

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

A Work Completed

John 19:30

Intro: We have looking at the events of the crucifixion as recorded in John's Gospel. We have studied the arrest and trials of Jesus and the travesty of human justice that was displayed in it. We've considered the fulfillment of many OT prophecies that occurred throughout this whole process. We briefly touched on the horrendous nature of crucifixion and the extreme physical suffering and humiliation and shame it brought on its victims. We also discussed the mind-set of Jesus as He hung on the cross, what He was thinking about, what His mind was focused on. Of course, it's impossible to know what someone is thinking but you can gather glimpses from the things that they say. We have also mentioned a few of the 7 statements Jesus made from the cross and many of them point to the fact that the Lord's mind, while He was on the cross, was dwelling upon the Scriptures and upon the needs of others.

John only records 3 of the 7 statements Jesus made from the cross. The first one concerned His mother and her continuing care after His death (26-27). The second is found in vs28 and while on its face it seems to merely address a physical need, it's actually also a fulfillment of Ps 69:21. The last statement from the cross that John records is found in vs30. This is not the last statement Jesus makes from the cross, it's just the last one John gives us.

30 – If Jesus Christ is the center of Christianity and if this final week is the center of His earthly life, then the center of that week would have to be the moment of His death on the cross. That particular moment would have to be the focal point of all human history and the phrase, "It is finished" is an important expression of that important moment.

The importance of these words is that they point to Jesus' death as an achievement. They were not the gasping sobs of a defeated man or the reluctant agreement of someone who is merely resigned to their inevitable fate. This is a triumphant statement declaring that the turning point in history has been reached and that the work Jesus was sent into the world to do had been accomplished.

This is what makes the death of Jesus Christ unique. If it was just a matter of His patient endurance in the face of such cruel abuse and suffering, it could probably be matched by other deaths. If it was just the fact that Jesus stayed faithful to God's truth to the bitter end, even when that truth was rejected; well, others have done the same. But, the death of Jesus Christ can never be matched in its fullest extent, because only Jesus achieved our salvation by His suffering and death. Because the death of Jesus Christ and the atonement it brought is so important, we should take the time to consider it in some detail. We'll never fully grasp it but we can work to understand it better.

First, let's consider the nature of the atonement Jesus accomplished for us on the cross. Atonement is a theological word that most people today are unfamiliar with because it comes from the world of biblical ideas and imagery that are difficult to understand. The 2 concepts related to atonement are the ideas of sacrifice and substitution. Sacrifice means the death of an innocent victim (animal). Substitution means this death was in place of the death of another.

The basis for atonement lies in the truth that all who've ever lived are sinners ([Rom 3:23](#)), they all have broken God's law and the penalty for sin is death ([Ez 18:4](#)). This death is not just physical death, its spiritual death too. Death is separation. Physical death is the separation of the soul and spirit from the body. Spiritual death is the separation of the soul and the spirit from God. This is what we deserve as a consequence of our sin. But Jesus took that death Himself by His sacrifice. He became our substitute by experiencing both physical and spiritual death in our place.

This truth is illustrated very vividly in the first ever occurrence of a sacrifice in the Bible. God created Adam and Eve and placed them in a perfect environment with only 1 restriction. God warned them that if they violated the restriction they would die. They probably didn't have any idea what death was but they knew it was serious. Still, they violated God's restriction through disobedience and when they heard God walking in the Garden, they tried to hide from Him.

Of course, no one can hide from God. God called them out of hiding and began to deal with their sin.

Now, what should we expect to happen at this point? God had told them that

in the day they sinned they would die. Adam and Eve had sinned. Should we not expect the immediate execution of the sentence? If God had put them to death right then, both physically and spiritually, banishing them from His presence forever, it would have been just.

But that is not what happens. Instead, God first rebukes the sin and then graciously performs a sacrifice, a result of which Adam and Eve were clothed with the skins of the animals sacrificed. This was the first death that anyone had ever witnessed. It was enacted by God. As Adam and Eve looked on they must've been horrified. "So this is death!" Yet, as they recoiled from the sacrifice, they must've wondered at it too, for what God was showing them was that although they deserved to die it was possible for another (2 animals) to die in their place. The animals paid the price of their sin. Plus, they were now clothed in the skins of the animals as a reminder of that fact.

This is the meaning of sacrifice: substitution - the death of one on behalf of another. Still, we must acknowledge that the Bible teaches that the death of animals could never take away the penalty of sin ([Heb 10:4](#)). OT animal sacrifice was a symbol of how sin was to be taken away, but it was just a symbol. The only real and effective sacrifice for sin was performed by Jesus Christ. These concepts have always been difficult for humanity to understand but that's why God has taken so much time and has gone to such elaborate means to teach them to us.

The next word for understanding the meaning of Christ's death is propitiation. This is also associated with the world of sacrifice, but unlike substitution, which mainly refers to what Jesus did for us (died in our place), propitiation describes His death in reference to its bearing on God. The background for this term is the wrath of God which is directed against all sin. Propitiation refers to the work of Jesus Christ in which the justified wrath of God against the sinner was sufficed and turned aside and the love of God was enabled to go out to save him.

The ark of the Covenant illustrates this idea beautifully. The ark was one of the pieces of furniture in the tabernacle. It was a chest roughly 3 feet long covered in gold and topped with a solid gold covering known as the Mercy Seat. It had 2 carved angels at either end whose wings stretched over the ark and met in the center. The stone tablets of the Law were kept inside the

ark and the ark was kept in the Holy of Holies, the most sacred room of the tabernacle. The most significant thing about the ark was that it was thought to symbolically be the earthly dwelling place of God.

This presents us with a terrible picture, as it was meant to. We see God dwelling between the outstretched wings of the cherubim. Immediately beneath Him is the law, which we have broken. As God looks down upon the affairs of men this is what He sees—the broken law. So this picture tells us that God in His holiness must judge sin and that sinners are subject to His judicial wrath. But this is not the end of it, thank God!

Eventually, the Day of Atonement arrives and on that day the high priest takes the blood of a sacrifice and sprinkles it on the mercy seat, between the presence of God and the broken law. What does this symbolize? Now the picture is no longer about wrath directed against the violators of God's law but rather a picture of mercy in which the wrath of God against sin is satisfied and the sinner is spared. Now when God looks down from between the wings of the cherubim He no longer sees the law we have broken but the blood of the sacrifice. An innocent One has died for the guilty. He has borne our penalty. Thus, we can live.

Another word used to describe the beneficial effects of Jesus' death is reconciliation: to make one ([II Cor 5:18-19](#)).

The background for this term is the broken relationship between humanity and God because of sin. We have already seen 1 example of this. When Adam and Eve sinned and God came to them in the Garden, they hid from Him. This wasn't been the case before their disobedience. Before there had been openness. They talked with God joyously. Now the relationship they had enjoyed was broken and they showed their psychological awareness of this by hiding. In a way, people have been hiding ever since. they hide through a self-imposed ignorance of spiritual things, through sophistication or culture, or even through religion— attempts to get away from God rather than to find Him.

But God comes to us regardless of our hiding; that's the glory of the gospel! Plus, when He comes He does what is necessary to heal the broken relationship and bridge the gap. In Eden it was the institution of sacrifices. On Calvary it was the ultimate bridge to which the earlier sacrifices pointed. [1 Tim 2:5](#) teaches us that it's on the basis of Christ's death alone that this

reconciliation takes place.

The last word we'll look at that relates to the death of Jesus is redemption. It's derived from 2 Latin words that mean "to buy again" or "buy back," as in redeeming something that's been pawned or mortgaged. The word is mostly used for material things but the Scriptures use the word to signify that we originally were God's but have since fallen into bondage as a result of our sin and now must be purchased out of the bondage of sin by Christ's sacrifice. Our bondage is to sin's power and penalty. There is no human escape from either but Jesus' death frees us from both!

Just as sacrifice is directed to the need created by our guilt of sin and propitiation relates to the need that arises from the wrath of God towards our sin and reconciliation addresses the need arising from our alienation from God because of our sin, so redemption is directed at the bondage our sin has consigned us to. Redemption applies to every thing to which we are bound. It releases us unto a liberty that is nothing less than the liberty of the glory of the children of God! In fact, the term "It is finished" is particularly appropriate for relating Christ's death to redemption. The Greek word is tetelesti, which means "paid in full" and was used this way in secular business transactions.

It is finished! Only 3 words in English, just 1 in Greek but this statement sums up the greatest work that has ever been done. We've looked at the great scope and glorious ramification of the atonement Jesus accomplished on the cross but was this all He was referring to? Obviously, it relates to this critical work but is that all it encompasses? There are a number of things we can point to as having been completed at the time of Jesus' death.

The 1st and most obvious is His sufferings. The cross didn't come as a surprise to Jesus. He was well aware of what He would face there but suffering had marked His life from the beginning. He had been thirsty, hungry and weary as He lived on this earth. He had ministered for over 3 yrs with no place to lay His head. He was scorned and rejected by His siblings and countrymen, was falsely arrested, accused, beaten and now subjected to the horrors and shame of the cross. No one ever suffered as Jesus did but now it was finished. No enemy will ever spit in His face again. No soldier will lay another stripe upon His back again. No priest will mock Him – it is finished. He now sits on heaven's throne waiting until all His enemies are

made His footstool. No one can despise Him or oppose Him, at least not successfully.

The 2nd thing that was finished was His work – not just His work of atonement but the work of His entire life: His complete and constant obedience to the Father, His teaching, His good works. All throughout His life Jesus had this work in mind and He devoted Himself to accomplishing it. At 12 yrs old, He knew He must be about his Father's business and part of that was revealing the character and nature of God the Father to humanity. He spent His whole life doing that but now it is done. His work was done and it was done perfectly. How many of us can say that?

The 3rd thing this statement applies to is the prophecies of His first coming. We can't say that all the scriptural prophecies of Jesus have been fulfilled because some relate to His 2nd Coming but all that dealt with His 1st Coming have been fulfilled. We can add to this all OT types that pointed to Jesus and His work and all the OT promises that looked ahead to His first coming had been completely fulfilled. We can also say that His intention to fulfill the Law of Moses was fully accomplished in all points of perfection. From Genesis to Malachi, there was nothing that was to be fulfilled in the life and ministry of the Messiah that was left lacking in Jesus.

4th, the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Jewish priesthood were also finished. Of course, the priests and religious rulers didn't acknowledge this fulfillment but the truth still stands that all the sacrifices, all the rituals and ceremonies that were written in the Law of Moses were simply there to point Israel to the coming life and work of Jesus Christ. Once His work had been accomplished, the rituals and ceremonies were now meaningless in comparison to the reality of Jesus.

It's interesting to note how quickly blood sacrifices disappeared in the ancient world once the Gospel of Jesus Christ was proclaimed. At the time of Jesus' death sacrifices were performed everywhere—Roman Empire, barbarian world and Judaism. But, wherever the Gospel was received, the sacrificial altars were deserted and dealers in sacrificial animals went out of business. The death of Jesus put an end to all blood-sacrifices. Why? Animal sacrifices ceased because the death of Christ alone met the need they were supposed to satisfy.

At His death, the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ was finished, the satisfaction of God's justice was finished and the power Satan, sin and death was forever finished.

bowing – This speaks of a peaceful act; like lying down on a pillow to sleep. Jesus didn't hang His head in defeat, He bowed it in peace. The use of this terminology reminds us once again that no one took His life from Him. Jesus, in a way unlike any other man gave up His spirit. Death had no righteous hold over the sinless Son of God. He took the place of sinners but He was never a sinner Himself. So, He could not die unless He gave up His spirit. He gave up His life because He willed it, when He willed it and as He willed it. The fact that He willfully surrendered His life meant that He also had the power to take it back up again ([Jn 10:17-18](#)).

Now we've come back to the point where we began. What makes the death of Christ so unique? What marks it out as the focal point of history? It's that it accomplished precisely everything that needed to be done in regard to our salvation. We deserved to die for sin; Christ died for us. We were under the just wrath of God because of our sins; Christ bore that wrath in our place. We were alienated from God; Christ reconciled us to Him. We were sold under sin; Christ bought our freedom by paying sin's price.

If Jesus refused to stop until His work for us was fully accomplished, should we do any less? Should we be hesitant to put our own hands to the plow? Should we pull back from the idea of taking up our cross and following hard after Jesus? Of course not! We should be encouraged to be employed in His service.

Spurgeon said, "Has He finished His work for me? Then I must get to work for Him, and I must persevere until I finish my work too; not to save myself, for that is all done, but because I am saved." Is this your understanding of your responsibilities to Jesus Christ? If you are a beneficiary of His labor on the cross, should you not now be obligated to take up your own cross and follow Him? 😊