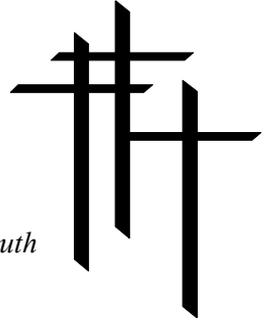


Timely Messenger



*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
Speaking the Truth in Love*

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THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

By Gregg Bing

The Passion Week: Continued

In our last two issues, we examined five of the seven times Jesus spoke from the cross; statements which help us better understand our Savior's loving heart and focus our attention on the true meaning of the Cross. In this issue, we continue our study looking at His sixth statement.

#6 "It is Finished!"

After almost six hours on the cross, the last three under darkened skies as Jesus bore the burden for our sins, the time for His death drew near. Jesus, "knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, 'I thirst!'" The soldiers

"filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth" (John 19:28-29).

"So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit." (John 19:30)

"It is finished!" One of the most powerful, one of the most meaningful statements ever uttered. The depth of meaning behind these words is beyond our full understanding, but as we consider the significance of Jesus' words, we discover some rich truths about the wonderful salvation He provided for us through His death at Calvary.

The first thing to notice is that the verb form Jesus used was not first person but third person. Jesus did not say, "**I** am finished!" but "**It** is finished!" This fact helps clear up misconceptions that some people have about Jesus' statement.

Jesus' words were NOT the "last gasp of a worn out life" (*Exposition of the Gospel of John* by Arthur Pink). Jesus did endure terrible physical sufferings, worse than anyone has ever experienced. His strength, as the Psalmist David wrote, was "dried up like a potsherd" (Psalm 22:15), but Jesus did not die because crucifixion drained His life away. Crucifixion was a long, slow process, sometimes lasting several days before the victim died. Jesus died after only six hours on the cross. When Pilate learned that Jesus was already dead, he "marveled" (Mark 15:44).

Though physically weak, Jesus remained mentally and spiritually alert until the moment He died. He was aware of everything that had been accomplished, and even ensured that a final prophecy from Psalm 69:21 would be fulfilled.

Jesus' words were NOT an admission of defeat or failure. He didn't whisper the words, as you might expect if He was giving up or surrendering to death. With His head held erect, Jesus cried out with "a loud voice" (Matt. 27:50), boldly declaring, "It is finished!" (John 19:30).

Jesus' words were NOT the despairing cry of a helpless martyr. While Jesus hung on the

cross, the crowds taunted Him, saying, "Save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matt. 27:40). Jesus had the power to do so, but He remained there in obedience to His Father's will (Heb. 10:7) and out of love for us (Eph. 5:2). Those who crucified Jesus did not take His life—He laid it down (John 10:18).

The expression "It is finished" is the translation of a single Greek word, "tetelestai," whose root word "teleo" means "to finish." Jesus confidently declared that with His death something was finished. What was He referring to? What was finished? As we examine the different ways "teleo" is used in the New Testament, we find it has several different shades of meaning, each of which helps us better understand why Jesus spoke this word from the cross.

Bring to a Close, End

In Matthew 11:1, we find the word "teleo" used to describe how "Jesus *made an end* of commanding His twelve disciples" (KJV). The word "teleo" can mean to bring a task to a close or to end it. What ended when Jesus died?

End of Jesus' Sufferings—Jesus had experienced

terrible sufferings the last few hours: the physical torture of the cross, the shame of a death reserved for the vilest criminals, and the mental anguish of being rejected by His own people. However, the worst of Jesus' sufferings was spiritual, the agony of being completely forsaken by His Father as He bore our sins. Earlier in His ministry, Jesus had spoken of the distress He felt as He anticipated His coming death (Luke 12:49-50). When Jesus died, His sufferings came to an end, something that brought Him great relief.

End of Jesus' Humiliation—When the Son of God entered into this world, it was a tremendous step down, a humbling experience. He emptied Himself, not of His deity, but of the form and glory He had with the Father, coming in the likeness of men, the form of a bondservant (Phil. 2:5-7). As a Man, He submitted Himself to the will of His Father. The lowest point of Jesus' humiliation was His shameful death on the cross.

When He breathed His last breath, Jesus' humiliation was at an end; His time in the form of a bondservant was over. When Jesus rose from the dead, He came forth in a different

(Continued on page 4)

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kind of body, one that was not subject to physical limitations such as hunger, thirst, weakness, distress, or pain. Jesus was raised in a new body that was incorruptible, immortal, spiritual, powerful, and glorious (1 Cor. 15:42-44). With His humiliation over, Jesus was restored to the form, glory, and position He had with the Father (John 17:4-5). From the depths of humiliation, He was highly exalted (Phil. 2:9-11) and seated at the right hand of God (Eph. 1:20-23).

However, Jesus' cry of "It is finished!" was more than a simple expression of relief at the end of His sufferings and humiliation.

Fulfill, Accomplish, Finish

The Greek "teleo" implies more than just stopping or ending a task; it also means to complete it—to fulfill, accomplish, or finish it in every detail. Paul used the word "teleo" when he stated that those who put Jesus to death, "**fulfilled** all that was written concerning Him" (Acts 13:29). Jesus used the word "teleo" when He spoke of His death as a baptism, saying, "And how distressed I am till it is **accomplished!**" (Luke 12:50) Paul, when he came to the end of his life and ministry, used the

word "teleo" in telling Timothy, "I have **finished** the race" (2 Tim. 4:7).

The WORD of God was Fulfilled—Everything "which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer" were fulfilled in perfect detail with Jesus' death. John's gospel emphasizes this with 16 references to the Scriptures (or the words of Jesus) being "fulfilled." Four of these are found in John 19: the soldiers parted Jesus' garments and cast lots for them (verse 24) in fulfillment of Psalm 22:18, the soldiers gave Jesus sour wine for His thirst (verse 28) in fulfillment of Psalm 69:21, the soldiers did not break Jesus' legs (verse 36) in fulfillment of Psalm 34:20, and one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear (verse 37) in fulfillment of Zechariah 12:10.

Every Old Testament type which pictured Christ's sufferings and death was fulfilled with Jesus' death at Calvary. Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only son, Isaac (Gen. 22), was fulfilled with God's sacrifice of His only begotten Son (John 3:16). Every sacrificial lamb, including the Passover lamb (Exo. 12), was fulfilled with the sacrifice of "the Lamb of God who takes away

the sin of the world” (John 1:29). The Law, with its tabernacle, priesthood, and offerings, was “a shadow of the good things to come” (Heb. 10:1). That shadow was fulfilled and became a reality with Jesus’ death on the cross and all that His sacrifice accomplished (Col. 2:17).

The WILL of God was Accomplished—The Old Testament law, with its animal sacrifices, could never satisfy God’s requirements to “take away sins” (Heb. 10:1-4), but “what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son” to condemn (judge) our sins in His flesh (Rom. 8:3).

Because the Law was powerless to cleanse man’s conscience from sins, the Son of God affirmed, “Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God” (Heb. 10:7), and “by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10).

The death of Jesus Christ was “the determined purpose” (counsel, will) of God (Acts 2:23). Nothing could have kept Jesus from going to the cross. As a Man, Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient to

His Father’s will, even to the point of death on the cross (Phil. 2:8). His every thought, word, and deed were in perfect accord with the will of God (John 6:38). Even those who gathered together to put Jesus to death, Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, even they, unwittingly did “whatever God’s hand and God’s purpose determined before to be done” (Acts 4:27-28). God’s eternal purpose, which was “foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Pet. 1:20), was accomplished with the death of Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:11).

The WORK of God was Finished—Jesus told His disciples, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34). He later spoke of “the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works,” He said, “that I do” (John 5:36). We often hear believers refer to “the finished work of Christ.” There are several different aspects of this finished work to consider.

Redemption: With His death, Christ paid the price to redeem or free us from the penalty of sin. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Eph.

1:7). Our redemption was not paid for with “corruptible things, like silver or gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:18-19). The word “precious” means of great price or of great value. The blood of Christ was precious because it was “without blemish and without spot,” the blood of One who “knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21).

Propitiation: When Christ died as a sacrifice for our sins, God was propitiated or satisfied. Because of His holy and righteous character, God requires that the sins of fallen men must be paid for by death (Rom. 6:23), by the shedding of blood (Heb. 9:22). Yet, God is also loving, merciful, and gracious. Because of His great love for us, even while we are sinners, God set forth His Son “as a propitiation by His blood” (Rom. 3:25) to satisfy His righteous requirements for our sins, “and not for ours only, but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, is the only one who could give His life and shed His blood as a substitute for the sins of others, because He, alone, is sinless. He lived in perfect obedience to the Law, the only Man

to ever do so, and in perfect obedience to His Father’s will. He was “in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Therefore, when Christ gave Himself as “an offering and a sacrifice” for our sins, it was “a sweet-smelling aroma,” satisfying to God (Eph. 5:2).

Justification: Jesus Christ shed His blood on Calvary that we might be justified or declared righteous by God (Rom. 5:9). He “who knew no sin” was “made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). We are “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24). The word “freely” means without a cause or reason. There is nothing in us, and there is nothing we can do to be righteous before God. We are justified by God’s grace only because He sees us in His Son.

With the redemption price for our sins paid, the righteous demands of God, set forth in His Law, were satisfied on our behalf (Rom. 8:3-4). God could remain just, and yet be the justifier of those who put their faith in Christ for salvation (Rom. 3:26).

Reconciliation: Having been justified by God through

faith in Jesus Christ, sinners can be reconciled to God. The word “reconciled” literally means to change. In the Scriptures it is used to describe the change needed to reconcile the differences between a holy God and sinful men. God does not need to change, sinners do, but only God can change us.

God accomplished the work of reconciling sinful men to Himself through the death of His Son. Jesus suffered and died, “the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18). We who “once were alienated and enemies” in our minds and by our wicked works, “He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death” (Col. 1:21-22a). Having been justified by faith in Christ, “we have peace with (lit. “toward”) God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). Through the finished work of Christ, we are presented “holy and blameless and above reproach in God’s sight” (Col. 1:22b).

All of this work was finished with the death of Christ: redemption, propitiation, justification, and reconciliation—All the work necessary for sinners to be saved and to receive the gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23). We don’t have to do anything—the work is all done!

Pay a Debt or Bill

There is one other way the word “teleo” is used in the New Testament, and it is found in Matthew 17:24, where “Those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, ‘Does your Teacher not *pay* the temple tax?’” Here the word “teleo” speaks of paying a debt in full. Archaeologists in Egypt have found bills of sale on papyrus with a form of the Greek word “teleo” written across them to indicate the debt was “paid in full.”

With Jesus’ death, our sin debt was “paid in full.” When we trust in Christ as our Savior, the Holy Spirit baptizes us into Christ (Gal. 3:27), and we are “complete in Him” (Col. 2:10). The word “complete” means “filled full.” Nothing needs to be added to what Christ accomplished for us when He died on Calvary and rose again.

“Once For All”

Jesus’ statement, “It is finished!” is from the Greek word “tetelestai.” This is the perfect tense of verb “teleo.” The perfect tense indicates action that has been completed in time past, but has continuing results or a continuing state in the present.

When Jesus cried, “It is finished!” He was saying, “It has been finished” and “continues to be finished.” Christ’s death on Calvary was a “once for all” sacrifice for the sins of the world. “The death that He died, He died once for all” (Rom. 6:10). The saving power of Christ’s death will never diminish. We “have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10), and by that “one offering, He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified” (Heb. 10:14).

What Must I Do?

In Acts 16:30, the Philippian jailor asked Paul and Silas, “What must I do to be saved?” Their answer was simple: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” It is sad that in our world today, this simple answer has, for the most part, been lost, even in many churches.

The religious traditions, philosophies, and doctrines of men put forth many different answers—all focusing on some work that people must do: being baptized or christened in water, joining a church, keeping the commandments, living a good life, giving or tithing, keeping the ordinances, etc. They fail to understand that all the work

needed to provide salvation from the penalty of our sins is already done! Most religions, even many that call themselves “Christian,” are all about what a person must DO in order to be saved, but true Christianity is all about what has already been DONE by our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament priests, who labored under the Mosaic Law, **stood** “ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins” (Heb. 10:11). They stood because their work was never finished. We find many “religious” people doing much the same today; they repeat the same legalistic rituals hoping to atone for their sins, but these “works” can never take away their sins.

Paul told the Romans: “By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in God’s sight” (Rom. 3:20). Salvation is “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to God’s mercy.” Salvation comes only one way: “through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Tit. 3:5-6; John 14:6).

While the Old Testament priests continually stood, the Lord Jesus Christ, “after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, **sat down** at the right hand of God” (Heb. 10:12). He

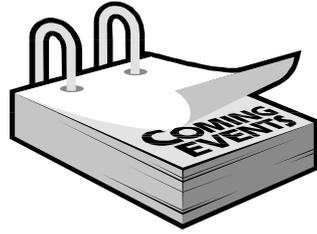
sat down because the work of redemption was finished—it was done!

While Jesus Christ has done all the work necessary for all men to be saved, this does not mean that everyone will be. All that Jesus' death fulfilled, accomplished, finished, and paid for is only experienced by those who put their faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior.

If you have never trusted Christ as your Savior, believing that "He died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4), I urge you to hear and believe this simple gospel message today.

This is the most important decision you will ever make. Paul told the Corinthians, "Behold, **now** is the accepted time; behold, **now** is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). Don't put this decision off until tomorrow, for "you do not know what a day may bring forth" (Prov. 27:1). It could be that, for you, tomorrow will never come.

Next Issue: We conclude our study of the crucifixion, looking at Jesus' final words from the cross and the events that immediately followed His death.



WINTER YOUTH RETREAT

January 2-4, 2014

Our annual Winter Youth Retreat will be January 2-4, 2014 at Three Mountain Retreat in Clifton, Texas. This retreat is for young people, ages 13 through college-age. Our theme will be: "To Live is Christ—*Studies in Philipians.*"

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Registration forms and additional information will be available soon on our website:

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PROPITIATION

By Robert E. Hanna

The Lord of Glory died for you;
To save your soul, He suffered through
Long hours of anguish and despair.
He paid your ransom—Do you care?

The God of Heaven, by His love,
Sent down His gift from up above;
His riches can be yours to share.
But tell me truly, Do you care?

The Savior of the world has spilt
His blood to nullify your guilt,
That you may meet Him in the air;
Have you received Him? Do you care?

The Lamb of God was slain by men,
To then arise and live again—
That you might see His presence fair.
You know these things—but DO YOU CARE?

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