

Final Words, Six "It is Finished"

John 19:28-30; Isaiah 52:14

Tetelestai

1. Christ's suffering is finished.

- *Isaiah 53:5-6; Luke 24:46-47; 1 Peter 3:18*

2. The devil is finished.

- *Romans 6:23; Hebrews 2:14-16; 1 Corinthians 15:55-57*

3. Sin and death are finished.

- *Isaiah 64:6; Romans 8:3, 6:6-12, 6:23*

Tetelestai

- **The servant**
- **The priest**
- **The artist**
- **The bill collector**



West Valley Church
April 5, 2026
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Final Words: When Love Spoke From the Cross¹ "Tetelestai: It is Finished" Easter Sunday John 19:30

They called it the golden spike; the date was May 10, 1869. It was the culmination of six years of work by two major railroads, finally completing the world's first transcontinental railroad, and it was right here in the United States. The Union Pacific Railroad started in the east in 1863 laying track westward from the end of their rail system in Omaha, Nebraska. It was hard work, especially across the Rocky Mountains. At the same time the Central Pacific Railroad headed east from Sacramento, California, laying track over the ominous Sierra-Nevadas. The two companies planned to meet somewhere in between.

After six years of hard work the two sets of tracks met in Promontory Summit, Utah, about 30 miles west of Brigham City.

The officials of both railroads were there for the driving of the last spike, which this gold spike was created to commemorate. The crowd cheered and telegraph wires flashed the news to the rest of the country and the world as newspaper headlines across the globe declared, "*It is finished*: East and West Tied Together!"

About two thousand years *before* that, iron spikes were also driven. Not into the wood and steel of railroad ties but through the hands and feet of God's Son and into the beams of a cross. Heaven and earth looked on, and sometime after the third spike was driven, there was another shout of "It is finished." But instead of joining two railways, God and man were bound together. Instead of a way across the wilderness of a country, a way was now open from earth to heaven. The means of access to God had now been completed.

It's *that* statement: "It is finished" – that we are going to look at today.

See, there were seven statements that Jesus made while he hung on the cross for you and me. We've been spending some time over these last Sundays looking at each one, and today we are looking at the sixth one; we timed it so that we would be talking about this one on this day, Easter Sunday.

To be able to understand this sixth statement, we have to partner it with the fifth statement, which we looked at last week. So let me read to you from John 19:28-30:

¹ Sources:

Fleming Rutledge, *The Seven Last Words from the Cross* Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 2005

Adam Hamilton, *Final Words from the Cross* Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2011

John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016)

Joseph Dongell, *John: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 1997)

George Lyons and T. Scott Daniels, *John 13–21: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*, ed. George Lyons, New Beacon Bible Commentary (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2020)

William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 2, The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY: Edinburgh, 2001)

Jesus knew that his mission was now finished, and to fulfill Scripture he said, "I am thirsty." A jar of sour wine was sitting there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips. When Jesus had tasted it, he said, "It is finished!" Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (John 19:28-30, nlt)

The original language tells us that "It is finished" was a loud, affirmative statement.

Jesus knew that everything had now been completed, there was just one last prophecy about his life and death to fulfill, and that was the one from Psalm 69:21 that said, "for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." In other words, when it says that Jesus knew that all things were now fulfilled, it means that all of the 350+ Old Testament promises and prophecies declared over the span of 1500 years were now fulfilled in his one life. The odds of that are incalculable. The death of Jesus is the completion of the meaning and intent of *all* Scripture. Soak that in for a moment.

After finishing that, He knew that what He had come to do was completed, and he shouted it out.

"It is finished" is three words in our language, but in the language Jesus spoke it was actually only one word: "tetelestai." (*tete...lestai...repeat, have them repeat after me*) It's a word that is packed with meaning and we're going to take a good look at it.

In all languages there are "tenses;" like in the English there is the past, present, and future tense. In Spanish, there are five tenses: presente (present), pasado (past), imperfecto (imperfect), futuro (future) and condicional (conditional).

In the Greek language, which is what John's Gospel is written in, there are also five tenses, and here in the Greek language the word "tetelestai" uses the "perfect" tense. So "tetelestai" (*repeat after me*) means more than just the completion of something. It means a "perfect completion;" when Jesus said this, he meant that all that he came to earth to do was not partially complete, not humanly complete, it was *perfectly* complete, finished, always being finished and always to be finished. Don't think for a minute "it is finished" meant, "It's over," or "I give up." It was not a cry of defeat; it was literally a shout of victory! Jesus did not say "I am finished;" he said, "IT is finished!"

So what is *it*, exactly that Jesus finished? Listen if we understand what was finished, we will realize why it should matter so much to us.

First let's see that tetelestai means...

1. Christ's suffering is finished.

A main purpose that Jesus came to earth was to suffer for us. This was an unusual and unique thing; no God in the history of world religions had suffered for people. No God had ever entered humanity, suffered, and died for them. God is God and man is not; it would be seemingly impossible for a god to suffer with man, let alone die.

But in Jesus Christ, God *did* become man. "Immanuel" the Bible calls Him means "God with us."

From beginning to end in the Bible God foretold, told, and retold that the purpose of Jesus

the Christ the Messiah coming to earth was to demonstrate the kind of life we could have and then to suffer and die so we could have it.

750 years before Jesus arrived the prophet Isaiah said:

He was pierced for our rebellion,
crushed for our sins.
He was beaten so we could be whole.
He was whipped so we could be healed.
All of us, like sheep, have strayed away.
We have left God's paths to follow our own.
Yet the Lord laid on him
the sins of us all. (Isaiah 53:5-6, nlt)

While Jesus was alive, he told his disciples,

"Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: "There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent." (Luke 24:46-47, nlt)

Later Peter, one of Jesus' followers and the early leader of the church said:

"Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit." (1 Peter 3:18, nlt)

These are only three of *scores* of Scriptures all throughout the Bible that reference Jesus' suffering in our place.

Most people who say they are not Christians will admit that Jesus was a great teacher, and that is very, very true, but I'm telling you that's just the tip of the iceberg of who He is and what He came to do. God came to us to serve, suffer and die for us. That's what He came for. And now he is saying that *that* purpose was finished.

The second thing you should know is that tetelestai means...

2. The devil is finished.

You don't have to be a Christian to look around you and notice that there is evil in this world. When you think of the political turmoil of this country and the world, that awful feeling you get is the recognition of the presence of evil. The hatred that is spewed from both sides on the sidewalks of our cities and the streets of social media reek of evil. There are wars being waged all around the globe that are claiming to fight evil and committing evil all while lining the pockets of a military industrial complex that profits off evil. Then there's music and the media; tell me with a straight face that much of it isn't turning more blatantly evil. There is abuse and neglect and injustice and oppression and exploitation and suffering all around us and what is *that* if it's not evil?!

The source of *all* the evil in the world has several names in the Bible: the devil, Satan, Beelzebub, Lucifer, the Tempter, the Accuser, the Serpent of Old. The devil is the source, and

the Bible makes it clear that every step of Jesus' life involved a life and death struggle against Satan. When Jesus was born, Satan moved the heart of Herod the king to murder all the babies in and around Bethlehem in an attempt to kill the child King Jesus.

Satan taunted Christ at his temptation, daring him to take the easy way out and avoid suffering and circumvent the Father's plan – all Jesus had to do was bow down and worship Satan.

Satan entered the heart of Judas Iscariot and moved him to betray Christ to be arrested. Satan stirred the crowd to cry out for Christ's crucifixion.

Jesus engaged this struggle with the devil all His life, knowing that in His suffering and death, He would defeat the Devil. You would say, "If the devil is finished then why is there still so much evil in this world?" Here's why: as long as there are people who choose sin and evil the devil can still hang around, but his days are numbered – one day soon Jesus will return. In the meantime, the ultimate end result of evil and sin is death. The Bible is very clear:

"The payment for sin is death, but the gift that God freely gives is everlasting life found in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23, gwt)

Jesus has defeated death by suffering and dying for us, so if we will give him our lives and live in him death is not the final answer for us – death is only a doorway into eternal life.

Again in Hebrews it says:

"Since the children are made of flesh and blood, it's logical that the Savior took on flesh and blood in order to rescue them by his death. By embracing death, taking it into himself, he destroyed the Devil's hold on death and freed all who cower through life, scared to death of death. It's obvious, of course, that he didn't go to all this trouble for angels. It was for people like us." (Hebrews 2:14-16, tmt)

Let me explain what Jesus did to the devil with this story: Imagine a family is on vacation driving along the highway in their car with the windows rolled down, enjoying the warm breeze of the sunny day. All of a sudden, a big bee darts in the window and starts buzzing around inside the car. The little girl in the backseat is highly allergic to bee stings, so she is panicking. If she is stung, she could die within an hour. She cries out, "Daddy, – it's a bee! It's going to sting me!" The father pulls the car over to a stop, and reaches to try to catch the bee. Buzzing around toward him, the bee bumps against the front windshield where the father traps it in his fist.

Holding it in his closed hand, the father waits for the inevitable sting. The bee stings the father's hand and in pain, the father lets go of the bee. The bee is loose in the car again. So the little girl panics again saying, "Daddy, it's going to sting me!" But the father gently and calmly says, "No honey, he's not going to sting you now. Look at my hand." The bee's stinger was embedded in his hand. He said, "Don't let the bee scare you; I took it's stinger in me; it will die soon."

Here's the point: Jesus' death on the cross took the sting of the devil, which is death. In his hands and feet. For a time, the devil is still alive, but he only holds the illusion of death. Jesus has finished the devil and illusion of death.

That's why the Bible says:

“Where o death, is your victory? Where, o death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” (1 Corinthians 15:55-57, niv)

To this day, Jesus still bears the scars of the spike driven through His hand. Jesus himself took the stinger in His hand!

Jesus' suffering is finished, the devil is finished, and...

3. Sin and death are finished.

Sin demands a heavy price tag; death. We've already said that the Bible says that the wages, or payment, of sin is death. In other words, when we sin, we get what we've earned, and that's death (*if we don't let Jesus change us*). But death isn't just at the end of our lives; it creeps into our daily life like a cancer creeps quietly into the corners and corrupts your body. The bad news is that all of us have sinned; we are all guilty. We are powerless to stop it in our lives. No matter what we do, we can't seem to stop sinning in word, thought, or deed over and over again in big and small ways in our power of sin and its consequences, which is death. We thought that maybe we could be good enough to overcome it, but we can't. In fact:

“We've all become unclean, and all our righteous acts are like permanently stained rags. All of us shrivel like leaves, and our sins carry us away like the wind.” (Isaiah 64:6, gwt)

But the Bible says that:

“We aren't saved from sin's grasp by knowing the commandments of God because we can't and don't keep them, but God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours—except that ours are sinful—and destroyed sin's control over us by giving himself as a sacrifice for our sins.” (Romans 8:3, tlb)

By dying on the cross for us, Jesus finished the payment of guilt for sin. We no longer have to go through life under a burden of guilt, suffering the dysfunctional results of sin and death.

The Bible says:

Your old evil desires were nailed to the cross with him; that part of you that loves to sin was crushed and fatally wounded, so that your sin-loving body is no longer under sin's control, no longer needs to be a slave to sin; for when you are deadened to sin you are freed from all its allure and its power over you. And since your old sin-loving nature “died” with Christ, we know that you will share his new life. Christ rose from the dead and will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. He died once for all to end sin's power, but now he lives forever in unbroken fellowship with God. So look upon your old sin nature as dead and unresponsive to sin, and instead be alive to God, alert to him, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Do not let sin control your puny body any longer; do not give in to its sinful desires.
(Romans 6:6-12, tlb)

Jesus Christ has done everything necessary for you and me to be able to be forgiven and set free from sin and to have a brand-new type of living, and to know God now and forever in heaven. Jesus has done it all. His suffering is finished, Satan is finished, sin and death is finished. This is why Easter is so important: Jesus rose from the dead to give us new life. You see, Jesus died so that our sin and death could be killed, but he rose from the dead so that he would give us a new and abundant life – if we'll accept it and live in it. Let me show you that verse again:

“The payment for sin is death, but the gift that God freely gives is everlasting life found in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23, gwt)

Jesus paid the price for our sin by taking on the sins of the world with his death: by dying in our place. Then he rose from the dead to break loose a whole new kind of life for us in this death-ridden world! This is the free gift of everlasting, resurrection quality life! If Jesus had only died and not risen from the dead, we could be forgiven but we'd still struggle under the control and dysfunction of sin and death. But because that stone was rolled away to reveal an empty tomb, abundant, whole, and holy life has burst forth and invades our world one believer at a time for every person who will accept Jesus' death and step into his life. Do you see?

So now, even though Jesus said, “it is finished,” there remains one thing that is unfinished. There is still something left that needs to happen. You and I need to accept his death and live in his new life. *You* can allow it to be finished *in you*: you can accept his death for you and commit to living out his resurrection life in and through you.

Jesus went through all that for you. How could you leave it unfinished?

The word “**tetelestai**” was used in everyday language of Jesus' day in at least four different settings. One use was by...

- the servant

When the job was completed, the servant would say to the master, “tetelestai,” meaning “I have completed the job you asked me to do.” Then the master would say to the servant, “Well done.” Any servant in the crowd around the cross that day could understand what Jesus said.

Another way the word was used was by...

- the priest

The Jewish people would bring their sacrifice to the Temple to be offered, whether it was grain or incense or an animal. After the high priest inspected it, if it was without blemish and determined to be an acceptable offering, the priest would say “tetelestai,” meaning it is an acceptable sacrifice; it is perfect. Any Jew in the crowd would understand what Jesus said.

Another way the word was used was by...

- the artist

When an artist completed his work, he would step back, look at the painting or sculpture and say, "tetelestai," meaning "completed." The picture is complete and lacks nothing. Any artist or art connoisseur would understand perfectly what Jesus meant.

Finally, the fourth way the word was used was by...

- the bill collector

If you owed someone money, when you went to that person and made your last payment and finally paid it off completely, the bill collector would take a stamp and the word "tetelestai" was stamped across the bill meaning "the debt is paid," or "paid in full." Archeologists have found numerous examples of this word scrawled across 2,000-year-old tax receipts from those days, meaning their tax debt had been paid. Any borrower, lender, tax-payer or purchaser would have understood what Jesus was stamped across the bill meaning "the debt is paid," or "paid in full."

Worship team come up

When you came in this morning, you received a receipt; it's a bill for your life. You see listed on there a sampling of the things we struggle with. Some things are the actions of sin and others are the impact of sin and dysfunction and death in our lives. This list represents all of these in our lives, and today it can be finished. I'm telling you: because of Jesus' death and resurrection, it is finished. And you can allow it to be finished for you.

In a moment, you will have the opportunity to do so. We are going to sing, and as we do, you can come forward, bring your receipt, and we will stamp it with a stamp that says: "Tetelestai: paid in full."

By coming forward today, you are doing one of two things – or maybe both: You are accepting Christ's death for you, and you are committing to live fully in his resurrection life. If you haven't yet put your faith in Jesus, I can't think of a better day for you than on Easter Sunday 2026. But maybe you've already done that sometime in your life; then today you can commit or maybe recommit to live fully in his resurrection life.

Let's sing, and as we do, please come.

Response time

Video testimony

Closing: Thank you for being with us. Guest: gift.

If you accepted what Christ has done for you, then salvation is finished. *Please fill out a card...give info...baptism! Baptism class is on April 19 and baptism service in one month – May 11.*

But there's one last thing: Something else is not finished...As long as there are people in this world who haven't heard about the amazing love and sacrifice that Jesus has made, something is *not* finished. Salvation is not finished for others.

Jesus commands us to go into all the world and introduce people to Him. He even gave us his Spirit so we could do it.

You and I must finish it!

There is only one attitude to have, and that's the attitude that the Apostle Paul had. This is what he said in Acts 20:24 –

What matters most to me is to finish what God started: the job the Master Jesus gave me of letting everyone I meet know all about this incredibly extravagant generosity of God. (Acts 20:24, tmt)

It is up to you and me to finish His work!

Sing

Life Group Questions

Final Words: When Love Spoke from the Cross

“It is finished”

Week of April 5, 2026

1. Read John 19:28-30. The sermon explains that Jesus’ statement “It is finished” (*tetelestai*) means *perfectly completed*. How does that change the way you view your relationship with God compared to thinking you still have to “earn” it?
2. The illustration of the transcontinental railroad shows two sides being brought together. In your own life, where do you most need to experience that “connection” between you and God?
3. The message says Christ’s suffering is finished. What burdens (guilt, shame, regret, pain) do you still carry that Jesus may already have paid for—and how can you begin to release them?
4. The sermon teaches that the devil’s power is broken but still present (for the time being). In what ways do you see the presence of the devil in our world? Where do you see ongoing struggles with sin or evil in your life, and how can you practically rely on Jesus’ victory in those moments?
5. The “paid in full” image is powerful. Do you truly live as if your sin-debt is canceled, or do you still act like you owe something? What would change in your daily life if you fully believed it was paid?
6. The sermon says there is one thing unfinished: our response. What specific step do you need to take right now—accepting Christ for the first time, or recommitting to live in His resurrection life?
7. The closing challenge focuses on sharing this message with others. Who is one person in your life that needs to hear about what Jesus has done, and what is one practical way you can begin that conversation this week?
8. Close in prayer for that person we are wanting to introduce to Jesus.