

Jesus Finished God's Salvation Work

John 19:1-42

Key Verse: 19:30

“When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

Jesus Christ was crucified. Crucifixion was a hideous, barbaric manner of death for notorious criminals enforced by the Roman Empire. But what was Jesus' crime? Even Pontius Pilate knew that Jesus was an innocent man and tried to set him free. Jesus was crucified not for his sins, but for us. Jesus was not an unfortunate victim. He was crucified as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. How one looks at Jesus and his death on the cross makes an eternal difference for every human being. May God give us all eyes of faith to see and hearts to accept Jesus as our Savior and the Savior of the world.

I. Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified (1-16)

As this chapter opens, Jesus had already been betrayed by his disciple Judas Iscariot, arrested, bound and brought to the Jewish high priest, and condemned on charges of blasphemy. But the Jews had no right to execute anyone. So they brought Jesus before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Pilate questioned Jesus about his kingship. **Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world...but...from another place...Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” Pilate retorted, “What is truth?” Then he said to the Jews, “I find no basis for a charge against him.” Then Pilate offered to release Jesus to them to avoid this case. But they shouted back, “Give us Barabbas!”**

Pilate was not sure what to do with Jesus. So he had Jesus flogged, hoping this would appease the Jews. Jesus was flogged, though he had done no wrong. Jesus was tied to a post and lashed with a whip, stinging his back with welts and wounds until the blood flowed down his back. It was a great injustice. It was the power of sin and darkness in human hearts that did this.

Next the soldiers put a crown of thorns on Jesus' head until blood dripped down Jesus' brow. They put a purple robe on Jesus and mocked his kingship saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!” and they slapped him in the face. Sadistic sinners like to mock others, especially when others appear weak or powerless. Jesus is the Mighty God who healed diseases, drove out demons, calmed a stormy sea and even raised the dead. But he did not exercise his power at this moment. Isaiah

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prophesied, **“He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.”** (Isa 53:3)

Pilate declared again, “I find no basis for a charge against him.” He presented Jesus in the robe and crown of thorns and said, “Here is the man!” It meant, **“Here is the man you call ‘king’. Isn't it enough that I have beaten him up?”** **The chief priests and officials shouted, “Crucify! Crucify!”** **Pilate answered, “You take him and crucify him. I find no basis for a charge against him.”** Three times Pilate declared Jesus' innocence. Still, Pilate had no courage to release him.

The Jewish leaders insisted, “He must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.” Indeed, their real charges against Jesus were blasphemy. They knew clearly that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, the Messiah and Savior of the world. But they could not accept it. They were determined not to believe it. **Hearing that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, Pilate was afraid and asked him, “Where do you come from?”** **But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate said, “Don't you realize I have power to free you or crucify you?”**

Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.” Pilate's power came not from himself or his achievement. It came from above. It was a greater sin to condemn Jesus and hand him over to Pilate. Still, Pilate had the responsibility to make a right judgment. From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free. But the Jewish leaders pressured him, **“If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.”** Now their charges against Jesus sounded not religious but political. **Pilate sat on the judge's seat and said, “Here is your king. Shall I crucify your king?”** **The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.”** It was a lie. They knew they should honor God as their king. But they paid lip service to Caesar so that Pilate would condemn Jesus. Their scheme worked. Finally Pilate handed Jesus over to them to be crucified.

How could it happen? How could the innocent Son of God be condemned and handed over to be crucified? It was a perversion of justice. Yet it was all part of God's salvation plan. Isaiah prophesied, **“Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer.”** (Isa 53:10) Jesus' condemnation and suffering was not for his sins and guilt but for ours. **“He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray,**

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each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isa 53:5-6) Peter wrote, “**He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.**” (1Pe 2:24)

II. Jesus was crucified and died (17-30)

The Roman soldiers took charge of Jesus. They put the cross on Jesus and forced him to carry it. Jesus carried the heavy cross through the streets of Jerusalem from the place of judgment headed to the place of execution. Crowds lined the streets watching, enemies were jeering, friends were weeping, strangers were perplexed wondering, “Who is this man, wearing the crown of thorns?” Jesus fell under the weight of the cross. Jesus was exhausted from the trials by the Jews and by Pilate, from the flogging, from the mockery, from the evil in human hearts. Jesus could carry his cross no further. So the Roman soldiers seized a passerby, Simon from Cyrene, and forced him to carry the cross.

Jesus came to the Place of the Skull called Golgotha. There they crucified him. They put the cross on the ground, laid Jesus on it and stretching out his arms drove long nail spikes into his wrists and feet. Then they lifted the cross up and propped it in a hole. Jesus was suspended between heaven and earth, blood oozing from his wrists and feet. They crucified two other criminals with him, one on each side, with Jesus in the middle. It was to shame and humiliate Jesus all the more. Jesus was crucified like a notorious criminal. What was the charge? Pilate put the charge on a notice and fastened it to the cross. It read: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. It made Jesus' crime sound like treason against Rome, like Jesus was some sort of political criminal. But Jesus was not a rebel. Jesus taught, “**Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.**” (Mt 22:21) The charge was written in three languages: Aramaic, the language the Jews could understand; Latin, the language of the Romans; and Greek, the language of communication across cultures. The Jews didn't like the charge, since they denied that Jesus was their king. They wanted Pilate to change it, saying that Jesus claimed to be their king. Pilate was unmoved: “**What I have written, I have written.**” Perhaps it was to humiliate the Jews. But from God's point of view it was just the right message to the world: “This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” Jesus of Nazareth meant Jesus the Good Shepherd. Jesus of Nazareth was eyes to the blind, healing to a royal official's son, forgiveness to an immoral Samaritan woman. The King of the Jews meant that Jesus was the promised Messiah, sent by God, the Light of the world, the Bread of life, the Savior of the world.

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Humanly, Jesus did not look like a king, but rather weak and powerless, like a loser. But in God's eyes Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords and the Judge of the living and the dead. Jesus will come again one day in glory to reign. His kingdom will have no end. How one sees Jesus determines his or her eternal destiny. Jesus said in John 8:24, **"if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins."** For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

The four soldiers divided Jesus' clothes among them. They did not tear his seamless undergarment, but cast lots to see who would get it. Their pettiness is appalling, gambling for a dying man's clothes. Yet even this fulfilled Scripture, Psalm 22:18, written 1000 years earlier, which said: **"They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment."**

Near the cross stood Jesus' mother Mary, three other women and the beloved disciple John. When Jesus saw his mother there, and his beloved disciple nearby, he said, **"Woman, here is your son,"** and to his disciple, **"Here is your mother."** From then on, John took care of Mary in his home. Jesus made them family. Jesus wanted them to love each other like mother and son.

Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said from the cross, **"I am thirsty."** So they lifted a sponge of wine vinegar to Jesus' lips. This fulfilled Psalm 69:21, which says, **"They...gave me vinegar for my thirst."** The events of Jesus' death fulfilled many prophecies in God's holy Word. His death was foretold in detail. After receiving the drink, Jesus said, **"It is finished."** With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

The last words of Jesus' human life on earth were simple but profound: **"It is finished."** In Greek this one word can also mean "completed," "accomplished," "fulfilled," or "paid." It is finished was not a simple statement that Jesus' life was over or that his suffering was finally complete. John's gospel uses the word or a variation of it seven times. In each case it has to do with finishing the work of God. **"My food,"** said Jesus, **"is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."** (Jn 4:34) **"I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do."** (Jn 17:4) Apostle Paul, when he was close to death, used the same word in 2 Timothy 4:7, **"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."** So what was the work that Jesus finished on the cross, the work that God had given him to do? What did Jesus do? What was his mission from God the Father?

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First of all, Jesus preached the word of God. In John 17:8 Jesus prayed regarding his disciples, **“For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.”** Jesus proclaimed the truth, for God's word is truth (Jn 17:17). Jesus revealed the true God through his life and teaching.

Secondly, Jesus healed the sick. Jesus' healing ministry showed the love of God and the power of God.

Thirdly, Jesus defeated the devil. Jesus defeated the devil in several ways. One way was that he drove out demons from people who were captive to the devil's power. Another way was that Jesus lived a sinless life. So he was not under the devil's power. Especially, Jesus lived in full surrender to the Father's will. He did not succumb to the devil's lies or temptations.

Fourthly, and most importantly, Jesus brought sinners to God. Jesus' preaching showed his truth. Jesus' healing showed his love. Jesus' defeat of the devil showed his power. These alone were not enough to liberate people. We needed one more thing, which no one else could give. We needed the forgiveness of sin. We needed his grace.

The woman caught in adultery exemplifies this. She was brought to Jesus to be judged. She was condemned by the law and should have been stoned to death. But Jesus said to her accusers, **“Let any of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”** They all walked away one by one. Jesus said to her, **“Has no one condemned you?”** **“No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”** (Jn 8:7-11) How could Jesus just let this woman go free? Did he ignore her sin? No, he paid it for her on the cross. He gave her forgiveness credit to be paid at a later time. When Jesus said, **“It is finished,”** he paid the penalty of her sins. Jesus paid it all. All to him we owe. Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow.

There is nothing good that we can do to merit the forgiveness of our sins. We can only trust in Jesus' righteousness and his shed blood to take away all our sins. It sounds too good to be true. But it is God's promise in the Holy Bible. There is nothing we need to do or can do to save ourselves from our sins except to trust in Jesus 100%. If we could trust in ourselves even 1% then we could have something to boast about. Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:8-9, **“For it is by grace you**

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have been saved, through faith--and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast."

Jesus finished the Father's work to save the world. In John 6:40, Jesus said, **"For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."** Jesus finished my salvation and yours on the cross. The only thing we need to do is to keep trusting him and him alone for our salvation. We need to keep loving him, remaining in his word and his love. This surely involves regular confession of sin and repentance. Hebrews 9:26 says, **"But [Christ] has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself."** Again, Hebrews 10:10 says, **"we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."** Eternal praise and thanks be to Jesus Christ who finished God's work of salvation for us!

III. Jesus was buried (31-42)

Jesus gave up his spirit. His life on earth was over. The Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Passover. So they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers broke the legs of the two men crucified next to Jesus. But when they came to Jesus, they found he was already dead. Instead of breaking his legs, a soldier pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. This was eyewitness testimony. Jesus was dead. These things happened to fulfill two more scriptures: **"Not one of his bones will be broken,"** (Ex 12:46; Num 9:12; Ps 34:20) and, **"They will look on the one they have pierced."** (Zech 12:10) Jesus' death was all in accordance with God's will and foreknowledge.

Jesus was taken down from the cross. Perhaps his mother Mary cradled his body as she wept. Two men came forward with Pilate's permission to ask for the body of Jesus. They were Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Joseph was a secret disciple of Jesus, because he feared the Jewish leaders. Nicodemus came with him. Nicodemus was the one that Jesus had told, **"You must be born again."** Nicodemus had tried on another occasion to get his colleagues to at least listen to Jesus (7:51), but they were too hardhearted. Nicodemus brought 75 pounds of myrrh and aloes to anoint Jesus' dead body. The two of them took Jesus' body and wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen, according to Jewish burial customs. Nearby was a garden and a new tomb which had not been used. This was the tomb where Jesus' dead body was placed.

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Jesus was crucified, died and buried. It was for our terrible sins against God and against man. Our sins are more terrible than we may realize. But couldn't God just ignore or forget about our sins, since he loves us? In his covenant with Israel, God required the blood of animals to be shed at the temple to forgive the sins of his covenant people. Leviticus 17:11 says, **“For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.”** Hebrews 9:22 says, **“In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”** And again Hebrews 9:14, **“How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”** Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God (1Pe 3:18). Jesus, the innocent Son of God, bore all our sin and shame and condemnation to give us the grace of forgiveness of sin, salvation and eternal life with him in his Father's house. Eternal praises be to Jesus our Good Shepherd and our King of salvation!