

It is Finished!

"Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit"

John 19:30

RECORDED in the gospels are seven last statements spoken by Jesus Christ on the cross. Among these is arguably one of the greatest announcements ever made in the history of mankind, and it came in the closing moments of Jesus' life. As He pulled Himself up on the nails to draw one last breath, Jesus declared, "It is finished." But far from a cry of defeat, this was a shout of victory. Jesus did not say, "I am finished," pointing to the end of His earthly life, but rather, "It is finished," referring to the completion of His task: Our redemption.

In the original Greek New Testament, Jesus' statement is actually just one word, *tetelestai*. It was written across ancient loan documents and receipts, meaning "paid in full" (cf. Col. 2:14). The word itself is in the perfect tense which in Greek designates something that has been completed and continues in its effect. And so, when Jesus declared, "It is finished," He was proclaiming that the penalty for every sin of every believer has been paid in full, and that the effect of that payment will continue forever, resulting in eternal life.

Though the implications of Jesus' statement touch on almost every practical and theological aspect of Christianity, space requires us to confine our attention to only a couple of key considerations. First, Jesus' declaration means that all sacrifice for sin is finished. Under that Old Covenant, the work of the priest was never done. But what hundreds of thousands of animal sacrifices could not do, Jesus accomplished once and for all time with one sacrifice. "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God" (Heb. 10:11-12, cf. Heb. 12:2). Herein lies the primary difference between true and false religion. Man-made religion says, "Do, do, do," but Christ says, "Done!"

Next, when Jesus declared, "It is finished," it meant that God's wrath had been propitiated. Three times in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus uttered this prayer, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not My will, but Thy will be done" (Mt. 26:39, 42, 44). This "cup" is described in Revelation as "the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger" (Rev. 14:10); that is to say, it is God's wrath against the sinner (Nahum 1:2; Rom. 1:18, 2:5). Yet if Jesus trembled in the garden at the thought of drinking from that cup, He did not waver on the cross, but drank it down to its bitter dregs. It was bad to the last drop. And not until it was emptied for all of those who believe in Him, did He declare, "It is finished!" God's eternal anger toward you, dear Christian, is over (Rom. 5:9, 1 Thess. 1:10, 5:9; 1 John 4:17-18). His wrath has been propitiated for those who are in Christ Jesus (1 Jn. 4:10).

All sacrifice for sin is finished! God's wrath is finished! We may wonder how Jesus Christ, the God-Man, could pay our eternal debt in just six hours on the cross (cf. 2 Pet. 3:8), but let us not forget that it was still six hours of unimaginable torture which He could have stopped at any point (Mt. 26:53). And though they taunted Him to come down and save Himself, He would not do it (Mt. 27:39-42). No, He "endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2), and would not surrender His Spirit (Luke 23:46), until the sacrifice for sin and the propitiation of God's wrath were finished. Selah, pause and meditate.