

## Seven Words: Word of Victory

### John 19:30-35

#### Introduction

As odd as it may seem, the Jews were actually more compassionate than the Romans when it came to crucifixions.

If you were crucified the Roman way, you remained on the cross until you died. No matter how long that took.

- For some it would take several days, meaning those poor souls endured the heat of the day and cold of the night.
- Historians describe how the flies and other bugs would be drawn to the open wounds on those dying, wounds that had been created by the floggings and beatings they had endured prior to the actual crucifixion.
- Many died after becoming insane.
- Once they were dead the Romans would take them down and toss their bodies into the garbage pit where they would be eaten by the vultures and dogs.

Jewish law required that a person who received the death penalty could not remain exposed like that once nightfall came:

You must not leave the body hanging on the pole overnight. Be sure to bury it that same day, because anyone who is hung on a pole is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance. (Deuteronomy 21:23)

The religious leaders, by their own law, had to have two burial sites ready in case there was no family to claim the body.

- When Jesus died, it was doubly important for His body to be off the cross before nightfall because the next day was the Sabbath.
- And now just any Sabbath, this was the Passover Sabbath, a day holier than most Sabbaths.

To ensure that those crucified did indeed die before sundown, a cruel method was used to speed up the process. A sledge-hammer type mallet was used to crush their legs. When they got ready to do that to Jesus, someone noticed that He was already dead. No one thought about it at the time, but later Christians realized that this was another fulfillment of prophecy. You see, you were never allowed to break the bones of your Passover lamb:

They must not leave any of it till morning or break any of its bones. (Numbers 9:12)

They still needed to verify that Jesus was dead, so one of the soldiers thrust a spear into the side of Jesus, just below the rib cage. Another prophecy was fulfilled in that moment.

They will look on ... the one they have pierced ... (Zechariah 12:10)

The spear pierced the pericardium that surrounds the heart, so instead of bleeding (like you do if you were still alive), a mixture of fluid and blood came from the body of Jesus.

- Sometime, if this sort of stuff interests you, you should read what medical experts say happened to Jesus on the cross.
- One of them has suggested that all of the physical and emotional experiences that happened to Jesus, together with the suffocating pressures on His heart and lungs during His time on the cross, all combined together and caused His heart to rupture.

We might accurately proclaim that:

Jesus died of a broken heart.

During these special services in the Lenten season, we have been focusing on the words that Jesus spoke from the cross. There are seven phrases, known as the Seven Words. To date, we have spoken about five of them:

Word of forgiveness (Father forgive them)  
Word of assurance (Today you will be with me)  
Word of compassion (Here is your son)  
Word of anguish (Why have you forsaken me)  
Word of suffering (I thirst)

Today we heard the sixth word, a word of victory: It is finished.

Those three words are actually one word in the Greek language – a fun word to say:

TELESTAI

Finished. Completed. Done. Over.

The word is in the third person singular.

- If it were in the first person singular, you would translate it as “I am finished.” Jesus doesn’t say that.
- Second person singular would translate as “You are finished.” That would sound a warrior preparing to attack. Jesus doesn’t say that either.
- No, it is the third person singular: It is finished.

It. God’s plan of salvation. What Jesus came to do has been fully and completely done. It is finished. What was finished in this moment?

## #1: SUFFERING

Jesus was born to suffer. When He, at age 12, proclaimed that He had to be about His Father’s business, the business to which He referred included more than preaching and healing. It also included the suffering necessary to pay the penalty for our sins.

The wages of sin is death ... (Romans 6:23)

Someone had to pay that price, and paying it would involve a whole lot of suffering.

In addition to those moments on the cross, Jesus suffered:

- Rejection from those who had been praying for His coming for thousands of years.
  - They considered Him to be a law-breaker and a trouble-maker
  - They even tried to push Him over a cliff to get rid of Him
- Rejection from His own disciples
  - They all ran away (except for John) when He was crucified

But now all that was finished. TELESTAI! He would suffer no more

And though we as His followers will experience suffering, we can rejoice in knowing that our suffering is only temporary. 2 Corinthians 4 says:

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. (2 Corinthians 4:16-17)

Because Jesus won the victory over suffering, we too will be able to proclaim: TELESTAI.

## **#2: SACRIFICE**

In Old Testament times, the priests were never allowed to sit down when they were on duty. This was a reminder to them and to all the people that work of sacrifice was never done. It was a never-ending cycle of sacrifice.

But when Jesus came:

(He) appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Hebrews 9:26)

This means that my sins are not on me. They are on Jesus. Yes, my sinful nature keeps enticing me toward sin, and yes, even my noblest moments carry with them the taint of selfish motives. But legally, because of the sacrifice of Jesus, I stand before God with a clean slate. His sacrifice has been credited to my account.

In Biblical times when you paid your bill at the merchant's tent, the merchant would write across that bill of sale "TELESTAI." Paid in full.

On the cross Jesus paid in full the debt you owe for the sin you committed.

That great hymn of the church says it well:

Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe;  
Sin had left a crimson stain,  
He washed it white as snow.

TELESTAI!

### #3: SATAN

One author wrote:

Oh, how I wish a video camera could have been able to record the great drama that took place on that day on Calvary. What an epic battle that was! Satan was there. God was there. Jesus was there. And it was all about us, so we were there too!

Much less dramatically, the Apostle Paul described that scene when he wrote these words to the Christians in Colossae:

(Jesus) canceled out every legal violation we had on our record and the old arrest warrant that stood to indict us. He erased it all—our sins, our stained soul—he deleted it all *and they cannot be retrieved!* Everything we once were has been placed onto his cross and nailed permanently there as a public display of cancellation. Then Jesus made a public spectacle of all the powers and principalities of darkness, stripping away from them every weapon and all their spiritual authority and power to accuse us. And by the power of the cross, Jesus led them around as prisoners in a procession of triumph. *He was not their prisoner; they were his!* (Colossians 2:14-15)

When Jesus pronounced “TELESTAI” on the cross, Satan was finished forever. We still have skirmishes – like that solitary Japanese soldier who hides in the jungle – but the war is over. It is finished. The outcome is no longer in doubt.

You and I as Christians should never live as though Satan had any power over us. Because he doesn't. He is finished. Whenever he pokes his ugly head up at you and tempts you to do wrong or fills your heart with fear or causes you to question God's presence in your life, put your finger on the tip of his pointy little nose and say “TELESTAI.” You are finished.

### APPLICATION

In the six hours He was on the cross, Jesus did what you and I could never accomplish in our lifetimes. No amount of effort on your part can match it, and nothing you do will add anything to it.

TELESTAI. It is finished. Paid in full. All that is left for us to do is receive it – to accept the gift of God's grace completed on the cross.

Have you done that? If not, I invite you to pray with me now.

Amen.