Reflections on “It is Finished!”

Good Friday
John 19:30
Series: Gospel of John [#23]
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April 18, 2014

Introduction

As Jesus died on the cross He called out “It is finished!” One writer paints the scene like this:

“Carnival crowds gape and game curseladen hours away, while on the far fringe His companions bewail their smitten Shepherd, slave-priced Master, lost Way. But one nearby thief sees the Light of the world before mercy’s dark curtain shrouds earth as He pays the bloodwage of sin.

From the Savior’s cross His exultant shout: ‘It is finished!’ quakes the earth, rips temple veil. Day redawns and a Roman centurion exclaims, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’ Others stifle yawns as they prance away, glad, too, that it is finished, once for all.”1

On this Good Friday we are reflecting on this last statement of Jesus on the cross.

A wide variety of Reflections.

The gospels record the reflections, the responses of a number of people to Jesus’ shout. Those who passed by this gruesome sight shook their heads as a graphic and deliberate display of ridicule. They mocked Him with abuse, “You made great claims! You were going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days! And now, just a few nails keep you helplessly pinned to that cross. If you really are the Son of God come down from the cross! It’s finished. Finally, it’s over. Another would-be-Messiah proven wrong, and gone.”2

The religious leaders who had longed, planned and worked for this moment shared those thoughts. “He saved others, but He can’t even save Himself! He’s the Son of God? Well then, let’s see Him jump down from that cross in perfect health. It’s finished. No more blasphemy from this deceiving charmer who lead many away from following us.”3

The two thieves crucified with Jesus joined in. “He’s the Messiah? He’s going to die just like we are. It’s finished.”4 Later as time slowly, painfully dragged on, one of the two saw, believed and received the light and life of Christ.5

Many followers of Jesus had dispersed, disappeared into the crowds. “We saw and heard so many amazing things. We were so sure! It’s almost impossible to believe, but now it’s finished, our hopes and dreams are gone. It is finished.”6
Then, down through the years critics have suggested that Jesus was admitting defeat in those words, admitting He had failed, and so with His death all of His ideas and plans were over, finished.

**God’s view of this time, these words.**

What did Jesus mean when He shouted “It is finished!”? What was His view in those last moments before He died? These words of Jesus, or the one word He spoke which takes us three words to express, speak of bringing something to a close, to finish, to fulfill or complete. John used the word twice two verses earlier here in chapter 19 as he tells us Jesus knew He had “accomplished”—or completed—everything to “fulfill” the Scripture (most likely Psalm 69:21) when He said “I am thirsty.”

Accomplished, fulfilled.

Jesus used another form of this word in chapter 4 when He said His food was to “accomplish”—to fulfill or complete—the Father’s work. He said the same thing again in chapter 5. Then in chapter 17 Jesus used it when He said He had “accomplished” the work the Father gave Him to do, and used it once more as He prayed that His disciples would be “perfected”—or be made complete—in unity. And now these final words are “It is finished!”

To see Jesus’ meaning of these words we must start with looking back, back to before God created us and our world. You see, the Bible tells about those “whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world” (NIV). Or it could be worded, “everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain” (ESV). In either case, God’s plan for saving us, for Jesus’ dying on the cross for us is part of His eternal plan. The apostle Paul wrote that God chose each believer in Christ “before the foundation of the world.”

The meaning starts to build with God’s promise after Adam and Eve sinned, the promise of One who would come, be bruised on the heel by Satan (referring to Christ’s death on the cross), but that Christ would bruise Satan on the head (referring to Christ’s death paying for our sins that sealed Satan’s judgment). “It is finished!”

These words included the path of Philippians 2 which tells us that

> “although [Christ] existed in the form of God, [He] did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (6-8).

Jesus did not cling to all His eternal, heavenly privileges and rights. His path to “It is finished!” was the path of the greatest humility ever.
These words also marked the end of His suffering for us, the physical, emotional, weight-of-the-world’s sin on Him suffering. Before Jesus came to Jerusalem this last time Mark’s gospel tells us

“...James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came over and spoke to him. ‘Teacher,’ they said, ‘we want you to do us a favor.’ ‘What is your request?’ he asked. They replied, ‘When you sit on your glorious throne, we want to sit in places of honor next to you, one on your right and the other on your left.’ But Jesus said to them, ‘You don’t know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of suffering I am about to drink? Are you able to be baptized with the baptism of suffering I must be baptized with?’ ‘Oh yes,’ they replied, ‘we are able!’ Then Jesus told them, ‘You will indeed drink from my bitter cup and be baptized with my baptism of suffering’” (10:35-39, NLT).

“It is finished!” The deepest, most bitter suffering is finished.

His death also finished the provision of the fountain of grace available to all for salvation through Him. Paul pictures it like this, God

“saved us because of his mercy. It was not because of good deeds we did to be right with him. He saved us through the washing that made us new people through the Holy Spirit. God poured out richly upon us that Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ our Savior. Being made right with God by his grace, we could have the hope of receiving the life that never ends” (NCV).14

Or, in his short, to the point words, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”15 “It is finished!” The fountain of grace freely, fully flows from Jesus because of what He did on that cross.

It is also the final sacrifice — no other sacrifice is required, could take its place or add to it. The New Testament book of Hebrews tells us,

“but [Jesus], having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God ... For by one offering He has perfected [or, made complete] for all time those who are sanctified” (10:12, 14).

Yes, “It is finished!”

Conclusion

“It is Finished!” The roughly cut beams of Jesus’ cross crossed over the infinitely deep canyon of hell; the bridge from sin, death and hell to holiness, life and heaven was
complete. Jesus’ dying words were not a weary moan of defeat, nor a quiet whisper of resignation, but a seismic shout of victory! “It Is Finished!”

A statement of victory, of truth with universal eternal significance ... and also of unmeasurable personal significance for every one of us. Most of us here this morning, I trust, have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior, have been freed from sin and its judgment to life and freedom ... and yet sometimes we feel like we are not good enough, aren’t doing enough, can never be or do enough to please God and so may wonder, “Am I really going to be with God forever?” Jesus answers, “It is Finished! I have completed all that needs to be done for you. It is Finished!”

And, yes, you may not yet have accepted Jesus as your Savior, accepted His complete, finished work for you. Isn’t it time for you to really consider and make that decision?

A man writing over 125 years ago said he once had seen a tract (or brief printed statement of some Christian truth, often the gospel) titled The Seven Togethers. It’s about seven things every believer has which are “seven links of a golden chain that binds us indissolubly to [Christ].” They are:

1) We are crucified together with Christ.
2) We have been quickened, or made alive together with Christ.
3) We have been raised together with Christ.
4) We have been seated together with Christ in heavenly places.
5) We are sufferers together with Christ.
6) We are heirs together with Christ.
7) We shall be glorified together with Christ.15

This is true of every one of us who have placed our faith in Christ. “It is Finished!”

May our response this morning be to bow before God in reverent awe, self-examination and worship; kneel before God to give Him our most since thanks; raise our hearts and voices in praise; move out with God, renewed, rededicated as we prepare to celebrate Jesus’ resurrection, Easter, on Sunday.

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3 See Matthew 27:41-43.
4 See Matthew 27:44.
7 John 19:28.
8 John 4:34; 5:36.
9 John 17:4, 23.
10 Revelation 13:8, NIV.
11 Revelation 13:8, ESV.
12 Ephesians 1:4.
13 Genesis 3:15.
14 Titus 3:5-7, NCV.
15 Ephesians 2:8-9.

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