“It Is Finished!”

— John 19:30 —

Introduction

We are in the final moments of Jesus’ life looking at the His sixth saying from the cross: “It is finished.” In Greek, this is a single word.

But this is no ordinary word. It is without a doubt one of the most glorious words ever uttered. It’s meaning reaches all the way back into the eternal plans of God and brings to a culmination thousands of years of human history. And it has defined human history ever since.

In this brief message, I want to answer three questions:

1. What does the word *finished* mean?
2. What does the word *it* refer to?
3. How should this truth affect our daily lives?

Jesus had just drunk some of the sour wine, and he said, “It is finished!” and bowed his head and gave up His spirit.

1. The Meaning of *Finished*

What does the word *finished* mean?

Its Definition and Translation

The Greek word is translated *finish*, *fulfill*, *end*, *pay*, *accomplish*, *keep*, etc. It carries three basic meanings:

1. completing an activity or process

2. carrying out an obligation or demand
3. paying what is due

Its Usage

Jesus used the word **five times** in the Gospels. The three in Luke are significant:

- In **Luke 12:50** Jesus said, “I have a baptism to be baptized with [referring to His death], and how great is my distress until **it is accomplished** [**τελεσθῇ**]!” [mission]
- In **Luke 18:31** He told his disciples, “Everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets **will be accomplished** [**τελεσθήσεται**].” [prophecy]
- In **Luke 22:37** He said, “This Scripture **must be fulfilled** [**τελεσθῆναι**] in me: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors.’” [prophecy]

Jesus used the word to talk about **accomplishing** His God-given **mission** and **fulfilling** all of the **prophecies** about Him in the Old Testament.

The same word is used just two verses earlier in **verse 28**: “After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now **finished [τελέω]**, said (to **fulfill** [**τελειόω**] the Scripture), ‘I thirst.’”

One other place that sheds light on its meaning is Paul’s familiar statement in **2 Timothy 4:7**: “I have **finished** [**τετέλεκα**] the race.”

The word can also mean *to pay*, as in paying a debt. I don’t think it’s reading into it to hear “It is paid in full!” in Jesus’ statement.

So Jesus *finished*, *fulfilled*, *put an end to*, *accomplished*, *paid*, *kept* it.

Transition: But what precisely was *it* that Jesus finished?

2. What Was Finished

I'd like to briefly highlight **ten** things that Jesus finished.

1. His Incarnational Mission and Work

I think the *it* can best be summed up in terms of Jesus' incarnational **mission**, the **work** His Father gave Him to do. He came to earth on a mission, sent by His Father. And completed it to the *t*.

- In **John 4:34** Jesus said, "**My food** is to **do the will of him who sent me** and to **accomplish his work**."

So Jesus perfectly completed the mission and work His Father gave Him to do.

2. The Eternal Plan of God to Glorify Himself in the Cross

God created the universe to bring Himself glory, and He planned the cross before the foundation of the world to be the chief means of doing so.

- **1 Peter 1:20** refers to the precious blood of Christ, the lamb without blemish or spot, who was "**foreknown** [foreordained] before the foundation of the world."

In His death, Jesus accomplished the eternal plan of the Triune God to bring Himself glory in the cross.

3. Old Testament Prophecies

All of the Old Testament with its types and shadows and prophecies pointed to the coming Messiah and ultimately to His atoning work. And Jesus fulfilled every last one of them perfectly.

4. The Old Covenant

The final and ultimate sacrifice had been made "once and for all," doing away with the Old Covenant and its imperfect sacrificial system.

- **Hebrews 9:12** says that Jesus "**entered once for all** into the holy places . . . securing an eternal redemption."
- Jesus says in **Luke 22:20**, "This cup that is poured out for you is the **new covenant** in my blood."

Jesus by His death **once and for all** put an end to the Old Covenant with its ongoing sacrifices for sins that could not take away sins and inaugurated the New Covenant, in which we look back at the **finished work of Christ**.

5. Law

Along with the Old Covenant went the Mosaic Law in its civil and ceremonial forms. Christ, whom the law foreshadowed, was the perfect fulfillment of it. He also perfectly kept the moral law in our place.

- Paul tells us in **Romans 10:4** that "Christ is the **end of the law** for righteousness to everyone who believes."

6. Substitutionary Atonement

Jesus accomplished His atoning work, which included both **expiation** and **propitiation**.

Expiation

Expiation is the **removal of our sin and guilt**. God transferred our sin to Jesus, and Jesus, by His death, took it away, paid the full penalty we deserved.

- **John 1:29:** "Behold, the Lamb of God who **takes away the sin** of the world."
- **Hebrews 9:26:** "He has been manifested to **put away sin** by the sacrifice of Himself."

Propitiation

Proposition is the **satisfaction of God's just wrath**. By paying for our sin and removing it, God's wrath was satisfied.

- **Romans 8:1**: There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

7. Cancellation of Our Debt (Objective Forgiveness)

- **Colossians 2:13–14** says that God has "forgiven us all our trespasses, by **canceling** the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross."

8. Reconciliation (Subjective Forgiveness)

Because of our sin, we were estranged and separated from God. Christ, by his death, accomplished our reconciliation. There was enmity and hostility, but Christ remove it and established a relationship of peace.

- **Romans 5:10:** "We were **reconciled** to God through the death of his Son."

9. Redemption/Ransom

We were in **bondage** because of our sins, and Christ, by His death, paid the **ransom** and delivered us, setting us **free** from the curse of the law and the guilt and power of sin.

- **1 Peter 1:18–19** reminds us that we were "**redeemed** [not] with perishable things like silver or gold . . . but with **precious blood**, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, **the blood of Christ**."

10. Defeat of Satan and His Demons

Thousands of years of human history, ever since the fall of Adam and eve in the garden, had been pointing toward and awaiting this event.

- **Hebrews 2:14–15** says that Jesus became a man so “that through death he might **destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil**.”

Jesus won a decisive victory over Satan and all the powers of evil.

Transition: This list is by no means exhaustive. The epistles unpack the significance of Jesus death in far more detail, but we must move on and consider the application of this glorious truth.

3. Why It Matters

How should this truth affect our daily lives? There are many ways, but I want to suggest four:

1. Be confident in God’s faithfulness and power to keep His promises.

Jesus finished all that the Father sent him to do. There wasn’t a single thing that He missed. Every last prophecy, every aspect of His incarnational ministry, every commandment needing to be obeyed, every sin needing to be paid—He finished, fulfill, completed, paid them all!

Whatever God sets his mind to do, he accomplishes it. He doesn’t know failure. What confidence this gives us in the promises of God that are still being realized or are yet to be fulfilled!

2. Rest and delight in Jesus’ finished work.

When you are tempted to earn God’s favor, remember, “It is finished!” Christ completed His work and earned God’s favor—both for Himself and for all those united to Him.

3. Be empowered to do battle with sin.

When you’re in the midst of temptation and feel weak in the face of the world, the flesh, and the Devil, remember, “It is finished!” Christ was victorious over the

powers of darkness. Sin's power has been broken. Remember Jesus' cry of victory.

4. Fight against guilt and despair.

When you're tempted to despair at your own sin, remember, "It is finished!" Christ bore all of God's wrath for all of our sins—past, present, and future—and they have been forgiven and paid in full. Don't wallow in the guilt of your own sinfulness. Let Christ's atoning work cleanse your conscience.

I love verse 2 of "Before the Throne of God Above": "When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within, upward I look and see Him there, who made an **end** to all my sin. Because the sinless savior **died**, my sinful soul is counted free, for God the just is satisfied to look on Him and pardon me."

Conclusion

"It is finished!" Jesus completed it. We have a completed salvation, victory over sin and death and hell, peace with God, and an unshakable confidence that God will finish all that He has promised.

I close with the hymn "Hark! The Voice of Love and Mercy":

Hark! the voice of love and mercy
Sounds aloud from Calvary;
See! it rends the rocks asunder
Shakes the earth and veils the sky:
"It is finished!"
Hear the dying Savior cry.

"It is finished!" Oh! what pleasure
Do these charming words afford!
Heavenly blessings without measure,
Flow to us through Christ, the Lord:
"It is finished!"
Saints! the dying record.

Tune your harps anew, ye seraphs!
Join to sing the pleasing theme:
All in earth and heaven, uniting,
Join to praise Immanuel's name:
Hallelujah!
Glory to the conquering lamb!