Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν Τετέλεσται tétélestai καὶ κλίνας "Jesus said, It is ·finished and died" John 19:30



A Short Study & Meditation of the Greek Word 'tétélestai'

A Christian Outreach Booklet by truegritt @ 2018

Of all the last sayings of Jesus as he was dying on the cross, none is more important or more poignant than *tetélestai* [It is finished!]

The Greek word *tetélestai* literally translated means 'it is finished', and they only appear in two verses of the New Testament *John 19:2 and John 19:30*

- After this, Jesus knew that everything had been ·done [finished; completed] tetélestai. So that the Scripture would ·come true [be fulfilled], he said, "I ·am thirsty". John 19:28 EXB
- When Jesus ·tasted [Lreceived] the ·vinegar [sour wine], he said, "It is ·finished" [completed; accomplished] *tetélestai*. Then he bowed his head and ·died [Lgave up/yielded his spirit]. *John 19:30 EXB*

When Jesus uttered those words, he was declaring that the debt owed to his Father was wiped away completely and forever. It was not that Jesus wiped away any debt that he owed to the Father; Jesus alone eliminated the debt owed by mankind – the debt of sin:

Meaning & Significance

The Greek Word terebect (tetélestai) is the perfect tense of the verb téleo whis derived from télos (an achieved goal, a consummation, a result attained bring something to a successful end, to its intended goal, to bring to an end complete, to accomplish).

Tετέλεσται or tetélestai is a crucial word because it signifies the successful enca particular course of action. It is the word we would use for example when make the final payment on a new car or the word we would use when we cre the finishing line of a school sports event, or successfully finish our homework a project. The word means more than just "I survived!" and I did exactly what I set out to do and it is finished!"

It does not therefore simply mean to complete a task; it means to carry someth out fully and to bring it to the finish or to perfection. It follows therefore t Jesus' cry of *tetélestai* is a word of finality and stands finished and it always be finished! His work of redemption is complete and nothing more is needed can be added or even taken from it.

The word *tetélestai* in the perfect tense of the verb therefore describes a past completed act with present effect, emphasising that the past completed event of the death of the Lord Jesus on the tree is ongoing and has ongoing, even permanent effects. In other words, even though Jesus' sacrifice occurred in the past its consequences are eternal and when Jesus declared *tetélestai* he was saying that his mission to redeem sinners had reached its intended goal, namely that to all who believe in his death and resurrection (the redeemed) would live forever.

Our Redeemer's ransom payment is sufficient for this life and the life to come! May God enable us by his Spirit, to live victoriously in light of the truth of this "Word of the Cross", that one great word *tetélestai*, which is the "power of God" to us "who are being saved, daily by the Spirit".

Just prior to his arrest by the Romans, Jesus prayed his last public prayer, asking the Father to glorify him, just as he (Jesus) had glorified the Father on earth:

• I have glorified you on earth by completing the work that you have given me to do. *John 17:4 LEB*

The work Jesus was sent to do was to seek and save that which is lost:

- For the Son of Man came to seek and to save those who are lost." Luke 19:10 LEB
- for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God made publicly available as the mercy seat through faith in his blood, for a demonstration of his righteousness, because of the passing over of previously committed sins ... Romans 3:23-25 LEB

To provide atonement for the sins of all who would ever believe in him:

• .. everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. 24 Yet God freely and graciously declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. 25 For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past. *Romans* 3:23-25 NLT 2013

• 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 ESV

Old Testament Prophecies

Also completed was the fulfilment of all Old Testament prophecies, symbols, and foreshadowing of the coming Messiah. From Genesis to Malachi, there are over 300 specific prophecies detailing the coming of the Anointed One, all fulfilled by Jesus. From the seed who would crush the serpent's head of Genesis 3:15, to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, to the prediction of the messenger of the Lord (John the Baptiser) who would prepare the way for the Messiah, all prophecies of Jesus' life, ministry, and death were fulfilled and finished at the cross:

- I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."

 Genesis 3:15 NRSV
- that while we were spiritually dead in our disobedience, he brought us to life with Christ. It is by God's grace that you have been saved. *Ephesians 2:5 GNT*

Although the redemption of mankind was the most important task ever and the sufferings that Jesus endured while on the earth and especially in his last hours were at last over, God's will for Jesus was accomplished in his perfect obedience to the Father:

- "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me. John 5:30 NRSV
- ... for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. *John 6:38 NRSV*

Most importantly, the power of sin, Satan and death was finished; no longer would mankind endure the flaming arrows of the evil one:

• And ·also [in addition to all this; or in all circumstances] use the shield of faith with which you can ·stop [extinguish] all the ·burning arrows [fiery darts] of the Evil One. *Ephesians 6:16 EXB*

By raising the "shield of faith" in the One who completed the work of redemption and salvation, we can by faith live as new creations in Christ. Although the death of Jesus on the tree or stake was the finished work that he came to do for the Father, it was also the beginning of new life for all who were once "dead in trespasses and sins". For all who believe are made "alive with Christ" through faith in his redeeming work.

- In the past you were ·spiritually dead ·because of [or in] your sins and ·the things you did against God [transgressions]. *Ephesians 2:1 EXB*
- When Jesus ·tasted [Lreceived] the ·vinegar [sour wine], he said, "It is ·finished [completed; accomplished] *tetélestai*. Then he bowed his head and ·died [Lgave up/yielded his spirit]. *John 19:30 EXB*

Inspiring Quotes

Tetélestai conveys an ocean of meaning in a drop of language, a mere drop. It would need all the other words that ever were spoken, or ever can be spoken, to explain the everlasting impact of this one word. It is altogether immeasurable. It is high; I cannot attain to it; it is deep; I cannot fathom it. It is finished! tetélestai is the most charming note in all of Calvary's music. The fire has passed upon the Lamb. He has borne the whole of the wrath that was due to his people. This is the royal dish of the feast of love." C H Spurgeon

'It is surely not too much to say, that of all the seven famous sayings of Jesus Christ on the cross, none is more remarkable than *tetélestai*.' C Ryle

'Eternity will be needed to make manifest all that *tetélestai* contains.' A W Pink

'All the funds necessary to pay for our total redemption were put up by Jesus Christ on the Cross.' *Tony Evans*

'He took my bankruptcy and covered it with his solvency. He didn't just make a down payment and then expect me to keep up the instalments.'

W Wiersbe

'What a grand utterance is *tetélestai*. Now we are safe, for salvation is complete. To the last farthing the debt of sin was now all discharged. The atonement and propitiation were made once and for all and forever, by the one offering made in Jesus' body on the Tree. There was the cup; Hell was in it; the Saviour drank it and he drained it till there is not a dreg left for any of his people. The great ten-thronged whip of the Law was worn out upon his back. There is no lash left with which to smite one for whom Jesus died. The great cannonade ("continuous heavy gunfire") of God's justice has exhausted all its ammunition—there is nothing left to be hurled against a child of God. Sheathed is thy sword, O Justice! Silenced is thy thunder, O Law! There remains nothing now of all the grief and pains and agonies with which chosen sinners ought to have suffered for their sins, for Christ has endured all for his own beloved.' *Charles Spurgeon*

'Since the foundation of the world there never was a single word uttered, in which such diversified and important matter was contained. Every word indeed that proceeded from our Saviour's lips deserves the most attentive consideration: but *tetélestai* eclipses all. To do justice to it is beyond the way of men or angels: its height, and depth, and length, and breadth, are absolutely unsearchable.' *Charles Simeon*

Although only one word in Greek, the word *tetélestai* can also be translated 'Paid in Full', and no *one* word ever uttered has so changed the history and destiny of mankind:

'On Calvary the note (debt) was paid in full (tetélestai). H H Hobbs

'If Christ had not paid the full penalty, there would still be condemnation left for us; but since he has paid the full penalty that is due to us, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.'

Wayne Grudem

'Never before and never after was one word spoken, which contains and means so much. It is the shout of the mighty Victor. Who can measure the depths of this one word!' A C Gaebelein

Looking at the Cross we see the work of redemption completed; looking at the open tomb we see Jesus' finished work fully accepted by the Father.

When the Lord Jesus said *tetélestai* he was saying that the sin debt was 'paid in full!' and his righteousness has been credited to our account:

The Payment Required For Sin Is Death

- For the ·payment [wages] for sin is death. But God gives us the free gift of ·life forever [eternal life] in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Romans 6:23 EXB*
- ... but you must not eat the fruit from the tree ·which gives the [of the] knowledge of good and evil [Ceating from this tree would make Adam, not God, the determiner of right and wrong]. If you ever eat fruit from that tree, you will [certainly] die!" Genesis 2:17 EXB
- [Therefore, just as] Sin came into the world ·because of what one man did [through one man], and with sin came death. ·This is why [...and so; or and in this way] ·everyone must die [death spread/passed to all people] because everyone sinned. *Romans 5:12 EXB*
- · for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. *Hebrews 9:26 NRSV*
- "But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself" *Hebrews 9:26 LEB*
- Jesus said to them, "My food is to do ·what the One who sent me wants me to do the will of the One who sent me] and to ·finish [complete] his work.

 John 4:34 EXB

His empty tomb and his resurrection are indisputable testimony to the fact that the Father accepted his Son's payment for sin on our behalf, as our Substitute. Thus, *tetélestai* is not a cry of defeat of a dying Man, but a cry of triumph of a Living, Life Giving Redeemer and a proclamation that the Work of Redemption had been fully, finally and forever accomplished:

- Having ·finished [completed] the work you gave me to do, I ·brought you glory [glorified/honoured you] on earth [C by leading people to praise God]. John 17:4 EXB
- Just as Abraham "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," 7 so, you see, those who believe are the descendants of Abraham. *Galatians 3:6-7 NRSV*
- For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." Romans 4:3 NRSV

- [Therefore] Since these children ·are people with physical bodies [have in common their flesh and blood], Jesus himself ·became like them [shared their humanity; likewise shared the same things]. He did this so that, by dying, he could destroy the one who has the power of death the devil and free those who were ·like slaves [held in slavery] all their lives because of their fear of death. Hebrews 2:14-15 EXB
- ·God will accept us also [L...to whom it will be credited/counted] because we believe in the One who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

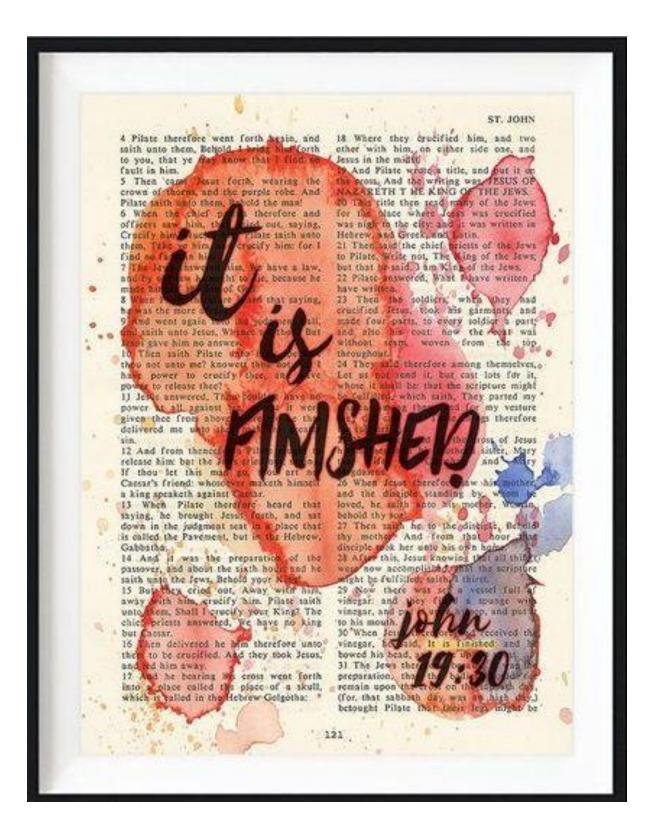
 Romans 4:24 EXB

Christ has paid the debt and totally destroyed the power of Satan, of sin and of death. The Champion accepted the challenge to do battle for our soul's redemption against all our foes. He met Sin in all its horrible, terrible, all-but powerful evil which led and nailed him to the Cross. Yet in that deed Jesus nailed Sin also to the tree. There they both did hang together - Sin and Sin's Destroyer. Sin destroyed Christ and by that destruction Christ destroyed Sin:

- ... and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. Hebrews 9:12 NRSV
- But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, "he sat down at the right hand of God. *Hebrews 10:12 NRSV*
- Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3:8 NRSV

Every requirement of the Law has been satisfied and God's holy wrath against sin has been satisfied (or propitiated):

• God ·sent [or appointed; or presented] him ·to die in our place to take away our sins [as a sacrifice of atonement; or as the mercy seat; as a propitiation; Cthe Greek term could mean the place where sacrificial blood was dripped (the mercy seat) or the sacrifice itself; it implies an atoning sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God]. We receive forgiveness through faith in ·the blood of Jesus' death [his blood]: ·that God always does what is right and fair [his righteousness], as in the past when he was patient and ·did not punish people for their sins [passed over/delayed punishment for previously committed sins]. Romans 3:25 EXB



- For this reason Jesus had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every way so he could be their [become a] merciful and faithful high priest in ·service [the things pertaining] to God. Then Jesus could ·die in their place to take away [make atonement for; be the sacrifice that pays for; be the sacrifice that appeases God's wrath against] their sins [the sins of the people]. Hebrews 2:17 EXB
- ... and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world, 1 John 2:2 NRSV

Redemption is eternally secured; we are reconciled in Christ's "fleshly body through death" that we might be presented before God "holy and blameless and beyond reproach:"

- In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. 1 John 4:10 NRSV
- But now God has ·made you his friends again [reconciled you] through Christ's death in the body [his physical body; the body of his flesh], so that he might bring you into God's presence as people who are holy, with no wrong [without blemish; as were sacrificial animals], and with nothing of which God can judge you quilty [blameless; innocent; free of accusation]. Colossians 1:22 EXB

The Lord Jesus Christ has utterly wiped out [completely removed or obliterated) the condemning evidence of broken laws and commandments which always hung over our heads, and has completely annulled it by nailing it over his own head on the Cross. Then having drawn the sting of all the powers which ranged against us he exposed them, shattered, empty and defeated in his final glorious triumphant act!"

When he completed the Work of Redemption Jesus cried with a loud voice tetélestai [it is finished!]:

• When Jesus ·tasted [received] the ·vinegar [sour wine], he said, "It is ·finished [completed; accomplished]. tetélestai" Then he bowed his head and ·died [gave up/yielded his spirit]. John 19:30 EXB

Erwin Lutzer puts it this way:

'This means that my sins are on Jesus, not on me. Yes, there is sin within me but not on me. My sinful nature keeps luring me toward sin, and even in my best moments my works are tainted with selfish motives; but legally, I am accepted on the basis of the merit of Jesus. Figuratively speaking, I have a new set of clothes and a clear record in heaven. The righteousness of Jesus has been (forever) credited to my account.' *Erwin Lutzer*

• [For] The ·teaching [message; word] about the cross is ·foolishness [folly] to those who are ·being lost [headed for destruction; perishing], but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 1 Corinthians 1:18 EXB

When Jesus cried *tetélestai* on the cross, he was saying that whoever places his trust in his sacrificial death on their behalf, receives as it were a "certificate of debt" with the inscription of *tetélestai* indicating that all his or her "faults or sins" (past, present and future) against God have been paid for in full!

Mankind owes a debt, a debt that lists all the rules we failed to follow; yet God forgave us of that debt. He took it away and nailed it to the cross:

- You were spiritually dead because of your sins and because you were not free from the power of your sinful self. But God gave you new life together with Christ. He forgave all our sins. *Ephesians 2:1 EXB*
- He ·cancelled [wiped out; erased] the ·record [certificate] of debt, ·which listed all the rules we failed to follow [with its decrees that were against us; ^C the record of sins revealed through the OT law. He ·took it away [set it aside; destroyed it] and nailed it to the cross. 15 'God [or Christ; He] ·stripped the spiritual rulers and powers of their authority [disarmed/despoiled the rulers and authorities]. With the cross, he won the victory and ·showed the world that they were powerless [publicly shamed them; made a public spectacle of them; like a triumphant general displaying his captives in a victory parade]. Colossians 2:14-15 EXB
- And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it, 14 erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it. *Colossians 2:13-15 NRSV*

• He did this by ·ending [setting aside; nullifying] the law of commands and rules ·by giving his own body [in his flesh; this phrase may go with the previous sentence]. His purpose was to make the two groups of people become one new ·people [humanity; person; man] in him and in this way make peace. *Ephesians 2:15 EXB*

'We can stand with confidence despite the thunder of the law and the lightening flash of justice, for we are safe beneath the cross. He paid the very last cent of the wages of our sin.' Charles Spurgeon

- But if we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins, because ·we can trust God to do what is right [he is faithful and righteous/just;] He will ·cleanse [purify] us from all ·the wrongs we have done [unrighteousness].

 1 John 1:9 EXB
- [For; Because] The ·payment [wages] for sin is death. But God gives us the free gift of ·life forever [eternal life] in Christ Jesus our Lord.

 Romans 6:23 EXB

When we sin we can now fix our minds and dwell on the truth of *tetélestai*, and then put that sin on God's ledger and write *Paid in Full* next to it! The truth inherent in the word *tetélestai* should give every believer great assurance, comfort and peace that all of our sin debt, past, present and future, is *paid in full* and there remains no sacrifice whatever to be paid! There is nothing we must or even could contribute to the remission of our debt, except receive the "free gift of eternal life" by faith:

- Jesus, "having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God." *Hebrews 10:12 EXB*
- God made ·Christ [the one] who ·had no sin [or never sinned; Ldid not know sin] to become sin for us, so that in ·Christ him] we could become ·right with [the righteousness of] God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 EXB

Satan may accuse Christians of "high treason" against God but now and forever "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous:"

• My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:1-2 NRSV

"The general 'worship' word of mankind is 'do' but the word of the Christian is done or tetélestai! [It is finished!] is the believer's all-embracing and all conquering word. Love has fulfilled his self-imposed task. Jesus, as the Substitute for sinners, was condemned to die; he died that he might finish the work of our redemption. our sins have received their death-blow; the robe of righteousness has received its last thread." Charles Spurgeon

- Because of God you are ·in [one with; in relationship with] Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God. ·In Christ we are put right with God, and have been made holy, and have been set free from sin [...and became for us righteousness, holiness, and redemption]. *1 Corinthians* 1:30 EXB
- But after ·Christ [this one; Cthis priest] offered one sacrifice for sins, forever, he sat down at the right ·side [hand] of God. *Hebrews 10:12 EXB*

Hymn writer E M Hall puts it this way: 'Jesus paid it all, All to him I owe; Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.'

It is done, completed, finished, and it is perfect! It needs no addition; it can never suffer any diminution. Let all mankind for whom the Son of God died now lay hold of this most precious thought; that we who believe are perfectly accepted in Christ:

- [Therefore,] Since we have been ·made right with God [declared righteous; justified] by our faith, we have peace with God. This happened through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1 *EXB*
- And since we have now been ·made right with God [declared righteous; justified] by ·the blood of Christ's death [his blood], ·we will surely also [how much more shall we...!] be saved through Christ from ·God's anger [final punishment; the wrath]. *Romans 5:9* EXB
- And those God ·chose to be like his Son [predestined; chose beforehand], he also called; and those he called, he also ·made right with him [declared righteous; justified]; and those he ·made right [declared righteous; justified], he also glorified [both a past act in Christ, and a future transformation]. Romans 8:30 EXB

• Let us ·look only to [keep our eyes on] Jesus, the ·One who began [Pioneer/Founder of; or Leader/Prince of] our faith and who ·makes it perfect [completes it]. He ·suffered death on [endured] the cross, ·accepting the shame as if it were nothing [disregarding/despising the shame] because of the joy that ·God put before [lay ahead for] him. And now he is sitting at the right ·side [L hand] of God's throne. Hebrews 12:2

It does not go to a limited extent, but goes the whole way. Our unrighteousness is now and forever covered; we are entirely and irrevocably free from condemnation.

'Consummatum est.' (the work is done, completed, finished!). Redemption is accomplished and the salvation of all who believe is forever secured. Sin will never be mentioned against them anymore, forever. Oh, wondrous deed of love! Oh, mighty feat of love accomplished once for all!"

'We need not fear that either sin or Satan or law shall condemn us at the last day.' J C Ryle

• [For] Anyone who enters God's rest ·will rest [or has also rested] from his work as God did. 11 Let us ·try as hard as we can [strive; make every effort] to enter ·God's [that] rest so that no one will ·fail [be lost; fall] by following the example of those who ·refused to obey [or did not believe; were unfaithful]. Hebrews 4:10-11 EXB

We may lean back on the thought that we have a Saviour who has done all, paid all, accomplished all, performed all that is necessary for our salvation. We may now take up the challenge of Paul the Apostle and ask "Who is the one who condemns?

- So now, those who are in Christ Jesus are not ·judged guilty [condemned; punished for their sins]. *Romans 8:1 EXB*
- ·But people cannot do any work that will make them right with God. So they must trust in him [But for the one who does not work, but trusts in God], who ·makes even evil people right in his sight [justifies/makes righteous the ungodly]. Then God ·accepts their faith, and that makes them right with him [credits/counts their faith for righteousness]. 6 David said the same thing.

It has been well said that Christ's Resurrection is the Father's "AMEN" to the Son's declaration of *tetélestai* [It is finished!]

He said that people are ·truly blessed [happy; spiritually fulfilled] when God, ·without paying attention to their deeds [apart from works], ·makes people right with himself [credits/counts righteousness to them].

Romans 4:5-6 EXB

- Who can ·say God's people are guilty [condemn; pronounce punishment]? No one, because Christ Jesus died, but he was also raised from the dead, and now he is on God's right ·side [hand;], ·appealing to God [interceding; pleading] for us. *Romans 8:34 EXB*
- Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

 Matthew 11:28-30 BSB
- ·God has made us what we are [For we are his handiwork/workmanship/work of art]. In Christ Jesus, God ·made [created] us to do good works, which God planned in advance for us to live our lives doing. *Ephesians 2:10 EXB*
- That is [or Just as; or For; Because], in Christ, he chose us before the ·world was made [foundation of the world] so that we would be his holy people people ·without blame [or unblemished; as are sacrificial animals] before him. Ephesians 1:4 EXB
- For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, "As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest," although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.

Hebrews 4:3 ESV

The work of redemption is now finished through the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every stumbling block is rolled out of the road and every gate is opened.

- After this, Jesus knew that everything had been ·done [finished; completed] tetélestai. So that the Scripture would ·come true [be fulfilled], he said, "I ·am thirsty". John 19:28 EXB
- When Jesus ·tasted [received] the ·vinegar [sour wine], he said, "It is ·finished" [completed; accomplished] *tetélestai*. Then he bowed his head and ·died [gave up/yielded his spirit]. *John 19:30 EXB*

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