

## ***Thankful He entered heaven; eagerly waiting His return*** (Hebrews 9:23–28)

The entrance of Christ into heaven has advantages for believers. Jesus had explained its importance for the coming of the Spirit (John 16:6–7); the author of Hebrews explains three advantages to us connected with Christ’s priesthood, all of which were pictured in the Day of Atonement given in the O.T. We can rejoice that Jesus has entered heaven, nevertheless we eagerly look forward to His return.

### ***I. Christ has made our worship pleasing (9:23–24).***

1. The O.T. principle was that nearly everything had to be cleansed with blood (9:22). That included the tabernacle and its contents. On the Day of Atonement (see Leviticus 16) blood was sprinkled or smeared on the tabernacle and certain articles, not because of their inherent uncleanness, but “because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites” (Leviticus 16:16, 19). Only then was their worship acceptable.
2. The heavenly “tabernacle” is the “original” of which the earthly was a copy. What was done on earth showed what was done or needed in heaven. Because Christ, the believer’s High Priest, represents in heaven a sinful people, the heavenly also needed cleansing, not because of its own uncleanness, but because it is associated with our worship. The prayers of the saints are in the incense offered in heaven (Revelation 8:3–4), yet we are a people of unclean lips (cf. Isaiah 6:5) defiling all with which we are associated. For our prayers to be a “pleasing aroma” to God, the heavenly things had to be cleansed. That cleansing was accomplished by the blood of Jesus when He entered heaven.

Approach God with humility, knowing that our worship is pleasing to God only because of the cleansing work of Jesus Christ. Be thankful that He entered heaven, making our worship pleasing.

### ***II. Christ has forever done away our sin (9:25–26).***

1. The Jewish high priest entered the Most Holy Place only one day a year, year after year. Get in, get out, come back next year — showing that animals’ blood was not sufficient to do away with sin.
2. Jesus Christ, the believer’s High Priest, has entered the presence of God with His own blood, once for all time. If that one-time sacrifice were not sufficient, it could not have been retroactive, and from the time Adam sinned, Christ would have had to be sacrificed again and again. But by having entered heaven and staying there, He showed that His one sacrifice was sufficient to redeem for all time. Christ’s work on the cross is the focal point in the history of redemption, it thus marks the “consummation” or “end of the ages.”

Christ’s presence in heaven assures us all our sin has forever been done away. He continues there as our Advocate. Rejoice that Jesus entered heaven and stayed.

### ***III. Christ has gained approval of our salvation (9:27–28).***

1. It is a divinely established principle that every person has only one life to live. Each must die. After they die, people must face the results of their lives.
2. Jesus Christ as a man (though also God), by the same principle of man, only died once. His self-sacrifice could only be once and afterwards He life was also evaluated. His life and death took away the sins of many. His resurrection and exaltation to heaven shows that His sacrifice was approved by God.
3. A final, very public approval is coming when Jesus Christ returns bringing salvation to all who wait for Him. Just as the exit of the Jewish high priest from the tabernacle after the sin offerings announced God’s approval of the sacrifice, so also Christ’s “exit” from heaven and His return to earth will not be to deal with sin again, but to bring salvation, completing fully what He has already begun to do in believers.

Rejoice that Christ entered heaven with His sacrifice approved, but look forward eagerly for His return as well to grant believers full salvation.

All who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for their sin can be glad that Christ was exalted and entered heaven as their High Priest. Rest in what Jesus has done, live in light of it, and look forward to His return bringing full salvation with Him.

#### *Questions for further thought and discussion:*

- What effect should it have on your worship (prayer, praise, etc.) realizing that your sinfulness would defile even heaven if not for Christ’s cleansing?
- What would help you, if you are tempted to worry that some sin could not be forgiven? How would you counsel someone who has that struggle? What is important for them to know?
- How should we live in light of the fact that every human being, even Jesus, lives and dies once and then must face judgment, evaluating the results of this life?
- Do you eagerly look for Christ’s return? Why/why not?