

# Hymn: Jesus Paid it All

On a hot summer Sunday morning in 1865, Mrs. Elvina Hall (1820-1889) was found in her accustomed place in the church choir loft. But as the pious words of the Reverend Schrick's prayer droned on and on, her thoughts drifted to other things. She pondered the meaning of the cross, and the storied scene flashed before her mind's eye.

High upon a rocky crag, three crosses scarred the afternoon sky. On the outer gibbets hung two notorious thieves. Below, Roman soldiers drank and gambled, waiting for death to overtake the poor wretches suspended above them. It was a public execution, but far more significant than they imagined at the time. Suddenly, the air grew dense and an eerie darkness invaded the scene.

As the soldiers gazed about them in superstitious dread, a triumphant cry pierced the gloom. It came from the figure on the centre cross. One word, in the Greek tongue: "Tetelestai!" Then He was dead. That shout of victory Christ uttered as He died is usually translated "It is finished!" (Jn. 19:30). But it had another meaning back then. It was an accounting term. When a bill was paid, it was commonly stamped with the word "Tetelestai," meaning Paid in Full.

And that is precisely what the death of Christ accomplished.

"[He] bore our sins in His own body on the tree," says Peter (I Pet. 2:24). "He Himself is the propitiation [the full satisfaction of God's justice] for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world," (I Jn. 2:2). The groaning weight of all the world's sin was laid on Christ at Calvary. He bore it in our place.

As the pastor's prayer continued, Mrs. Hall took up her hymn book and, turning to a blank page inside the cover, she began to write. Afterward, she presented the pastor with some simple lines of poetry.

Glancing at them, the pastor was reminded of something that had happened just that week. The church organist, John Grape (1835-1915) had composed a new hymn tune, with no words in mind. He passed it on to Pastor Schrick, suggesting they might find a use for it in future.

Stepping into his study, the pastor laid Mrs. Hall's poem next to the lines of music. In surprise, he saw they fit one another like hand in glove. The words and tune have been partners ever since, in the hymn, "Jesus Paid It All."

## Jesus Paid It All

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1. I hear the Sa - vior say, "Your strength in - deed is small,  
 2. Lord, now in - deed I find your pow'r and yours a - lone,  
 3. For noth - ing good have I, where - by your grace to claim—  
 4. And when, be - fore the throne, I stand in him com - plete,

child of weak - ness, watch and pray, find in me your all in all."  
 can change the le - per's spots and melt the heart of stone.  
 I'll wash my gar - ments white in the blood of Cal - v'ry's Lamb.  
 "Je - sus died my soul to save," my lips shall still re - peat.

Refrain

Je - sus paid it all, all to him I owe;

sin had left a crim - son stain, he washed it white as snow.