

It Is Finished

What did Jesus mean when He uttered the words “It is finished!” in John 19:30?

The phrase actually translates one word in Greek, *tetelestai*, from the root *teleō*, which means “to finish, fulfill.”

Significantly, this specific form of the verb, *tetelestai*, is only found twice in the entire New Testament, both times in John 19.

In fact, the two occurrences of *tetelestai* are found within three verses of each other: “After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), ‘I thirst.’ ... When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, ‘It is finished,’ and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (John 19:28, 30).

Do you see that? Although the verb *teleō* occurs 28 times in the New Testament, the form *tetelestai* is found only twice, and those two occurrences are in the same context, right next to each other, making the meaning perfectly clear.

Jesus was saying, “Mission accomplished! Everything that had to be done has been done! It is finished!”

Similarly, leading New Testament scholar D.A. Carson writes,

The verb *teleō* from which this form derives denotes the carrying out of a task, and in religious contexts bears the overtone of fulfilling one’s religious obligations. Accordingly, in the light of the impending cross, Jesus could earlier cry, ‘I have brought you glory on earth by completing (*teleiōsas*; i.e. by accomplishing) the work you gave me to do’ (17:4). ‘Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them *eis telos*—not only ‘to the end’ but to the full extent mandated by his mission. And so, on the brink of death, Jesus

cries out, It is accomplished!

According to another great New Testament and Greek scholar, B. F. Westcott:

The earthly life had been carried to its issue. Every essential point in the prophetic portraiture of Messiah had been realized (Acts 13:29). The last suffering for sin had been endured. The “end” of all had been gained. Nothing was left undone or unborne. The absence of a definite subject forces the reader to call up each work which was now brought to an end.

Similarly, M. Dods wrote:

The cry, tetelestai, “it is finished,” was not the gasp of a worn-out life, but the deliberate utterance of a clear consciousness that His work was finished, and all God’s purpose accomplished (17:4), that all had now been done that could be done to make God known to men, and to identify Him with men.

Yes, the divine mission has been accomplished. Jesus has done it!

Every sin has been paid for, every evil deed judged, and the full and total price of our redemption purchased at the cross.

That is the power of the blood of Jesus.

That is the glory of the Son of God.

That is the depth of the Father’s love—and it was all for you and for me so that forever, we could be with Him and even share in His nature.

Who could imagine such a story of love?

There’s really no need to read other meanings into “It is finished,” such as: “When Christ died, He said ‘it is

finished', meaning the old covenant was now fulfilled and done away with." Or, Jesus spoke in Hebrew on the cross, and when He said, "It is finished," it was actually the Hebrew word nishlam, which means 'Paid in full.'

Regardless of whether there is any truth to these claims (Jesus certainly spoke in either Aramaic or Hebrew on the cross, not Greek), neither of them convey what John intended to convey.

Jesus perfectly lived the life He had to live and perfectly died the death He had to die. It is finished!

All we have to do is to put our faith in that finished work of the cross and follow that Lord who died and rose for us.

Our own works cannot save us, but the work Jesus did for us on the cross can save us perfectly and forever.

It is with good reason that John G. Lake (1870-1935) said, "In all of your preaching and teaching you must always leave people with the consciousness of the triumph of Christ."

Yes! Amen!

(Excerpted and adopted from Michael L. Brown, Hyper-Grace: Exposing the Dangers of the Modern Grace Message.)