing of teeth” ([Matthew 13:49-50](#)).

As Jesus hung on the cross for 6 hours, fully God and fully Man, He spoke 7 times.

1. The crowds mocked Him saying, “If you are the son of God save yourself.” And Jesus said, **“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”** ([Luke 23:34](#))
2. Jesus passed on the care of his mother to His disciple John. **“Woman, behold, your son!”** Then he said to the disciple, **“Behold, your mother!”** ([John 19:26-27](#))
3. One of the criminals who was hanged beside Him said, *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”* And he [Jesus] said to him, **“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”** ([Luke 23:39-43](#))

These three statements were made during the first three hours on the cross.

Then, the full wrath of God fell upon Him. Thick darkness covered the land for three hours. During that time, Jesus received the punishment that we deserve: all the sufferings of God's wrath. ([Luke 23:44, 1 Peter 3:18](#)).

4. Right after the three hours of darkness were over, Jesus said, **“My God, my God why have you forsaken me?”** ([Matthew 27:46](#)) Jesus was quoting a psalm ([Psalm 22:1](#)) that those standing by would have been very familiar with.
5. Then, as His peace returned and fellowship with the Father was restored, Jesus said, **“I thirst.”** What a beautiful picture of both Jesus' humanity and divinity! He was offered sour wine mixed with gall (pain-deadening medicine) but refused it so that no one would have reason to believe that He didn't endure the full punishment for our sin. ([Matthew 27:34, John 19:28-29](#))

6. At last, Jesus declared with a loud voice, “**Tetelestai! It is finished!**” His saving work had been perfectly completed. The wrath of God on sin was paid once and for all. At that moment, forgiveness was obtained for all who would believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior. He satisfied God’s righteous anger, taking the punishment each believer deserves. Three days later, when He rose from the dead, He conquered death itself. Those who hope in Christ look forward to the day they are at home with Him.
7. Then finally, since it was, in fact, “*finished*,” there was no further need for Jesus to remain on the cross, so He said, “**Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!**” *And having said this he breathed his last.*” ([Luke 23:46](#)). Jesus did not remain dead but rose from the dead three days later. On His cross He conquered sin. In His resurrection, He conquered death.

Jesus took sin upon Himself and purchased salvation for every person who believes in Him. Those who believe have “*now been justified by his blood*,” which He shed on the cross ([Romans 5:9](#)). Justification means being declared right before God. Jesus’ own righteousness – all the righteousness a sinner needs – is imputed through faith in Jesus ([Romans 5:1](#)). The first imputation is when a person takes on Adam’s guilt. The second imputation is when a person receives Christ’s righteousness. That person’s standing before God is permanently changed; they are forgiven, clean, righteous, and adopted children of God, destined to eternal life through Christ Jesus ([Ephesians 1:3-6](#)).

Throughout this article, we have considered an enormous amount of very bad news that we all face because each of us was born with a sinful nature. There is nothing we can ever do in our own strength to be considered “good” in God’s sight. Everything we do is polluted by sin. This is the worst possible news that any human being can face.

But there is good news for sinners; in fact, it’s the best news possible! Sinners like us CAN be reconciled to God, saved from the power of sin and death and the eternal punishment we deserve. The word “Gospel” literally means good news. That’s what we have in Jesus Christ: there is salvation in His name and no other name under heaven ([Acts 4:12](#)).

If you have never trusted in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, I have good news for you. You don’t need to work for God’s approval; in fact, the harder you try to impress God the more you come under His judgment ([Isaiah 64:6](#)). Instead, trust in Jesus Christ, who has satisfied all of God’s righteous requirements. If you believe that God sent His Son to redeem you, paying the price for your sins, then pray to the Father. Admit your sins and sinful nature, repent of your sinful life, and rest in Jesus’ death on the cross.

“**Tetelestai**,” Jesus cried out; “**It is finished!**” Praise God, for those who repent and believe the Gospel, it has only begun! Life awaits all who follow Christ; my prayer is that you will follow Him today.

If you have questions or would like to talk with someone in person, we would love to help. Click the button below to contact us by email, and we will respond as soon as possible. And of course, feel free to join us on Sunday morning at One Hope Fellowship.