



HEBREWS

JESUS IS BETTER

A 4-WEEK DEVOTIONAL BY CHAD POE

YM360

Jesus Is Better: A 4-week Devotional on the Book of Hebrews

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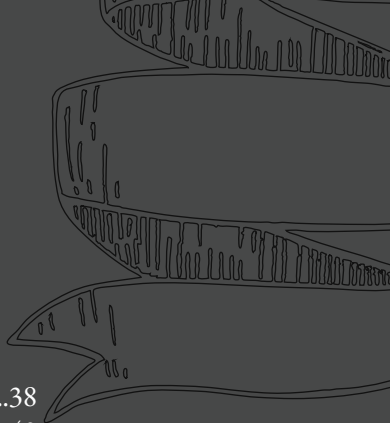
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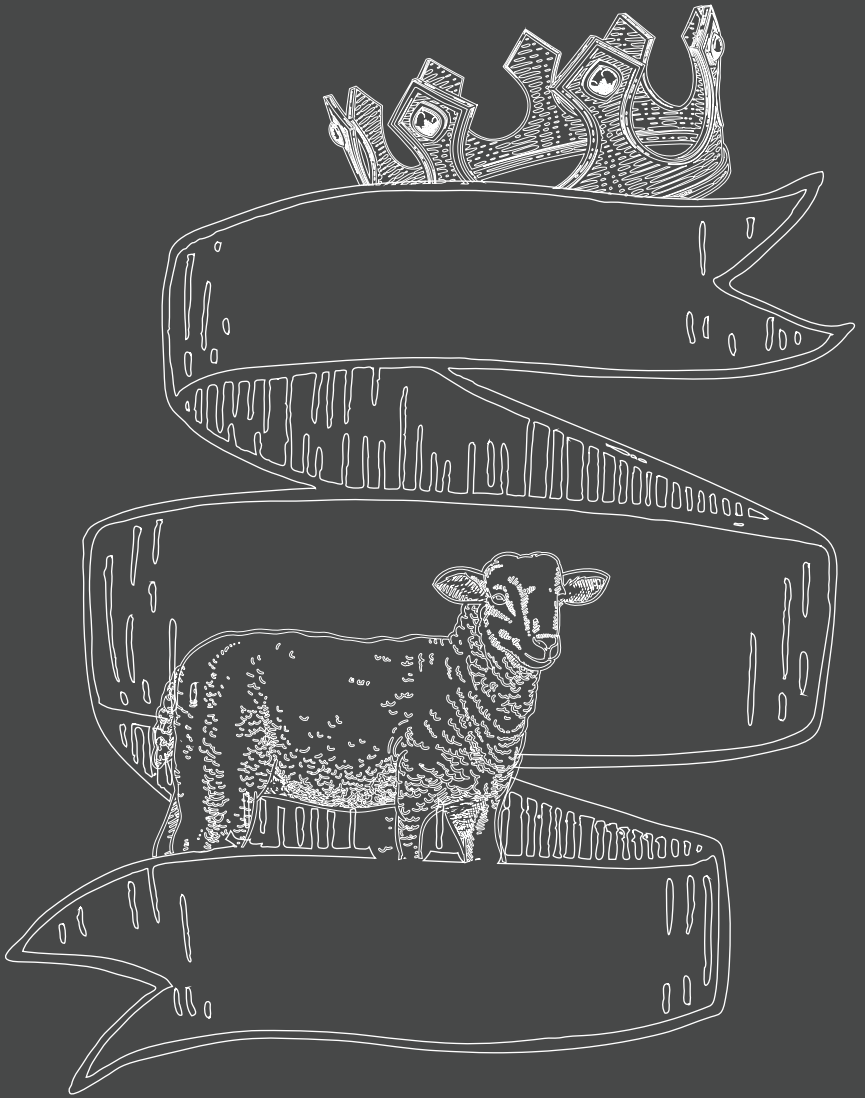
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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever felt a disconnect between what you believe about Jesus and how you actually live? Or maybe you've felt pulled in so many different directions in life that you got distracted and lost sight of growing in your faith? Let's face it; it can be hard to stay committed to God. But the good news is that you're not alone, and God doesn't want to leave you where you are!

How do I know that? Because the book of Hebrews was written to people like you. Specifically, it was written to a group of people who were struggling with their faith. Don't get me wrong; they didn't hate Jesus. They knew there was something true about Him, but they struggled with following through in their commitment to Him. The author of Hebrews knew this, and step by step, he showed them that they could grow in their faith, overcome sin, move to maturity, and live out their beliefs. How did he do this? By continually reminding them that Jesus is better.

In fact, Jesus is Better is the constant drumbeat of the book of Hebrews. "Better than what?" you might ask? Well, fill in the blank. Jesus is better than anything else that rivals His attention in your life. And the writer of Hebrews knew that the key to living for Jesus is believing that He truly is better. Specifically, Jesus is the better

prophet, priest, and king. Let's start by breaking that down a little bit. In the Old Testament, there were three important positions within the nation of Israel: prophet, priest, and king. This isn't to say that other jobs in Israel weren't important, but the people realized that they needed strong leaders in these positions in order for their nation to succeed. Whenever they had weak and corrupt people in these positions, it signaled trouble for the nation. Whenever they had strong and spiritually sound people in these positions, it signaled times of prosperity for the nation.

While all three of these positions were similar, they also had differences. The prophets represented the voice of God within the nation, often admonishing the nation for sin and announcing future events. The priests represented the holiness of God within the nation, guarding and caring for the Israelite temple and directing animal sacrifices for the sins of the nation. The kings represented the power and glory of God within the nation, directing the course of the nation.

While these three positions were given to different people in Israel, they were originally given to one man, Adam. In the Garden of Eden, Adam was created in God's image in order to be God's prophetic voice in the world, God's priestly guardian in the world, and God's kingly representative in the world. However, in Genesis 3 Adam didn't rule over the garden well, and instead allowed a serpent to enter and influence his decisions. Because of this, Adam and his wife Eve were removed from the Garden of Eden.

Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, the question is continually raised, who can fulfill these roles and lead our nation and the world as God's prophet, priest, and king? Although many

men filled these roles in the Old Testament, none of them did so perfectly. Just like us, they all had sins and failures. They had trouble

staying committed to God. Ironically, even the prophets, priests, and kings of the Old Testament needed someone who could be their prophet, priest, and king.

In the book of Hebrews, we are shown that Jesus fulfills His role as the better prophet, priest, and king. Jesus performs all the duties that the leaders of Israel were called to perform; only Jesus does them all without any sin. He stayed perfectly committed to God throughout His life, and He did it on our behalf. This is why Jesus truly is better. He is the prophet, priest, and king that we need, and thankfully the one that we have.

In each week of this devotional, we are going to think about Jesus as the better prophet, Jesus as the better priest, and Jesus as the better king using the book of Hebrews and other passages in the Bible. Hebrews will be our launching pad that shoots us off into the space that shows us Jesus' greatness. I know that as you read these words prophet, priest, and king, you might be thinking, those were things from thousands of years ago, how are they relevant to me? Well, that's partly what this devotional is about. Think of it as building a bridge between the words of the Bible about Jesus and your own world.

Whether you're a person who is merely curious about Jesus, a new Christian, a growing Christian, or a stagnant Christian, you can catch a bigger vision of Jesus as you meditate on the words of Hebrews. Each day we're going to take some time to do just that. We're going to read through a few verses of the book and think

about how those verses apply to Jesus and to us. There will be a few questions at the end of each day's devotional to help you think through the message of the verses, and there will be some prayer prompts to help you praise God for the truth revealed in the text.

This devotional will help you see how these words apply in your life today and how they will help you love and live for Jesus!

The great British pastor Charles Spurgeon once said, "The Word of God is like a lion. You don't have to defend a lion. All you have to do is let the lion loose, and the lion will defend itself." In the Bible,

the Word of God can refer to both Jesus and Scripture. In fact, the Word of God (Scripture) unleashes the Word of God (Jesus) in our lives so that we can live for Him through His power. If you read Hebrews every day and let it soak into your heart, then God will set the lion loose in your life through His Word to change your life. All you need to bring every day is a Bible, a pen, and an open heart.

Are you ready to see how much better Jesus is than anything else in the world? Let's get started!



WEEK 1 INTRODUCTION

This week we're going to focus on the idea that Jesus is the better prophet. In the Old Testament, prophets acted as God's mouthpieces for the nation of Israel. If you look in your Bible's table of contents under the Old Testament heading, you'll see all the books of the prophets, starting with Isaiah and going through Malachi. These were men that God chose to give the nation of Israel important messages. In the book of Hebrews, Jesus is the most important prophet because He was truly the voice of God. Let's dive in!

WEEK 1 | DAY 1

Jesus and the Old Testament

Hebrews 1:1-3

Begin by reading Hebrews 1:1-3 in your Bible.

Have you ever known someone who was into puzzles? I mean, really into puzzles? I'm talking about the type of person who finishes a complicated puzzle, glues it together onto a board, puts it in a frame, and hangs it on their wall as a piece of art? Piece by piece, this person labored over the puzzle until everything fit perfectly and it was completed, worthy of showing off to everyone who came over to visit.

In a sense, the Old Testament can be thought of like a puzzle. Piece by piece, the speakers and writers were putting something together, and when it was completed, it was a picture of the coming Son of God, Jesus. Notice that in verse 1, the writer tells us that God spoke to Israel's forefathers (meaning the people who lived in the land of Israel during Old Testament days) through prophets. This is often how God chose to reveal His will to Israel, and also to remind them when they got off track of His commandments that He had given them through Moses. It was important for God that Israel know His will and desires, because God desires to be known by people.

Let that sink in for a second. God desires to be known by people. By you.

In verse 2, the writer tells us that God has now spoken through His Son, Jesus. Instead of speaking through a bunch of different

voices, God's ultimate plan was to speak through one person. This is one reason that Jesus is better. He's not simply one of a number of prophets, but He is the ultimate prophet. He is not only a word from God, -He is the Word of God dwelling in our midst. What better way for God to communicate than through His own Son?

The writer wants to make sure that his readers understand that the Son of God wasn't simply a creation but was the mouthpiece for the entire creation of the world. Verse 2 tells us that the Son is the one "through whom [God] made the universe." (NIV) The creator of the world actually came into the world to tell the world about God. This means that there is no better source of knowledge about God than through Jesus.

In other words, if you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. In Colossians 2:9, the apostle Paul tells us that "in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." (NIV) Jesus is the exact representation of God, and so His words are the very words of God.

Not only that, but Hebrews 1:2 tells us that Jesus is also the appointed heir of all things. Like a child who receives an inheritance, this whole world belongs to Jesus. The Son of God created the world, owns the world, and speaks God's words into the world. There is nothing that you need in God that Jesus doesn't provide. While the Old Testament prophets were able to give some knowledge of God as He gave it to them, Jesus is able to give us everything we need in God.

Jesus is the better prophet.

REFLECTION

1. What things in life do you struggle to bring under Jesus' authority?
2. Based on Hebrews 1:1-3, how is Jesus similar to the Old Testament prophets? How is He different?
3. Of the ways that Jesus is described in verses 2-3, which stands out the most to you personally? Why?

PRAYER

Thank God for sending Jesus to be the prophet. Ask Him to give you a growing desire to know and love Jesus more and more. Pray for any requests that you have in full view that the world is under Jesus' authority.

MY THOUGHTS FOR TODAY



WEEK 1 | DAY 2

Jesus is the Ultimate Word of God

Hebrews 1:1-4

Begin by reading Hebrews 1:1-4 in your Bible.

Yesterday we began thinking about Jesus as the better prophet and by reading Hebrews 1:1-3. Today we are reading those verses again, and adding one more verse at the end that, which makes an interesting point about Jesus and angels. (It might have made you curious when you read it!). We'll get back to that in a second, but first, let's think some more about how Jesus is a better prophet.

We talked yesterday about prophets as the mouthpieces of God. Jesus is the better prophet because He is the perfect mouthpiece of God as His very Son. However, Jesus didn't just represent God with His words, but through His miracles, and His death, and His resurrection.

Let's do a little trivia to see how Jesus represents God in all three of these ways. Fill in the blanks if you know the answer to these. L and look up the Scripture references if you need some help or to check your answers.

God spoke through the words of Jesus.

- I am the _____ . (John 6:35)
- I am the _____ . (John 8:12)
- I am the Resurrection and the _____ . (John 11:25)

God spoke through the miracles of Jesus.

- Jesus turned water into _____. (John 2:1-11)
- Jesus made a blind man _____. (Mark 8:22-26)
- Jesus fed _____. (Luke 9:10-17)
- Gave a dead man _____. (John 11:38-44)

God spoke through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

- On the cross, Jesus said, “It is _____.” (John 19:30)

In Jesus’ words, He made it emphatically clear that He has the full authority of God when He speaks. In His miracles, He made it emphatically clear that He has the full power of God when He acts. On the cross, He made it emphatically clear that He accomplishes the purpose of God through His death and resurrection. Pastor J.D. Greear puts it like this: “Most religious prophets give you instructions about what you should do to find peace with God. Jesus’ message was about what He had done to give you peace with God. He didn’t stand up and say, ‘go and do;’ He sat down and said, ‘It is done.’”

Jesus is better than any other prophet, because He did more than they could possibly do. Not only is Jesus a better mouthpiece for God than the prophets, but He’s also better than the angels. This is where Hebrews 1:4 comes into play. Apparently, there were some people in the church that this letter was written to that who either worshipped angels or held them as the ultimate mouthpieces of God. Like we said in the introduction, these people did not have it all together. They had some wacky beliefs about God and the world.

Angels often did act as God's representatives in the Old Testament, but the writer of Hebrews wants these people to know that Jesus is MUCH greater than even the angels. Look down in your Bible at Hebrews 1:14. He is saying here that angels have a role to play as ministering spirits that help Christians, but they are servants of Jesus, who alone is the ultimate word of God.

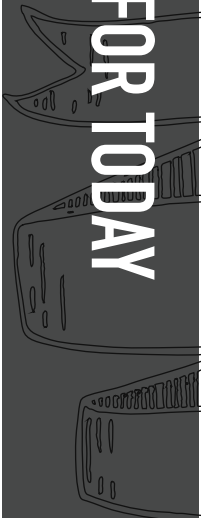
REFLECTION

1. In what specific ways How is Jesus better than the Old Testament prophets?
2. When Jesus said, "it is finished," what was he talking about?
3. In your life, what are some of the temptations you face in regard to prioritizing the things of God?

PRAYER

Take some time to praise God that Jesus showed God's love for us through His words, actions, death, and resurrection. Ask God for help with those areas of temptation that you listed in question three. Bring all your requests to God in full confidence that Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father (Hebrews 1:13) and that God loves to hear from you.

MY THOUGHTS FOR TODAY



WEEK 1 | DAY 3

Jesus is the Anchoring Word of God

Hebrews 2:1-4

Begin by reading Hebrews 2:1-4 in your Bible. Then turn and read Acts 3:22-23.

I am a huge fan of the entire Marvel Cinematic Universe. When a new Marvel movie comes out, I love going to the theater with popcorn and candy topped off with a Coke Zero. I love sitting with a bunch of other people who are there to watch our beloved superheroes take to the screen. On opening weekend, there will be 150 of us filling seat by seat, row by row. I would like to think that everyone in the place loves Marvel movies. They know what's taken place since Iron Man made his debut. They understand why we've had seventeen different Incredible Hulks. I like to think they are all part of the "we" who love these movies.

However, I realize that not everyone in the theater loves these movies like in the same way I do. In fact, there are usually three kinds of people there at the theater: those who love Marvel movies, those who like or are merely curious about Marvel movies, and those who came with friends but couldn't care less about Marvel movies. These are the ones who are checking their phones or getting up from their seats in the middle of the movie to go get more of those gross gummy worms from the concession stand. The movie might have a nostalgic connection to them, but when they leave, they couldn't care less. But in that room, they are part of the "we" there for the movie.

In Hebrews 2, the writer begins with “we.” He was talking to a church that was full of people like those watching Marvel movies. Just like with people at Marvel movies, there are three kinds of people in the world with relation to Jesus: true believers, unbelievers, and make-believers. The first group (true believers) consists of people who truly believe that Jesus is the Son of God, although they might at times become more or less committed to him. The second group (unbelievers) consists of those people who simply don’t believe that Jesus is the Son of God. The third group (make-believers) consists of those people who might come to church and play along at the Christian game, but they aren’t truly invested in following Jesus. In Hebrews 2, we see that Scripture warns believers, unbelievers, and make-believers alike about growing disinterested in the Gospel. This isn’t merely about ignoring a movie for two hours... this is a matter of salvation!

So, why do people fall into this trap? This happens?

The word that the writer uses for this occurrence in Hebrews 2:1 is “drift.” On lakes and oceans, boats drift when they aren’t anchored. They simply allow the water to carry them wherever it will. If you’ve been a Christian for a while, then you can probably think of times when you have drifted away from God. This happens when we aren’t anchoring ourselves in Jesus. It usually isn’t intentional, but we forget how good Jesus is and the great salvation that God has given us in Jesus. We start drifting along with other people and other desires.

New Testament scholar D.A. Carson puts it like this, “We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it

relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated.” This drift can happen to any of us, so we should be alert for signs of drifting.

What are some signs of drifting in faith?

1. I don't want to read the Bible.
2. Salvation does not matter to my day-to-day life.
3. Prayer is not important to me.
4. Lost people do not matter to me.

If you see yourself in these signs, you are not a hopeless case! Your life doesn't have to continually drift here and there without purpose and meaning in Jesus. Some of the readers of this letter had also drifted, or he wouldn't have bothered to write about it. In telling them how not to drift or how to stop drifting, he told them to anchor themselves in Jesus' great salvation, which is the focus of verses 3 and 4. The writer reminds his readers in these verses that God has announced, confirmed, and testified the salvation available in Jesus. This means that God announced the salvation provided by Jesus through the Old Testament writers and prophets, confirmed this salvation by the life of Jesus to all those who knew and followed Him, and testified to this salvation by miracles, gifts, and the Holy Spirit.

When we think about the gift of salvation that God has given to all who believe in Jesus, we need to remember that this salvation was witnessed by many people who testified to Jesus, some of whom were even killed for their belief in Jesus. This isn't a pie-in-the-sky belief. It is historically confirmed through the life of Jesus. You can anchor

yourself to Jesus by meditating on the fact that His salvation is God's great work, prepared from the foundations of the world and written into history for you (Ephesians 1:3-10).

REFLECTION

1. Of the four signs of drifting in faith mentioned above, do you recognize any that you deal with in your own life? If so, which one is most obvious in your life right now? Which one do you find yourself struggling with most often?
2. What specific things have you put in place to anchor yourself in Jesus and avoid drifting towards compromise, disobedience, superstition, lost self-control, prayerlessness, or godlessness?
3. What steps are you taking that you take to 'stay alert' to your walk and avoid long seasons of drift?

PRAYER

If you have never accepted God's salvation in Jesus, then you can do that now by believing that Jesus is the Son of God, that he died on the cross for your sins, that he was raised from the grave in victory over sin and death, and that he is now Lord over all creation. If you are already a Christian, then praise God for this very salvation. Ask God to help you in those places where your life might have drifted from being anchored to Jesus. Let your requests be known to God in full awareness that he cares for you, even if you have drifted from His purpose for your life.

MY THOUGHTS FOR TODAY



WEEK 1 | DAY 4

Jesus is the Word Worthy of Honor

Hebrews 3:1-6

Begin by reading Hebrews 3:1-6.

“Better than Moses?!” This would have been the reaction of many Jewish people centuries ago had they read our passage for today. Moses was the greatest prophet of the nation of Israel. He was the one to whom God had given the commandments that directed the nation. Who could be more worthy than the person to whom God had given His commandments to? We’re told in the Old Testament that Moses had even spoken to God face to face. Who else could claim as close a relationship with God? Moses was like Jeff Bezos, Steph Curry, and Taylor Swift all rolled into one. He was a big deal. But yet the writer tells us that Jesus is much better than Moses.

In verse 2, the writer says that Jesus and Moses were both faithful to the callings that God had appointed to them. But then he says something interesting. Moses was a faithful servant in God’s house, but Jesus is faithful as the Son over the house.

Moses was a servant; Jesus is a Son.

Moses took care of the house; Jesus owns the house.

Moses was a good leader for a set time; Jesus is the eternal ruler of the world.

Moses was great; Jesus is better.

And what does the writer mean when he talks about God's house? He tells us in verse 6. The house of God is the people of God. Moses served the people of God by leading them from Egypt to the border of the Promised Land. He worked hard to make sure the people followed God on the journey, although at times, he also sinned. He was a great servant and did his job well. But Jesus is so much more, because He is the leader over the people of God. He won that leadership through His death and resurrection. For this reason, He is worthy of greater honor than Moses or any other leader. He's worthy of greater honor than the most famous preacher. He's worthy of greater honor than the most famous Christian musician. He's worthy of more honor than anyone who follows Him.

So what should we do with that information? In small ways, we're sort of like Moses. We are called to be servants in His house. Part of that means holding on to our courage and our hope in Jesus. This means that we need to cling to Him in all of life and make Him our purpose in life. The original readers of Hebrews were facing some intense persecution because of their belief in Jesus, and the writer is reminding them to hold on to their courage and hope in the face of persecution. We should hold on to our courage and hope in Jesus in the face of any opposition, persecution, or obstacles that we face in life. This is one way that we honor Jesus' glory. He suffered, died, and rose from the grave for us, and now we live for Him.

The other thing we should do is fix our thoughts on Jesus, as it says in Hebrews 3:1. Make Jesus great in your mind. Does this mean that we are supposed to constantly just think about Jesus and nothing else? Not exactly. But we should see everything in our days as opportunities to love Him, show His goodness to others, ask for His help, and give thanks to Him. Are you excited about an opportunity today? Thank Jesus for it. Do you have a friend who needs to know Jesus?

Tell them about Him. Do you need wisdom for a decision today? Ask Him. Do you have some spare time today? Where do you have a time in your day to spend a few minutes praising Him in your mind or out loud? When you start to see your whole life as a series of opportunities to know Jesus, praise Jesus, and show Jesus to others, then you will understand what it means to fix your thoughts on Him.

REFLECTION

1. What are some ways that you can you fix your thoughts on Jesus today?
2. Have you ever faced opposition because of your beliefs about Jesus or actions as a Christian? List some of those moments. What is the best response in those situations?
3. Who is the person you admire most in life? How is Jesus even better than them?

PRAYER

Spend some time giving honor to Jesus, who lived, died, and rose from the grave for you. Confess to Him those places in life where you don't give Him enough honor, whether it's through your words or actions. Ask Jesus to help you fix your thoughts on Him today. Present your requests to Him as the Lord of all creation.

MY THOUGHTS FOR TODAY



WEEK 1 | DAY 5

Jesus is the Suffering Word of God

Hebrews 3:7-19; Acts 7:37-53

Begin by reading Hebrews 3:7-19, then flip over and read Acts 7:37-53.

Yesterday we thought about ways in which Jesus is better than Moses, who Jewish people considered the greatest prophet of all time. Today let's think some more about this idea, using Hebrews 3:7-19 and Stephen's speech to the Sanhedrin before he is stoned in Acts 7. Both of these passages pick up on the same idea: Jesus is the prophet whose word should be believed. For context to the Acts passage, Stephen has been arrested for preaching the Good News that Jesus is King of the world, and his speech in Acts 7 is in the middle of his trial. In a sense, he is guilty of the crime because he has indeed proclaimed Jesus as King. However, he is trying to convince the members of the Sanhedrin to also believe in Jesus.

Have you ever tried to explain something to somebody that they just wouldn't believe? It's tough to try to get through to someone who won't accept any evidence. For instance, did you know that there is a Flat Earth Society dedicated to the belief that the earth is not round, but flat? In order to hold this belief, they have to ignore or explain away all of the evidence for a round earth, such as satellite pictures of the earth showing its roundness. Similarly, Stephen is demonstrating to the Sanhedrin that Jesus fulfills the prophetic qualifications of the better prophet that Moses told the people would come (Deut. 18:15). He goes on to point out to them that Jesus was persecuted for His prophecy, just like prophets who came before Him. Also, just like the Israelite people in the desert who didn't listen to Moses and instead

rebelled against the law of God, many people didn't believe that Jesus was from God and spoke the truth of God. They were very religious but were also unbelievers.

In Hebrews 3:7-19, the writer is telling the people that believing in Jesus is the way to divine rest with God. He counsels them to hold on to the confidence that they have in Jesus until the very end and to encourage each other in belief in Jesus. This means that we have a role to play in holding on to our own confidence in Jesus and building up the confidence of others. Thankfully, it is not up to us to keep ourselves eternally secure in Jesus (read Romans 8 if you're unsure about this). If it were up to us, then we would all be in trouble. But notice that in Hebrews 3:12, a sinful, unbelieving heart will eventually turn away from God when things get difficult. An unbeliever could appear very religious but doesn't actually believe that Jesus is sufficient for salvation. In contrast, a believing heart will maintain confidence in Jesus even in the midst of suffering and will give other people reason to maintain confidence.

The writer of Hebrews wants the people to maintain confidence that Jesus is better than any other prophet and that Jesus is all that we need to have a relationship with God. If we maintain confidence in Jesus, then we can live in great freedom that we have all we will ever need to please God.

REFLECTION

1. What are some areas in your life where you are tempted to lose your confidence in Jesus?
2. What are some ways that you can help your Christian family and friends to maintain their confidence in Jesus?
3. What are ways you can develop new Christian friendships that will encourage you to maintain your own confidence in Jesus?

PRAYER

Spend time giving thanks to God for Jesus' suffering on your behalf. Ask God to increase your own confidence and help you to encourage other believers this week. Present all of your requests to God in full view that Jesus has done all you need to give you access to God.

MY THOUGHTS FOR TODAY



WEEK 1 RECAP

Things I Want To Remember About What I Studied This Week

What a great week! After this week, you should be able to tell others that Jesus is the better prophet, and that this truth is backed up by several passages in Scripture (Hebrews 1:1-4, 2: :1-4, and 3:1-19 for reference). You read that Jesus is the Word of God, which is also how we describe the Holy Bible. That is not an accident!

In our time of study, we looked at Jesus as the way in which God's words are made known. When Christ came to Earth, He not only displayed the Word in body, but he fulfilled all of the 'words' proclaimed by the prophets in the Old Testament. As you think back over this past week, try to process that Jesus was the One first and only to fulfill all of God's laws and prophecies. He is truly better!