

Our High Priest

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I think we are all in agreement that with each passing day we are drawing closer to the return of our Lord and Savior. And concerning this, I have very much appreciated the many messages our brother Dr. Maas has put before us of the dangers and of the corruption of modern day Babylon that is constantly put in front of us and challenges each one of God's children in this present age as we patiently wait for Christ's return.

We have all heard the messages. Isaiah 48:20 and more familiar probably Revelation 18:4, where we are called by God to come out of her. A message specifically sent to each one of us when it says, "Come out from her, My people." This is not a message for all of those who dwell upon the earth, but for those who have become heirs to the promises of God. "My people" is clearly meant for those who have entered into a covenant relationship with God. And verse 20 adds, "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!" No mention of anyone else, showing us He is quite aware of the struggles we all must labor against each day in this corrupted environment as we work to endure to the end.

Turn with me please to Hebrews 11 and we will capture the two verses describing our current condition as it speaks of the many other saints who have gone before us. Hebrews 11 and will be in verse 38 and 39. We are breaking into the dialogue that is speaking of those who held fast to their faith.

Hebrews 11:38-39 —of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all of these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise.

These saints are like us and are still waiting to receive their reward and inherit the promises that God will provide to each and every one of us. It is

quite the opposite of what so many people in the world are doing and thinking, who believe their salvation is already complete and are not waiting for anything more from God than to die and go to heaven. They certainly do see some of the workings of God, but they just cannot bring themselves to believe and to live by plain scriptures that show that one can fall short and lose one's future hope of salvation. And that salvation has always been and remains an issue of faith as much as it is an issue of grace. Fortunately, these are both gifts that God provides to all of us abundantly.

I Corinthians 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Hebrews 4:1-2 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

Let us add in one more scripture spoken by Jesus to His disciples concerning when He would reward His people.

Matthew 16:27 "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each one according to his works."

Not when one goes to their grave, but when Christ returns and after His judgments are announced.

This age we are now in and this nation we find ourselves in is and has been in a state of moral decline for many, many decades. It was never perfect in its moral responsibility to their Creator. But it was way better than today as people restrained themselves in the gross sins of the human nature. And they made an effort, maybe a moderate effort, but they made an effort to cover their spiritual and their physical nakedness. Romans 1 clearly shows that God has revealed enough of Himself to all men that they should fear Him and strive to live righteously. He has, as it were, put very much of Himself out there in the public square for all men to see. Verses 20 and 21 state that

His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made. Verse 22 adds, They professed to be wise, they became fools.

We by the grace of God look out from our lives with a godly perspective and can see, or should see, that Babylon lacks any true spiritual health. It is all just an image and lacks the spiritual gifts and the strength needed to submit to God, even on a basic level of lawkeeping and treating others better than oneself. Babylon, in my eyes, is like a dressed up painted lady and can appear to be very alluring in her wealth. And at times seemed to be very reasonable in her activities. But the core of her heart and of her ways is rotten to the bone and it hides the sickness and the stench of death that surrounds her. All the while with music and pleasure, she claims it is the best time to live here and that solutions to any problems are just around the corner.

Our beloved brother Charles Whitaker schooled me many years ago when he said to me, "We live in a culture of death." It surprised me then; it does not today. Babylon can only try to offer a quantity of life to everyone, but never a *quality* of life and has very little in purpose to offer beyond today. Tomorrow she knows very little to nothing about, only saying that we are evolving into better creatures, and the future is bright for everyone. But she holds men's carnal nature in her hands and keeps the pressure of want in their hearts and watches men as they run to and fro to find a life of some ease and rest. Little time is spent by men to measure one's days or build more than a modest effort to seek and to serve God. And the rest men seek from the burdens of life is never found until one enters the grave.

I know I am being very negative here this afternoon and using broad strokes about others and towards a place that we call home. And it is not as clear to us as it is to God how much damage and how much good continues every day. But what I do know is God surely upholds the upright, but destroys the wicked. He is very forthcoming, showing His people the future events that must take place as we come to the close of this age, and so we know Babylon will be destroyed, and with each passing day, the countdown continues. I am also of the opinion that the paint Babylon wears to hide how evil the days are is made from the suffering humanity has accepted as normal. And it is a mixture of tears and blood that cries out for a future hope—a hope that the Babylonian system can never supply.

Two main factors I see when living in a society apart from God such as ours, a culture that is full of people who are constantly seeking to satisfy the self, and we have heard it over the years, what we have all often called a way of get. First is the amount of sin people are both knowingly and unknowingly involved in. And secondly, how little focus is put on things that matter in life for their future good. This creates a life that does a lot of drifting from one day to the next, trying to just get along but never finding any rest or peace for their souls. I learned this from Ted: Consider the fact that no ship that can only drift, will survive intact for very long. Ted brought this out a few months ago when he spoke about the importance of anchors. We need to stay tethered to God's will. Destruction is always 100% for any ship that can do no more than drift. And this is a good comparison to our walk with God.

And I know you sharp guys and gals out there are thinking, Well, the ark Noah and God built together did nothing but drift for a whole year. That is true. But first off, consider that there is nothing to run into, for the waters covered the whole earth, and secondly, this vessel was certainly under 24/7 surveillance and never went anywhere that God did not first pass on it, at least in my opinion.

I use this as an analogy, for God's children can fall into times where one is just drifting. Saints can be worn down by the constant bombardment by a culture that surrounds us, and drifting or doing very little for one's spiritual self then becomes a normal reaction in one's life. Yet in this we expose ourselves to many dangers. We can end up getting what I call cross contamination. Not intentionally joining into the affairs of this world, but surrounded by so much misinformation, so much perversion and ungodly activities that occur so often they begin to look like and to be accepted as normal behavior by those around us. We can also become exhausted in our trials and start drifting, thinking God has gone off and left us to fend for ourselves. But like Noah, who waited for God's perfect timing to bring him home, so we also must learn to patiently wait on Him whose vision is much better than our own.

This wearing down we can have happens on both a physical and a spiritual level. They are related, I believe, maybe more than we think. When the body is sick, we can become less focused and not see how our sickness relates to a

spiritual problem we have yet to resolve. Or if we neglect our spiritual duties, we can lose the peace and the rest our bodies need each week. And though we work to avoid all things unclean, it can unknowingly touch our lives and cross-contaminate us. We must be constantly on guard as we work and live in this age.

Turn over, please, if you will, to a familiar passage in Haggai concerning cross contamination. Though it is speaking to the unclean physical touching of what is clean by what is unclean, we can view this with a spiritual perspective and see how false doctrines, false gospels can also be a source of contamination. Haggai, chapter 2. And we will read verses 10 through 14. This is, of course, out of the New King James, and everything I use is out of the New King James. If anything changes, I will let you know.

Haggai 2:10-14 On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts: 'Now, ask the priests concerning the law, saying, "If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?'"'" Then the priests answered and said, "No." And Haggai said, "If one who is unclean because of a dead body touches any of these, will it be unclean?" So the priests answered and said, "It shall be unclean.' [Our priest is two for two here.] Then Haggai answered and said, "'So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,' says the Lord, 'and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.'

It is teaching us something here: that any offering that is presented with unclean hands automatically becomes unclean and unacceptable to God. His standards are high. We all know that. It is not a far leap in thought to see it includes a life we live before God. Romans 12:1-2 defines us as a living sacrifice to remain holy and acceptable to Him and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. Certainly, we must always strive to present ourselves clean before God in our actions and in our words. A drifting vessel or a drifting person has none or very little protection over what they may drift into. With Satan running around and Babylon as filthy as it is, it is a target rich environment, one we must be vigilant about at all times.

At this point I want to get away from the negative and the dangers we all need to be concerned about and look at what God has done for us to hold us fast with better promises and a better covenant than our forefathers had. Our pastor Richard, I am sure, can do many multiple sermons on this, but we will pick out a couple of points to keep us encouraged as we continue our pilgrimage to a city and builder whose builder and maker is our God. For it is God who gives us the gifts and the strength to lay hold of the hope that is set before us. Like the ark that was carefully cared for, so it is for each one of us. I will just look at three of the topics spoken of in Hebrews that are presented to us, and they are here to encourage us as we labor to enter into God's rest, for we are admonished to hold fast our confession. And in Hebrews 2, verses 1 and 2, we are instructed on what is needful for us to maintain our focus. There is the help. Let us take it.

Hebrews 2:1-3 Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which by the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him [two witnesses there].

Here, we see a complete change in the way God is working with His people versus Israel's relationship with God prior to Christ's arrival and His ministry. No longer is God sending the prophets as He did with Haggai, or angels as He did with Daniel, or a mediator. I am not saying He cannot. It is just not the norm. As He did with Moses. But the Son Himself now speaks to us. What a great honor and privilege we have to know and to know that we know we are directly being taught by Christ Himself, and what He has heard from His Father, He speaks to each one of us. No one before spoke as He is speaking. And it is through Him we see the Father. Certainly more than enough of a reason why we should of course give the more earnest heed. Christ, who is the express image of His Father, Christ, who made the worlds and upholds all things by the word of His power. In these last days has spoken words that are spirit and are life for each one of us. It is a great advantage to us to listen, just as it would be a great loss to ourselves if we failed to give heed and obey.

Please start turning (if you have not left there) to Hebrews again. This time in chapter 3, and we will read verses 1 through 4. Christ being so much better than the angels and greater than Moses. Chapter 3 of Hebrews sets the stage for the supremacy of Christ over His creation. I will read this for us.

Hebrews 3:1-4 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him [His Father] who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. But this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God.

This is the family God is building up today. Verse 6 of this same chapter tells us we are the house He is building in these last days, "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of hope firm to the end." Going back to chapter 2 of Hebrews and verse 11 says, "For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren." I do not know what more to add to this, but that we certainly should give the more earnest heed to the words that are spoken to us by the Lord Himself.

The next subject brought forth in the book of Hebrews is a gift God has provided for each one of us that our forefathers only had a shadow of after God instituted the Levitical priesthood in the wilderness. And this was the appointment by the Father of Christ as our High Priest over His own house, whose members we are, like I mentioned, if we hold fast to our calling. "No one," we are told in Hebrews 5:4, can "take this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was." And verse 6 adds, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." Christ now has a never-ending priesthood and ministers in the true sanctuary that is above, who does not need to offer up sacrifices daily for Himself or His people, for this He did once when He offered up Himself. Our Savior who has offered to bear the sins of many. Chapter 10 of Hebrews, verses 11 and 12 adds more detail, saying,

Hebrews 10:11-12 And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away

sins. But this Man [that is, Christ], after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.

He is called our great and merciful High Priest. And in the office as High Priest, He is both faithful to Him who appointed Him and faithful in His duties to the people God has called into a covenant and awaiting the salvation to be revealed as heirs to the promises of God.

And one of the major functions He does before God is to make intercessions for the people of His house, those whom the Father has called and given to Christ to prepare for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. That would be us and for those who have gone before us of this age we live in. What a wonderful help He provides for us when we reach out to Him!

Many people who claim to be religious, they claim a religion other than what God has provided and profess Christ as their high priest. They have read Hebrews and they claim Christ as their high priest. They are mistaken. He is not any more than Aaron would be considered the high priest of the nations that surrounded Israel in the wilderness. They are not the people of His pasture, not in a sense the firstfruits are, those He has called out in these last days and have been baptized into the New Covenant. That day when God opens up salvation is coming, but it is not today.

Certainly Christ is overseeing all human activities in His creation. But He is not at this time making intercessions for their sins. We can see this clearly when we read of those who God is preparing to enter into His rest when He says, "My people." These are the ones Christ is making intercessions for. He has removed the veil, that is, His flesh, and has let us enter into the very throne room of God. And we are not drifting into His presence, but we are going in boldly before His throne of grace that we may have the grace needed by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

It is beyond my ability to see and understand all the wonderful advantages God has provided for us. One who was tempted in all things. One who knows our weaknesses, One who is willing to advocate on our behalf and help us get past our sins, One who has all authority in heaven and earth. And though it may seem long at times to find an answer, has our concerns at the

top of His mind as He sits with the Majesty on high and serves both the Father and His creation. And of course that includes us.

My third and last point from the book of Hebrews concerning Christ as our High Priest is all the work He is putting forth in being focused in getting the people ready to enter into God's rest. It is the sanctification process. Hands-on. Not their own rest, but what the Father has determined to be His rest. It is very singular in His presentation to us on who will enter into His rest when He says, "My people" and "My rest." This rest harkens back to the time of the physical creation. We are in Genesis 2, verses 2 and 3. God declares the seventh day and sanctified it. Verse 2 reads,

Genesis 2:2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

That rest was broken when sin entered into the world, so there remains for the people of God a rest to be entered into. Hebrews 4, verse 1 says,

Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.

This was not the rest of entering into the Promised Land. Israel rebelled and was disqualified to enter into God's rest, and if Joshua had given them rest, they would not be spoken of another day. But verse 6 adds,

Hebrews 4:6 Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those [Israel] to whom it was first preached did not enter in because of disobedience, . . .

Hebrews 4:9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.

That is all of us. This rest is for the people, those who today hold fast to their hope and remain faithful to the end. Those who will give the more earnest heed to the words spoken to us, words spoken by the Son Himself, our Savior and Shepherd of the Father's flock. Those who the Father seeks to worship Him in spirit and truth, these will be those who enter into God's rest.

Our High Priest by James Beaubelle (<https://www.cgg.org>)

I have the fullest confidence that our High Priest can and will finish His work, for He is faithful in His work. Let us also be faithful in our endeavors as we labor to enter into this rest.