

**Text: Hebrews 9:24-28 (Pew Bible, pg.1190)**

**Title: “Mission: Christmas” Pt.3**

## **INTRODUCTION**

I’ve really been blessed by our worship this Christmas season. Our musicians did a magnificent job last Sunday evening in the concert. We’re building toward our Christmas Eve service this Friday night at 6 pm. It’s for the whole family; come and be part of this beautiful evening. Our worship during this Christmas season is part of our witness.

**ILLUSTRATION** – A few weeks back we learned that an atheist organization was planning to run advertisements on city buses with the message, “Millions of people are good without God.” And perhaps you’ve seen some of those advertisements. It’s no coincidence that the ads were run at Christmas ... an effort to counteract the witness of the church during the season when the name Christ is displayed everywhere. There’s been quite a stir about it. The story about this made it all the way to the New York Times last week in an article entitled, “Atheists’ Ads Rattle Fort Worth.” In the article the writer reports that “the reaction from believers has been harsher than anyone in the nonbeliever’s club expected.”

It seems like the only time the world hears from us is when we’re mad about something. What ought to happen is that our worship and witness should fill the air continuously, not just when we’re opposed to something.

I love what happened a couple of months ago in Philadelphia when more than six hundred singers secretly gathered at the large Macy's store in downtown Philadelphia on a Saturday morning. Dressed in street clothes, the singers nonchalantly mingled with other shoppers. This Macy's in Philadelphia happens to be home to the largest organ in the world, the historic Wanamaker organ. Exactly at noon the organist began playing the opening measures to the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's Messiah.

Suddenly, the choir members, sprinkled throughout the store, exploded in song, surprising the shoppers. The video of this event has gone viral on places like YouTube. It shows the amazed shoppers watching the choir giving glory to the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." You could even see that some of the shoppers started singing along.

I can’t think of a better picture of the worship and witness of the people of God as we are out in our world ... and not just at Christmas.

Open your Bibles to Hebrews 9:24 (Pew Bible, pg.1190). Now we need to know *what* happened, but we also need to know *why* it happened. So we’re spending this Christmas season thinking about God’s grand mission in sending His Son Jesus into the world ... Mission: Christmas. Read Hebrews 9:24-28.

The writer of Hebrews explains what was happening when Christ was sent by the Father. It tells us that he “appeared.” Perhaps you noticed that word “appeared” repeated three times in the English

text. In the Greek text they are actually three different words that all mean the same thing ... to be made visible, to be made know, to be manifested.

The writer of Hebrews talks about what happened after the resurrection of Jesus and His ascension into heaven.

**Hebrews 9:24 (NIV) - For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.**

**Hebrews 9:25 (NIV) - Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own.**

**Hebrews 9:26a (NIV) - Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world.**

So Christ has become our High Priest interceding in our behalf before the Father. This great work was pictured in the ministry of the high priest in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple where they would go into the Holy of Holies to offer sacrifices of the blood of animals to atone for the sins of the people. So this is the great work that Jesus has been about since He ascended to the Father.

But before He could *ascend* to that great work, Jesus had to *descend* to do another work. And that is what the next verses are about. What we have here is the Christmas story in an amazing sentence.

**Hebrews 9:26b (NIV) - But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.**

What does this sentence tell us about Jesus' appearing when He was born in Bethlehem's manger and lived in Israel's villages and died on Calvary's cross?

## **1. THE COMPLETE SUFFICIENCY OF HIS APPEARING**

**Hebrews 9:26b (NIV) - But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.**

Notice it says that Christ has appeared "once for all..." And He appeared to offer the sacrifice of His own body. And this sacrifice is so great that it doesn't have to be repeated ever again. It was sufficient for the sins of all the world, and it was sufficient for all of your sins and my sins. There was nothing insufficient or flawed about the death of Jesus on the Cross that would cause God to have to redo it.

**ILLUSTRATION** – In theaters this month people are watching the remake of the movie "True Grit." The original "True Grit" appeared in 1969 starring John Wayne and Glen Campbell. John Wayne won the Best Actor award that year for playing Rooster Cogburn in "True Grit." Well now they have remade "True Grit" starring Jeff Bridges as Rooster Cogburn. Now if you're a John Wayne fan, you know that is just wrong ... it's all wrong. In my humble opinion there was nothing about that movie that made it necessary to remake it.

Well there was nothing about the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the Cross that would cause the Father to remake it. It was completely sufficient.

This is repeated in...

**Hebrews 9:27 (NIV) - Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,**

**Hebrews 9:28 (NIV) - so Christ was sacrificed...**

Now there's something else we need to see about His appearing:

## **2. THE HISTORICAL SEQUENCE OF HIS APPEARING**

**Hebrews 9:26b (NIV) - But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.**

It says Jesus appeared "at the end of the ages" or "at the consummation of the ages." We saw last week that Paul says Jesus was born "at just the right time" or "in the fullness of time." So God is presiding over history. Christ coming was *pictured* in the sacrifices of the old covenant. His coming was *predicted* by the OT prophets. And when everything had unfolded that needed to unfold, God sent His Son.

**ILLUSTRATION** – My Christmas lights are set up on a timer. They come on when darkness begins to descend. You see, in my infinite knowledge I know at what time of the day it begins to get dark. Aren't you impressed? I set the timer to bring the lights on at just the right time.

The same thing was true for the birth of our Savior. Just as certainly as you and I know about what time it is going to get dark this evening, God looked off into the future and knew His own timetable. The Father set the timer long ago in eternity past. The Light came on "at the end of the ages" just at the right time. And the Scripture says that God has already set the timer for the second coming of Christ as well. We'll talk about that in a moment.

Now the next thing we see is...

## **3. THE LIBERATING SUCCESS OF HIS APPEARING**

**Hebrews 9:26b (NIV) - But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.**

What happened is that the coming of Jesus Christ and His death on the Cross accomplished something amazing ... He broke the power of sin.

The phrase "do away with" means to annul or to set aside something.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Occasionally you hear of a marriage being annulled. That means that the legal action that happened when a couple got married and the marriage license was filed at the courthouse was reversed or set aside for whatever reason.

And that's what the Cross of Christ accomplished. Sin was and is the basic reality in the human experience. We are held in its grip and governed by its laws. But Christ came to liberate us from that.

The Scripture says it a little differently in v.28:

**Hebrews 9:28 (NIV) - so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people...**

It was not just to take away "sins," but to take away your sins and my sins ... "the sins of many people."

Do you see friends that the whole issue with sin has been taken care of? Think about this when you struggle with temptation to sin. The vision God had for you when Christ died on the Cross was that you would sin would not be your master. Our sin debt has been paid.

There's something else to see...

#### **4. THE PERSONAL SACRIFICE OF HIS APPEARING**

**Hebrews 9:26b (NIV) - But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.**

Jesus appeared "to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself."

This was a sacrifice of the most cherished, valuable person in the universe ... the Christ, the Son of God. If you ever doubt that you as a sinner could ever be saved and made righteous before God, think about this. Which is greater, my sinfulness and guilt, or the precious blood of the Son of God?

Has it occurred to you that when we doubt that our sins are forgiven we are really committing blasphemy. We're saying that there is something greater than the precious blood of Christ.

Well, there's one more thing for us to ponder today.

#### **5. THE GLORIOUS SEQUEL TO HIS APPEARING**

**Hebrews 9:28 (NIV) - so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.**

This means that as believers we can look forward to His coming, not with a fearful dread of judgment, but with the anticipation of our complete salvation.

Now there are many differences between Jesus' first coming and His second coming. But think of this: Jesus' first coming was announced by the singing angels to some lowly shepherds, and later by a shining star to some seeking men from the East. Jesus' second coming will be announced worldwide with the shout of the archangel and the trumpet call of God. What a glorious day!

And the span of time, however long it may be, between the first coming and the second coming of Jesus is a time in which God has extended His patience and His mercy. He is gathering from all the nations a people all His own. And if haven't received Christ, you are living on borrowed time. Come to Christ today.

## **LORD'S SUPPER**

When we share in the Lord's Supper we are to keep in mind the Lord's two great appearances. The first appearance came at His birth and extended to His death on the Cross and His glorious resurrection.

**1 Corinthians 11:23 (NIV) - For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,**

**1 Corinthians 11:24 (NIV) - and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."**

**1 Corinthians 11:25 (NIV) - In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."**

**1 Corinthians 11:26 (NIV) - For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

When we share together in the Lord's Supper we are remembering not just His first appearing, but also His second appearing.

We must prepare ourselves for this experience.

**1 Corinthians 11:28 (NIV) - A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.**