

It Is Finished! (The Last Word of Jesus)

John 19:28-30

²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, *He said, "I am thirsty."* ²⁹ A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth. ³⁰ Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, **"It is finished!"** And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

Introduction

I have been collecting the last words that people say on their deathbed. There are scores of them, but here are some examples from the collection:

Archimedes, Greek mathematician (212 B.C.): *"(on being ordered by a Roman soldier to follow him) 'Wait till I have finished my problem.'"*

Beethoven (1827). His last words: *"I shall hear in heaven."*

Charlotte Bronte, author of *'Jane Eyre,'* passed away at the age of 38. She'd been married just about a year. Looking at her loving husband, she said, *"We have been so happy."*

Jean Baptiste-Camille Corot, French landscape and portrait painter (1875): *"I hope with all my heart there will be painting in Heaven."*

One of Jesus' seven last words on the cross: *It is finished.* Translated in three words in English, but one word in Greek: te-te-le-s-tai (τετελεσται). It means "It is finished," "It's done," or "It's completed." What did He mean by saying "It is finished?" That's what we are going to talk about this morning.

At the cross, Jesus has once and for all completed the following three things: Atonement, Adoption, Access.

I. Atonement

When Christ uttered, "It is finished," He meant His work on earth was finished. His mission and what He had come for was finished. Done. Completed. What is done? Atonement is done. What is atonement? Redemption.

To explain what atonement means, I need to borrow Jesus' own words in Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and **to give His life as a ransom for many.**"

What's your understanding of ransom? Oxford Dictionary defines "**ransoms** (plural noun) a sum of **money or other payment demanded or paid for the release of a prisoner.**"

In the 21st century, the word 'ransom' means money demanded or paid in some hostage situation. The 1st century audience in Israel, however, understood it differently. Back then, the word reminded them of an animal. The sacrificial animal, to be exact. Typically, a goat or a lamb without blemish (without any defects, cuts, or bruises).

In the days of Jesus and the Old Testament times, let's say I am guilty of something bad I have done, and I need God's forgiveness to clear my conscience; I am commanded by the Law to bring the sacrificial animal, the ransom, the sin offering, to the temple. The priest knows why I am there. He lays his hand on the sin offering (Leviticus 4:33). At that moment, my **sin is transferred** from me, the guilty party, to the lamb, the innocent one. Since the lamb carries my sin, it must **pay the wages of my sin through its own death**, shedding its own blood. **The lamb dies, and I go free.**

Payment of my sin was made, and I am forgiven. That's what the atonement means. That's exactly what happened at the cross: Jesus Christ the Lamb of God died on our behalf, paid the wages of our sin through His own death; therefore, we are forgiven. Atonement was completed at the cross once and for all.

This is how Scripture puts it: 2 Corinthians 5:21— "*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*"

II. Adoption

The second thing Christ did at the cross was adoption: in Christ, we are adopted into God's family, and we become God's children thereafter. Have you ever been to the adoption court? After everything is properly processed, in front of everybody, the judge strikes the gavel and declares, "Done." In the same way, when our adoption process was completed at the cross, God in the Heavenly court struck the gavel and declared, "Done."

Did you know that, before we came to know Christ, we were strangers to God? That's why not everyone in the world, especially non-believers, is a child of God. In fact, the Bible says that we were the enemies of God (Romans 5:10). We were **hostile to God** when we didn't know Christ. That means, between us and the holy God was a wall that separated us from God. It kept us from having an intimate relationship with Him. Through His death on the cross, however, Jesus tore down the wall. What happened next? Reconciliation took place and peace was restored between God and us, the believers in Christ. Now, we become sons and daughters of God. And to His children God grants the privilege to inherit the Kingdom of God for eternity with all the glory and honor associated with it. At the cross, adoption was completed.

III. Access

The last thing completed at the cross was access to God. Jesus opened the heavenly gate and granted us access to God (Matthew 27:51) so that we may approach God in boldness and confidence (Ephesians 3:12).

At the cross, when Jesus took His last breath, something that never happened before took place in ‘the Holy of Holies’ in the Temple of Jerusalem. For you to understand better, let me walk you through the Temple in Jerusalem. Imagine a rectangular courtyard. You start walking toward the Temple from outside, you enter through the first gate, and you are in the outer court known as **‘the court of gentiles’** where anyone is allowed: male and female, old and young, animals, birds, merchants, money changers and even foreigners (gentiles, non-Jews). You pass the second gate and enter **‘the court of women.’** This area allows only Jews, both male and female. Then, you keep walking through another gate and enter **‘the court of Israel’** (only Jewish males were allowed with their sacrificial animals). Another gate, and you enter **‘the priestly court’** where the priests perform the sacrifice of animals on the altar of sacrifices. Finally, you arrive at **‘the holy place’** and walk in.

Now, you are inside ‘the holy place.’ In this chamber, you see *the table of showbread* (to your right), *the golden lampstand* (to your left), and *the altar of incense* (ahead). At the back of the altar, you see *the veil* that separates **‘the Holy of Holies’** from the rest of ‘the holy place.’

Behind the veil lies the holiest place of all — a perfect cube measuring 20 cubits in width, length, and height (a cubit being the distance from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger, about 18 inches, making the cube roughly 30 ft x 30 ft x 30 ft). In it, you find the Ark of the Covenant with the tablets of Ten Commandments inside —Originally there were three objects inside— the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 25:16; Deut. 10:1-5), Aaron’s budding rod (Numbers 17, Hebrews 9:4), and a golden jar of manna (Exodus 16:32-34). Over time, according to 1 Kings 8:9, only the stone tablets remained inside the Ark.

To this ‘Holy of Holies,’ only one person in all of Israel (the high priest) was allowed to enter once a year on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). Sprinkling the blood of sin offering on the mercy seat on the Ark of the covenant, the high priest asks for God’s forgiveness on behalf of his own people.

Going back to the day of Jesus’ crucifixion 2,000 years ago, right after He breathed His last breath, the veil in the holy place was torn into two pieces **from the top to the bottom**, not from the bottom to the top (Matthew 27:51). The significance? It was not done by any humans but by God so as to open and give us access to His most holy presence. From that day on, you and I have access to God’s throne room through Jesus. Not just through any religion, but only through Christ. Not just one day but all the time, every minute. We, the children of God, go into His presence with no fear. Rather, with boldness and confidence, we go in and call God in Heaven ‘Abba Father,’ a very affectionate term. All in the name of Jesus! Amen.

Conclusion

In the first century Roman world, if you owed money and could not pay it on time, what would you do? Ask for more time, right? If the creditor refuses to grant your wish, then, what happens? Typically, he puts you in jail and keeps you there until you pay the last penny of your debt.

Let's say I am the debtor sitting in a dungeon. A certain rich man, a benefactor, out of his charity, bails me out. The jailer comes with the keys, opens the door, and says that now I can go home because someone has paid off my debt. Before I go home, though, the jailer gives me a piece of paper on which only one word was written. In Greek. *Te-te-le-s-tai* (τετελεσται). My debt is paid off. Completely off. I take the certificate with me. I wouldn't dare lose it. I would take it with me showing everyone, "See, my debt is paid off." It is done. It is completed. It is finished. That's what Jesus did with our iniquities on the cross.

So, remember Jesus' word: *It is finished*. **Atonement** is done. Your debt is paid off. Your sins are forgiven. **Adoption** is completed. You're God's child. **Access** is granted. Enter into God's presence with boldness and confidence in the name of Jesus our Lord.

Amen.