

John 19:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Analysis

Jesus' final words from the cross: 'It is finished' (tetelestai). This single Greek word tetelestai derives from teleo, meaning to complete, to accomplish, to fulfill perfectly. The perfect tense indicates completed action with permanent results - the work is finished and remains finished. In commercial contexts, tetelestai appeared on receipts meaning 'paid in full.' Jesus declares His redemptive work complete - atonement accomplished, sin's debt paid, prophecy fulfilled, God's wrath satisfied. Nothing remains for humans to add. After this declaration, Jesus voluntarily dismisses His spirit (gave up the ghost). This was not defeat but victory - the mission accomplished. The single word encompasses incarnation, perfect obedience, substitutionary death, and satisfaction of divine justice. It transforms the Cross from apparent tragedy to triumphant completion of salvation.

Historical Context

John's Gospel emphasizes Jesus' sovereignty throughout the Passion - He lays down His life voluntarily (10:18), in control even in suffering. The cry 'tetelestai' contrasts with the synoptics' 'My God, why have you forsaken me?' John presents the theological interpretation - the work is finished. Early Christians understood Christ's death as accomplishing salvation once for all (Hebrews 10:10), not requiring repetition or supplementation. Church Fathers debated atonement theories - ransom, Christus Victor, satisfaction - but all agreed Christ's work was complete. Medieval Catholic theology added purgatory and human merit, which Reformation rejected based on verses like this - salvation is finished in Christ.

Modern debates about universalism, inclusivism, and pluralism must account for this declaration - Christ's work is complete and exclusive (Acts 4:12). The word has comforted dying believers for centuries - salvation secured by Christ's finished work.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What specifically was finished when Jesus spoke 'tetelestai' - His earthly life, the atonement, prophecy fulfillment, or all of these?
2. How does the perfect tense of tetelestai (completed with permanent results) shape our understanding of salvation's security?

Interlinear Text

ὅτε	οὖν	ἔλαβεν	τὸ	όξος	ὁ	Ἰησοῦς	εἶπεν
When	therefore	had received	G3588	the vinegar	G3588	Jesus	he said
G3753	G3767	G2983		G3690		G2424	G2036

Τετέλεσται	καὶ	κλίνας	τὴν	κεφαλὴν	παρέδωκεν	τὸ
It is finished	and	he bowed	G3588	his head	and gave up	G3588
G5055	G2532	G2827		G2776	G3860	

πνεῦμα
the ghost
G4151

Additional Cross-References

John 17:4 (Parallel theme): I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

Philippians 2:8 (Parallel theme): And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Daniel 9:24 (Parallel theme): Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

John 10:11 (Parallel theme): I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

Hebrews 12:2 (References Jesus): Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Luke 23:46 (Spirit): And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

Isaiah 53:10 (Parallel theme): Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

Mark 15:37 (Spirit): And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

Romans 10:4 (Parallel theme): For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

John 19:28 (References Jesus): After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.