

John 19:28-30  
It is Finished

I have a fascination with last meals and the last words of people sentenced to death. The internet has gladly fed this obsession. When a person is about to die, and they know it, what they want to eat and say comes into focus in an especially intense way. The food request is either an elaborate meal or a simple one. The last words of a person, however, are a different matter. As one author said, the last words of a person "will either affirm or alter their guiding beliefs and values." For John Arthur Spenkelink, a convicted murderer, the imminence of his execution laid bare his cynicism and lack of repentance. Instead of taking the occasion to correct his former beliefs, he said, "Capital punishment means those without the capital get the punishment."

My fascination with last meals and words extend beyond the secular; it has led me to consider the last words of Jesus in more detail as well. In the synoptic accounts, Jesus' last meal was the Seder and his last drink a little sour wine on the cross; and his last words were "it is finished." With these last words, we see Jesus affirm his beliefs and values here on earth. When he proclaimed, "it is finished," he declared that he had completed the work His Father gave him from eternity past! And because he completed the work His Father gave him, we now can walk in newness of life! We don't have to work for it; we need to rest in Him! Let's take a few moments and see how John powerfully communicates this truth in John 19:28-30. I want us to observe the cross, hear the conclusion, and see the crown.

First, let's see how Jesus's completion of the work of redemption on the cross freed us from the bondage of works and gave us the freedom to rest in his grace. When we look at the cross today, we see a symbol of grace and hope. But in Jesus' day, the cross was a symbol of pain and torture. Roman crucifixion was not only a horrific form of torture, recalls one author, reserved for the lowest dregs of the criminal class, but also crucifixion was associated with severe shame and torment. Crucifixion was so awful, that Romans citizens were not only exempt from this humiliating death, but the word was not even used at social gatherings. Even within the Jewish mindset, crucifixion was a curse (Deut. 21:23, see also Gal. 3:13). With this background, Jesus' statement of "it is finished" takes on a whole new significance. Martyn Lloyd Jones sums it up effectively, "the Son of God came to die for us and our sins. He now offers to clothe us with His righteousness and to present us faultless before God in eternity. There is no need for us to exhaust ourselves further in futile efforts (for our Justification and Sanctification). There is no need for heroics...Our all is not enough (our labors would be in vain). But He is all-sufficient."

Second, the conclusion of the matter is this – It is finished! While you do not need to know Greek grammar to understand your Bible, a bit of knowledge in this area can go a long way. The verb translated "it is finished" is a perfect tense verb. In Greek, this verb form can indicate an action that happened in the past but has lasting results. This means the work of redemption initiated before the foundation of the world and culminated in the cross, abides today! What's more, the verb used suggests that the subject isn't just the active agent of the action, but the action personally impacts the subject—either because the agent (or subject) benefits from the action or because he suffers as a result of the action. The Triune God not only decreed that someone should suffer for the sins of many, but the Son chose to personally suffer for the sins of many. The apostle Paul stated it this way, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21)." Moved by the precious truth of Jesus' self-sacrifice for the sinner, Charles Wesley penned these words, "And can it be that I should gain / an interest in the Savior's blood? / Died He for me, who caused His pain— / For me, who Him to death pursued? / Amazing love! How can it be, / That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?" Wesley's words resound a

truth some eighteen hundred years after the fact because what Christ did on Calvary abides even now!

Finally, Christ's proclamation that "It is finished" fully secured his status as the one crowned with glory and honor (Ps. 8:5). Christ boldly proclaimed to his disciples that, "all power and authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto me." With that power, Satan (and everything else) is placed under his feet (Ps. 8:6-8). With that power, every knee will bow and every tongue confesses that he is Lord (Phil. 2:9-11). With that power Jesus can save and empower his people for service in His kingdom. He secured his status as Lord of all, because he died for all (2 Cor. 5:15). One of our modern-day poets summed it up well, "the head that once was crowned with thorns, is crowned with glory now, the Savior knelt to wash our feet, and now at His feet, we bow. The one who wore our sin and shame, now robed in majesty, the radiance of perfect love, now shines for all to see!"

### **So what?**

Christ probably never intended "it is finished" to be a slogan plastered on a bumper sticker or Instagram. He did, however, intend to communicate a powerful truth – Christ completed the work of redemption, and its result will reverberate throughout eternity! We should find tremendous comfort and hope in this. We have all observed over the last several weeks how people throughout the world have gone to great lengths to manage the COVID-19 pandemic. Health care professionals, ministry personnel, government officials, families—especially moms, and teachers have worked tirelessly to maintain some semblance of order. It is exhausting. You can see the toll that working long and stressful hours has taken on the physical and emotional states of all concerned. If this pandemic drags on for the next few months, the world will need more than a month's long siesta to recover from the exhaustion.

As a Christian, I take consolation in knowing that while hard physical work is unavoidable, Christ finished the hard spiritual work. His sacrifice makes it possible for us to rest. Some will ask, but how do we rest in Christ? What does it mean to abide in Christ? My answer is simple: How does a baby abide in its mother's arms or a window cleaner rest in his harness? How does an Electric power line worker remain in her basket or how does a person ziplining rest in their gear? They placed their trust in the equipment! The only requirement for abiding in Christ's work on the cross is the act of receiving and trusting in all that God has done for us in Christ. Let us trust and rest brothers and sisters, because "It is Finished!"