

BE
CONFIDENT

BE CONFIDENT

LIVE BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT

NT COMMENTARY

HEBREWS

Warren W. Wiersbe

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*This book in the “BE” series is
dedicated to my good friend JIM ADAIR
whose editorial skill and constant
encouragement have shepherded me
through many days of study and writing.
Thanks, Jim!*

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THE BIG IDEA

An Introduction to *Be Confident*
by Ken Baugh

Dr. Viktor Frankl was an Austrian psychiatrist who lived as a prisoner in Auschwitz and other concentration camps during World War II. Dr. Frankl experienced unimaginable horror during his years of captivity, yet during that time he was able to discern the reasons why some people survived the camps while others did not. In his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, Dr. Frankl writes about how hope was the key factor to a prisoner's ability to survive. He says,

For the prisoner who had lost faith in the future, his future was doomed. With his loss of belief in the future, he also lost his spiritual hold; he let himself decline and become subject to mental and physical decay.... The only chance people had of making it in the camps was their ability to focus on some future goal, it had nothing to do with who was the healthiest or strongest, but who had someone waiting back home for them or who had some vocational goal they dreamed of realizing one day. (Beacon, 2000, p. 82)

It surprises me that hope helped people survive the concentration camps. One would think it would be something more tangible like good

health, food, warm clothing, and shelter; but, as Dr. Frankl discovered, it was the power of hope.

At times, life is dark and ominous. I cannot think of a season in my life that could ever equal that of Dr. Frankl's, but I have had my share of difficulties and no doubt so have you. Yet one thing that always serves me well during a difficult season of life is my confidence in God's character—that He can be trusted even during my darkest days. In fact, the Big Idea that runs throughout the book of Hebrews is simply this: You can trust God. And throughout the book, especially in chapters 11—12, we discover men and women of faith who have done just that, trusted God despite difficult circumstances.

We are reminded of the confidence of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as our forefathers in the faith. We read of Joseph and how he trusted God even after being unjustly accused and thrown into prison. We are reminded of Moses and his willingness to leave the riches of Egypt because of his confidence in God. And there are so many others—Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Jephthah, David, Samuel. All these people knew that they could trust God, and we remember them as great men and women of faith.

But if you're like me, as you read the stories of these people, it's tempting to think that they're different from you and me, that they had some type of supernatural gift of faith that we do not have that enabled them to trust God so completely. However, I don't think that's the case at all. I think they were just as normal as we are, and I believe that their level of faith is available to every follower of Christ. That's right: You, too, can become a great man or woman of faith if you remember the following three principles.

The first principle of great faith is *I must remember that God is with me*. This is a truth that we all know but need to be reminded of time and again. David says, "Even when walking through the dark valley of death I will not

be afraid, for you are close beside me, guarding, guiding all the way” (Ps. 23:4 TLB). Jesus promised us that He would never leave us. He is always watching over us, and He knows exactly what’s going on in our lives. The apostle Paul assures us that God will never give us more than we can bear (1 Cor. 10:13). He is constantly monitoring everything in our lives. We may not like the fact that God allows bad things to happen to us, but we can be confident that He is using even those things for our good and His glory. “The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy” (Ps. 111:7 NIV).

The second principle of great faith is *I must remember the honor and rewards that await me in heaven*. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that it was the certainty of heaven that helped Jesus endure the cross. “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for *the joy set before him* endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (12:2 NIV). Jesus kept one eye on the reality of heaven, one eye on eternity, and it enabled Him to endure the pain, humiliation, and rejection He experienced on the cross. The same will be true of us if, during the difficult seasons in life, we remember that heaven is sure and that we will each be rewarded for our faithfulness to God during this life. Paul says, “These troubles and sufferings of ours are, after all, quite small and won’t last very long. Yet this short time of distress will result in God’s richest blessing upon us forever and ever!” (2 Cor. 4:17 TLB).

The third principle of great faith is *I must remember that God will guide me when I am confused*. Confusion is a close companion during difficult times, but if I look at my life and situation through the vantage point of God’s Word, the confusion clears and I can better see God’s purpose.

When NASA launches a rocket, their job is not over after the launch. Instead, NASA constantly monitors the rocket’s progress, and the rocket continually receives instructions from ground control to keep it on the right

heading. A rocket can reach its destination only if it maintains constant contact with ground control, and the same is true for each of us. The Bible says, “Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don’t try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he’s the one who will keep you on track” (Prov. 3:5–6 TLB).

Every believer can develop great faith if we remember these three principles. I have no doubt that as you study the book of Hebrews along with Dr. Wiersbe’s commentary, you will be strengthened in your faith and encouraged in your walk with God.

Dr. Wiersbe’s commentaries have been a source of guidance and strength to me over the many years that I have been a pastor. His unique style is not overly academic, but theologically sound. He explains the deep truths of Scripture in a way that everyone can understand and apply. Whether you’re a Bible scholar or a brand-new believer in Christ, you will benefit, as I have, from Warren’s insights. With your Bible in one hand and Dr. Wiersbe’s commentary in the other, you will be able to accurately unpack the deep truths of God’s Word and learn how to apply them to your life.

Drink deeply, my friend, of the truths of God’s Word, for in them you will find Jesus Christ, and there is freedom, peace, assurance, and joy.

—Ken Baugh
 Pastor of Coast Hills Community Church
 Aliso Viejo, California

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

The epistle to the Hebrews is a book we need today. It was written at a time when the ages were colliding and when everything in society seemed to be shaken. It was written to Christians who were wondering what was going on and what they could do about it. The stability of the old was passing away, and their faith was wavering.

One of the major messages of Hebrews is *Be Confident!* God is shaking things so that you may learn to live by faith and not by sight. He wants you to build your life on the permanence of the eternal and not on the instability of the temporal.

This is the message I have tried to bring out in this brief exposition. I have had to deal only briefly with some truths, and totally ignore others, so that this message might come across. It is impossible in a book this size to cover everything in so profound an epistle as Hebrews.

You may not agree with all my interpretations and applications. But if you are a Christian I am sure you will agree that our ever-living High Priest in heaven is able to see us through these difficult and demanding days. “The just shall live by faith!”

Look to Jesus Christ and—*Be Confident!*

—Warren W. Wiersbe

A SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Theme: Press on to maturity

Key verse: Hebrews 6:1

- I. A Superior Person—Christ (Hebrews 1—6)
 - A. Better than the prophets (Hebrews 1:1–3)
 - B. Better than the angels (Hebrews 1:4—2:18)
(Exhortation: drifting from the Word: 2:1–4)
 - C. Better than Moses (Hebrews 3:1—4:13)
(Exhortation: doubting the Word: 3:7—4:13)
 - D. Better than Aaron (Hebrews 4:14—6:20)
(Exhortation: dullness toward the Word: 5:11—6:20)
- II. A Superior Priesthood—Melchizedek (Hebrews 7—10)
 - A. A superior order (Hebrews 7)
 - B. A superior covenant (Hebrews 8)
 - C. A superior sanctuary (Hebrews 9)
 - D. A superior sacrifice (Hebrews 10)
(Exhortation: despising the Word: 10:26–39)
- III. A Superior Principle—Faith (Hebrews 11—13)
 - A. The great examples of faith (Hebrews 11)
 - B. The endurance of faith—chastening (Hebrews 12)
(Exhortation: defying the Word: 12:14–29)
 - C. Closing: practical exhortations (Hebrews 13)

IS ANYBODY LISTENING?

(Hebrews 1:1–3)

A man from Leeds, England, visited his doctor to have his hearing checked. The doctor removed the man’s hearing aid, and the patient’s hearing immediately improved! He had been wearing the device *in the wrong ear* for over twenty years!

I once asked a pastor friend, “Do you have a deaf ministry in your church?” He replied, “There are times when I think the whole church needs a deaf ministry—they just don’t seem to hear me.”

There is a difference between *listening* and really *hearing*. Jesus often cried, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” This statement suggests that it takes more than physical ears to hear the voice of God. It also requires a receptive heart. “To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Heb. 3:7–8).

Many people have avoided the epistle to the Hebrews and, consequently, have robbed themselves of practical spiritual help. Some have avoided this book because they are afraid of it. The “warnings” in Hebrews have made them uneasy. Others have avoided this book because they think it is “too difficult” for the average Bible student. To be sure, there are some profound truths in Hebrews, and no preacher or teacher would dare to claim that he

knows them all! But the general message of the book is clear and there is no reason why you and I should not understand and profit from it.

Perhaps the best way to begin our study is to notice five characteristics of the epistle to the Hebrews.

1. IT IS A BOOK OF EVALUATION

The word *better* is used thirteen times in this book as the writer shows the superiority of Jesus Christ and His salvation over the Hebrew system of religion. Christ is “better than the angels” (Heb. 1:4). He brought in “a better hope” (Heb. 7:19) because He is the mediator of “a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Heb. 8:6).

Another word that is repeated in this book is *perfect*; in the original Greek it is used fourteen times. It means “a perfect standing before God.” This perfection could never be accomplished by the Levitical priesthood (Heb. 7:11) or by the law (Heb. 7:19), nor could the blood of animal sacrifices achieve it (Heb. 10:1). Jesus Christ gave Himself as one offering for sin, and by this He has “perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14).

So the writer was contrasting the Old Testament system of law with the New Testament ministry of grace. He was making it clear that the Jewish religious system was temporary and that it could not bring in the eternal “better things” that are found in Jesus Christ.

Eternal is a third word that is important to the message of Hebrews. Christ is the “author of eternal salvation” (Heb. 5:9). Through His death, He “obtained eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12), and He shares with believers “the promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:15). His throne is forever (Heb. 1:8) and He is a priest forever (Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21). “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb. 13:8).

When you combine these three important words, you discover that Jesus Christ and the Christian life He gives us are *better* because these blessings are

eternal and they give us a *perfect* standing before God. The religious system under the Mosaic law was imperfect because it could not accomplish a once-for-all redemption that was eternal.

But why did the writer ask his readers to evaluate their faith and what Jesus Christ had to offer them? Because they were going through difficult times and were being tempted to go back to the Jewish religion. The temple was still standing when this book was written, and all the priestly ceremonies were still being carried on daily. How easy it would have been for these Jewish believers to escape persecution by going back into the old Mosaic system that they had known before.

These people were second-generation believers, having been won to Christ by those who had known Jesus Christ during His ministry on earth (Heb. 2:3). They were true believers (Heb. 3:1) and not mere professors. They had been persecuted because of their faith (Heb. 10:32–34; 12:4; 13:13–14), and yet they had faithfully ministered to the needs of others who had suffered (Heb. 6:10). But they were being seduced by teachers of false doctrine (Heb. 13:9), and they were in danger of forgetting the true Word that their first leaders, now dead, had taught them (Heb. 13:7).

The tragic thing about these believers is that they were at a standstill spiritually and in danger of going backward (Heb. 5:12ff.). Some of them had even forsaken the regular worship services (Heb. 10:25) and were not making spiritual progress (Heb. 6:1). In the Christian life, if you do not go forward, you go backward; there is no permanent standing still.

“How can you go back into your former religion?” the writer asked them. “Just take time to evaluate what you have in Jesus Christ. He is better than anything you ever had under the law.”

The book of Hebrews exalts the person and the work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. When you realize all that you have in and through Him, you have no desire for anyone else or anything else!

2. IT IS A BOOK OF EXHORTATION

The writer called this epistle “the word of exhortation” (Heb. 13:22). The Greek word translated “exhortation” simply means “encouragement.” It is translated “comfort” in Romans 15:4, and “consolation” in 2 Corinthians 1:5–7; 7:7. This word is related to the Greek word translated “Comforter” in John 14:16, referring to the Holy Spirit. The epistle to the Hebrews was not written to frighten people, but to encourage people. We are commanded to “encourage one another daily” (Heb. 3:13 NIV). It reminds us that we have “strong encouragement” in Jesus Christ (Heb. 6:18 NASB).

At this point we must answer the usual question: “But what about those five terrible warnings found in Hebrews?”

To begin with, these five passages are not really “warnings.” Three basic words are translated “warn” in the New Testament, and the only one used in Hebrews is translated “admonished” in Hebrews 8:5 (where it refers to Moses) and “spake” in Hebrews 12:25. Only in Hebrews 11:7 is it translated “warned,” where it refers to Noah “being warned of God.” I think that the best description of the five so-called warning passages is the one given in Hebrews 13:22—“exhortation” (KJV), or “encouragement” (AB). This does not minimize the seriousness of these five sections of the book, but it does help us grasp their purpose: to encourage us to trust God and heed His Word.

The epistle to the Hebrews opens with an important declaration: “God ... has spoken to us in His Son” (Heb. 1:1–2 NASB). Near the close of the book, the writer states, “See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking” (Heb. 12:25 NASB). In other words, the theme of Hebrews seems to be “God has spoken; we have His Word. What are we doing about it?”

With this truth in mind, we can now better understand the significance of those five “problem passages” in Hebrews. Each of these passages encourages us to heed God’s Word (“God ... has spoken”) by pointing out the sad

spiritual consequences that result if we do not. Let me list these passages for you and explain their sequence in the book of Hebrews. I think you will see how they all hang together and present one message: *Heed God's Word*.

Drifting from the Word—2:1–4 (neglect)

Doubting the Word—3:7—4:13 (hard heart)

Dullness toward the Word—5:11—6:20 (sluggishness)

Despising the Word—10:26–39 (willfulness)

Defying the Word—12:14–29 (refusing to hear)

If we do not listen to God's Word and really *hear* it, we will start to *drift*. Neglect always leads to drifting, in things material and physical as well as spiritual. As we drift from the Word, we start to *doubt* the Word, because *faith* comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). We start to get hard hearts, and this leads to spiritual sluggishness, which produces *dullness* toward the Word. We become "dull of hearing"—lazy listeners! This leads to a *despiteful* attitude toward the Word to the extent that we willfully *disobey* God, and this gradually develops into a *defiant* attitude—we almost "dare" God to do anything!

Now what does God do while this spiritual regression is going on? He keeps speaking to us, encouraging us to get back to the Word. If we fail to listen and obey, then He begins to chasten us. This chastening process is the theme of Hebrews 12, the climactic chapter in the epistle. "The Lord shall judge *his people*" (Heb. 10:30). God does not allow His children to become "spoiled brats" by permitting them to willfully defy His Word. He always chastens in love.

These five exhortations are addressed to people who are truly born again. Their purpose is to get the readers to pay close attention to God's Word. While there is some stern language in some of these passages, it is my understanding that none of these exhortations "threatens" the reader by

suggesting that he may “lose his salvation.” If he persists in defying God’s Word, he may lose *his life* (“Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?” [Heb. 12:9]). The inference is that if we do not submit, we might die. “There is a sin unto death” (1 John 5:16). But if the epistle to the Hebrews teaches anything, it teaches the assurance of eternal life in a living High Priest who can never die (Heb. 7:22–28).

Some students try to explain away the “problem” of “losing your salvation” or “apostasy” by claiming that the readers were not truly born again, but were only “professors” of Christian faith. However, the way the writer addresses them would eliminate that approach; for he called them “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb. 3:1). He told them that they had a High Priest in heaven (Heb. 4:14), which he would not have written if they were lost. They had been “made partakers of the Holy Ghost” (Heb. 6:4). The admonitions in Hebrews 10:19–25 would be meaningless if addressed to unsaved people.

The epistle to the Hebrews is a book of evaluation, proving that Jesus Christ is better than anything the law of Moses has to offer. The epistle is also a book of exhortation, urging its readers to hear and heed the Word of God, lest they regress spiritually and experience the chastening hand of God.

3. IT IS A BOOK OF EXAMINATION

As you study this book, you will find yourself asking: “What am I *really* trusting? Am I trusting the Word of God, or am I trusting the things of this world that are shaking and ready to fall away?”

This letter was written to believers at a strategic time in history. The temple was still standing and the sacrifices were still being offered. But in a few years, both the city and the temple would be destroyed. The Jewish nation would be scattered, and this would include Jewish believers in Jesus Christ. The ages were colliding! God was “shaking” the order of

things (Heb. 12:25–29). He wanted His people to have their feet on the solid foundation of faith; He did not want them to trust in things that would vanish.

I believe that the church today is living in similar circumstances. Everything around us is shaking and changing. People are discovering that they have been depending on the “scaffolding” and not on the solid foundation. Even God’s people have gotten so caught up in this world’s system that their confidence is not in the Lord, but in money, buildings, programs, and other passing material things. As God continues to “shake” society, the scaffolding will fall away, and God’s people will discover that their only confidence must be in the Word of God.

God wants our hearts to be “established with grace” (Heb. 13:9). That word *established* is used, in one form or another, eight times in Hebrews. It means “to be solidly grounded, to stand firm on your feet.” It carries the idea of strength, reliability, confirmation, permanence. This, I think, is the key message of Hebrews: “You can be secure while everything around you is falling apart!” We have a “kingdom which cannot be moved” (Heb. 12:28). God’s Word is steadfast (Heb. 2:2) and so is the hope we have in Him (Heb. 6:19).

Of course, there is no security for a person who has never trusted Jesus Christ as his own Savior from sin. Nor is there security to those who have made a “lip profession” but whose lives do not give evidence of true salvation (Matt. 7:21–27; Titus 1:16). Christ saves “to the uttermost” (i.e., “eternally”) only those who have come to God through faith in Him (Heb. 7:25).

I like to tell congregations the story about the conductor who got on the train, began to take tickets, and told the first passenger whose ticket he took, “Sir, you’re on the wrong train.” When he looked at the next ticket, he told that passenger the same thing.

“But the brakeman told me to get on this train,” the passenger protested.

“I’ll double-check,” said the conductor. He did and discovered that *he* was on the wrong train!

I fear there are many people who have a false faith, who have not really heard and heeded God’s Word. Sometimes they are so busy telling everybody else what to do that they fail to examine their own situations. The epistle to the Hebrews is a book of examination: it helps you discover where your faith really is.

4. IT IS A BOOK OF EXPECTATION

The focus in this book is on the future. The writer informs us that he is speaking about “the world to come” (Heb. 2:5), a time when believers will reign with Christ. Jesus Christ is “heir of all things” (Heb. 1:2) and we share the “promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:15). Like the patriarchs lauded in Hebrews 11, we are looking for that future city of God (Heb. 11:10–16, 26).

Like these great men and women of faith, we today should be “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb. 11:13). This is one reason why God is shaking everything around us. *He wants us to turn loose from the things of this world and stop depending on them.* He wants us to center our attention on the world to come. This does *not* mean that we become so heavenly minded that we’re no earthly good. Rather it means that we “hang loose” as far as this world is concerned, and start living for the eternal values of the world to come.

Abraham and Lot, his nephew, illustrate these two different attitudes (Gen. 13–14). Abraham was a wealthy man who could have lived in an expensive house in any location that he chose. But he was first of all God’s servant, a pilgrim and a stranger, and this meant living in tents. Lot chose to abandon the pilgrim life and move into the evil city of Sodom. Which

of these two men had true security? It would appear that Lot was safer in the city than Abraham was in his tents on the plain. But Lot became a prisoner of war! And Abraham had to rescue him.

Instead of heeding God's warning, Lot went back into the city, and when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot lost everything (Gen. 19). Lot was a saved man (2 Peter 2:7), but he trusted in the things of this world instead of trusting the Word of God. Lot forfeited the permanent because he depended on and lived for the immediate.

Martyred missionary Jim Elliot said it best: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

You and I as God's children have been promised a future reward. As with Abraham and Moses of old, the decisions we make today will determine the rewards tomorrow. More than this, our decisions should be motivated by the expectation of receiving rewards. Abraham obeyed God *because* "he looked for a city" (Heb. 11:10). Moses forsook the treasures and the pleasures of Egypt *because* "he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. 11:26). These great men and women (Heb. 11:31, 35) of faith "lived in the future tense" and thus were able to overcome the temptations of the world and the flesh.

In fact, it was this same attitude of faith that carried our Lord Jesus Christ through the agony of the cross: "Jesus ... for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2). The emphasis in the epistle to the Hebrews is "Don't live for what the world will promise you today! Live for what God has promised you in the future! Be a stranger and a pilgrim on this earth! Walk by faith, not by sight!"

This letter is not a diet for "spiritual babes" who want to be spoon-fed and coddled (Heb. 5:11-14). In this letter you will find "strong meat" that demands some "spiritual molars" for chewing and enjoying. The emphasis in Hebrews is not on what Christ did on the earth (the "milk"), but what

He is now doing in heaven (the “meat” of the Word). He is the Great High Priest who *enables us* by giving us grace (Heb. 4:14–16). He is also the Great Shepherd of the sheep who *equips us* to do His will (Heb. 13:20–21). He is working *in us* to accomplish His purposes. What a thrill it is for us to be a part of such a marvelous ministry!

Dr. A. W. Tozer used to remind us, “Every man must choose his world.” True believers have “tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world [age] to come” (Heb. 6:5); this should mean we have no interest in or appetite for the present sinful world system. Abraham chose the right world and became the father of the faithful. Lot chose the wrong world and became the father of the enemies of God’s people (Gen. 19:30–38). Abraham became the friend of God (2 Chron. 20:7), but Lot became the friend of the world—and lost everything. Lot was “saved; yet so as by fire” (1 Cor. 3:15) and lost his reward.

5. IT IS A BOOK OF EXALTATION

The epistle to the Hebrews exalts the person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The first three verses set this high and holy theme, which is maintained throughout the entire book. Their immediate purpose is to prove that Jesus Christ is superior to the prophets, men who were held in the highest esteem by the Jewish people.

In His person, Christ is superior to the prophets. To begin with, He is the very Son of God and not merely a man called by God. The author makes it clear that Jesus Christ is God (Heb. 1:3), for his description could never be applied to mortal man. “Brightness of his glory” refers to the shekinah glory of God that dwelt in the tabernacle and temple. (See Ex. 40:34–38 and 1 Kings 8:10. The word *Shekinah* is a transliteration of a Hebrew word that means “to dwell.”) Christ is to the Father what the rays of the sun are to the sun. He is the radiance of God’s glory. As it is impossible

to separate the rays from the sun, it is also impossible to separate Christ's glory from the nature of God.

"Express image" (Heb. 1:3) carries the idea of "the exact imprint." Our English word *character* comes from the Greek word translated "image." Literally, Jesus Christ is "the exact representation of the very substance of God" (see Col. 2:9). Only Jesus could honestly say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). When you see Christ, you see the glory of God (John 1:14).

In His work, Christ is also superior to the prophets. To begin with, He is the *Creator* of the universe, for by Him, God "made the worlds" (Heb. 1:2). Not only did Christ create all things by His Word (John 1:1–5), but He also upholds all things by that same powerful Word (Heb. 1:3). "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist [hold together]" (Col. 1:17).

The word *upholding* (Heb. 1:3) does not mean "holding up," as though the universe is a burden on the back of Jesus. It means "holding and carrying from one place to another." He is the God of creation and the God of providence who guides this universe to its divinely ordained destiny.

He is also the superior *Prophet* who declares God's Word. The contrast between Christ the Prophet and the other prophets is easy to see:

<i>Christ</i>	<i>The Prophets</i>
God the Son	Men called by God
One Son	Many prophets
A final and complete message	A fragmentary and incomplete message

Of course, both the Old Testament and the gospel revelation came from God, but Jesus Christ was God's "last word" as far as revelation is concerned. Christ is the source, center, and end of everything that God has to say.

But Jesus Christ has a ministry as *Priest*, and this reveals His greatness. By Himself He “purged our sins” (Heb. 1:3). This aspect of His ministry will be explained in detail in Hebrews 7—10.

Finally, Jesus Christ reigns as *King* (Heb. 1:3). He has sat down, for His work is finished, and He has sat down “on the right hand of the Majesty on high,” the place of honor. This proves that He is equal with God the Father, for no mere created being could ever sit at God’s right hand.

Creator, Prophet, Priest, and King—Jesus Christ is superior to all of the prophets and servants of God who have ever appeared on the sacred pages of the Scriptures. It is no wonder that the Father said, at the hour of Christ’s transfiguration, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5). Two of the greatest prophets were there with Jesus—Moses and Elijah, but Christ is superior to them.

As we study Hebrews together, we must keep in mind that our purpose is not to get lost in curious doctrinal details. Nor is our purpose to attack or defend some pet doctrine. Our purpose is to hear God speak in Jesus Christ, and to heed that Word. We want to echo the prayer of the Greeks: “Sir, we would see Jesus” (John 12:21). If our purpose is to know Christ better and exalt Him more, then whatever differences we may have in our understanding of the book will be forgotten in our worship of Him.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What is the difference between hearing and really listening?
2. In what ways do you agree or disagree with this statement: “In the Christian life, if you do not go forward, you go backward; there is no permanent standing still”?
3. Wiersbe says, “God does not allow His children to become ‘spoiled brats.’” What are some traits of a “spoiled brat” Christian?
4. Name some things that we tend to trust in today rather than trusting in God.
5. Wiersbe says that the book of Hebrews is a book of examination. It helps us discover where our faith is. What sometimes keeps us from examining our lives?

6. Abraham understood a sense of values and delayed gratification. Lot on the other hand lived for the immediate. List examples of Abrahams and Lots in today's world.

7. Hebrews sets out to prove Christ is not merely a man. What difference would it make in your life if you discovered that Christ was indeed merely a good man or a prophet?

8. Read Genesis 1:26, John 1:1–14, and Colossians 1:13–17. Then explain Christ's role before the Incarnation.

9. Tozer is quoted as saying, "Every man must choose his world." What makes it difficult at times to choose the kingdom of heaven over the kingdom of earth?