

Introduction

We come to remember the Lord Jesus today by focusing on the sixth saying from the cross. John 19.28-30 contains both the fifth and sixth sayings:

**After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."
²⁹ A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a
hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. ³⁰ When Jesus had received the sour wine, he
said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.**

We will gather our thoughts by asking three questions. What was finished? What does "finished" mean? What kind of word is "finished"?

1A. What was finished?

What is within the scope of "it" in the expression "It is finished" (v. 30)? This needs clarification in light of the other passages that indicate that some kind of completion came *before* the crucifixion.

In John 17, we have indication of what was complete before the cross. Jesus glorified God by accomplishing the work God gave Him to do (v. 4).

1) He manifested the Father's name to the people God gave to Him (v. 6b, they were the Father's elect: "**Yours they were**"). He revealed the Father to them by giving them the words the Father gave Him (v. 6a, "**I have manifested your name,**" cf. v. 26, "**I made known to them your name**" with v. 4, "**I glorified you on earth**" and v. 14).

2) His assigned work included intercession, "**I am praying for them**" (the ones God gave to Christ, v. 2 so He could give them eternal life, they are the Father's elect, the ones that were His, v. 6b, 9b, "**I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours**"). Ultimately, this means, "I am going to the cross for them."

3) He kept and guarded the apostles (v. 12a) despite the departure of Judas (v. 12b) in order to fulfill the Scriptures (v. 12c).

4) He sanctified Himself in order to sanctify His people (vs. 16-19, **They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.** ¹⁷ **Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.** ¹⁸ **As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.** ¹⁹ **And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth).**

What then remains incomplete even though the work on earth that Christ came to do is already finished?

It will help to emphasize the remaining part if we rule out some options. Note what was not completed. His work did not bring in the end of history and the final judgment. John the Baptist thought Jesus would do this (Mat. 3.11-12). However, Jesus did not bring judgment but delay until the harvest (Mat. 13.30, 40). Consequently, when judgment should surely fall on those who crucified Him, Jesus interceded for their temporary protection (cf. the 1st saying from the cross, "**forgive them,**" Lk. 23.34). In other words, He did not complete His Messianic work as the baptizer with the Spirit and with fire. He did not yet die as a supreme act of saving love. He has not yet come back from the grave, nor has He yet instituted the new day of worship of the Sunday-Sabbath; that is something He performed by redemptive deed. Thus, many things remain yet undone.

We can narrow down our focus by considering the thoughts of Christ lying behind the "**I thirst**" saying (Jn. 19.28). John functions as an "omniscient narrator" when he tells us what Jesus was thinking and intending at the time He spoke the words of thirst. Knowledge and intention captured His inner thought life while suffering on the cross and from His inner thoughts came the words, "**I thirst.**" He knew that all was finished. He aimed at the goal of fulfilling Scripture.

What then was finished *on the cross* that was not yet finished in the garden? What singular thing (“it”) found accomplishment there on the tree?

Answering this question is easy for the Christian because it goes right to the heart of the good news. The accomplishment of the cross was the suffering of hell in the place of the people given to Christ by the Father. This was the paradoxical hour of suffering and glory in the deepest humiliation of God’s humble servant (cf. Jn. 17.1, **“Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you”**). It was the hour of the greatest trouble from which Jesus recoiled when He said, **“Father, save me from this hour”** (Jn. 12.27). That was not a question, but an expression of maximal self-preservation in light of the coming baptism with fire that He must endure (**Lk. 12.49-50, “I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! ⁵⁰ I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!”**)

Not forgetting that Jesus is God, we have to note that He endured the suffering and shame of the cross as a human being, a sinless, self-sacrificing high priest on behalf of the people of God.

Therefore, when all His works of public and private ministry on earth reached completion, He had one more work remaining yet to do on earth. He must go into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. He must endure the wrath of God. He must be deprived of the Father and there languish in a void, in an empty wasteland until He would thirst in body and soul for God like the deer that thirsts for the water brooks. He must take the role of great high priest and offer up a sacrifice to God, and He must be that sacrifice; He must be both offerer and offering! He must drink the bitter dregs of the cup of divine wrath.

Once the darkness passed and Jesus came back from the wasteland, then He could fulfill the Scripture and say, “I thirst.” Then He could express what He knew deep in His heart and soul, “it is finished.”

Finished, finished, hear the dying Savior cry.

Finished all the types and shadows of the ceremonial law; finished all that God had promised, death and hell no more shall awe!

Thus, our first question, “what was finished,” directs our thoughts to the work of Christ in its unfolding stages of accomplishment. In the garden, all that the Father gave Jesus to do was complete. On the cross, the distinctive work as great high priest was now complete. He offered Himself up to the glory of a most humble death on behalf of the covenant people, on behalf of those the Father gave to Him (Jn. 17.1-2).

2A. What does “finished” mean?

Does it due justice to think it simply means that the time of suffering has come and gone? The suffering has passed, so Jesus joyfully declares His relief and joy. Surely, this is what took place, but it does not tell us (or unpack) all that is contained in the word “finished.”

Accomplishing His high priestly work means He endured the wrath of God. He was the propitiation for the sins of the covenant people (Heb. 2.17, cf. those given to Him, v. 13) who will make up the redeemed world in glory (Jn. 1.29; 1 Jn. 2.2; Jn. 17.1-24). In other words, He obtained eternal redemption (Heb. 9.12, “by means of his own blood...securing an eternal redemption”). He suffered in the place of His people offering up the blood of the eternal covenant on their behalf (Heb. 13.20). Thus, it is the case that Jesus obtained the church by His blood (Acts. 20.28). In the hour of the cross, Jesus secured eternal life for those given to Him (Jn. 17.2). Substituting Himself in their place and thus appeasing the wrath of God, Jesus made it certain that each one for whom He died will receive eternal life both now (Jn. 17.2) and in the glory of heaven (Jn. 17.24). He secured the salvation of the world, the new human race, the new humanity.

On the cross, He secured the gift of the Spirit to apply the saving benefits of the cross to His people. He was baptized with fire in order to baptize His people with the Spirit and then on the cross, Jesus secured the drawing of His people to faith by the working of the Spirit (Jn. 12.32; 1 Thess. 1.5; 2 Thess. 2.13-14).

In the dark hours, in the darkness of eternal judgment, Jesus secured His people's release (redemption) and that forever. He purchased eternal redemptive-release with His own blood (Heb. 9.12). Therefore, finally and irresistibly, He made it certain that all those given to Him in the eternal covenant of redemption will be saved. None for whom Jesus died will perish. He will bring all for whom He died to saving faith. All who believe in Him will never die. This is a marvelous grounding of the gospel of the kingdom, repentance, and the forgiveness of sins by faith in the risen Lord Jesus.

3A. What kind of word is "finished"?

It is a single word (in Greek) and it contains a subject and verb (it is finished).

In addition, it is worth noting that this word is not in the first person.

There is no direct address to the Father. Who is the audience of this word? Note that it is a declaration and only a few people heard the declaration or proclamation of Jesus our prophet. Presumably, John remained to hear the sixth saying and later recorded what he heard. The Father and the Holy Spirit heard it. Jesus executed the eternal plan of redemption, and by His blood, He secured the gift of the Holy Spirit to apply the salvation (the eternal redemptive-release) to His covenant people.

It is a pronouncement. It is a declaration. Our prophet of prophets makes an astounding proclamation.

In the final analysis who hears this proclamation? We all do, reading the Gospel. It is a proclamation of our prophet regarding His priestly work and His kingly honor. He died in the place of His covenant people. He is the Lord of history bringing consummation to realization. Thus, He proclaims that the saving of the world by saving His covenant people is certain, secure, and finished once and for all.

Conclusion: Who spoke these words?

1) Jesus is the Alpha and Omega of redemption

When you put the sixth saying in context of the big picture of finishing things (creation, Gen. 2.1 and consummation, Rev. 16.17), and when we recall that He speaks as a member of the trinity (as God the Son), then we know that He is Alpha and Omega. He is the beginning and the end in that He is doing what is necessary to bring creation along to its original goal. It was God's delight to finish His works with the objective of bringing man through history to eternal Sabbath rest. That was the original promise of the six and one of creation week. The fall of man into sin necessitated that the only way for God's image bearer to reach the promised rest is by redemption and restoration from the fall. Therefore, Jesus is the redeemer of God's elect. He is Alpha and Omega of redemption.

2) Jesus is our singing Savior

To finish this work was a delight, a declaration, a song (cf. the relief at the end of my wife's EMG: are you finished? Yes!). In Romans, Paul tells us that Jesus our Savior sings (15.8-9). We are His joy (Heb. 12.2) as He delights to accomplish the work that began in the six and one of creation week. He is priest who hangs in between heaven and earth in the place of His people, His brothers and sisters by covenant. He is sovereign and He rules history as Sabbath king, and thus He delights in the works of creation for man with the goal of eternal Sabbath rest. That He secured for fallen image bearers.

3) Jesus is our great prophet, priest, and king

By saying "it is finished," Jesus causes us to look at what transpired in the darkness as the great high priest of our souls. He causes us to look again. In a matchless way, He causes us to revel in His greatness as our prophet, priest, and king. To Him be the glory both now and forevermore, Amen.

What then shall we sing?

Hark, the voice of love and mercy by stanzas:
 Hear (His words, "it is finished")
 Record (record the dying words)
 Absorb (absorb these words for your comfort)
 Praise (the speaker of these words)

What then shall we say as we partake of the bread and wine?

I need the Savior who finished all that was required in the eternal covenant of redemption. I need the one that secured the great end promised in creation week of eternal Sabbath rest for His image bearers. I need Jesus who finished all that was necessary during the days of His ministry on earth, and that finished the great priestly work of substitution in the place of His covenant people to secure their deliverance from condemnation, from the bondage of sin, and to eternal release and freedom in glory forever. I am a sinner and I need Him. O Lord Jesus, I need you.

I own Him as my very own. I submit myself to Him as my prophet, priest, and king. I commit myself to serve Him in all things for His glory. O Lord, I own you as my very own prophet, priest and king.

I own His brothers and sisters as my brothers and sisters in the family of God. O Lord Jesus, I own your people as my brothers and sisters in the household of faith.

Glory to the bleeding Lamb! Glory to the bleeding Lamb!