

**It is finished! 1 March 2009. John 19. 28-30.**

My reading this evening comes from John 19 - commencing at verse 28. **[John 19. 28-30.]**

'Jesus', we read, '*knowing that all things were now accomplished*'. John used that exact expression, 'Jesus knowing' three times in the second half of his gospel.

At the beginning of chapter **13**, we were told that the Lord knew *that His hour had come*, 13. 1; 'Now before the feast of the Passover', we read, 'Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart ('cross the frontier') from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end'.

And at the beginning of chapter **18** we were told that He knew *all that His hour involved*, 18. 4; Judas, together with a detachment of Roman troops, and temple police from the chief priests and Pharisees, came, we are told, with lanterns, torches, and weapons to the garden of Gethsemane. 'Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him', far from fleeing or taking refuge among the gnarled and twisted olive trees of the Garden, 'went forward and said to them, Whom do you seek?'

Now, in chapter **19**, we are told that He knew that *His hour was forever past*, 19. 28; 'After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished ('that all was now finished' – the same word), that the scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" For *He* not only knew it – He wanted *others* to know it. And yet one of the many aggravations of crucifixion was a raging, burning thirst. His mouth was dry, and He needed first to have His parched throat moistened. Hence that 'I thirst'. And the One who had earlier refused *the drugged wine*, which would have dulled and clouded His senses, now gladly accepts *the sour wine*, that all might hear that one, that all-important word – 'Finished – completed – accomplished'.

Some of you may know the name 'Hudson Taylor'. It was some 155 years ago<sup>1</sup> (in September 1853) that James Hudson Taylor left the UK for China as a pioneering missionary. There he founded the China Inland Mission.<sup>2</sup> During his 51 years of service in China, his Mission established 20 mission stations, brought 849 missionaries to the field, trained some 700 Chinese workers, and developed a witnessing Chinese church of 125,000. It has been said that at least 35,000 were converted through him personally and that he baptized in the region of 50,000.<sup>3</sup>

The story really began when, as a lad in his teens, Hudson Taylor took and read a pamphlet from his father's library - which pamphlet made much of the words, 'The Finished Work of Christ!' 'There dawned upon me', Hudson Taylor later wrote, 'the joyful conviction that, since the whole work was finished and the whole debt paid upon the Cross, there was nothing for me to do but to fall upon my knees, accept the Saviour, and praise Him for evermore!'<sup>4</sup>

And Hudson Taylor is only one among countless thousands to whom this cry of Jesus has come to mean so much. But I want us to focus our minds for a short time on the Saviour's words, 'It *is* finished', and to ask, not what this cry meant to Hudson Taylor or what it means to us, but what did the cry mean *to Jesus Himself?* In its fullness, it is, of course, impossible for any of us to know – but I suggest that to the Lord Jesus it *must* have been – at the very least – a cry of *triumph*, a cry of *satisfaction*, and – dare I say – a cry of *relief*.

It was most certainly a cry of triumph – of victory.<sup>5</sup> For, contrary to all appearances, His crucifixion and death were *no tragedy*. This was not the despairing moan of a helpless martyr – not a sigh of exhaustion, pain, despair or defeat. Jesus died with the cry of a victor on His lips.

The Lord Jesus didn't fall into the category of those of whom He once spoke – who undertake a work which, in the event, they are unable to finish – 'which of you', He said, according to Luke 14, 'intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it ... lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish', Luke 14. 28-30.

You may remember *the men of Babel* – who for entirely different reasons to the man of whom Jesus spoke – 'left off building', KJV – 'stopped building', Gen. 11. 8 – and who never completed the tower and city which they had begun. The Lord Jesus was no *Samson*, who, we read, only 'began' to deliver God's people Israel from their Philistine oppressors – leaving others – Samuel, Saul and notably David – to finish the work, Judges 13. 5. Speaking of David, the Lord Jesus was no *Joab* – David's nephew and commander of David's army – of whom the Bible says that he '*began* to number (the people), but he *did not finish*, because wrath came on Israel' (on account of the census – David's bright ideal)', 1 Chron. 27. 24. For Joab's part – who had raised an objection, but had been over-ruled by King David – 'he did not count Levi and Benjamin among them, for the king's word (David's command) was abominable to Joab', 21. 6, but in any case his work was interrupted by God's wrath which 'came on Israel'.

Ah, no – unlike the man of Luke 14, unlike the men of Babel, unlike Samson, and unlike Joab – the Lord Jesus

finished what He had begun.

On one occasion, in the face of the many problems confronting him, Moses was all set to give in. Concerning his task, he said that he was not able to bear the people alone, '*It is too heavy*', were his words, Num. 11. 14. Similarly, on one occasion, the prophet Elijah found the way too hard, became thoroughly despondent and was all set to throw in the towel, crying, '*It is enough*', 1 Kings 19. 4. The Lord Jesus faced waves of opposition altogether unknown to either prophet, and yet He continued, undeterred and undaunted, until He could say – not '*It is too heavy*' or '*It is enough*' – but '*It is finished*', John 19. 30.

Beyond any shadow of doubt, His 'It is finished' was a mighty word of *triumph*!

But surely it was to Him also a cry of great – of immense – satisfaction. As a rule, the greater the task, the greater the satisfaction in completing it. Think of Solomon. King Solomon readily acknowledged that the Temple which he built on Moriah's mount in Jerusalem couldn't really contain or house the Living God – who, in any case, as Solomon said, the very heaven of heavens itself cannot contain. Yet Solomon must have felt a sense of tremendous satisfaction when he surveyed his completed House of Gold. 2 Chronicles 3. 1 says that, 'Solomon *began* to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared to David his father' – a point repeated in two other places in the books of Kings and Chronicles.<sup>6</sup> But no less than nine times in the books of Kings and Chronicles we read of Solomon in connection with building the temple that he '*finished it*'.<sup>7</sup> He *began* and he *finished* - it was a great achievement. Full marks, Solomon.

But far more impressive than ever the construction of the Temple at Jerusalem had been was the creation of the heavens and the earth – of which it was said, 'Thus the heavens and the earth were *finished*, and all the host of them', Gen. 2. 1. I understand that the *estimated* diameter of the *known* universe is anything up to 40 billion light years – that is, up to 240,000 million, million, million, miles across – give or take a few feet – and apparently expanding. Think of it – some *estimate* the universe to comprise 100,000 million galaxies – each comprising, on average, 100,000 million stars – that's 10,000 billion, billion stars. If I could count to 3 million in one second, it would only take me 100 million years to count them all. Yes, the creation of the heavens and the earth was certainly a most impressive achievement.

But I want to tell you that here at Golgotha we witness an infinitely *more* impressive work. Perhaps someone might question that claim. And so, as evidence, I will ask four simple questions about each of these three great finished works.

### 1. Who performed the work?

First, building the temple at Jerusalem? 'Solomon', you say. 'You told us the Bible said so!' Yes, but this was shorthand. If Solomon did it himself, he would still be building! According to the Old Testament, in constructing the Temple, Solomon employed a total workforce of 183,850 men.<sup>8</sup> When creating the cosmos, God needed no workforce of course, but it is clear from scripture that all three Persons of the Godhead shared in the great work. 'In the beginning *God* created', we read – yet He did so *through His Son* – for 'all things were made through Him ... apart from Him ...' – and it was then, we are told, that '*the Spirit of God* moved upon the face of the waters'. But though it is true that, on the cross, the Lord Jesus offered Himself *to God through* the eternal Spirit, it is clear that neither the Father nor the Spirit had any hand in bearing our sins – of the Lord Jesus only is it said, 'Who *His own self* bare our sins in His own body on the tree', 1 Pet. 2. 24 – neither the Father nor the Spirit ever having had a body. For '*by Himself* He purged our sins', Heb. 1. 3. He did it all alone!

### 2. How long did the work take?

According to 1 Kings 6. 37-38, it took Solomon *seven years* – 7½ years to be precise, taking account of the Hebrew months specified – to finish the work of building the Temple. God finished the creation of heaven and earth in just *six days*! But the Lord Jesus finished the vast work of eternal redemption in just *three hours*!

### 3. What did the work cost?

Building a Temple in any way fit for the true and living God had proved enormously expensive work – David and Israel's princes had contributed in advance about 3,700 tons of gold, and about 34,600 tons of silver – in value totalling about £102 billion at today's prices.<sup>9</sup> By way of contrast, God's massive creatorial achievement cost Him only His word – for 'by the word of the Lord were the heavens made ... He spoke and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast', Psa. 33. 6, 9.

But the work which the Lord Jesus finished in John 19 cost Him *everything* – absolutely *everything* – for it cost Him *Himself*.

I wonder if any of you have ever heard the name, Tony Bullimore. Tony Bullimore was a British yachtsman who, a

12 years ago, capsized 2,500 kilometres from the south west coast of Australia in the icy waters of the Southern ocean. He had been at sea for two months, competing in a round-the-world single-handed yacht race held every four years – the latest race being completed only last Thursday by British yachtsman Steve White – who finished in eighth place.<sup>10</sup> Tony Bullimore was sheltered in a tiny air pocket in the upturned hull of his yacht for almost five days. Marine rescue officers at Canberra received a distress signal which triggered a large-scale rescue mission involving the Australian defence forces in a long-distance air-and-sea operation. No one had ever been rescued so deep within the Southern ocean, but, in spite of the appalling weather conditions, Bullimore was eventually rescued by the warship HMAS Adelaide on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> January 1997.

Tony Bullimore later wrote a book, well-titled 'Saved'. In his book, he tells how the following Monday, when he arrived safely at Fremantle, near Perth, 10,000 people lined the dockside, together with 150 journalists. He hobbled to a podium.

One aggressive journalist questioned the huge bill for the rescue, which fell upon Australian taxpayers – of whom no doubt he was one! Warship HMAS Adelaide alone had used 600,000 litres of fuel. Then there had been the risks to the rescue forces. RAAF pilots had skimmed giant waves in winds that rarely dropped below 45 knots.

"There *is* something a little absurd about the tremendous cost of rescuing people who attempt difficult challenges", Bullimore admitted. "I have thought about it very deeply and I don't know whether we have *the right* to lean on society, communities or countries to say, 'Well, here we are, come and rescue us'. Let me say one thing. Thank you Australia for giving me back my life. Thank you very much". No, Tony Bullimore certainly couldn't justify the cost – he was just extremely grateful that it had been paid.

And I am in exactly the same position. I had no *right* to look into heaven and say to the Son of God, 'Well, here I am, come and rescue me'. But, in His matchless love, *He did* – and I too have been "saved"! But at what a cost – His riches turned into poverty; His glory into shame; His bliss into suffering; His throne into a cross. I cannot possibly justify such expense – His poverty, shame, suffering and death on a cross. What I know is that I shall for ever be thankful that, because of a love which knew no limit, *for me* the expense was met, the cost was paid. For, as the apostle Paul once wrote, 'the Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me'.

And

#### 4. What was God's response to the work?

In the case of the Temple, God's pleasure was expressed when it was finished in that - we are twice told<sup>11</sup> - 'the glory of the Lord filled the house of God' – He manifested His presence there in a special way. In the case of the creation of the heavens and the earth, we are told that 'God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good', Gen. 1. 31 – and if *God* said .... Now that is some certificate of satisfaction! But in the case of our Lord's completed work on the Cross, God stooped down, gripped the huge veil in the Jerusalem temple and tore it in two - from top to bottom - that all might know that our Lord's single sacrifice had met God's every demand and that the way into His immediate presence was open – and God then proceeded to shout His loud 'Amen' to what His Son had accomplished by raising Him from among the dead and taking Him to glory to sit at His own right hand.

Yes, the word 'Finished' was undoubtedly for our Lord a cry of satisfaction as well as a cry of victory. But surely it must also have been at the same time a cry of immense relief. The Lord once said that His very food had been to do the will of Him who had sent Him, and to 'finish his work', John 4. 34. And now that He had wholly completed 'the work' His Father had given Him to do, He could leave the world into which the Father had sent Him, and return to the Father.<sup>12</sup> This polluted world had never been – it never could have been – His proper home. He was ever and always a stranger here. Shortly before the Cross, He had spoken longingly in prayer of the glory which He had shared with the Father before the world was, John 17. 5. What relief then it must have been to Him to know that *now*, His mission forever accomplished, He was shortly to re-enter His Father's house - to share that familiar glory with Him again.

I don't think I can do better to close this morning than by repeating the words of Hudson Taylor - 'There dawned upon me the joyful conviction that, since the whole work was finished *and the whole debt paid upon the Cross*, there was nothing for me to do but to fall upon my knees, accept the Saviour and praise Him for evermore!'<sup>13</sup>

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hudson\\_Taylor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hudson_Taylor).

<sup>2</sup> In 1865.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.wholesomewords.org/missions/biotaylor2.html> ]

<sup>4</sup> <http://216.239.59.104/search?q=cache:pbciZrACCoJ:zoelog.wordpress.com/2007/04/16/hudson-taylor-gods-mighty-man-of-prayer/+hudson+taylor+the+whole+debt+paid+upon+the+Cross&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=3&gl=uk>

<sup>5</sup> 'The word eujaggevlion ("gospel") originated in the language of military combat and is a technical term for the announcement of victory'. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, II, 710, 722.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Kings 6. 1 and 2 Chron. 3. 2.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Kings 6. 9, 14, 22; 7. 51; 9. 1, 25; 2 Chron. 5. 1; 7. 11; 8. 16.

<sup>8</sup> That is, 153,600 in 2 Chron. 2. 2, 17-18; plus 30,000 in 1 Kings 5. 13; plus 250 in 2 Chron. 8. 10.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Chron. 22. 14; 29. 4, 7. Solomon 'the king made silver and gold at Jerusalem as plenteous as stones', 2 Chron. 1. 15. A tonne of gold would have a volume equivalent to a cube of side 37.27cm (Approx. 1' 3").  
35,840 ounces in one ton.

In February 2009, gold was £680 for an ounce.  $3,700 \times 35,840 \times 680 = \text{£}90,173,440,000$ .

In February 2009, silver was about £9.80 an ounce.  $34,600 \times 35,840 \times 9.8 = \text{£}12,152,627,000$ .

Total at February 2009 = £102,326,067,000 i.e. over £102 billion.

<sup>10</sup> The *Vendée Globe* is a round-the-world single-handed yacht race, sailed non-stop and without assistance. The race is held every four years. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/dorset/7912773.stm>

<sup>11</sup> 2 Chron. 5. 14; 7. 1.

<sup>12</sup> John 13. 1; 16. 28; 17. 4.

<sup>13</sup> In his own narrative of his conversion, Hudson Taylor quotes James Proctor's hymn:

Nothing either great or small,  
Nothing, sinner, no;  
Jesus did it, did it all,  
Long, long ago.  
'It is finished!', yes, indeed,  
Finished every jot;  
Sinner, this is all you need;  
Tell me, is it not?

<http://www.teachingresources.org/issues/1997Winter/Hudson%20Taylors%20Favorite%20Text.htm>