

life group study guide

October 26, 2014

Tetelestai – “It is Finished.”

Read: John 19:28-30

Tetelestai! Only one word in Greek, but three familiar words in English. These words, “It is finished,” are well known to most of us. They even figure in verses of a couple of well-known Christian songs:

*It is finished,
He has done it;
Life conquered death;
Jesus Christ has won it.*
Keith Green, “The Victor”

*Behold the Man upon a cross, my sin upon His shoulders;
Ashamed I hear my mocking voice, call out among the scoffers.*
*It was my sin that held Him there, until it was accomplished;
His dying breath has brought me life; I know that **it is finished**.*
Stuart Townend, “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us”

Q: What do you first think of when you read these last words that Jesus Christ spoke on the cross?

Q: So what exactly is finished? What is Jesus Christ telling us and the rest of the universe with this one Greek word?

Context – First of all, the exact same Greek word, *tetelestai*, occurs two verses earlier in John 19:28. The NLT translates the first part of that verse this way, “Jesus knew that his mission was now finished . . .”

So, this context makes it clear that Jesus’ last word is a statement that He had completed His primary mission on this earth.

Study – Q: Secondly, so what is this mission of Jesus Christ: Why did He come?

Q: Why did He have to come and why did He have to die on the cross?

Q: What was the principal purpose of Immanuel – God with us?

Q: One way of looking at what His essential mission must be is to ask these questions: 1. What did Jesus himself and other NT writers say? 2. What could Jesus Christ -- the one and only Son of God; fully God and fully man -- do that no other person who has ever lived could?

In answer to the first question, consider the following verses, just a few of many that preach the same message. These verses teach the Bible doctrine of The Substitute Atonement – that on the cross Jesus died in our place, to atone (that is, to make amends or reparation or repayment for wrongdoing) for our sins, paying a price that we owed to a Holy God but were utterly unable to pay.

Jesus’ own testimony about His mission: A reading of any of the Gospels will quickly reveal that Jesus knew that He had come to give His life for others. Here is just a sample:

life group study guide

- Matt 20:28 (and Mark 10:45): “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
- Mark 14:24 (at the last supper, speaking of what the wine represented): “This is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice for many.”
- Luke 19:10: “For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.”
- John 3:17: “God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.”
- John 12:27: “Now my soul is deeply troubled. Should I pray, ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But this is the very reason I came!”
- John 12:32-33: “‘And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.’ He said this to indicate how he was going to die.”

Other NT testimony about Christ’s mission:

- Romans 5:8-9: “But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God’s sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God’s condemnation.”
- 1 Cor 15:3: “I passed on to you what was most important and what has also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said.”
- 2 Cor 5:19, 21: “For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them . . . For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.”
- Ephesians 1:7: “He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.” (Also see 1 Pet 1:18-19)
- Colossians 2:13-15: “You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.”
- 1 Tim 1:15: “This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’”
- 1 Tim 2:5-6: “For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity – the man Christ Jesus. He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone.”
- Hebrews 9:28: “Christ died once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him.”
- 1 Peter 2:24: “He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right.”
- 1 John 2:2: “He [Jesus Christ] is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” (ESV)
- 1 John 4:10: “In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (ESV)

Q: Propitiation means “a sacrifice that bears God’s wrath and turns it to favor.” Jesus was the perfect sacrifice and turned God’s wrath away from sinners, that is, us! How do other English versions translate 1 John 2:2 and 4:10? Why do you think many modern versions don’t use the word “propitiation”? Do you think it’s because the word is uncommon now or because modern people don’t like the idea of God having wrath toward sinners? What do you think of the wrath of God? Should He be above it? Is it unworthy of God?

life group study guide



LIFE GROUPS
doing life together

Q: Propitiation is one of the key ideas or images of the Atonement. Fill in the following blanks for this popular Christian hymn (one we've sung at KCC):

"Till on that cross as Jesus died, the _____
_____, for every sin on Him was laid; here

in the death of Christ I live." Do you think Stuart Townend got this right? Why or why not?

Q: There are other images or ideas contained in the Atonement, particularly sacrifice, redemption/ransom, and reconciliation. Where do you see these ideas in the verses above? How do these verses, images, and ideas help you to understand what Christ has done for you on the cross?

Q: So to get back to an earlier question: why could only Jesus Christ be a substitute atonement for the whole world? Why could only He be a satisfactory sacrifice, propitiation, redeemer, and reconciler?

Dr. Johnny Pressley of Cincinnati Bible Seminary has said that God has laid down four rules for an acceptable and final substitute atonement (all from the book of Hebrews):

1. The substitute must be fully human. He had to be "like" us. Heb 2:14-18.
2. The substitute must be perfectly sinless. He had to be a "lamb without blemish." Heb 4:14-16; 7:26-28.
3. The substitute must be totally willing. Heb 5:8-9; 10:5-10.
4. The substitute must be fully divine. Only God could be an infinite and eternal sacrifice for all people and for all time. Heb 7:14-16, 23-28.

Q: What do you think of these qualifications? Where do you see them lived out in Jesus' life?

Conclusion: Q: So what does it all mean for us today – 2,000 years later? What has Christ's finished work done for us? How has it changed our standing with God, especially in terms of wrath, debt, and estrangement?

Jesus' mission of salvation is finished. We don't need to (and can't) add anything to it. He accomplished what no one else could do, taking the sin of the whole world upon His shoulders. The "rest of the story," though, is that God is not finished with us. We live with hope and assurance that nothing can separate us from God's love (Rom 8:35-39). We know that one day He will also complete His work in us as well (Philippians 1:6).

Q: (from Mark Roberts at www.thehighcalling.org): Do you live as if Jesus finished the work of salvation? Do you have confidence that God will finish that which He has begun in you?

Q: What does such a great salvation mean for us in our daily lives? Since "it is finished," how should we then live (to quote a Chuck Colson book title)?

One Suggestion: The Apostle Paul says we are to be grateful ambassadors for Christ: "He has given us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors: God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, 'Come back to God!'" (2 Cor 5:19-20)

Q: What are other ways in which we can live out our gratitude to our Savior?

"How can I say thanks for the things You have done for me?
Things so undeserved, yet You gave to prove Your love for me;
the voices of a million angels could not express my gratitude.
All that I am and ever hope to be, I owe it all to Thee."
Andrae Crouch, "My Tribute"

life group study guide