

Warnings

The Invitation

Hebrews 4:14-16

May 10, 2026 am

HDBC

As I shared last week, these warning messages have been rather heavy and serious. And this is as they should be. So, today before we get into the message I thought I'd share a BC comic strip that illustrates an important point and goes well with the series. It was found in the Sunday paper back during an era when reading the comics in the paper was still a thing.

Man on island sending note to pen pal by sealing it in a bottle and dropping it in the water. He wrote, *I don't think I believe in God, Heaven, Hell. What should I do?*

He waited a few days and finally the bottle came floating back to him with the reply. In response to his declaration *I don't think I believe in God, Heaven, Hell. What should I do?* He read a simple 2-word reply. ***Don't die!***

This morning we will wrap up the series on ***Warnings*** in the book of Hebrews. And to do so I really want to shift the focus away from a specific warning and wrap it up on a high note by looking at one of the great mountain peaks of truth found in the book of Hebrews. In doing so we'll build on last week's sermon where I gave you seven compelling reasons to take the step of faith to follow Jesus. These seven were found in the first three verses of Hebrews one. They provide a foundation for the entire book. They also build a powerful case for trusting Jesus. But first . . .

The warnings can be summarized in a few statements.

It is possible to know about Jesus, yet not be saved.

It is possible to know how to be saved, and not be saved.

It is possible to come right up to the edge of salvation and remain lost.

It is possible to associate with the church and not be saved.

It is tragic to have opportunities to be saved, yet remain lost.

The warnings in Hebrews are evidence of God's love and grace.

There is no reason to remain unsaved and unforgiven.

Why? Because Jesus has done everything necessary.

Today's passage makes that crystal clear. Hebrews 4:14-16

In His life on earth Jesus filled three functional positions; **prophet, priest, and king**. **As prophet**, He proclaimed the message of the kingdom of God. **As king** he rules over all of His creation. **As priest** he serves as the sufficient mediator between God and humanity.

As Baptists, we don't use the word **priest** very often, even though the NT speaks of the priesthood of all believers. Meaning we no longer need a human mediator. All believers have access to God through Jesus. To understand this access we need to understand how the OT priesthood worked.

They were chosen by God.

They were to be holy and righteous.

They were to be a bridge between God and people.

The nation of Israel was called to be a **kingdom of priests** to the world. **The whole nation!** They ultimately failed to embrace that role. However, God established a system of worship that involved a priesthood for His own people. He gave them specific functions and roles. He set aside one of the twelve tribes of Israel as the priestly tribe, meaning all priest were chose from that tribe. It was the tribe of Levi. Their job to handle sacrifices and tithes, take care of all the functions in the temple and lead the people in worship. They acted as mediators, representing the people to God.

One priest was appointed to be the High Priest. The main one. He was the leader of the priests and he handled the big jobs. The biggest was to go into the very heart of the place of worship, representing the people to God.

I'm going to share more in a moment. But note that our passage clearly indicates that **Jesus is the ultimate High Priest**. All the high priests who came before him were flawed, sinful humans who were serving as they were called, but who were insufficient. God knew this, yet He called and

used them. In doing so they were all pointing to the one who would come who would be sufficient. The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that Jesus is that one. **What do we learn about Jesus as our High Priest?**

1. He Is a great high priest (14)

1) Because of who He is

He is the Son of God. All other high priests had simply been men who had risen through the ranks and been chosen for that role. By the time of Jesus it had become a very politically corrupted office that was more about power and control than spiritual service. But when Jesus came along, for the first time in history the high priest was from a different order.

2) Because of where He served

Notice the phrase *who passed through the heavenlies*. That would have been a shocking statement when it was written. Jesus fulfilled the function of the high priest, but He did not serve in the temple which was located in Jerusalem. He fulfilled His service in the temple not made with hands but in the very presence of His Father in Heaven.

Consider the layout for the temple. (show the slide of the temple)

The inner part mirrored that of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, but the temple was a permanent structure rather than a mobile one. Also temple in Jerusalem during Jesus' day had many additional areas or courtyards that were not part of the tabernacle.

These courtyards were open-air areas designated for specific groups of people. Where you could go was determined by who you were. The further in you went the more restricted it was. The closer the courtyard to the Holy of Holies more restrictive it got. Essentially getting closer to God. More about this in a moment.

Court of the Gentiles. Outer court and the largest of them all. It was accessible to everyone, including non-Jews. It was public area that included commercial activities. There were **signs warning Gentiles** that they could not go any further, on penalty of death.

Court of Women. It was on the East side and was accessible to Jewish men and women. Called the court of women because it was as far inside as they could go. The temple offering boxes were located there.

Court of Israel. Narrow, elevated courtyard on the west side of the court of women. Restricted to Jewish men who were ritually clean. They could come into that area to witness the sacrifices. Observation area.

Court of the Priests. Restricted to the Levites, who were the priestly tribe. It contained the altar upon which animals were sacrificed, as well as the laver for ritual washings.

Holy Place. Lampstand. Altar of Incense. Table of Showbread. Priests would enter to burn incense to the Lord which represented the prayers of the people. There was a rotation system among the active priests. **This is where Zechariah was ministering when he was approached by Gabriel and told about the upcoming birth of his son John, the Baptist.** Interesting note: During the time of Jesus most of the priests were Sadducees. They did not believe in resurrection, miracles or even angels. It is unlikely that Zechariah was a Sadducee but one can understand the reaction when he shared about being visited by an angel.

Holy of Holies. Separated by a massive, thick veil, four inches thick. Inside was the Ark of the Covenant. Inside the Ark were the ten commandments, a bowl of manna and Aaron's rod that had miraculously budded. On the lid were two golden angels with their

wings reaching toward each other. That area under their wings was called the Mercy Seat. Place where the people could meet with God.

But they could only do that through a proxy. That proxy was the High Priest. He could come in only once time per year on the Yom Kippur. Only after careful ceremonial cleansing. He would bring the blood of an offering and sprinkle it on the mercy seat for the forgiveness of the people.

Of course the blood of animals could not atone for sins. Those animal sacrifices were a precursor to one who would come, whose blood could indeed secure atonement and forgiveness. That person was Jesus.

All of this was designed to show that sinful people were separated from a holy God. Therefore, they needed a redeemer, one who could break down all the walls and take away all the courts and provide instant and unrestricted access to God. That brings us to Jesus.

He did not enter Herod's temple to accomplish His work. He entered a greater temple, one that is in Heaven. He entered into the presence of His Father, bringing the blood that would make atonement for the people. But it was not the blood of a bull, goat or lamb. It was his own blood. And there it was received by the Father as a full and complete sacrifice for our sins.

How do we know it was enough? Two examples will suffice.

One, the veil that kept the Holy of Holies off limits was torn in two from top to bottom. Jesus opened the door to the presence of God for all who would trust in Him.

Second, when Jesus had finished this act, He sat down at the right hand of His father. The Hebrew High Priest had to come again and again and again. It was never enough. Not so with Jesus.

Jesus is indeed The Great High Priest!

2. He Is a sympathetic high priest (15)

1) Sympathize *To be affected with the same feeling as another.*

He understands how we feel because he has been there. Felt the full range of emotions from sheer joy and delight to utter grief.

Family Problems? His did not understand Him.

Lost loved one? Lazarus

Pain of unreturned love? He was rejected

Obscure beginnings? He came from Bethlehem

Poverty? Born to peasants.

2) Weaknesses *Lack of strength, frailty.*

Weaknesses common to human nature, hunger, thirst, weariness, etc. Natural limitations of humanity.

If we have felt the pounds of humanity, He has felt the tons.

If we drank drops of suffering, He has swallowed an ocean.

3) Tempted

He faced not only the same struggles of humanity which we face, but also the same temptations to sin. **Satan threw entire arsenal at the Lord.** He knew what it was like to face the allurements of sin, know the battles with temptation. But never once sinned. Not one time did he give in to the temptation.

Some say since he never sinned, he could not really identify. **Key is identification with the battle**, and the battle happens during the temptation. He understands sin completely, not because he yielded to it but because he faced & conquered it.

He really does know how you feel. Understands.

OT High Priest was an aristocratic leader who was unable to know those from whom he was building a bridge. Simply performing a spiritual function. Further, they often failed in area of mercy.

In the days of Jesus they were cruel, insolent and greedy.

Worshippers often chased from temple by priest with stick. People needed sympathetic high priest.

3. He Is an effective high priest (16)

Real test of the effectiveness of high priest is whether or not his work has brought me into a relationship with God. OT high priest could only roll back the sins of the people and postpone the judgment. That is why they had to keep coming back every year.

Jesus came only once and now offers access to all who will come.

1) We can draw near

Most ancient rulers were unapproachable by common people. Even Esther the queen could not approach the king unless summoned without the threat of losing her life. Yet with God, any repentant sinner can come right into his presence. Why? Work of our Great High Priest.

2) We find mercy and grace when we do

Not only can we come to his throne of grace, but we find just what we need there.

Mercy - Not getting what I deserve. Done wrong, deserve punishment, but I don't have to receive it. Being lazy on job, but not getting fired.

Grace - Getting what I don't deserve. Being lazy on the job and getting bonus anyway. Acting in kindness to someone who does not deserve it.

I heard a wonderful illustration from Josh Howerton that I want to share.

Imagine you could get into a time machine and travel back to the first century. You come to the temple, in the court of Gentiles. You would like to go further in, but you see the signs that forbid you from doing so. You see others going in but you are restricted.

Then a stranger comes up to you and asks if you want to go inside. You say you would but you are not allowed. He says it will be ok if you go with Him. He takes you past the wall into the court of women. You see men and women, but all are Jewish. You indicate that you are worried, but the stranger tells you is ok because you are with him.

Then he takes you into the court of Israel. From there you can look into the court of priests where the brazen altar stands. In the distance you see an opening into a much smaller area. The Holy Place. The stranger takes your arm and escorts you into that area. You see the table of showbread, the menorah and the incense altar. At the end of the room you see a massive curtain. Behind it is the holy of holies and you know that there is no way you can go into it. The holy God has chosen that place to manifest His presence. You are a sinful person and you know you would die in His presence.

The stranger tells you not to worry. You not only be safe from death but will be welcomed by God, simply because you are with Him. He draws back the curtain and brings you in. You see the Ark of the covenant with the two angels on top. Their wings are reaching toward each other. There, between them, at the mercy seat you see the face of God. And as you do you look back at your guide and it's the same face. He is the son of God. You understand why you are allowed into that presence. It is because of Him.