

It is Finished

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[0 : 0 0] When I was growing up, I used to have lots of G.I. Joes. Who knows what G.I. Joes are? Who owns any G.I. Joes? Put up your hand.

Well, Alex does because he's got mine. Okay, well, G.I. Joes, they were awesome. They were little toy soldiers, if you don't know. They were one of the great things of the 80s, amongst other things. And they had all kinds of gadgets and weapons and grappling hooks, and they could do all sorts of amazing things.

And they used to go on a lot of missions in the house that I was growing up in. All around the house, they had missions. They had assault missions against the neighbor's cat. They had infiltration missions into the biscuit cupboard in the kitchen.

They had a lot of different missions that they got involved in. But sadly, they'd often get captured by the enemy. And that was typically either my mom, who would confiscate them, or the dog, who would go and bury them somewhere in the back garden.

And then we had to mount a whole rescue mission to rescue the buried G.I. Joes. Boys and girls, if you've got G.I. Joes, if you've got toy soldiers, do they ever get captured by the enemy?

[1 : 0 5] You know, that might be your mom or your sister or whatever it is. Now, tell me, when soldiers get captured, have they accomplished their mission? No. Of course not.

A soldier, a captured soldier, can't carry out the mission, can't accomplish the mission. Now, why am I talking about soldiers and missions? Well, because when we read about what happened to Jesus on Easter Friday, we might wonder whether he ever accomplished the mission that he came to earth to do.

Because in the end, he got captured by his enemies, didn't he? And not only captured, they even managed to kill him. And so it's easy to think that Jesus failed his mission. In fact, that's exactly what his disciples thought after he died.

And lots of people still think that today. They think, they read about Jesus being arrested and being killed, and they think, well, what a tragic end to a good life. What a tragic end to the story.

It's such a pity it had to end this way. But I want to tell you a secret this morning. You want to hear a secret? Good. Someone wants to hear a secret. I want to tell you a secret.

[2 : 1 3] And the secret is this. That even though Jesus was captured and killed, he never failed his mission. In fact, it turns out that he managed to complete his mission precisely because he was captured and killed.

And that is very strange, isn't it? But that's the twist in the story. As we discover it right at the end of reading about the life of Jesus. And we've been going through John. We've been learning as a church about Jesus.

But right at the end, we find there's a twist in the tale. You know when you're reading a book or you're watching a movie. But then right at the end, something changes completely that you didn't expect. There's a twist in the story that changes the whole meaning.

Well, there's a twist in the story of Jesus. Because as he's dying and his enemies stand there laughing and sneering and think they've won, you know what Jesus says?

In a loud voice, something that nobody expected, he says, Yes, it is finished. It is finished. What he's saying there is that he has completed his mission.

[3 : 13] Right there on the cross as he was dying. And this morning, we need to understand why. If we can understand what Good Friday is all about, we need to understand why him dying actually accomplished the mission that he came to earth to do.

So first, we've got to ask, well, what was he talking about when he said it? When he said it is finished. What exactly is finished? Well, we can work that out by reading the rest of the story. And you'll find a lot of the things that you read in your Bible that you don't understand, you can work out just by reading the rest of the story.

Reading the bigger passage, the context that they're in. And when you do here, you'll discover that John, who wrote down all that happened, keeps saying the same thing over and over again.

I wonder if you noticed what that was. The phrase that John uses over and over again in this chapter. He keeps saying how all these things happen to fulfill scripture.

Did you notice that? Over and over again. He then quotes verses from the Old Testament to show how all of these things that are happening to Jesus had already been predicted by prophets hundreds of years before.

[4 : 18] And small things as well. It's weird. You think if there's going to be prophecies, there'll be prophecies about big, important things. But there's small, seemingly unimportant things that were predicted centuries before.

Like the Roman soldiers gambling for Jesus' clothes. That's weird. But it's what a prophet had said would happen. Or them giving Jesus a drink, which wasn't normal for condemned criminals.

Or the fact that none of Jesus' bones were broken, which also wasn't the normal way to finish a crucifixion. Normally they would finish it by breaking the bones of the condemned man, but not for Jesus.

And the fact that they stabbed Jesus with a spear, which was also not normal. And all of these details that Jesus and his disciples couldn't have set up to happen, they were predicted. You know, they couldn't have gone, it's not like Matthew or John went to the Roman soldiers and said, Oh, by the way, can you just stab him with a spear and make sure you don't break his bones?

Because then he'll fulfill scripture. No, these things couldn't have been engineered. These were things that were out of their control. And yet they happened exactly like the Old Testament prophets said they would.

[5 : 26] And I mean, of all the many things that convinced me that the Bible is true, this is one of them. And you can go and you can look up these prophecies, they're in the Old Testament. And we know, scholars tell us, and they prove that they were written hundreds of years before Jesus was even born.

And yet they predict to the detail what is going to happen on this day when he dies. It's very important we understand that. But why is John telling us this? Why is he listing all of these Old Testament prophecies that have been fulfilled when Jesus died?

Well, to show us that God actually had a plan. And it's a plan that God's been working out for thousands of years. That's what the Old Testament is all about. And that plan is all coming together now.

This moment when Jesus is dying on the cross. So that's the it that Jesus is talking about here when he says it is finished. He's talking about God's plan and he's saying it has now been accomplished.

Him dying was the final part of that plan. It was the final thing that needed to happen for that plan to be fulfilled. It's like when you build a Lego house or a palace or a fire station or something like that.

[6 : 34] Anybody built a Lego structure? Put up your hand if you've built a Lego house. Yeah. So, you know, when you when you get a Lego house, maybe maybe it's a present for Christmas or whatever.

And you open it up. What do you find inside? You find Lego. You find a bag of Lego, but you find something else. Instructions. Exactly. How to build the Lego. How it's the plan of how the house will be put together.

So you can open it up and you can look at what the house is going to look like and you can see what all the things that need to happen in order to build it. But the house isn't finished just by looking at the instructions, is it?

You don't open the instructions. Then suddenly the house is is there built. No. The instructions show you what's going to happen. Basically, they show you how to build it. It's only once you've actually built the house and you put that last Lego brick in place that you can go to your mom and dad and say it's finished.

Right. Well, that's kind of what's happening here when Jesus says it is finished. For thousands of years, God has been drawing up a plan, an amazing plan to fix this broken world.

[7 : 34] The best plan in history. And his plan was to save us from our own sin that's inside us. That's how God is going to fix this broken world because the world is broken because of our sin.

Because of something that's in here, not something that's out there. Often we'll point to problems in this world and say, well, that's the problem. That's the problem. That's the problem. But actually, the Bible tells us the problem is in here.

It's the sin that's inside each of us. And God had a plan right from the beginning to rescue us from our own sin so that we can live in a new world one day with no sin and none of its effects.

And God has been carrying out that plan over thousands and thousands of years that we see in the Old Testament. But it was only when Jesus died that the final piece of that plan was put into place.

Only then could he say, it is finished. Which he did. And so that's what Jesus is talking about. But the question we've got to still ask this morning, and that's important for us to ask, is why did Jesus need to die for that plan to be accomplished?

[8 : 38] Surely there was another way. You know, why did he have to go through all the suffering and this pain for God's plan to be accomplished? For him to finish his mission? Well, to understand that, we need to understand something else about this very special word Jesus uses.

Finished. The word finished. Now, in the original language, it's a very rare but very important word. And it was a word that wasn't only used to describe a mission being accomplished or a plan being finished.

It was also a word people used to describe a debt being paid. So I don't know if you've ever got into serious debt. If you've borrowed money and a lot of money from someone else.

But in those days, sometimes a person would borrow so much money that they wouldn't be able to pay it back. And you know what would happen to them? If they weren't able to pay back their debts, they would be thrown into prison.

A special prison called the debtor's prison. And the warden would then get a list of all of that person's debts. And they wouldn't be allowed out until all of those debts were paid. Until the very last cent was paid.

[9 : 39] But of course there was a problem. I wonder if you've noticed it. The problem with that system is that if they're locked up in debtor's prison, they wouldn't be able to go find work to get the money to pay back their debts.

And so the only way someone in debtor's prison would get out is if someone else from outside came and paid their debt for them. A friend or a family member.

And when that happened, you know what the warden would do? When their debt was paid and the warden checked it against the list, he would take that page with all the debts written on it. And he would write one word across the whole thing in big red ink.

And that word was finished. The same word Jesus uses here on the cross. Because you see what Jesus is telling us. He's telling us just how he accomplished God's plan to save us.

And he's telling us he did that by paying all of our debts for us. Because the truth is, every time we sin against God and ignore him in the world that he's made, we store up debts next to our names that must be repaid.

[10 : 44] You know, God can't just overlook sin if he's a perfect and holy judge. And what's more, we can't pay those debts ourselves. We're trapped. We're locked up.

We can't pay the debts against God because we can't stop sinning. You know, lots of people think they can undo their sins by, you know, doing a lot of good works and a lot of good deeds and religious things.

But that wouldn't work in a courtroom on earth, let alone God's heavenly courtroom. It's not like a bank robber who's been caught will go to the judge and say, oh, but I give some money to charity or I help old ladies across the road or, you know, I recycle.

You know, that's not going to pay for his crime. And so we mustn't think that us doing good deeds is going to wipe out our debts against God, pay for our sins. We can't pay our debts.

The only way they can be cleared is if someone from outside comes and pays them on our behalf, someone who has no debts of their own to pay. Well, that's exactly what Jesus did when he died on the cross.

[11 : 51] And that's why the plan was always for him to die. And we know that because there's another thing that happens according to plan here. The last thing I want to tell you about this morning. Also something you may have noticed or maybe it escaped your attention.

Jesus was killed during the Jewish holiday of Passover. And it's very important that we understand why. Now, the Jews didn't plan that. They didn't plan to execute Jesus on Passover.

In fact, it was a problem for them that it happened on Passover. But God planned that. And the reason he did is because during Passover, the Israelites would remember how God rescued them from Egypt all those years ago.

When he brought his judgment on every house in Egypt. And the only way they could escape that judgment was to sacrifice a Passover lamb. So that when God passed over the house, it would be spared.

But it couldn't be any old lamb. We read in the Old Testament, God said it had to be unblemished, clean. And a very interesting detail that we read in Exodus. None of its bones were allowed to be broken.

[12 : 57] In other words, it had to be perfect. But why? I mean, they were going to kill this lamb anyway. Why couldn't it just be any old lamb? Well, because you see, all of those Passover lambs were only ever meant to point us to Jesus.

And that's why none of his bones were broken. And that's why John mentions it here. To show us that he is actually the real Passover lamb. He's the one that's spotless. He's the one that's without sin.

And so he's the only one who's capable of paying your debts against God. And that's why only Jesus is able to take your record and write finished across it.

And that's what he did. But has he done that for you? Have your debts against God been canceled yet? Ask yourself. Have you been saved from your sin?

Because there's only one thing you need to do to make sure you are. And if you haven't done it, you should do it this morning. And John tells us what that is. There's only one thing that he wants us to do after reading this.

[13 : 59] And he mentions it in verse 35. You can look at it if you have your Bible in front of you. He tells us why he wrote all of this. And he says this. The man who saw it, that's him, has given testimony.

And his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth. And he testifies so that you also may believe. Now that's all you need to do.

Believe this. It's very simple. Almost too simple. But it's because Jesus has completed his mission. He's done it all. So all that's left for you to do is believe in him.

Believe in that. And you think, oh, but what do I actually have to do? What must I do to be saved? Just believe. Because if you truly believe in Jesus, that he saved you and he is the king and he is your Lord, then that will change the way you live.

You don't need to be told. And that's why all you need to do is believe that this is true. But not everyone does. Some, when they look at Jesus, they see a man who died a tragic death and no more.

[15 : 06] But then there are others who realize the opposite. They realize that by dying, when Jesus said his final words, it is finished. At that moment, he accomplished the mission that he came to do.

And they believe that with all their heart and they know that their debts have been written off because Jesus died and said, it is finished. And so that they can step out of debtors' prison and begin a new life in relationship with God.

Have you done that? Have you believed that with all your heart? Do you know in your heart of hearts this morning that Jesus has written finished across your record? Or do you still doubt?

Well, there's no reason to doubt any longer because of what Jesus said on the cross. It is finished. You don't have to doubt. All that's left for you to do is believe in that. To put your faith in Jesus, the one who came to pay your debts for you and to follow him into new life, to live life with him as your king and savior.

Believe. That's all you need to do. And if you want to do that now and if you haven't done that, well then, Good Friday is the best time to do it. And so if you want to do that now, I want to pray a prayer which you can follow along in your heart silently after me as I pray it.

[16 : 18] If you want to now believe in Jesus and tell God that you put your faith in him. And so let's pray you can follow along in your heart after me. Dear Lord Jesus, I believe that you came to this earth to pay for my sins.

I believe that when you died on the cross, you paid for them in full. Thank you for saving me from my sins. Help me now to live in light of that.

Help me to trust you as my savior and help me to follow you as my king. Amen. Amen.
Amen.