

WHAT JESUS DID, IS, AND WILL BE DOING (Hebrews 9:24-28)

You can usually discern a person's vocation by the tools he or she uses to do their work.

- If a person uses thread and a sewing machine, that person may be a seamstress or a tailor.
- If a person uses a stethoscope and a scalpel, the odds are pretty high that person is a doctor, and more precisely, a surgeon.
- If a person uses lumber, a power saw, and a pneumatic hammer, he is obviously in construction.
- If a person uses measuring cups, and an oven, she might be a baker or a cook.
- If a person uses the written word, he might be a journalist or an author of some kind.
- If a person uses the spoken word, he might be any number of things, but if he uses more spoken words that are really needed, he is either a politician or a preacher.

In the Bible, we find some interesting tools. Moses made good use of a staff. Samson used the jawbone of a donkey. David used a sling shot, and then a harp, and then a sword.

Jesus often used His touch, but most often, He and His Father used the power of their spoken word. God said, "Let there be . . ." and there was. Jesus said to evil spirits, "Be gone," and they were cast out. He commanded the tempestuous waves and the howling wind, "Be still," and they were. Jesus ordered twelve frightened but eager men, "Follow Me," and they did.

My tools for ministry are the books that I read and the computer on which I type, but both of those involve the use of words. For that reason, of necessity, I must be a student of language. I must pay attention to it and know how it works.

Let me offer a quick grammar review of what you learned in school. You will remember that a sentence needs two things—a noun and a verb. A noun is a person, place, or thing while a verb provides action or a state of being.

The shortest sentence of the Bible is John 11:35. It consists of just two words: "Jesus wept." It is a complete sentence. It has a noun, *Jesus*. It contains a verb, *wept*. The noun answers the question, "Who?" The verb provides the answer to the question, "What?"

Whenever you examine a passage, you need to ascertain who the text is talking about and what action is being discussed, encouraged, forbidden, or commanded. Of course, there are other questions to ask such as, "When, Where, Why? How?" While all of those questions are important and have the primary questions are "Who?" and "What?"

With that in mind, let's go to our text—Hebrews 9:24-28. You don't have to read far into the text to get to the noun, the subject of the passage. It is Christ, the anointed One, the Messiah. He is the hub around which the wheel of this text turns. As we read through this passage, we will come to three key verbs that describe what Jesus has done, is doing, and will do. Let me read the text, and you see if you can catch the three verbs that are

used to describe the activity of Jesus. The three verbs are entered, offered, and appeared. Those three verbs frame the action and form the outline of this message.

From this text, I want to make three simple statements.

Jesus Entered into Heaven to Pray for Us

The author of Hebrews draws a contrast between the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the High Priest of the Jewish faith. Once a year, every year, the High Priest would enter into the Most Holy Place to bring a blood offering before God to atone for the sins of the people. Jesus, however, didn't enter into a building constructed with human hands. He entered into heaven itself. The tabernacle and later the temple were copies of God's abode, the place of His residence.

Recently, I visited in the home of a lady who is taking care of her mother. On the front porch I noticed three pots each of which contained soil and beautiful flowers. I complimented the daughter on the beauty of her flowers. She blushed slightly and confessed, "Well, they are just plastic." They are copies—beautiful copies, realistic copies—but just copies of the real thing.

The High Priest entered a copy each year, but Jesus went to the real place. He entered into heaven itself.

Verse 23, which we looked at two Sundays ago, tells us that Jesus brought with Him a better sacrifice. The High Priest entered the Most Holy Place with the blood of bulls. Jesus entered into the very Presence of God having sacrificed Himself and having shed His blood. He was the perfect sacrifice to which all of the other sacrifices pointed.

The later part of v. 24 tells us why Jesus entered into heaven: "To appear in the presence of God on our behalf." In what sense does Jesus appear before His Father on our behalf? The author of Hebrews dealt with this earlier in his letter. Look at what he wrote in 7:25. Jesus lives to make intercession for us.

Paul picked up on this theme in Romans 8:34. Listen to that verse: "Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us."

This past week I was in Waco, Texas. I was there to attend lectures on Romans 8. They were delivered by N.T. Wright. He is a longtime professor of N.T. in England and for a number of years served as a Bishop in the Anglican Church. He delivered 9 lectures on Romans 8 between Sunday night and Wednesday morning. When we got to v. 34, he said, "Jesus is our man in heaven."

Just think about that. Jesus has the Father's ear. As they look down, the Son nudges the Father and says, "See Matt down there in Enid, OK. He's struggling. He needs our help." And if you belong to Him, He does that for you, too.

When you or someone you love is facing difficulty, you request prayer for yourself or that family member or friend. You are right to do that. We need to pray for one another, and they need us to pray. Have you ever thought about the fact that Jesus is praying for you, too? The wonderful thing is you don't have to ask Jesus to do that; He has promised us in His word that He will do that.

Sometimes, we promise someone that we will pray for them, and then forget. We don't remember until we see them again. We see Joe coming. Under our breath we say, "Lord, help Joe." Then, as Joe comes up to us, we say, "Hey, Joe. Been praying for you. How you doing?"

Jesus doesn't forget. He promises to pray for us, and He actually does. Do you think God the Father listens to Jesus, His Son? When Jesus prays for you, do you think the Father waves Him off and says, "Ahh, you always take their side"?

John carries the idea further and refers to Jesus as our Advocate. We read in 1 John 2:1, "But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

An Advocate is a lawyer. Jesus is our defense attorney; He pleads our case. Like Perry Mason, Jesus never loses a case. The only difference is that Perry Mason only represented innocent people who were wrongly accused. We are guilty people who are rightly accused by the Devil.

When the Devil accused us of wrongdoing, Jesus speaks up and says, "Maybe so, but I have already paid for their sin. I took their punishment." And the Father bangs His gavel and says, "Case dismissed!"

According to our text, the first thing Jesus did was He entered. He entered into heaven to pray for us.

Jesus Offered Himself Once as Our Sacrifice

Look at v. 25. Unlike the High Priest who returns to the Most Holy Place to offer the sacrifice of atonement year after year, Jesus sacrificed Himself once. Look at the end of v. 26 and the beginning of v. 28. Jesus was offered once for the sins of many.

According to v. 26, Jesus' sacrifice of Himself came at the end of the ages. The word means the end of one thing and the beginning of another thing. Clearly, the author is referring to the end of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New Covenant. The Old Covenant was fulfilled in Jesus, and He has inaugurated the New.

It is not as though the Old Covenant didn't work; so, God scraped it and came up with an alternate plan. No. Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the old deal with God, and He established the new deal that is centered on what He has accomplished through His death and resurrection.

The prophet Jeremiah foretold about the coming of this New Covenant. He wrote in Jeremiah 31:31, "Behold, the days are coming declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah." He goes on to describe this new covenant. At the end of v. 34 he announces, "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

The forgiveness of sin is what Jesus achieved on the cross, and that event marks the end of the old and the beginning of the new.

Let me tell you about a man named Greg Koukl. He is what is called a Christian apologist. That means he defends the truth of the Christian faith. For years he has hosted a radio talk show. He has authored several books. He has served as a professor or

apologetics at Biola University. In his book, *The Story of Reality*, he illustrates how the death of Jesus on the cross is the one thing we need to solve the one problem we have. Listen to what he wrote:

Most ailments need particular antidotes. Increasing the air pressure in your tires will not fix a troubled carburetor. Aspirin will not dissolve a tumor. Cutting up credit cards will not wipe out debt that is already owed. If your water pipes are leaking, you call a plumber, not an oncologist, but a plumber will not cure a cancer. Any adequate solution must solve the problem that needs to be solved, and singular problems need singular solutions. Some antidotes are one-of-a-kind cures for one-of-a-kind ailments. Sometimes only one medicine will do the job, as much as we may like it to be otherwise.

Mankind faces a singular problem. People are broken and the world is broken because our friendship with God has been broken, ruined by human rebellion. Humans, you and I—are guilty, enslaved, lost, dead. All of us. Everyone. Everywhere. The guilt must be punished, the debt must be paid, the slave must be purchased. Promising better conduct in the future will not mend the crimes of the past. No, a rescuer must ransom the slaves, a kindred brother must pay the family debt, a substitute must shoulder the guilt. There is no other way of escape.

We come today to remember the one thing Jesus did to solve the pre-eminent problem that we have—the problem of sin and separation from God. We come to remember this new covenant and what Jesus did to establish it.

So far, we have looked at two things Jesus did. We have examined two verbs. There is one more upon which we need to focus. The first was entered. **Jesus entered into heaven to pray for us.** The second was offered. **Jesus offered Himself once as our sacrifice.** Now, we come to the third.

Jesus Has and Will Appear to Save Us Fully

While Jesus offered Himself once, He will appear more than once. The text mentions a present appearance, a past appearance, and a future appearance.

The end of v. 24 is concerned with Jesus' present appearance. The author uses the word *now*. Jesus is now, presently, appearing before His Father on our behalf. We know He is at the Father's right hand interceding for us.

The second half of v. 26 of Jesus' past appearance. This was not an appearance before His Father. Rather, He appeared to this world. He came and appeared at the end of the age, the end of the Jewish dispensation, to deal finally and fully with our sin problem—our guilt before a holy God.

Jesus actually, literally, physically came into this world. The Jesus story is not a make-believe story. It is not a fable. It is history. It actually happened. God appeared among us as one of us. John makes this point at the beginning his first epistle. Listen to the first three verses of that letter as recorded in the New Living Translation:

¹We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, ^[a] whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. ²This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us. ³We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

As surely as Jesus appeared literally and physically the first time, He will appear actually and bodily a second time. Verse 28 is the most overt prophecy of the Jesus' second coming in the entire letter of Hebrews. There is no mistaking what the author is telling us—Jesus is coming again.

The reason for His coming, however, is different. The two are related, but they are distinctly different. Jesus appeared the first time to deal with sin. He will appear the second time to save us. You might object by saying, “Aren't we saved by Jesus' death on the cross which He achieved on His first appearance?” Yes, we are saved in one sense, but this second appearance views our salvation in a different sense.

Our salvation begins with Jesus' death on the cross, but it won't be fully and finally consummated and completed until He returns. It is only upon His return when Jesus will resurrect us. At that time, we will be given a resurrection body, one that is fit for eternity. It is at His return that there will come a new heaven and a new earth. The city of heaven will descend to the new earth and we will live eternally with God on a recreated earth. We will spend eternity with God not up there somewhere. Eternity will be right here on a redeemed and perfected earth. It is then when God's plan for man that was broken when Adam and Even sinned will be fully and finally restored.

Paul announces in Titus 2:13 that we are “waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” The return of Jesus is our blessed hope. It is then that our salvation will be complete.

In what or in whom have you placed your hope?

The first verse of the hymn “The Solid Rock” reveals the only sure place to invest our hope. That verse reads, “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid Rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand.”

I read that the psychologist, Dr. Shane Lopez, is the world's foremost researcher on hope. He claims that hope isn't just an emotion. In his words it is but “an essential life tool.”

Depending on our vocation, we use different tools to do our work. As believers in Jesus, our work is to follow Jesus and live for Him. To succeed in that work, He has given us a wonderful tool called *hope*. In encourage you to become acquainted with that tool and to use it every day that God gives you.