

19:17 They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha.

The Romans took Jesus and He received the most severe of the floggings that Rome administered (see notes on John 19:1). In this flogging the prisoner was stripped naked, tied to a post, and beaten by two soldiers whose whips were embedded with bone or metal. Due to blood loss and stress, many never survived the flogging.

The condemned man would then carry the horizontal crossbeam of the cross to the site of the crucifixion where the vertical pole to which it would be affixed was already in place. There he would be forced to lie down and his arms would be either tied, or nailed and tied, to the cross member. He was then raised and the beam fastened to the pole. His legs would be twisted and nailed to the base of the cross. At times, a wooden block was placed under his feet to allow him to raise himself with his legs to avoid suffocating. This was done to prolong the agony which resulted in muscle spasms and unbearable pain.

Golgotha was outside the city limits; the appearance of the hill was like a skull.

19:18 There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between.

Crucifixion was synonymous to horror and shame. Josephus calls it “the most pitiable of deaths” (Kostenberger, 543). Those crucified were made a public spectacle, often affixed to crosses in bizarre positions and their bodies left to be devoured by vultures. No Roman citizen could be crucified unless by direct order of the emperor.

For hours or even days, the victim would hang in the heat of the sun. The end would come through heart failure, brain damage caused by lack of oxygen, suffocation, or shock (Kostenberger, 543). All of these things made crucifixion the most horrible of deaths.

Evil men were crucified on either side of Jesus, perhaps fulfilling Psalm 22:16: “. . . A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet.”

19:19 Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

19:20 Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek.

19:21 So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'"

19:22 Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

Above the heads of those crucified, a sign was hung stating the crime; this was to be as a deterrent to others in committing the same offense. By writing, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS," Pilate intended to bring a small measure of revenge upon the Jews. Hebrew (Aramaic) was the language common to the Jews, Latin was the official writing language of Rome, and Greek was the international spoken language as English is today.

The chief priests wanted the sign to be corrected to say, "*He said, 'I am the king of the Jews.'*" But since Pilate was no longer under the threat of mob violence or another complaint reaching Caesar (see notes on 18:39-19:16), he once more became adamant in his lack of cooperation.

19:23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece.

19:24 So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be"; this was to fulfill the Scripture: "THEY DIVIDED MY OUTER GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS."

The soldiers took Jesus' clothing and divided it among themselves; this fulfilled Psalm 22:18 which says, "They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." The four pieces were presumably His belt, head covering, sandals, and outer garment. This suggests that there were four soldiers. The tunic was the garment worn under the outer garment. It was woven as a single piece with no seams; this was common among Jews who did this to insure that two dissimilar fabrics were not joined together which was forbidden by the OT law (Lev. 19:19; Deut. 22:11).

19:25 Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

19:26 When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"

19:27 Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his own household.

The wording of verse 25 allows for three or four women.

In this great moment of Jesus' agony, Jesus makes provision for His mother. Mary was most certainly widowed by this time and depended on Jesus, her oldest son, to support her. Jesus entrusted her to John instead of one of His brothers, perhaps because of their unbelief (Jn. 7:5). From that time on she lived with John, the writer of the gospel.

19:28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty."

19:29 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.

19:30 Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

Matthew 27:46 records Jesus saying on the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" After that, He stated He was thirsty (which fulfilled prophecy), drank the sour wine, and said, "it is finished."

"It is finished" is actually one word in Greek. It also appears in verse 28 where it is translated as "accomplished." It also appears in John 17: 4, "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do." It carries the idea of fulfilling a task, or meeting one's religious obligations (Carson, 621). "I am thirsty" are the words of a victim; "it is finished" are the words of a victor (Pink).

What was "finished"?

What does this mean for the speaker?

To Jesus it meant that His suffering would end, that the types and prophecies concerning His first coming were fulfilled, and that He had fulfilled all of the work that God had wanted Him to do while He was on this earth. In John 17:4 Jesus said, "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do."

Of course this doesn't mean that His work ended, for Scripture tells us that He is our High Priest, who stands before God making intercession for us (Heb. 7:25). He is also our Advocate (1 Jn. 2:1). What it means is that He completed His *public* work, the work that needed to be seen before the eyes of men.

Jesus' work as our High Priest is very much like the work of the High Priest in the Old Testament tabernacle. There were two altars in the tabernacle: one made of brass, which was used for sacrifice, and one made of gold, called the mercy seat. One altar was outside in the courtyard, the other was inside the Holy of Holies; one on this side of the veil, visible to all, the other behind the veil and only seen by the high priest.

The mercy seat was the lid of the Ark of the Covenant (Ex 25:17, etc.). The ark contained the 10 commandments which witnessed against the sin of the people (ISBE). Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would offer a sacrifice upon the brazen altar for the sins of the people. When that was finished, he would continue his work by sprinkling the blood of the sacrifice upon the mercy seat. The blood "intercepted, as it were, this condemning testimony, and effected reconciliation between God and His people" (ISBE).

The same priest had to officiate at both altars. If the mercy seat was to be sprinkled with blood, the sacrifice had to first be offered, but it could not be offered in the same place where mercy was obtained. The animal was sacrificed outside of the Holy Place in the courtyard; its death was visible; it was public; the sacrifice was slain before the eyes of men. But once the sacrifice was killed, the priest left the

presence of the people and entered into the Holy of Holies alone to make atonement at the mercy seat in the presence of God. When he reappeared, the people knew that the sacrifice had been accepted. Jesus, the great high priest, offered Himself as the once for all sacrifice that was made in view of all to see. It was made in this world. This is what Jesus meant by the words "It is finished." But then to obtain mercy He needed to leave the peoples' presence and enter into the presence of God where the blood of His sacrifice was offered on our behalf. His return three days later would be the assurance that His sacrifice had been accepted.

What does "it is finished" mean to God?

Theologians generally agree that Jesus' words, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46) mark the time when God the Father turned from the Son. This would thus, be the time when Christ became our sin-bearer and the wrath of God was poured out upon Him. From God's perspective, "it is finished" meant that the anger of God toward our sin had been satisfied. The penalty we had incurred had been paid. Peace was established between God and man.

God would not be holy if He did not respond to sin with wrath. In fact, the greater the anger, the holier God is seen to be; a god who is unconcerned about sin would be less than holy. A god who did not judge sin would be less than righteous.

Sin completely damages our relationship with God. Lamentations 3:42-44 says, "We have transgressed and rebelled, You have not pardoned. You have covered Yourself with anger and pursued us; You have slain and have not spared. You have covered Yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can pass through." Sin results in wrath; wrath expresses itself in judgment. When we sin God covers Himself as if with a cloud so that not even our prayers reach Him. In Zechariah 7:13 God says, "As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear." Isaiah 1:15 says, "When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood." But God exhausted His wrath on Christ; God is satisfied. Justice is met. There is no more curse. The cloud that separates us from Him is removed. The waves of judgment that were poured over the Son are now still. "It is finished" means that all is well with God.

What did it mean to Satan?

It meant that Satan was defeated. Jesus had described His work in Matthew 12:29 as binding the strong man (Satan) and plundering his house. With prophetic vision He had said, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning" (Lk. 10:18). It was at the cross when the head of the serpent was crushed (Gen. 3:15). Colossians 2:15 says, "He (God) had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He (God) made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him (Christ)." The "rulers and authorities" are satanic powers; in Ephesians 6 Paul calls them "spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places." The imagery of making the forces of darkness a public display comes from Rome's military victories where the conquered were stripped and paraded before the people of Rome in humiliation.

What does "it is finished" mean for us?

It means that life has been opened up to us into the glorious freedom in God's beloved Son. The cross was an eviction notice to sin.

It means that sin's power has been overcome. Paul said, "sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (Ro. 6:14).

It means that sin's penalty has been paid.

Colossians 2:13-14 says, "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

The certificate of debt is an IOU, a statement of indebtedness, personally signed by the debtor (Moule, Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary, 97). It is written "against us" and it states how we have failed to meet God's demands. Over our lifetime our sins have piled up into massive liability. But God has taken our debt of sin and He nailed it to the cross. At the cross our debt was paid in full; God has wiped the slate clean. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law" (Gal. 3:13). In Isaiah 43:25 God said, "I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, And I will not remember your sins." In Isaiah 44:22 He tells us, "I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you."

It means that sin's presence will leave us. The day will come when we will be glorified, perfectly conformed into the image of Christ. This is possible because of Jesus' death on the cross.

What does "it is finished" mean for history?

"It is finished" is a perfect tense verb in Greek, meaning that it was something that was done that has an abiding significance. There is a finality to the word. It signifies that what was done doesn't need to be done again. Christ's death brought in a new state of affairs that will last forever. Hebrews 10:14 tells us, "For by one offering He has perfected *for all time* those who are sanctified;" by one offering we are perfected forever.

Thus, the word has eternity in it. The cross introduced a new age. The night has gone; the sun of righteousness *has risen* with healing in its wings (Mal 4:2). My redemption is complete.

Arthur Pink, in his commentary on John, summarizes the words "it is finished" like this:

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished" (John 19:30). "It is finished"—a single word in the original. It was the briefest and yet the fullest of His seven cross-utterances. Eternity will be needed to make manifest all that it contains. All things had been

done which the law of God required; all things established which prophecy predicted; all things brought to pass which the types foreshadowed; all things accomplished which the Father had given Him to do; all things performed which were needed for our redemption. Nothing was left wanting. The costly ransom was given, the great conflict had been endured, sin's wages had been paid, Divine justice satisfied."

Jesus demonstrates full consciousness and control even over the cross. Earlier, Jesus had said that no one takes His life from Him, but that He lays down His life as an act of His own will. For example, in John 10 Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. . . . For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father"(Jn. 10:11, 17-18). Here it says, "He gave up His spirit."

19:31 Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

The day of preparation was the day before the Sabbath. It was a high day, for it was not only the weekly Sabbath, but falling two days after the Passover also made it the day to offer the sheaf offering (Lev. 23:11). Deuteronomy 21:22 also forbids dead bodies from hanging overnight lest they defile the land. This would be doubly offensive if the next day was a Sabbath, or in this case, a high day.

19:32 So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him;

19:33 but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.

19:34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.

Breaking the legs prevented the person from lifting himself to breathe resulting in asphyxiation. The soldiers, men experienced at recognizing death, saw that Jesus had already died, so they did not break His legs.

Medical doctors debate about what would cause blood and water to flow from Jesus' side, but John's point is simply that of providing undeniable evidence that Jesus was dead.

19:35 And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe.

19:36 For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, "NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN."

19:37 And again another Scripture says, "THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM THEY PIERCED."

John testifies that he was an eyewitness to these events, and he tells his readers this so they may know that he wasn't passing down some myth conceived by others, but that they might believe.

The prophecy that is fulfilled is not a verse in the OT, but a concept that could have come from a number of different places.

Numbers 9:12 says of the Passover lamb, "They shall leave none of it until morning, nor break a bone of it; according to all the statute of the Passover they shall observe it." Christ is the Passover lamb. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:7, "Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed."

Likewise, Psalm 34:20 says, "He keeps all his bones, Not one of them is broken." Although this Psalm is simply saying that God protects the righteous man, John could be applying it to Jesus as evidence that He was God's righteous suffering servant.

Either passage could be correct, but John 19:37 is clearly prophetic. Zechariah 12:10 says, "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that **they will look on Me whom they have pierced**; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn."

This Zechariah passage predicts the coming of the Spirit, seeing the pierced Messiah, and the repentance of the people. God sent the Spirit after Jesus' ascension. And the nations mourn at Christ's return. Revelation 1:7 says, "BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him."

19:38 After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body.

19:39 Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight.

19:40 So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

19:41 Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid.

19:42 Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby,

Joseph of Arimathea appears in all four gospels and only in connection with Jesus. He was a member of the Sanhedrin (Mk. 15:43), was rich (Matt. 27:57), and was looking for the kingdom of God (Mk. 15:43; Lk. 23:51). He is called a disciple of Jesus in Matthew 27:57 and John 19:38. Typically, the Romans would leave crucified victims to be eaten by the vultures and the Jews would bury their criminals outside of the

city. However, being a member of the Sanhedrin gave Joseph access to Pilate who most likely granted his request since he didn't see Jesus as being guilty anyway.

Nicodemus (see Jn. 3:1 ff.) also came and brought spices. The NAS says they were about one hundred pounds in weight; Carson states the measurement of weight was a little under 75 pounds. The volume of spices is neither a mistake nor an exaggeration. Herod the Great was buried with 500 pounds of spices and Gamaliel had about 80 pounds (Carson, 630). The spices included myrrh (a fragrant resin), aromatic sandalwood, and aloes. These were used on many occasions, but used for burial to mask the smell of decaying flesh. The spices were laid on the strips of fabric that were wound around the body and perhaps packed around the body as well.

Near the place of crucifixion was a new tomb – almost surely an artificial cave. The other gospels tell us that it belonged to Joseph of Arimathea. The mention that no one had been laid in the tomb prepares the reader for chapter 20; only one person had disappeared and had been resurrected – the tomb was found to be empty. Furthermore, the word for garden indicates something substantial like an orchard or plantation that makes the mention of a gardener in Chapter 20 understandable as well.

The site of Jesus' tomb is almost certainly not the "garden tomb" where visitors are directed when they visit Israel, but the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

The day of preparation is the day before the Sabbath, so the work needed to be done quickly before the Sabbath began at dusk when work was forbidden.