

# Session 7

## IT IS FINISHED

*John 19:30; I Corinthians 15*

### Memory Verse

*<sup>30</sup> When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished."  
Then bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.*

– JOHN 19:30, CSB



## It is Finished

**THEOLOGICAL THEME:** The atoning work of Jesus conquered death for all who call Him Savior.

In Genesis 3:15, we read that one of the curses God handed down in the garden of Eden was that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the seed of the serpent. The tragic events of sin entering the world as a result of Adam and Eve's rebellion had only occurred nine verses earlier. But already, even in the midst of covenant curses being handed down, hope of a Savior was promised. From Genesis 3 all the way through the remainder of the Old Testament, God dropped hints of the coming Messiah. He would be a Suffering Servant whose wounds would heal God's people. He would be a mighty King in the line and tradition of David—but even better. He would be a prophet like Moses, who spoke to God face to face like a man speaks to a friend—but even better. His ministry would fulfill the priestly system that filled the pages of the Torah.

For all the promises and all the prophecies, the one unifying element was the hope of redemption and restoration for God's people. Patiently, constantly, and increasingly, God gave glimpses of the future restoration of His people to fellowship with Him. The prophets (especially Isaiah and Jeremiah) spoke of a new covenant coming. As the depictions and hints of what the Messiah would look like mounted and even came to fulfillment in the person of Jesus, those who should have known the most about Him (the Pharisees) totally missed it. Humans, as it turned out, were good at misunderstanding what God was doing.

So it was, then, that the greatest victory cry in all of human history, "It is finished," did not look like much of a victory cry at all. It came from parched lips attached to a battered and almost unrecognizable body. It came from the mouth of a man who was being executed in a manner reserved for criminals. However, it also came from the mouth of a Savior who had just defeated sin for everyone. It is finished, indeed.

**?** What references to Jesus in the Old Testament are you aware of? Which one are you most drawn to?

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**?** Read 1 Peter 1:20. How does it make you feel to know that God had a solution for sin before it was even needed?

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## Session Summary

In this week's session, Jesus' seventh and final saying from the cross was uttered as a declarative finale of His redemptive work. In His death, sin and death were defeated. This was, however, far from the conclusion of Jesus' story. Being resurrected, Jesus appeared to hundreds of eyewitnesses. As the apostle Paul explained to the Corinthians, the victory over death that was achieved by Jesus' death and resurrection is the center of what it means to be a Christian.

### 1. "It Is Finished" – The Beginning of Life (John 19:30; 1 Cor. 15:3-8)

At long last, through all the betrayal, beatings, false trials, torture, and mockery, Jesus had the final word. The writers of the Gospels each slowed down the pace of their respective narratives in order to focus on the ultimate significance of what occurred during the crucifixion of Jesus. With excruciating detail, the final moments of Jesus' earthly life slowly unfolded, building to this moment pregnant with eternal force. John recorded the final saying of Jesus from the cross, "It is finished," but the meaning of the statement was more significant than immediately apparent.

According to D.A. Carson, "As an English translation, It is finished, captures only part of the meaning, the part that focuses on completion. Jesus' work was done. But his is no cry of defeat; nor is it merely an announcement of imminent death (though it is not less than that.) . . . On the brink of death, Jesus cries out, It is accomplished!"<sup>1</sup> What was accomplished was the redemptive mission that Jesus had been sent on by the Father

for the sake of a humanity languishing in its sin. What was fulfilled was every last Messianic prophecy in the Old Testament that pointed to God's Suffering Servant and deliverance of His people. What was made available was eternal life and enduring hope for every person who called upon the name of Jesus for salvation from that moment forward!

Just as He was the one to declare that His mission had been accomplished, He was also the one to hand over His spirit. John carefully described Jesus' role even in His own physical death. His life was not taken from Him, as though there was something that had power over Him to take anything from Him. No, Jesus handed over His own life. This final act was a demonstration of both His complete submission to the Father's will and His immeasurable love for the creation that was brought about through Him.

**?** How would you explain the significance of Jesus giving up His spirit versus it being taken from Him? What bearing does that difference have on your ability to trust Him even in the midst of your most impossible situations?

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**?** Application: What does it mean to you that all of the suffering that Jesus experienced was specifically part of God's plan to offer the gift of salvation to you?

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It is central to Christianity, however, that Jesus was not referring to His life when He said "It is finished." Rather, His life would be resurrected, as promised, and revealed to hundreds of His followers. In his first letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul addressed this very matter. The Corinthians had begun to believe a strain of false teaching that indicated that there was no resurrection from the dead. For the entirety of chapter 15, Paul emphatically walked through the reality and the testimony of Jesus' resurrection.

In reasserting the heart of the gospel that the Corinthians had heard from him, as a way of shoring up their slipping certainty, Paul reminded them of the undercurrent behind “It is finished”—that the Scriptures told of the events of Christ’s passion. According to the Scriptures, referring to the whole counsel of the Old Testament and its Messianic prophecies, the death of Jesus, His following burial, and His resurrection had to happen. It was part of God’s divine plan, foretold as far back as Genesis 3:15, to redeem all of creation through one perfect sacrifice.

Paul then pointed to the eyewitnesses who were the blessed recipients of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances. To reinforce the reality of the resurrection, Paul pointed out that several of the eyewitnesses to whom Jesus appeared were still alive. The inherent challenge from Paul was, if the Corinthians doubted him, they could simply ask the ones who saw the resurrected Jesus.

## 2. The Dead Made Alive (1 Cor. 15:20-27)

As Paul continued to unfold the implications of the reality of Jesus’ resurrection, he contrasted the legacy of Adam and that of Jesus. In the previous verses, Paul had pointed out that if one were to logically carry the false claims of the beliefs some Corinthians were espousing, there was no hope for the living or the dead. In the strongest terms he could muster, Paul pointed out “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless, you are still in your sins” (v. 17). Now he continued, but along the lines of the certainty of Christ’s resurrection. Precisely because He had been raised from the dead, there was hope for all those who “fall asleep” in the time remaining until His second coming. “Fall asleep” was one of the more popular terms used by Paul for those Christians who died, emphasizing that physical death was not an end.

Paul then pointed to the difference between the legacy of Adam and that of Jesus. This was the first appearance of such a comparison for Paul, but it would also appear in Romans 5. In this instance, Paul pointed to the new creation that Jesus brought about in His defeat of death. Emphasizing the complete humanity of Jesus, Paul argued that just as death entered through a man at the beginning of the first creation (Adam), so through Christ life was ushered in for those of the new creation. New creation referred to those who were made new when they became Christians.

**?** What seasons or experiences in life are most likely to make you ponder on the hope that is available in Christ? Why do you think that's true?

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**?** Application: How is being made a new creation different from just being cleaned up? Which idea offers the most hope?

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Verses 23-27 contain Paul's brief explanation of how redemptive history would unfold from the moment Jesus was resurrected until His second coming at the end of human history. The explanation came as a way of Paul addressing the ongoing reality of death in the face of Jesus' resurrection making Christians eternally alive. The eternal hope, then, would be finally realized when the playing out of human history led to Christ's ultimate defeat of death.

### 3. Victory Forever! (1 Cor. 15:50-58)

As Paul drew his argument for the reality of resurrection—both Christ's and that of His followers—he did so by pointing to the absolute incompatibility of the things of the world and the things of eternity. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor can corruption inherit incorruption” (v. 50). Indeed, the character and nature of the holy must by its very nature forbid the presence of the sinful. The problem could not have been made clearer and its magnitude could not be overstated. The hopelessness of humanity (flesh and blood) to resolve its own mortal predicament was undeniable. What, then, must be done to solve the incompatibility?

The only possible answer could not come from humanity, as humanity was the part of the equation that excluded itself due to its sinfulness. The answer, then, had to come from God, the incorruptible One. What it would take in order for God to solve the matter was exactly what Jesus referred to when He said, “It is finished.” It would take a perfect sacrifice that could only come from God. The tarnished creation could only be

restored by the gracious act of its Creator. Only the redemptive plan that satisfied His righteous wrath with the fullest expression of His limitless love could offer the transformation necessary for creation to be made new. That plan was what Jesus finished.

**?** When you read Paul's stark contrast between humanity and the holiness of God, what impressions of God fill your mind? What about your sense of your own need for His grace?

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**?** Application: Paul explained the transformation process as a life-long process. What does that mean for the Christian's battle with sinfulness? Why does that make the transparent conversation in your group imperative for your accountability and ongoing encouragement?

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Paul referred to the corruptibility of humanity finally becoming incorruptible when "the trumpet will sound." Paul was clearly referring to the time of Christ's second coming, when the dead in Christ rise and those still alive will follow. In that moment, the last remaining visages of death's grip and influence on Christians will be eradicated. Mortality will be replaced with immortality. That which has been corrupted will be covered with incorruptibility. The sting of death will be extinguished.

## Conclusion

It is easy to rush past Easter. There are so many traditions, family plans, and special meals involved with the celebration that the profundity of what was accomplished when Jesus said, "It is finished," can quietly pass by. In that light, it is important to intentionally consider the full extent of exactly what Jesus finished for the redemption of creation.

First, what Jesus finished is the world's only hope. While that may sound overly dramatic and perhaps even cliché, it is absolutely true. All of the things that cause pain, anxiety, grief, heartache, loneliness, isolation, and so on find their answer in the redemption that the cross offers. The invitation extended to humanity when Jesus said "It is finished" was an invitation to wholeness and restoration, limitless joy, an end to death, and freedom. As the lost world frenetically seeks to control its own future, happiness, and fulfillment, Jesus offers abundant life—now and forevermore.

Second, Jesus delivered humanity and is continuing to deliver humanity. While His death on the cross broke the power of sin over those who call Him Savior, the ultimate realization of that deliverance will not be experienced until Jesus returns. This is a dynamic referred to as the "now and not yet." Why is that important to realize? Because even for Christians who take their spiritual growth and discipleship extremely seriously, there will still be a struggle with sinfulness, brokenness, temptation, and all the trappings of life until the end of human history. There is still much to look forward to, but there is victory now! All the more reason to be in community with others, having those crucially transparent conversations and encouraging one another.

Third, the love of Jesus is most powerfully evidenced in His finishing His mission. What lies at the heart of Jesus' seven sayings from the cross and the supreme sacrifice He made is the simple fact that Jesus loves you. His devotion to the Father to submit Himself to everything that went into being faithful to undergo death, burial, and resurrection is indescribably beautiful. That His sacrifice was offered to set creation right, healing and restoring it from sin's effects, moves one to worship. Understanding Jesus' depth of love for humanity, even while it cried out for His crucifixion as He made a way for humanity to be restored to God, is overwhelming. Easter, in all its glory, is gloriously about the love of Christ for you.



Who are you demonstrating the love of Christ for by praying for them to come to know Him? How often do you pray to that end? Who joins you in those prayers?



❓ How is God prompting you right now to move toward Him? How is His leading and prompting in your life a demonstration of His love for you? Who do you discuss those promptings with to help you understand how to respond?

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❓ In Jesus, God literally came to humanity to make Himself known. What parties or invitations is your group extending to others to invite them to learn the way God came to humanity in Jesus? How can you demonstrate the love and hope of Jesus in doing so?

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**CHRIST CONNECTION:** Jesus died a substitutionary death for humanity. In His death, He satisfied God's wrath on sin and provided victory for humanity over death and the grave.

**MISSIONAL APPLICATION:** The church has the powerful testimony of those who were once dead but have been made alive in Christ. As a result, the church has the great opportunity every day to share that same hope with others who need to experience life in Christ.



# FOR NEXT WEEK

## #Blessed

### Main Passages

- Matthew 5:1-12

### Session Outline

1. Be Aware (Matthew 5:1-12)
2. Be Conformed (Matthew 5:1-12)
3. Be Encouraged (Matthew 5:1-12)

### Memorize

*<sup>30</sup> When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished." Then bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.*

- John 19:30, CSB

### Daily Readings

- Monday - Luke 14:27
- Tuesday - John 8:31-32
- Wednesday - John 13:34-35
- Thursday - John 15:1-8
- Friday - Philippians 4:19
- Saturday - 1 Peter 5:6

### References

<sup>1</sup>Carson, D.A. The Gospel According to John. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991.