

TRUTH AND LIFE

Doctrinal and Ethical Notes on the Bible

G. Wright Doyle, MDiv, PhD

Part I

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Volume 5

THE MAJOR PROPHETS

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DOCTRINAL AND ETHICAL NOTES ON THE BIBLE

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THE MAJOR PROPHETS

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China Institute, 2019

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Note: *Truth and Life* is a work in progress. Sections will be posted over time and may be incomplete. Check back for new and updated documents. This is *Truth and Life: The Old Testament - The Major Prophets (April 2019)*.

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**The notes for some of these books of the Bible may be incomplete. Check for updated versions at www.reachingchineseworldwide.org. This is *Truth and Life: The Old Testament – The Major Prophets* (April 2019).*

INTRODUCTION to *TRUTH AND LIFE*

Origin and Nature of this Book

Truth and Life: Doctrinal and Ethical Notes on the Bible grew out of a study that I did with several men over a period of three-and-a-half years. Following the order found in *Search the Scriptures*,¹ a Bible reading guide I used at the beginning of my Christian life, we asked two questions of each passage:

What does it say about the usual topics discussed in books on systematic theology (such as the doctrines of revelation, God, Christ, man, sin, salvation, God's people, and "the last things")?

What does it say about how we should live? That is, what does it say about what is usually called "Christian ethics"?

As time went on, I discovered that this way of looking at the Bible was quite helpful for me, since it required me to look closely at the biblical text and to search it carefully for teachings not only on doctrine – that is, general "truth" – but also on the application of doctrine to daily life. Thus, the title: "Truth and Life." Of course, all that the Bible says is true, and all of it bears upon life. Indeed, Jesus said, "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life."² We cannot separate doctrine from our proper response to it.

That is why this book includes notes both about general truths revealed by God in the Bible and about ways in which we could apply these truths at home, school, work, and church, and in society. As much as possible, the advice in each "Life" section comes directly from the corresponding passage of the Scriptures.

Distinctive Features

To my knowledge, this book is unique, at least at present.

There are plenty of study Bibles, Bible commentaries of all sorts, and books on systematic theology and on Christian ethics. I am not aware that anything exists that

¹. Alan M. Stibbs, general editor, *Search the Scriptures: A Three-Year Bible Study Course* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984).

². John 6:63.

provides brief comments on what each passage of the Bible says both about the usual topics [*topoi*, or *loci*] of theology and about ethics.

As a glance at any page of this book will show, the “Truth” sections follow a topical order based on the standard theological categories, as mentioned above. The “Life” sections follow the order of the passage itself and are not arranged topically.

In treating the theology of each passage, I sometimes spend a large amount of time drawing out what we can learn from it about the doctrine of revelation – that is, mostly about the Scriptures themselves (“special revelation”). How God has revealed himself to us in his written Word is foundational to everything else we believe about him and his works in the world and in our lives. Sometimes we also find teaching on what is often called “general revelation” – revealed through our moral constitution, the created order, and the events of history.

You will also see that I devote significant attention to the doctrine of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – which I usually discuss under the headings of “His greatness” and “His goodness.” My goal is to draw our attention away from ourselves and this world so that we may focus again on our great, glorious, and gracious God. Such a reorientation of thinking has been very beneficial to my own soul and life.

After looking at God and his works, we examine what the passage might teach about angels, Satan and demons, mankind, sin, salvation, God’s people, and the last things.

Other Characteristics

Since the Bible is a big book and since the authors of the Scriptures, under God’s inspiration, frequently write about the same topics many times, you will encounter a great deal of repetition here. It simply could not be avoided. Please be patient with me – and with how God has chosen to present what he thinks we need to know! I have found in my own life that I need constant exposure to the same truths day after day, year after year, for them to “sink in” and then be “worked out” into my life.

I have attempted to express myself as concisely as possible. Most sections are presented in outline form for easy reading. I have not aimed for literary elegance or fullness of expression; otherwise, the book would be twice as long. My goal is to give

you as much information as possible in the briefest format. I have written other non-scholarly commentaries and thematic biblical studies in the usual expository style.³

Truth and Life is not a study Bible or a commentary in the usual sense. It is not at all meant to replace these fundamental aids to understanding the Scriptures, but to be used in conjunction with them. You will not find extensive explanations of historical or cultural backgrounds, word studies, or a verse-by-verse or even paragraph-by-paragraph running commentary.

This book is not exhaustive, but suggestive; much more could have been said. Nor is it an academic publication, though I have drawn upon the writings of learned scholars.

In addition, the wording and format of these notes are not always consistent. I wrote them over a period of several years and did not always adhere to the same format. My editorial assistants and I have tried to make the text consistent as much as possible, but irregularities remain.

Some passages receive very detailed treatment, while others are discussed much more briefly. Further, some include references to several parallel or related passages of Scripture, while others merely cite the relevant verse(s) in the section under consideration. Again, this disparity reflects the long time I have spent writing the notes, as well as the amount of energy I had on any particular day! As I said above, the notes are meant to be suggestive, not exhaustive.

Note: When only verse numbers are given, they refer to the chapter (or psalm) being discussed. Thus, in the notes on Romans 1:1–17, “1, 5” means “1:3, 5.” If chapter and verse are given, but no book, the reference is to the book being discussed.

My Background

Though I am not now a professional biblical scholar or an academic theologian, I have had some opportunities to engage in advanced study of the Bible and theology.

³ G. Wright Doyle, *Worship and Wisdom: Daily Readings from Psalms and Proverbs with Commentary* (Durham, NC: Torchflame Books, 2015); *Christ the King: Meditations on Matthew* (Durham, NC: Light Messages, 2011); *Jesus: The Complete Man* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2008); and *The Lord's Healing Words: Six Months of Daily Readings from the Bible on Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Health (with Commentary)* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2008).

At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I majored in Latin but also took three years of classical Greek. After graduation I attended the Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria. Though it was (and is) a theologically liberal Episcopal school, the seminary faculty included a few outstanding evangelicals, and I was able to learn some things even from those who did not believe that the Bible is God's Word written.

From seminary I moved to the pastorate, serving three small Episcopal churches in Eastern North Carolina for two years. This entailed careful study and exposition of the Scriptures along with daily pastoral visitation and care for the people of these congregations.

In 1971, I began doctoral studies in Classics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, with the aim of equipping myself to teach in a seminary. For two years, I read Greek and Latin literature under the instruction of some of the finest Classicists in the world. My doctoral exams dealt with the Greek New Testament, Hellenistic philosophy, and early Christian rhetoric – that is, preaching. My dissertation focused on Augustine's theory of the exegesis and exposition of Scripture as outlined in *de Doctrina Christiana*, as well as on how Augustine "applied" his theory to his sermons on the Gospel of John. The year that I spent with this master-student of the Bible has profoundly affected the way I read and teach the Bible. Always, Augustine aimed to communicate the truths of Scripture in a fashion that would change people's lives.

My wife Dori and I went to Asia as missionaries in 1975. After two years of Chinese language study and two years away on furlough, we returned to Taiwan, where I began teaching Greek and New Testament at China Evangelical Seminary, Taipei. Over the next seven years, I labored to help Chinese Christians understand and apply the Bible to their culture. My familiarity with the Bible also benefitted immensely from the five years I spent supervising the translation of Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich's *Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* into Chinese (and then, later, from five more years revising the work).

Since our permanent return to the United States in 1988, I have taught intensive courses on New Testament and Systematic Theology for various seminaries in Taiwan and North America, preached regularly, composed the volumes mentioned in the note on page ii, and continued my daily study of the Bible. I have also learned a great deal from Carl F. H. Henry. I made an abridgment of his six-volume *God, Revelation, and*

Authority for publication in Chinese, and I authored an introduction to his *magnum opus*.⁴ From him I was taught just how fundamental is the doctrine of revelation.

Sources

In addition to my own daily reading of the Bible over the past 54 years, other sources have contributed to *Truth and Life*. These are too many to list individually, but here are the main ones:

Systematic Theology

Augustine of Hippo. *Enchiridion; City of God; Confessions; and On Christian Doctrine (Teaching)*. Various editions.

John Calvin. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960.

Jonathan Edwards. *Religious Affections; The End for Which God Created the World; Charity and its Fruits*; various sermons; and other works. Various editions.

Carl F. H. Henry. *God, Revelation, and Authority*. 6 vols. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976–83.

Douglas F. Kelly. *Systematic Theology*. Vols. 1 and 2. Tain, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2008, 2014.

Matthew Levering. *The Theology of Augustine. An Introductory Guide to His Most Important Works*. Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.

Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest. *Integrative Theology: Historical, Biblical, Systematic, Apologetic, Practical*. 3 vols. in 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.

Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott. *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Biblical Theology

Several works of biblical theology have helped to shape my general outlook and interpretative stance:

⁴ G. Wright Doyle, *Carl Henry: Theologian for All Seasons. An Introduction and Guide to Carl Henry's God, Revelation, and Authority* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010).

Richard Bauckham. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Philip Edgcumbe Hughes. *Interpreting Prophecy: An Essay in Biblical Perspectives*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976.

George Eldon Ladd. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.

Leon Morris. *The Cross in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965.

Leon Morris. *New Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.

Herman Ridderbos. *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1975.

Study Bibles

To supplement those mostly older studies, in the composition of this book I have relied heavily upon recently published study Bibles. These contain the results of the best evangelical scholarship. After writing my notes, I mined study Bibles for further information about background, parallel passages in the Scriptures, and generally accepted interpretations. In this way, I hope that I have avoided major errors of interpretation. I freely and gladly acknowledge my debt to the scholars who have contributed to these essential guides for understanding the Bible.

The most useful to me have been:

ESVSB: *ESV [English Standard Version] Study Bible*. Wayne Grudem, general editor. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008.

HCSB: *HCSB [Holman Christian Standard Bible] Study Bible*. Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010.

MSB: *MacArthur Study Bible*. John MacArthur, author and general editor. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Incorporated, 1997.

NIVSB: *NIV [New International Version] Study Bible*. Kenneth Barker, general editor. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1985.

NKJV: *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*. Mark V. Chavalas, Craig S. Keener, Victor H. Matthews, John H. Walton. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017.

CBSB: *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*. Mark V. Chavalas, Craig S. Keener, Victor H. Matthews, John H. Walton. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017.

ZNIVSB: *Zondervan NIV Study Bible*. D. A. Carson, general editor. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015.

Commentaries

CNTUOT: G. K. Beale and D.A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.

Over the years, I have read a number of commentaries on various parts of the Bible. It would be tedious to list all the volumes that have helped me understand the Scriptures, but I shall merely acknowledge my debt to the many able scholars who have enriched my understanding of the Scriptures.

The Purpose of *Truth and Life*

Despite all its limitations, this series of doctrinal and ethical notes on the Bible aims to help the ordinary reader discern in the Holy Scriptures what God has said about himself – his nature, will, and ways – and about how we should live in response to his Word.

I pray that God will use these notes to encourage you to read the Bible both *theologically* and *ethically*, with the goal of loving God and your neighbor by the power of the Holy Spirit.

To him be all the glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

G. Wright Doyle

ISAIAH

Isaiah 1

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is holy; He is the Holy One of Israel, 4.
- ♦ He is the Lord of hosts—the almighty general of heavenly armies, 9.
- ♦ He speaks from heaven through his prophets, 1–2.
- ♦ He will redeem his people, 27. This points toward the shedding of blood, which would take place in Jesus’ death on the Cross.
- ♦ He reveals his word and his law to his people, 10.
- ♦ He chose his people Israel, who are in some sense his “children,” 2, 4.
- ♦ He will also change them into righteous people, 26.
- ♦ He will cause them to be ashamed of their former idolatries, 29.
- ♦ He will destroy his enemies—those in Israel who do wrong, and all nations that attack his people, 24, 28, 31.
- ♦ But if they rebel, he will utterly destroy them, 20.

His goodness

- ♦ Though he severely disciplines and reduces the number of his people, yet he always leaves a small remnant who are faithful to him and will be used to fulfill his promises to Abraham, 9.
- ♦ He rebukes his people for their sins in specific ways, so that they can repent and return to him, 4, 15, 17, 21–23.
- ♦ If the people do repent and seek to do righteousness, God will thoroughly forgive them, 18–19.
- ♦ His purpose in judgment is to refine his people and cause them to turn back to him, 25–26.
- ♦ He is angry with his people when they go astray and forsake him, 4.
- ♦ He disciplines his wayward children with all sorts of pain and trouble, 5–8.
- ♦ Though God commanded sacrifices and solemn assemblies, they are useless unless the people have repentant hearts that seek righteousness and believe in God, 10–17.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Forsaking God, turning from him, 4, 28
- ♦ Rebellion against God and his laws, 20
- ♦ Refusing to repent and change, 20
- ♦ Spiritual adultery—harlotry—by worshipping idols, 21, 29
- ♦ Breaking the Ten Commandments, e.g., murder, stealing, bribery, not defending the weak, debasing the currency, 21–23

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Listen to God's words to us through the Old Testament prophets, Jesus, and the apostles.
- ♦ Do not think that outward worship without inward devotion to God is of any value.
- ♦ Hold fast to God with all our heart.
- ♦ Repent of our sins, turn from them, and seek to build new habits of righteousness, 16–17.
- ♦ Trust that God will fully forgive us if we turn back to him, 18.
- ♦ Expect discipline in this life for our sins, but full restoration in heaven.
- ♦ Reject oppression of the weak and silence in the face of oppression and evil, 17.

Isaiah 2–3

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is light, and he gives light to his followers, 2:5.
- ♦ He alone is to be exalted, and he will be exalted in due time by all men, 2:11, 17.
- ♦ He is LORD of hosts—almighty commander of heavenly armies, 2:12; 3:1.
- ♦ He is glorious and majestic, 2:19, 21.
- ♦ He is the God of Jacob and the other patriarchs, to whom he gave promises, 2:3.
- ♦ He took Israel to be his people, for his own possession, 3:12, 15.
- ♦ He reveals his truth and his ways to his people through chosen messengers, 2:3.
- ♦ He dwells among his people. In the Old Testament, in his temple in Jerusalem, the Mountain of the Lord. In the New Testament, in Jesus and now in followers of Christ, by the Spirit; later, on the new earth, 2:2.

His goodness

- ♦ He will not let evil ultimately triumph; at his appointed time, he will restore his people to prominence as teachers of the way of God to the nations, 2:2–3.
- ♦ He judges the whole world, 2:4, 19, 21.
- ♦ His judgment brings terror upon all workers of iniquity, 2:19.
- ♦ There is an awful “day of the LORD” that will come as judgment, 18.
 - It includes particular instances of his judgment in the past.
 - It will culminate in the final “day of the Lord,” when Jesus returns to judge the world.
 - He also judges his people, beginning with the leaders, 3:13–14.
- ♦ He judged faithless Israel, 3:1–7, 17–26.
 - With loss of leaders
 - With loss of economic sustenance
 - With loss of their land
 - With loss of all honor and beauty
 - With loss of life

Sin

It includes: All idolatry, pride and arrogance, speaking against God, lack of repentance for sin, oppression of the poor and helpless, and extravagance and luxury, 3:8–9, 12, 14–15, 16, 18

Judgment

It includes

- ♦ The reversal of fortunes, so that women and children lead, 3:5–7, 12
- ♦ The fall of mighty men, 3:11
- ♦ Beautiful women being stripped of their beauty and made ugly and despised, 3:17–23
- ♦ Terror and humiliation filling all people; overthrowing all idols, 3:25

The Last Things

Christ's return: Someday, when Christ returns, there will be universal peace, 2:4.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Walk by the light of the LORD.
- ♦ Renounce all pride in strength, wealth, power, and beauty.
- ♦ Care for the weak and helpless among us.
- ♦ Warn our neighbors and friends of impending judgment upon our nation and of the imminent return of Jesus Christ.
- ♦ Communicate God's truth to others, especially "Gentiles," that is, those who do not know about Christ.

Isaiah 4

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is glorious, transcendent in “weight” and awesome in burning holiness, 5. *See Isaiah 6:1-4; and Exodus 33:18-23.*
- ♦ He has the power to protect his people, 5-6.

His goodness

- ♦ He sent judgment upon his people for their sins, decimating the male population in war and leaving women as widows, 1. *See Isaiah 3:1-26.*
- ♦ He is beautiful and glorious, and thus so is the Branch, the Messiah whom he would send, 2.
- ♦ He gives abundant produce and fruit to a land he had judged for the sin of its people, 2. *See Isaiah 1:7.*
- ♦ He allowed some Israelites to escape the judgment predicted in chapter 2, 2. *See Isaiah 1:9; 15:16.*
- ♦ He will ascribe holiness to those who remain in Jerusalem, 3. *See Isaiah 1:26 and 1 Corinthians 1:2.*
- ♦ He will wash away the moral filth of his people and cleanse them from the guilt of bloodshed, 4. *See Isaiah 1:18; 1 John 1:9; and Revelation 1:5.*
- ♦ He will protect them with his glorious presence, as he did during the Exodus, 5. *See Exodus 13:21-22; 14:21-22; and Psalm 121:5-6.*

Christ

His prefiguration: He is prefigured as

- ♦ The Branch of the LORD, a messianic title for the promised descendant of David who would come to save God’s people, 2. *See Isaiah 11:1; 53:2.*
- ♦ The one who washed his people from the guilt and stain of their sins through the shedding of his own blood, 4. *See Revelation 1:5; and Hebrews 9:14.*

The Holy Spirit

His person: The Holy Spirit is represented by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, 4. *See Luke 3:16, where the baptism of fire is the fire of God's judgment.*

Salvation

Its benefits

- Imputation of holiness for repentant sinners, 2
- Washing away of our guilt by the blood of Jesus, 4
- God's provision and protection, 2, 5-6

The Last Things

Christ's return: When Jesus Christ returns, he will usher in a new heaven and a new earth, where the glory of God dwells among his people. *See Revelation 21-22.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Expect to see God's judgment upon sinful people and upon nations that have turned from his truth.
- ♦ Thank God for sending Jesus as our glorious Messiah, who died for us to cleanse us from guilt, that we might be counted holy and righteous.
- ♦ Thank God for his presence by his Spirit.
- ♦ Trust in God or provision and protection now, as long as God wants us to survive and bear witness to him.

Isaiah 5

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is holy, 16.
- ♦ He is the Holy One of Israel—Israel’s favorite title for God, 19, 24.
- ♦ He is righteous, 16.
- ♦ He is almighty, the LORD of heavenly armies, ruler of history, 16.
- ♦ He is judge, 16.
- ♦ He will be exalted over all his enemies, 16.
- ♦ He revealed himself to Israel as Yahweh, 25.
- ♦ He chose Israel and his people and gave them every possible blessing, expecting to see them bear the fruits of righteousness and justice, 1–7, 13.

His goodness

- ♦ His fierce anger burns against all sin, but especially the sins of his rebellious people, 5, 24–25.
- ♦ The fulfillment of God’s intention for Israel is found in Jesus, the True Vine. True believers will bear the fruit of good works. Hypocrites will be cut off, cast into the fire, and burned. *See John 15:1–7.*

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Lack of knowledge of God, that is, personal, intentional knowledge, 13; *see Hosea 4:6.*
- ♦ Not regarding the work of the Lord in creation, providence, redemption, and judgment, 12
- ♦ Scorning God’s omniscience and holy judgment, 18–19
- ♦ Rejecting God’s revealed law, contained in his written Word, 24
- ♦ Calling evil good and good evil, 20
- ♦ Pride in one’s supposed wisdom and intelligence, 21
- ♦ Oppression, 7
- ♦ Bribery and perversion of justice, 23

- ♦ Luxury and extravagance in housing, 8–9
- ♦ Intoxication with any substance, 11, 22
- ♦ Indulgence in entertainment and food, 12

Judgment

Its substance

- ♦ Removal of protection, 5
- ♦ Destruction of all sorts, 5
- ♦ Burning, 5, 24
- ♦ Being laid waste, 5–6
- ♦ Desolation, 9
- ♦ Famine, 10, 13, and drought, 13
- ♦ Invasion and defeat by fierce enemies, 26–30
- ♦ Captivity, 13, 29
- ♦ Death, 14
- ♦ Humiliation, 15
- ♦ Darkness, 30
- ♦ Profound sorrow and distress, 30

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Love God, even when he brings judgment, 1.
- ♦ Avoid all extravagance, self-indulgence, and numbing entertainment.
- ♦ Pay close attention to God's Word and to his works.
- ♦ Fear his judgment.
- ♦ Hold to absolute standards of good and evil.
- ♦ Care for justice and the rights of the weak and needy.
- ♦ Expect the imminent destruction of the U.S. by foreign enemies, natural disasters, internal decay, and societal breakdowns.

Isaiah 6

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is high above all the earth; he is transcendent. Thus, he is exalted as King and Lord of the entire universe. He leads the heavenly armies [hosts] into victorious battle over all sin. He is worshipped by heavenly beings. He is holy beyond imagination, 1–3, 5.
- ♦ His glory fills the earth, 3. The creation declares his beauty, power, and deity.
- ♦ His acts of salvation and judgment manifest his greatness and his goodness.
- ♦ His word spreads throughout the world.
- ♦ He is sovereign in judgment and salvation, 9–12.

Note: For reasons known only to himself and beyond our capacity to evaluate, much less criticize, he hardens sinners in their lost condition and even uses his word to make them even more inexcusable, thus further intensifying the punishment that comes upon them. See Mark 6:1–6, John 12, and other passages.

- ♦ He dwells among men. He is immanent in the Old Testament in the Temple and by speaking to the prophets and working salvation for his people; in the New Testament, he is immanent supremely in Jesus Christ, and now, he is immanent by the Spirit in his people, 1–9.

His goodness

- ♦ He cannot abide sin, but he graciously forgives his repentant people and even cleanses from the guilt and stain of sin, 6.
- ♦ He condescends to enlist sinners in his service, 8.
- ♦ He preserves a remnant to transmit his word and to confirm his covenant, 13.

The Last Things

Christ's return: One day, Jesus will return in universally manifest splendor.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Ponder often the glory of God.
- ♦ Confess our sins, especially sins of speech. Words reveal our heart.
- ♦ Offer ourselves in humble service to God.
- ♦ Declare his word faithfully, leaving the results to him.

Isaiah 7:1–8:15

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is sovereign Lord of the universe and of this world, including all nations. He shows this by governing the rise and fall of kings and kingdoms, 7:4–9, 17–25; 8:9–10.
- ♦ He is omniscient. Thus, he can predict the future through his chosen prophets, 7:3–9, the rest of this chapter and the rest of Isaiah.
- ♦ He is omnipotent. He can defeat powerful nations, and he can cause a virgin to conceive, 7:14–16.
- ♦ He is present with his people, through his prophetic word. He promises deliverance from evil and the coming Messiah, Immanuel (“God with us”). Jesus fulfills this prophecy and name, 7:14; 8:8. *See Matthew 1:23 and John 1:14.*

His goodness

- ♦ He is kind. He offers to give a sign to Ahaz that the prophecy of Jerusalem’s deliverance will come true, 7:11.
- ♦ He is merciful. He will protect his faithful remnant from total destruction, 8:14.
- ♦ He is righteous and just. He will punish all evil and oppression, usually through the wicked actions of evil men, 7:4, 20.
- ♦ He is severe toward his unbelieving people. He will judge them by sending upon them what they fear, 8:6–8.
- ♦ He requires faith from us. The basic sin is lack of belief in him and his word, 7:4, 9, 13; 8:6, 12.
- ♦ He will cause unbelievers to stumble over the “rock” of his salvation, 8:15. This was fulfilled in Jesus. *See 1 Peter 2:8.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Trust in God at all times, even when our dangers and difficulties seem about to overwhelm us. He is with us!
- ♦ Fear God and not men, 8:12-13.
- ♦ Trust that God is controlling history for his greater glory and the good of his people, even when it includes national disaster.
- ♦ Faithfully proclaim God's mercy and his judgment to our friends and neighbors.

Isaiah 8:16–9:7

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is transcendent, the Lord of Hosts, 8:18.
- ♦ He will someday bring prosperity, 9:3, peace, and an end to oppression and war, 9:4–5.
- ♦ He will bring this prosperity and peace through his son, Jesus, 9:6–7.
- ♦ He is zealous for his glory and for the good of his people, 9:7.
- ♦ He has the power to fulfill his plan, 9:7.
- ♦ He reveals himself to his prophets and their disciples through his word, 8:16.
- ♦ He dwelt upon Mt. Zion in Old Testament times, 8:18.

His goodness

- ♦ He hides his face from his people when they ignore his word, 8:17, 20.
- ♦ He will not tolerate any seeking of wisdom from any other source than his revealed word, 8:19.
- ♦ He sends disaster and darkness upon his rebellious people, 8:21–22.

Christ

His person

- ♦ He was prefigured by prophets like Isaiah as a fully human prophet, 8:18. *See Hebrews 2:13.*
- ♦ He is man, a child who was born of Mary, 9:6. *See John 1:14 and Luke 2:11.*
- ♦ He is God, the Son of God, with his very nature. He is the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Eternal Ruler, 9:6–7.
 - Counselor: Wisdom incarnate
 - Mighty God: Omnipotent, fully divine
 - Everlasting Father: Eternal, older than the world, loving ruler and guardian
 - Prince of Peace: Son of God the King, the one whose power, purity, and pity brings peace

- ♦ He is a descendant of David and heir of God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7. As such, he will rule forever over a new earth, 9:7.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Ponder the words of God written in Scripture, rather than seeking wisdom anywhere else.
- ♦ Pass on the word of God to our children and to disciples who can pass on the truth to the next generation, 8:16.
- ♦ Wait patiently for God to fulfill his purposes when we meet opposition to our faith and our message, 8:17.
- ♦ Recognize that children—and disciples—are given to us by God and share with us in the witness of suffering and service in the world. We should, therefore, present both ourselves and them to God as his servants, 8:18.

Isaiah 11:1–12:6

Truth

God

His Triune nature: He exists in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, seen here as “the LORD,” his Spirit, and the incarnate Son, the promised descendant of David who would rule as king forever, 11:1–12.

His greatness

- ♦ He is wise and understanding, powerful and all-knowing, 11:2.
- ♦ He is faithful, 11:5.
- ♦ He will fulfill his promise to David to raise up one of his descendants to rule forever over his people and over all the earth, 11:1–10.
- ♦ He preliminarily fulfilled his promise to restore his people from exile in Babylon and will finally fully restore them from the ends of the earth, 11:11–16.
- ♦ He is glorious in every way, 11:10.
- ♦ He can be known, 11:9.
- ♦ He is transcendent; he is great, 12:6.
- ♦ He saved Israel, and he will save all those who trust in him, 12:2.
- ♦ He can become the strength, the song, and the salvation of all who trust in him, 12:2.

Note: This reminds us of the song of victory sung by Moses and Miriam after the defeat of the Egyptians. See Exodus 15:2.

- ♦ His character doesn't change. He is the same now as when he delivered Israel from Egypt, 12:2. *See Exodus 15:2.*
- ♦ He is in the midst of his people, 12:6.

His goodness

- ♦ He is merciful. Though his people disobeyed and had to be punished, yet he had mercy on the remnant and brought them back to the land, 11:11–16.
- ♦ He is good and holy, 12:6.
- ♦ He is kind. He chose Israel; though he punished them, yet he also forgave them and had mercy on them and comforted them, 12:1, 6.

- ♦ He is just. He will destroy the enemies of his people who oppress them, 11:4, 5, 11–16.
- ♦ He is all-powerful. He can recreate the world so that the effects of sin are reversed, so that even carnivores become herbivores, and the ancient enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman is eradicated, 11:6–9. *See Genesis 3:15.*
- ♦ He must judge and punish wickedness and rebellion, 12:1.

Christ

His person

- ♦ He is man, the descendant of David, 11:1.
- ♦ He is fully filled with the Spirit of God, 11:2.
- ♦ He is divine, for he will destroy all the enemies of God's people with merely the breath of his mouth at the end time, 11:4. *See Revelation 19:11 and 2 Thessalonians 2:8.*

His work: He judged, and judges, as God does, according to reality, truth, and justice, 11:3.

Salvation

Its recipients: Salvation will extend to the entire earth: every facet of it, and every sort of person, race, culture, and nationality, 11:9–11.

Note: This fulfills the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12, that all nations would be blessed in him, and the unity of mankind before the Fall and the Flood will be renewed.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Trust God to fulfill all his threats and all his promises.
- ♦ Sing praises and thanks to him for his character, his acts of salvation, and his judgment.
- ♦ Declare his glory among the nations. *See Matthew 28:18–20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24; Acts 1:8; and John 20:21.*

Isaiah 13:1–14:2

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is omniscient. He knows the future; in this case, the total and permanent destruction of Babylon by the Medes 200 years after the prophecy was written by Isaiah, 13:1–22.
- ♦ He is omnipotent; he rules the affairs of empires and even determines the courses of the heavenly bodies and the convulsions of the earth, chapter 13, including verses 10 and 13.
- ♦ He is jealous for his own glory; he will humiliate the proud persons, 13:11.

His goodness

- ♦ He is faithful and merciful to his people. After chastising them by exile, he will bring them back to the land which he had promised them. This happened after Babylon fell, 14:1–2.
- ♦ He will punish sinners for their wickedness, 13:9, 11.
- ♦ His righteousness expresses itself in anger against sin and sinners, 13:3, 5, 9, 11.
- ♦ God's wrath against sin will be manifested throughout the history by the destruction of all proud empires, of which Babylon is a representative. At the end of time, Jesus will come and fulfill this prophecy by judging the entire earth and punishing all unrepentant sinners. *See Mark 13 and the book of Revelation.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Trust God to punish all the nations and individuals who oppress his people, as Babylon did with the Jews.
- ♦ Avoid all pride, for God will bring down all arrogance and haughtiness.
- ♦ Trust that God will again be merciful to us after we have repented of the sins which brought discipline upon us.

- ◆ Warn people of the coming of Christ to judge the world.

Isaiah 14:3–32

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is all-powerful; he can destroy the mightiest of kings, 5, 24.
- ♦ He is jealous for his unique glory and sovereignty; he will abase all those who seek to exalt themselves, 13–15, 22.
- ♦ He possesses all power and authority; none can resist his will, 26–27.

His goodness

- ♦ He is faithful; he keeps his promises to his people. In this case, he restores Israel to the Promised Land after their discipline by exile in Babylon and gives them rule over those who had ruled over them, 3–4, 32.
- ♦ After the hard labor of slavery that results from sin, God can give rest to his people, 3.
- ♦ He is just; he will punish those who have oppressed others, 6.
- ♦ He is thorough in his judgment; he cuts off even the children of persistent evildoers, lest they repeat the sins of their fathers, 22.
- ♦ He keeps his threats. To this day, Babylon is a total ruin, with no one living there, 23.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Wanting to be like God, as did Adam and Eve, 13–14
- ♦ Pride, as it is self-destructive; when any being presumes to divine honor, glory, and power, he will be utterly cast down, 15

Judgment

Its characteristics

- ♦ The fall of the king of Babylon has been compared to the fall of Satan and the evil angels from heaven, 12–14. *See Revelation 12:7–9.*

- ♦ The fall of Babylon is a type of the final destruction of the earth and its prideful pomp at the end of the age. *See Revelation 18.*
- ♦ The fall of Babylon is also a preview and warning to all nations like it. The USA seems to be today's Babylon and will certainly be similarly destroyed, perhaps soon.

Hell

Its characteristics

- ♦ There is a realm of the dead, where they have conscious awareness of each other and of their situation, 9–11.
- ♦ In hell, all the pomp and pleasures of a sinful life will be turned into their opposites, and there will be eternal humiliation, poverty, and pain for those who had indulged all their passions on earth, 11, 19.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Beware of all pride and self-sufficiency. God opposes the proud and will humiliate them.
- ♦ Do not fret over the temporary prosperity of wicked rulers and nations; they will be brought down in God's time.
- ♦ Trust God to keep all his promises.
- ♦ Warn people of the coming judgment and the imminent danger of going to hell and point them to Christ as the only Savior.

Isaiah 16–17

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is the covenant God of Israel: YAHWEH, Adonai, 17:6.
- ♦ He is our Maker. He is almighty Lord, and the only one who can care for us, 17:7.
- ♦ He is the Holy One of Israel, 17:7.
- ♦ He is God of salvation to all those who trust him, 17:10.
- ♦ His Messiah, the descendant of David, will rule over his people with justice and righteousness, 16:5. This will happen now in the church, through the Spirit, and after the return of Christ.

His goodness

- ♦ He is merciful to his people, 16:5.
- ♦ He does not delight in the death of a sinner. Somehow, he, through the prophet, grieves for their suffering as a consequence of their sins, 16:9, 11.
- ♦ He uses one nation to punish another nation in his righteous judgment, chapters 16–17.

Sin

It includes: The main sin is pride; like Lucifer (Babylon), Moab was judged for his excessive pride, 16:6.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Beware of any kind of pride, for it will bring God's discipline.
- ♦ Know that proud nations will be destroyed in time.
- ♦ Do not look to men or idols to save us, but to our Maker and God.
- ♦ Do not rejoice in the fall of evil men and nations, but weep for them, for without God's mercy we would be in their place of judgment.

Isaiah 18–19

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is Lord of all the nations, as Maker of the world and of all mankind. He is Lord in judgment, destroying nations for their pride and aggression, e.g. Ethiopia and Egypt, 18:1–19:18.
- ♦ He is Lord in salvation, eventually bringing all nations, e.g. Egypt, Assyria, and Israel, together through the spread of the gospel of Christ, as happened in the early church period, when Egypt, Syria, and Israel were home to large Christian populations, 19:19–25.
- ♦ He will fulfill his promise to Abraham, e.g. Ethiopia will worship God, 18:7—a prophecy that began to be fulfilled in the early church. *See Acts 8:27–38.*
- ♦ He fulfilled the prophecy about the folly of those who think themselves wise by sending Christ as our wisdom and giving the gospel as the only way to know God and his truth, 19:12. *See 1 Corinthians 1:20.*
- ♦ He is a master poet, as all of Isaiah testifies. As creator of language, he uses human language to convey his truth to mankind.

His goodness

- ♦ He destroys nations in several ways.
 - Internal division and strife, 19:1–2
 - Recourse to divination and sorcery, 19:3
 - Foolish counsel on the part of advisers to rulers, 19:11–15
 - Oppression by cruel foreigners, 19:4
 - Natural and economic disasters, 19:5–10
- ♦ He will take away any person, thing, or nation in whom his people have foolishly put their trust.
- ♦ He will somehow “take [his] rest” in his dwelling place during and after judging nations, 18:3–4.

Mankind

Our created nature: Men and women are different: In general, women are more prone to fear than men, 19:16. *See 1 Peter 3:6.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Expect God to punish all proud and oppressive nations, including our own.
- ◆ Rejoice that God fulfilled Old Testament prophecies of both judgment and salvation.
- ◆ Do not trust in anyone or anything for wisdom or salvation. This includes fortune-tellers, spirit mediums, or wise men.
- ◆ Cry out to God for salvation when in trouble, 19:20–22.

Isaiah 20–50:3

Notes for this section are currently unavailable.

Isaiah 50:4–51:16

Truth

Note: This passage is complicated with several speakers, several audiences, and several themes.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He created the whole world, 51:13.
- ♦ His salvation to Israel will resemble a return to the pristine conditions of Eden, 51:3. This was partially fulfilled in the return from Babylon but will be fully realized in the new heaven and the new earth.
- ♦ He will replace this world with another, renewed world, in which his salvation and righteousness will prevail forever, 51:6.
- ♦ He chose Israel as his special people, 51:16.
- ♦ He brought them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and into the Promised Land, 51:10, 15.

His goodness

- ♦ He will comfort his people who look for righteousness and seek him, 51:1, 3, 12. This comfort will include joy and gladness, thanksgiving and song. *See Ephesians 5:19–20; Philippians 4:4; and 1 Thessalonians 5:18.*
- ♦ He promised to use Israel as a light to the nations, that people of all races, tongues, etc., might come to the light, 51:4. This is fulfilled in the spread of the gospel to all the world since Pentecost.
- ♦ In some ancient time, he destroyed Rahab, a sea monster who personifies chaos and evil, 51:9.
- ♦ He is the ultimate judge, who will acquit his Servant of all charges against them, and save them from ultimate disgrace, 50:7–9.

Note: This points toward the resurrection and ascension of Christ as the vindication of his innocence and victory over all his adversaries. See Romans 8 for the fulfillment of this passage for all those who are in Christ.

- ♦ He will judge the world with righteousness when Christ returns, 51:5.

God's Servant

His work

- ◆ God's Servant listens to God daily, waiting to hear his Word, that he might speak to others, 50:4.

Note: This points to Christ's listening to the words of the Father before speaking to men. See John 5:30; 8:29.

- ◆ God's Servant meekly submitted to disgrace and abusive treatment, 50:6. This points toward the Passion of Christ.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Do not be afraid when others accuse us; God will justify us as we trust in him.
- ◆ Do not fear oppressors; God will help us at the right time.
- ◆ Look back to God's former works of creation and salvation and trust that his unchanging love and power are for us today also.
- ◆ Listen to God's word daily, waiting for him to speak to us.

Isaiah 51:17–52:12

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is jealous for his glory and reputation and will make sure that his honor is upheld in his people, sometimes by chastising them, and always by destroying those who blaspheme and oppress them, 52:4–6.
- ♦ He will cause his name to be known and glorified in all the earth by saving his people, 52:10.
- ♦ As King, God reigns and rules over all the earth, 52:7.
- ♦ He is faithful to his threats and promises. He carried out his threat through Moses to punish his people through exile and fulfilled his promises to bring them back to the Promised Land, 52:8.
- ♦ Having brought them out from Babylon, God went before his people and behind his people to protect and guide them, 52:12. This recalls his presence to them after the Exodus and his constant care of believers in Christ. *See Matthew 28:20.*

His goodness

- ♦ In his holiness, he hates sin and unrighteousness. When he encounters it, especially in his people, he is filled with fury and anger, 51:17, 20.
- ♦ His anger, or at least his outpouring of it upon sinners, is likened to a cup full of wrath, which makes those who drink it completely drunk, 51:17, 20, 21.

Note: This points toward the cup which Jesus had to drink on the cross, and to the cup of wrath which unrepentant sinners will drink on the last day of God's judgment. See Revelation 14:10; 16:19.

- ♦ In his love, God takes the cup of wrath away from his people, and in his holiness, forces their oppressor to drink it, 51:22–23.
- ♦ This exchange can take place because God redeems his people, that is, he delivers them by the payment of a price, 52:3, 9.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Thank God for sending Jesus to drink the cup of his wrath in our place and for redeeming us from sin, Satan, the law, and death.
- ♦ Separate ourselves from evil and touch no unclean thing, but follow God in holiness of life, 52:11. *See 2 Corinthians 6:17.*
- ♦ Spread the news of God's universal lordship and his salvation in Christ to all the nations, 52:7.

Isaiah 52:13–53:12

Truth

Note: One of the central passages in the entire Bible, this section of Isaiah details the sufferings and ultimate success of the Servant of God, who is revealed in the New Testament as Jesus, the fully human but also fully divine eternal Son of God who took upon a human nature and offered himself as a sacrifice for our sins. Various parts of this passage are quoted in the New Testament.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He knows and ordains all things, including the use of sinful men to accomplish his good purposes.

Note: This passage is a prophecy about the sufferings of Christ and the glories that followed. It consists of specific predictions of what would happen to Jesus. Only God could produce such a prophecy and its exact fulfillment more than 700 years later. This is another demonstration that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, authoritative Word of God, written for our instruction and encouragement.

God's Servant

His person

- ♦ God intended to redeem his people by the sacrifice of his Servant, who was righteous (unlike them), 53:10–11.
- ♦ This Servant, being fully human, had no distinguishing marks to evoke the admiration of men. On the contrary, he was despised and rejected by them throughout his adult life, and then cruelly tortured by them, 53:2–3.

His work

- ♦ He died physically, but his soul also died, 53:12.
- ♦ He did all this willingly; his death was voluntary, as the New Testament also records, 53:12.
- ♦ He entered completely into human sorrow and pain, 53:3.
- ♦ His sufferings were meant as a vicarious, substitutionary atonement for the sins of God's people, that is, he took upon himself the consequences of our sins by

receiving punishment from men as a wrongdoer and, much more importantly, the wrath of God as a sin-bearer, 53:5–6, 8, 10–12.

- ◆ During his ordeal, he did not deploy his divine powers and dignity to retaliate, but like a lamb—and thus serving as the ultimate sacrifice prefigured in the Levitical system—he silently and meekly endured verbal and physical abuse, 53:7–9.
- ◆ He even interceded for his sinful tormentors, 53:12.
- ◆ His suffering culminated in death and burial, 53:9.
- ◆ As ordained by God, after his suffering—and because of it—the Servant received new life that will last forever through, as the New Testament relates, the resurrection of Christ and his later ascension to God’s right hand, 53:10.
- ◆ He “prospered,” in that his work of atonement succeeded in its goal. Many are:
 - Justified, that is, counted righteous before God, 53:11
 - Healed, that is, forgiven, and treated for their innate sinfulness, 53:6
 - Sprinkled with his shed blood and thus rendered ritually clean and qualified to enter God’s presence, 52:15
- ◆ He caused even Gentile kings to be silent in submission before him, 52:15.
- ◆ He will receive an inheritance, which will be the entire recreated earth, along with his redeemed people, 53:12.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Thank God constantly for sending Jesus to die for our sins and rise for our justification.
- ◆ Believe that in him our sins are completely taken away from God’s sight, we are justified, and we can enter the presence of a holy God.
- ◆ Speak the good news of Jesus’ salvation to the ends of the earth, 52:15.

Isaiah 54

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is Maker, both of Israel and of the world, 5.
- ♦ He is the LORD of hosts, that is, all-powerful, 5.
- ♦ He is the Holy One of Israel, 5.
- ♦ He is the Redeemer, 5, 8.
- ♦ He is the providential ruler of individuals and nations, and thus protector of his people, 16–17.
- ♦ He is also called God of the whole earth, 5.
- ♦ Especially here, he is Israel's husband, 5.
- ♦ His salvation overcomes the shame and pain of the period of his severe discipline and apparent rejection of his people for their sins, 1–4, 10–15.

His goodness

- ♦ He is full of mercy, 7.
- ♦ He is faithful to his covenant promises, 10, even after he has had to chasten his people severely for their sins, 4, 6–10.

Note: The universal flood of Noah's time, and God's covenant with Noah and with the earth never again to cover the earth with water, is assumed as historical fact, and made the basis for faith that his covenant with Israel will likewise never be abrogated, 9–10.

The Last Things

The end of the age

- ♦ The people of God will be, for the first time, fully righteous, 14.
- ♦ In the future, all of the children of Israel will be taught by God, 13. This began to be fulfilled when Jesus came, *John 6:45*, and later when he poured out his Spirit upon believers in Christ. *See 1 John 2:20.*
- ♦ The descendants of Israel will someday inherit the nations, 3. This began to be fulfilled after Pentecost, when Christians preached the gospel and gained converts from many nations. It will be completed when Christ returns, and his people will inherit the earth. *See Romans 4:13 and Matthew 5:5.*

The new creation

- ♦ This earth will be removed, 10, and a New Jerusalem will be created by God, which far surpasses the beauty, glory, and peace of the earthly Jerusalem under Solomon, 11–16.
- ♦ The people of God will be, for the first time, fully, righteous, 14.

Life

The Christian Life

- ♦ Marriage: If a young wife is either forsaken or rejected by her husband, she will be utterly brokenhearted, 6.

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Remember that he will never forsake us utterly when we are disciplined but will gather us back again to himself after we have thoroughly repented.
- ♦ Cleave to him with our whole being in true love and devotion as Christ is now revealed as the Bridegroom of his people. Husbands should also imitate his love for us in their love for their wives. *See Ephesians 5:22–23.*
- ♦ Be prepared for an even larger ministry after we have experienced discipline, 2–3.
- ♦ Set our hope fully on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, and not on this world. *See 1 Peter 1:13.*

Isaiah 55

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is God, not man, 5.
- ♦ His thoughts and ways are far, infinitely far, above those of men, 8–10.
- ♦ He effects his will through his spoken word only, fulfilling his plan for his people and the nations, 10–13.
- ♦ He seeks his own glory in all he does, especially in saving his unworthy people, 13.
- ♦ He is the Holy One of Israel, YAHWEH, the LORD, our God, 5.
- ♦ He speaks to his people, inviting them into his presence, 1.
- ♦ He invites them to seek and find him, 6.
- ♦ He invites them to return to him, 7.
- ♦ He exists as Father, Son (Word, 11), and Spirit (waters), 1.

His goodness

- ♦ He is generous, offering drink and food free of charge, 1–2.
 - His offer of refreshing water, which is identified with the Spirit, was repeated by Jesus. *See John 4:11, 13–14; 7:37–39; and Revelation 7:17.*
 - The Spirit is also connected with wine, 1. *See Acts 2:13, 17 and Ephesians 5:17–18.*
 - The Lord's Supper also reminds us of this promise. Jesus called himself the Bread of Life. *See John 6:35.* In every way, he fulfills the promises made in this passage in Isaiah.
- ♦ His grace comes to sinners who hear and heed his Word, 3.
- ♦ He makes covenants with his people and will be faithful to them, 3. In this case, the covenant made with David in 2 Samuel 7 is referenced.
- ♦ He also keeps other promises, like the one to restore exiled Israelites from Babylon to the Promised Land, 12–13.

Note: This restoration, with the removal of thorns and the springing up of fruitful plants, points toward the total undoing of the curse on the earth at the end time.

- ♦ He intends to save people from all nations through the witness of Israel, 4–5. This began to be fulfilled at Pentecost and then through the worldwide preaching of the gospel.
- ♦ He is merciful and invites sinners to repent and receive mercy, 7.
- ♦ His mercy is abundant, 7. *See Ephesians 1:7.*
- ♦ He is righteous, identifying and refusing to have close relationship with sin, 7.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Listen to God's Word daily by reading, memorizing, and meditating upon Scripture.
- ♦ Seek God and his multifaceted grace daily, believing his promise to give us his spirit when we call upon him in faith.
- ♦ Repent of our sins daily and forsake our wicked ways, by his grace.
- ♦ Trust God to keep all his promises.
- ♦ Do not presume to understand all of God's ways, which are far beyond our understanding.
- ♦ Preach the Word of God, which possesses supernatural power, to all the nations.

Isaiah 56–57

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is Savior, 56:1.
- ♦ He is covenant-making, 56:4.
- ♦ He is transcendent and dwells in a high and holy place, 57:15.
- ♦ He is eternal, and he gives an everlasting name to those who trust in him, 56:5.
- ♦ He inhabits eternity, 57:15.
- ♦ He is holy, 57:15.
- ♦ He dwells with his house, the Temple, 56:5.
- ♦ He dwells with the contrite, meek, and lowly, 57:15.

His goodness

- ♦ He is righteous and just and therefore requires these of his people, 56:1.
- ♦ He will/did bring back the exiles of Israel from Babylon; he thus shows his faithfulness to his covenant, 56:8.
- ♦ He intends to save people of all nations, 56:3–8.
- ♦ He will revive the humble and contrite after he has disciplined them for their backsliding hearts. He will “heal” them by bringing them back to himself, 57:16–18.
- ♦ In this way, he will comfort those who mourn for their sin and its results, 57:18.

Righteousness

It includes

- ♦ Joining ourselves to the Lord, 56:6
- ♦ Serving him, 56:6
- ♦ Loving him, 56:6
- ♦ Observing the Sabbath (at least in Old Testament times), 56:6
- ♦ Observing his covenant, 56:6
- ♦ Worshipping and praying to God, 56:7
- ♦ Trusting God, 57:13

- ♦ Practicing humility and contrition for sin, 57:15

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Rulers who exploit their people, 56:9
- ♦ Idleness and laziness, 56:10
- ♦ Greed and covetousness, 56:11; 57:17
- ♦ Selfishness, 56:11
- ♦ Sorcery, 57:3
- ♦ Adultery and harlotry, 57:3
- ♦ Mockery of others or of God, 57:4
- ♦ Falsehood and deceit, 57:5
- ♦ Idolatry, 57:5–10
- ♦ Forgetting God, 57:11
- ♦ Not fearing God, 57:11
- ♦ Turning away from God when disciplined by him, 57:17

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Love God, serve him, hold fast to him, keep his commandments, observe a day of rest in honor of him.
- ♦ Respond with humble repentance and contrition when God disciplines us for our sins.
- ♦ Avoid all the sins listed above, especially idolatry and covetousness, for they breed all the others.
- ♦ Spread the gospel to all nations, for this fulfills God's design to save the Gentiles.

Isaiah 58

Truth

Revelation

Its source: God speaks truth of judgement and comfort through his prophets, 1, 14.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is glorious, 8.
- ♦ He is holy, set apart; he ordained the Sabbath as a holy day also, to be set apart, 13. On this day, Israelites (and perhaps Christians today also) were to focus on God alone, delight in him, speak his words and do his works, not their own, 13.
- ♦ He is strong, and he will give his strength to his people, 11.
- ♦ He is delightful! Those who delight in him and forsake their own pleasure to delight in him will be filled with delight and pleasure, 13–14.
- ♦ He will be close and accessible to those who are sincere, repentant, and loving, 9.

His goodness

- ♦ He cares for the poor and the powerless, 7.
- ♦ He answers the prayer of sincere, repentant, loving people, 9.
- ♦ He guides those who abhor evil and seek good, 11.
- ♦ He gives safety and prosperity to those who delight in him, 14.
- ♦ He is just, for his ordinances are just, 2.
- ♦ He hates wickedness and oppression, 6.
- ♦ He will not honor religion which is merely external and ceremonial, with no internal delight in him or outward works of justice and mercy, 2–5.
- ♦ He cares for his Sabbath (at least in the Old Testament; whether this applies in the New Testament has been debated), 13.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Not only worship God sincerely, but also seek the welfare of all around us, especially the poor, needy, and oppressed.
- ♦ Fast sometimes when we are seeking God.
- ♦ Seek our pleasure and delight in God alone.
- ♦ Set aside one day in seven—probably Sunday, the Lord’s Day—to forsake all worldly pleasures and concerns and concentrate upon God’s Word and works instead. In fact, we should do this every day!

Isaiah 59

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is omnipresent and all-knowing, 1.
- ♦ He is holy and righteous and cannot have companionship with sin and unrepentant sinners, 12.
- ♦ He alone can save, and he does so with all his plenitude of power, 16–17.
- ♦ He seeks his own glory, and his wrath against sin will bring praise from the ends of the earth, 19.
- ♦ He has chosen Israel to bless the world, so the Redeemer will come from Zion, 20. This points to Jesus.
- ♦ He is Triune; he has a Spirit, 21.
- ♦ He will give his Spirit to his chosen messengers, that they may speak his word to his people, 21. This finally points to Jesus and to Jesus' disciples. *See Acts 1:8.*

His goodness

- ♦ He is loving and merciful; he seeks salvation for sinner and restoration of justice in the land, 15–16.
- ♦ He is faithful; he will keep his covenant with his people, 21.
- ♦ He will save those who turn from sin, 20.
- ♦ He is just; he will fully repay each man according to his deeds, 18.
- ♦ With fury, he will punish his enemies, 18.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Not calling out for justice or pleading for truth, 4
- ♦ Trusting in empty words and speaking lies, 4
- ♦ Conceiving words of falsehood, 13
- ♦ Conceiving evil in the mind and heart, 4, 7
- ♦ Doing works of injustice, 6
- ♦ Doing violence, 6
- ♦ Displaying eagerness and zeal for harming others, 7

- ♦ Not caring for peace, 8
- ♦ Lying against the Lord, 13
- ♦ Departing from God, 13
- ♦ Speaking words of oppression (those in power) and rebelling (those being oppressed), 13
- ♦ Not interceding for sinners, 16

Its consequences

- ♦ Death, 5
- ♦ Further evil, 5
- ♦ Frustration and failure, 6
- ♦ No peace, 8
- ♦ Lack of justice and righteousness in society, 9
- ♦ Ignorance and confusion, 10
- ♦ Sadness, 11
- ♦ A longing for justice and salvation, but in vain, 11
- ♦ Awareness of our many sins against God, 12
- ♦ Lack of public truth, 14–15
- ♦ Persecution for the righteous man, 15

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Watch over our thoughts, for they produce deeds. God looks into our hearts and minds and sees our evil imagination.
- ♦ Stop evil where it starts—in the thought life.
- ♦ Pray for God to bring salvation to this sinful, sick, and broken world.
- ♦ Speak out for justice and truth.
- ♦ Ask for God's Spirit to enable us to declare his praise and his Word.
- ♦ Ask whether sin has come between God and us when we sense a distance between ourselves and God.

Isaiah 66

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is transcendent; he sits above heaven and earth.
- ♦ He is King; heaven is his throne and earth, his royal footstool, 1.
- ♦ He is Creator; he made heaven and earth, 2.
- ♦ He is jealous for his unique deity and the worship he deserves, and he punishes idolaters by allowing them to continue in their destructive delusions and to experience all that they dread, 4.
- ♦ He regards people who are poor (afflicted), contrite (penitent), and reverent toward his Word, 2. *See Isaiah 57:15 also.*

His goodness

- ♦ He constantly calls out to sinners to repent, especially from forsaking him for idols and folly, 4. *See Proverbs 1–9.*
- ♦ He speaks comfort to those who are despised by the world but who fear and love his Word, 5.
- ♦ He promised to comfort once-forsaken Israel with comforts that overflowed and greatly exceed the pain that had been inflicted upon her for disobedience, 8–13.
Note: This promise also applies to believers in Christ who are persecuted. See 2 Corinthians 1:3–5.
- ♦ His promised comfort included the assurance that, as promised to Abraham long ago, all nations would be blessed in Israel, and that Israel—God’s chosen people—would be honored and served by the Gentiles, 12–13.
- ♦ His promise included the prediction that Gentiles who had been blessed through Abraham’s seed would be
 - The people of God so much that they would be eligible to be priests, offering acceptable worship, 18–21
 - Prophets, taking the good news of God’s glory to the whole world, 18–21

Note: This is being fulfilled now by Christian cross-cultural missionaries. See Matthew 24:14 and Acts 1:8.

- ♦ His comfort centers upon “peace like a river”—a condition of total rest, safety, satisfaction, prosperity, and quiet, mixed with joy and happiness, 12.
- ♦ His righteous anger, on the other hand from his comfort, burns hot with indignation against those who commit idolatry and transgress his commands, 17, 24.
- ♦ He fully repays his enemies—those who despise and oppress his people—as well as those who worship idols. 6, 15–17, 24.

The Last Things

The final judgment: The final punishment in hell will be horrible and unending, 24. *See Mark 9:44, 46, 48.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Rejoice always in the Lord, and especially in his grace and salvation, not only to us, but in the whole world. The progress of the gospel in individuals and around the globe should fill us with immense joy.
- ♦ Believe that God will comfort us in all our afflictions, and that times of suffering and sorrow will end.
- ♦ Look eagerly for the salvation to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- ♦ Love our neighbors, near and far, by taking the gospel to them, regardless of the cost to ourselves.

JEREMIAH

Jeremiah 1

Truth

Revelation

Its conveyance

- ♦ It came to God's chosen prophets in the Old Testament as "the word of the LORD," equated with "the words" of the prophet. That is, the very words of the prophets are from God, 1-3, 7, 9, 17.
- ♦ It came also in visions which were explained by God, 11-14.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He exercises sovereignty over
 - The lives of individuals, 5
 - Nations, 10
 - His people Israel, 14-16
- ♦ He is jealous for his own glory and unique allegiance from his people, 16.
- ♦ He vents his holy anger and wrath on idolaters, 14-16.
- ♦ He strengthens his chosen people and prophets against their enemies and fortifies them with his presence, 8, 17-19.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Worshiping other "gods," including man-made images, 16
- ♦ Worshiping anything that turns us from God, 16, including money, sex, power, pleasure, possessions, prestige, etc.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Listen to what God says to us through the Bible and ask for wisdom to know how it applies to us now.

- ♦ Trust and obey God; he can use people who are young or otherwise considered unready or unfit for service, if they trust him and obey him, 7–10. That includes us!
- ♦ Do not be afraid to declare God's words to our family, friends, neighbors, and all whom we meet, even if they respond with hostility. We should trust that God will strengthen us by his presence. *See Matthew 28:20.*

Jeremiah 2:1–3:5

Truth

Revelation

Its source: God's self-disclosure came to Israel through

- ♦ His deliverance of them from Egypt, 2:6, 20
- ♦ Guidance and provision in the wilderness, 2:6
- ♦ Entrance into the Promised Land, 2:7
- ♦ Chastening for sin, 2:30, 3:3
- ♦ The law of Moses, 3:1
- ♦ The words of the prophets, 2:1–2

God

His greatness: God is jealous for the love of his people, hurt by their forsaking him and going after idols and furious at their treachery and ingratitude, 2:5, 9–13, 17, 31–32.

His goodness

- ♦ He is gracious and kind.
 - He chose Israel from among the nations to be his people, 2:1.
 - He delivered them from Egypt and brought them into the Promised Land, acting like a husband to them, 2:6–7, 13, and like a father, 3:4.
 - He was to them like a fountain of living waters, supplying all their needs, 2:13.
- ♦ God is merciful and urges his people to return to him from their waywardness, 3:1.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ For religious leaders, not seeking God, rightly handling his written revelation, not knowing God, 2:8
- ♦ For rulers, transgression of God's law, 2:8
- ♦ For prophets, prophesying by another "god," 2:8
- ♦ Not fearing God, 2:19
- ♦ Forsaking God, 2:13, 19

- ♦ Exhibiting unrestrained, animal-like sexual passion, 2:23–25
- ♦ Idolatry, 2:11, 28
- ♦ Adultery, 2:33–34
- ♦ Remarriage after divorce, 3:1; *see Deuteronomy 24:1–4; Matthew 19:9; and Romans 7:1–6, etc.*
- ♦ Going back to the former husband after marrying another man, 3:1
- ♦ Harlotry, 3:2
- ♦ Refusing to repent after being corrected and chastened by God, 2:30
- ♦ Despising and forgetting all God’s blessings to us, 2:5–7
- ♦ Saying that one has no sin, 2:25
- ♦ Lack of shame for obvious sin, 3:3

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Seek satisfaction in God alone, for only he can fulfill our deepest longings; he alone is the fountain of living waters.
Note: For Christians, Jesus is shown to be this Fountain. See John 4:14, where he is speaking to a woman who had had multiple husbands in her desperate search for a man to satisfy her longing for love and perhaps also sexual passion.
- ♦ Love God as Father, Savior, Provider, and Husband. For us now, “Husband” and “Savior” refers to Jesus.
- ♦ Receive his correction and repent when he rebukes us for sin.
- ♦ Avoid sexual immorality.

Jeremiah 3:6–4:31

Truth

God

His goodness

- ♦ He is merciful and gracious, repeatedly pleading with his people to return to him from their idolatry, 3:7, 12–15, 22; 4:1, 3–4, 14.
- ♦ He is faithful to his covenant promises, by telling his people he will save some of them for future blessings, 3:14–18.
- ♦ He will heal them from their evil thoughts and backslidings, 3:17, 22.
- ♦ He will help them become stable and loyal to God again, 4:1–2.
- ♦ He will save them, 4:14.
- ♦ He is their husband, despite Judah's treachery, 3:14.
- ♦ He is their father also, 3:14.
- ♦ He is holy and righteous; he must eventually punish unrepentant sinners, and he will do so with fury and terrible thoroughness, causing bitter grief and sorrow, 3:21; 4:5–13, 18–21, 23–31.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Idolatry, 3:6
- ♦ Not learning from the lessons of others who sinned and were punished, 3:8
- ♦ Not obeying God's voice, 3:13, 25
- ♦ Following the dictates of our evil hearts, 3:17
- ♦ Adultery, 3:20
- ♦ Forgetting God, 3:21
- ♦ Evil thoughts, 4:14
- ♦ Rebelling against God, 4:17
- ♦ Foolishly choosing not to know God, 4:22
- ♦ Being expert in evil but not in good, 4:22
- ♦ Murder, 4:31

Righteousness

It includes

- ♦ Acknowledging sin and turning from it, 3:13, 25
- ♦ Returning to God, 3:14
- ♦ Calling on God as “Father,” 3:19
- ♦ Acknowledging the salvation comes from God alone, 3:22–24
- ♦ Putting away all things abominable to God, 4:1
- ♦ Worshiping (swearing by) God in truth, justice, righteousness, 4:2
- ♦ Seeking a change of heart, 4:3–4, 14

Salvation

It includes

- ♦ Cessation of God’s anger, 3:12
- ♦ Healing from sinful patterns, 3:22
- ♦ Receiving soul care from pastors in tune with God’s heart, 3:15 (this points towards Jesus the Good Shepherd, and all pastors/elders who love him)
- ♦ Unity in God with all other true worshipers of him, 3:18
- ♦ Deliverance from judgment, 4:4 and following

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Constantly search our hearts to see which evil thoughts and intentions lurk there.
- ♦ Try to identify any idols of the heart that turn us away from God.
- ♦ Repent of our sins quickly and seek God’s mercy.
- ♦ Obey God’s written word and worship him sincerely, from the heart.
- ♦ Proclaim impending judgment on individuals and nations that have rebelled against God, especially “Christians” who have turned from him and nations like America which have “known” God in some way and rejected him.

Jeremiah 5–6

Truth

Revelation

Its source: It came to Israel through the prophets, who proclaimed both comfort and urgent warnings, and whose words were like fire, actually becoming instruments of refining and destruction for treacherous Israel, 5:14.

Its content: It is often counterfeited by false prophets, who say, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace, and only lightly healing the wounds of God’s people, rather than saying what is hard to hear, 6:14.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is almighty creator, who set the boundaries of the oceans and governs the weather and harvests, 5:22, 24.
- ♦ He is Lord of hosts, commander of the armies of heaven, 6:9.
- ♦ He has a “soul” that can adhere to or depart from his people, 6:8.
- ♦ He is sovereign over even the greatest nations, using them as instruments of his plan for his people, 5:15.
- ♦ He is jealous for the unique allegiance of his people and furious at their worshiping other “gods,” 5:19.

His goodness

- ♦ He is merciful – he would pardon Jerusalem if even only one just and truthful person were found in it, 5:1.
- ♦ He continues to offer rest to his people if they will only return to the old ways of Moses, 6:16.
- ♦ He continues to warn them, giving them chances to repent, 6:17.
- ♦ He is patient, chastening his people repeatedly and for many years before finally carrying out his warnings through Moses to destroy the city and send them into exile, 5:6.
- ♦ He continues to feed them despite their self-indulgence, lust, and ingratitude, 5:7, 24.

- ♦ He is faithful to his promises never completely to eradicate his people, but leaving a faithful remnant, 5:10, 18.
- ♦ He is just and holy, punishing unrepentant sinners, 5:9.

Christ

His prefiguration: Jeremiah and other prophets are types of Jesus Christ, who came as God's final prophet to his people, announcing the coming of the kingdom of God and warning of terrible judgment if they did not repent. *See, for example, Matthew 23–25.*

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Not responding to God's repeated chastening, 5:3
- ♦ Defiantly seeking to break free from God's rule, 5:5, 23
- ♦ Transgressing God's law, 5:6
- ♦ Worshiping (swearing by, offering sacrifices and incense to) other "gods," 5:7, 19
- ♦ Adultery, 5:8
- ♦ Saying that God does not see their actions and will not recompense good or evil, 5:12
- ♦ Ignoring the words of the prophets, 5:13, 6:17
- ♦ Not heeding either the words of the prophets or the Law of Moses, 6:19
- ♦ Forsaking God, 5:19
- ♦ Not fearing God, 5:22
- ♦ Gaining wealth through fraud and oppression, 5:26–28
- ♦ Not caring for the plight of the needy, 5:28
- ♦ Propheying falsely, 5:31
- ♦ Exercising religious authority by personal power and for personal gain, 5:31
- ♦ Accepting and approving of bad spiritual leadership, 5:31
- ♦ Not delighting in God's word, 6:10
- ♦ Covetousness, 6:13
- ♦ False dealing, 6:13
- ♦ Lack of shame for open sins, 6:15
- ♦ Refusing to walk in the light of ancient revelation, 6:16
- ♦ Slander, 6:28

Its extent: It reaches to all people, of all classes and conditions, 5:4–8, 6:13.

The Last Things

The final judgment: The invasion by Babylon and consequent suffering, destruction of Jerusalem, and exile of God's people, like all temporal judgments of God upon sinners, point towards the Last Judgment, when unrepentant sinners will be utterly destroyed and cast into eternal misery in hell.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Study the written revelation of God in the Bible, including Old Testament Law and prophets, to learn God's ways and will.
- ♦ Thank God for his patience with us, notwithstanding our many and great provocations against his divine majesty.
- ♦ Do not presume upon God's kindness and mercy, but repent and seek him again.
- ♦ Boldly warn our friends and neighbors of impending judgment, both upon our nation and on the whole world when Christ returns.

Jeremiah 7–8:3

Truth

Revelation

Special revelation

- ♦ Much of the Bible, like most of this section, is narrative.
- ♦ God's revelation takes place in history, in which God demonstrates
 - His will and his ways
 - His greatness and his goodness
 - His power and his pity
 - His holiness and his justice
 - His wrath and his righteous judgment upon sinners
- ♦ Some revelation also includes prophecy, like much of Jeremiah, especially 7:14, 20, 27, 32–34; 8:1–3.
- ♦ God exercises sovereignty over who will hear, understand, and respond to his revelation, 7:27.

God

His goodness

- ♦ He is patient, repeatedly sending prophets to his people to declare their sins and coming judgment and urging them to repent before it is too late, 7:25.
- ♦ He is also holy and just, and he cannot abide continued hardness of heart but will eventually pour out his wrath upon unrepentant sinners, even his own people, 7:12–14; 7:27–8:3.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Trusting in religious buildings and rites for God's favor and protection, without worshiping and obeying God from the heart, 7:2–11
- ♦ Oppressing foreigners, fatherless, and widows; shedding innocent blood; idolatry, 7:6–7, 8:3
- ♦ Stealing, murder, adultery, swearing falsely, worshiping other "gods," 7:9

- ♦ Not hearing or responding to God's repeated messages through his spokesmen, 7:13, 18; especially, worshiping idols in the place meant for God's worship alone, 7:30
- ♦ Killing innocent children, 7:31

The Last Things

The final judgment: Again, the terrible and total destruction of Jerusalem prefigures the universal judgment coming at the Last Judgment, when unrepentant sinners will be cast into hell, which in the New Testament is connected with the Valley of Hinnom, later called Gehenna, translated "hell," 7:32. *See, for example, Matthew 7:29–30.*

Life

- ♦ Take care to heed God's revelation to us through the prophets and apostles, especially Jesus' many sermons, while there is still time to repent.
- ♦ Faithfully transmit this message to all those around us.
- ♦ Speak especially to professing Christians, who are all too often worshiping and obeying idols in defiance of God's clear commands.
- ♦ Pray for those around us, unless God tells us that the time for prayer has ended, 7:16.

Note: Has the USA, including its churchgoers, come to this point? After all, we have had 400 years of access to God's revelation, and our total society, including many so-called Christians, have not heard or heeded God's word.

Jeremiah 8:4–9:22

Truth

Revelation

Its source

- ♦ It came through Old Testament prophets and New Testament writers, each with his own personality; this shows up in both the content and style of what is written, as, for example, in Jeremiah's profound sorrow for the disaster about to overtake his people, 9:1–2.
- ♦ It came also through the Law of Moses, 8:8.
- ♦ It can be counterfeited or distorted by false prophets and teachers of the Word of God, 8:8, who usually try to say that things are fine when they are not, failing to diagnose the real problem which is sin, 8:11.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He knows what we are thinking, saying, and doing, 8:6.
- ♦ He is holy and must punish sin, which he does with great thoroughness and severity, 8:13–17, 9:7–9, 13–16.
- ♦ He is jealous for the undivided devotion of his people and responds with anger to their idolatry, 8:19b.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ The initial sin of refusing to know God through the revelation which he has given us, 8:8–9, 9:13
- ♦ Walking according to the intentions of our own hearts, not God's will, 8:6, 9:14
- ♦ The proceeding sin of worshiping idols, false "gods" who are not gods, 8:19b
- ♦ Choosing deceit over truth, and thus not knowing God, 8:5, 9:3
- ♦ Distorting God's word and assuring people that all is well, when it is not, 8:11
- ♦ Lack of shame over our abominable practices, 8:12
- ♦ Refusing to repent and turn back to God after being chastened, 8:5
- ♦ Refusal which leads to further deceit between people, 9:4–8

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Be careful to listen to God's written word and respond with repentance for sin and an amended life.
- ♦ Speak truly with each other, saying hard things when necessary, in order to turn them from sin to God.

Jeremiah 9:23–10:25

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is great, with a great name and power, 10:6.
- ♦ He is king of the nations, 10:7.
- ♦ He is unique, 10:7.
- ♦ He is the only true God, 10:10.
- ♦ He is living, 10:10.
- ♦ He is eternal, 10:10.
- ♦ He is the omnipotent Creator and Ruler of the universe, 10:12–13.
- ♦ He has made himself the Portion (inheritance, “private” possession) of Israel, 10:16.
- ♦ He is the leader of the armies of heaven, i.e. almighty, 10:16.
- ♦ He can be known! 9:24.
- ♦ He is Yahweh, exercising loving-kindness, justice, and righteousness in the world; he delights in these things also, 9:24.
- ♦ He is personal, with a name (Yahweh), 10:6.

His goodness

- ♦ He kindly corrects his erring people, 10:24.
- ♦ He punishes all men, Jew and Gentile alike, on the basis of their attitudes and actions, 9:25–26.
- ♦ He is capable of terrible wrath and indignation against sin, 10:10, 25.

Mankind

Our nature: We are incapable of understanding or guiding our own course in life, 10:23.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Boasting in wisdom, power, wealth, 9:23
- ♦ Following the ways of those who do not know God, 10:2

- ♦ Idolatry of all sorts, 10:3-5, 8-9, 14 -15

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Resolutely avoid trusting in anything we are, have, do, or make; none of these can save us from God's eternal wrath and punishment.
- ♦ Trust only in God, "boast" only in our knowledge of him, put all our hopes in him alone, and in his mercy and kindness to those who fear him. Paul quotes this verse in 1 Corinthians 1:31, showing that it points us to Christ and what God has revealed in him to us.

Jeremiah 11–12

Truth

Revelation

Its veracity

- ♦ God's revelation is consistent: in the Old Testament, the prophets reiterate, expound, and apply the provisions of the Mosaic Covenant to their time, as God spoke to them, 11:1–8.
- ♦ Revelation takes place even when it is not believed or obeyed (contra Barth, who—at least in some places—claimed that revelation only takes place when it is received with faith), 11:7–8.

Its literary forms: It includes many literary genres, such as

- ♦ Historical narrative, 11:1–8
- ♦ Personal lament, 12:3–4 (Jeremiah)
- ♦ Poetry, 12:1–13
- ♦ Judicial indictment, 11:1–13
- ♦ Personal address to the prophet, 11:9, 14, 12:5–6

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is self-revealing, 11:4–5, 7 (and all of the Bible).
- ♦ He is aware of all things, even secret plots and inward thoughts, 11:18, 20; 12:3
- ♦ He is righteous, 12:1.

His goodness

- ♦ He is Yahweh, the covenant Lord of Israel, 11:3.
- ♦ He is faithful to his covenant, both its promises and its warnings, 11:7–12.
- ♦ He is full of love for his chosen people, 11:15.
- ♦ He is faithful to his commitment to his people and therefore ready to punish all who afflict them, 12:14.
- ♦ He is incredibly merciful, forgiving and restoring a remnant of his people after chastising them, 12:15.
- ♦ He is merciful even to the enemies of his people if they repent and trust in him, 12:16.

- ♦ He is ready to pour out his anger on them when they forsake him for other “gods,” 11:16–17, 12:7.

Christ

His prefiguration: He is prefigured and typified by his prophets, including Jeremiah, in his agony for the people of God and in his own suffering from his countrymen, 11:19, including his family, 12:6.

The People of God

Their characteristics, as the people of Israel

- ♦ They were God’s green olive tree and his vineyard, planted by him in the promised land, 11:16–17, 12:10.
- ♦ They are his dearly beloved, 11:15, 12:7.
- ♦ They are his inheritance and “portion,” 12:9–10.
- ♦ They are the recipients of his salvation from Egypt and revelation at Sinai, 11:4–8.
- ♦ They are constantly rebellious against him, 11:8, 10.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Be careful to study and obey God’s revealed will, lest we suffer chastisement.
- ♦ Ponder the history of Israel and seek to avoid their sins.
- ♦ Love God for his kindness toward his people throughout all ages.
- ♦ Love Christ, who revealed his own heart and pointed toward his own death in the words and lives of the prophets.
- ♦ Expect to suffer, and perhaps face increasingly difficult challenges, in our service to God, 12:5.
- ♦ Expect opposition from our countrymen, townsmen, and even our family, 11:19; 12:6.

Jeremiah 13

Truth

Revelation

Special revelation

- ♦ Old Testament prophets were sometimes told by God to perform symbolic acts, like putting the sash into the River Euphrates, to demonstrate a point, 1-11.
- ♦ He also revealed his will through his words, written by Moses (and other writers of history, prophecy, and poetry) and spoken by the prophets, 10.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is omniscient, seeing all that we do, 27.
- ♦ He seeks his own glory from his people, 16.
- ♦ He is true and the opposite of all falsehood, 25.
- ♦ He punishes all evil, both now and later, 9, 13-14, 16-19, 20-22, 24-27.

His goodness

- ♦ He desires intimacy with his people, having chosen Israel to “cling” to him like a sash, and like husband and wife, 11.
- ♦ He desires to share his own glory with them, 11.
- ♦ He sees them as his flock, and he as divine Shepherd, 17 (this points to Christ, now our Good Shepherd, see John 10).

Christ

His goodness: As typified by the prophets, including Jeremiah, he grieved for the destruction coming upon God’s people for rejecting the Incarnate Word and his words to them, 17.

Mankind

Our created nature

- ♦ We were made for close fellowship with God, 11.
- ♦ We were meant to be for God’s glory, 16.
- ♦ We were meant to share in God’s own glory, 11.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Exhibiting pride, 9, 15, 17
- ♦ Refusing to hear and heed God's words, 10
- ♦ Following the thoughts of our own hearts instead, 11
- ♦ Worshiping and serving other "gods," that is, any creature, physical or mental, from whom or which we expect to find help and "life," 10
- ♦ Forgetting God, 25
- ♦ Trusting in falsehood, 25
- ♦ Adultery and lust, both physical and spiritual, 27

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Ask God to show us any places of pride in our hearts, such as pride in our appearance, knowledge or intelligence, skill, performance, possessions, position, prestige, family, personal relationships with "important" people, nation, race, religion, religious status or activities, etc.
- ♦ Seek intimacy with God and Christ through the Spirit, in company with all God's people.
- ♦ Weep for the coming destruction of our nation and the eternal destruction of all unbelievers.

Jeremiah 26

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is a progressive and cumulative whole, building on previous revelation, as the elders' reminder of the prophecy of Micah and the response of good king Hezekiah demonstrates, 17–19.

Its source: It comes through history, as the reference to the destruction of the tabernacle at Shiloh shows, 6.

God

His greatness: He is sovereign over the lives of his people, even his faithful spokesmen, protecting some and allowing others to be killed, 20–24.

His goodness

- ♦ He is gracious, bearing with Israel's rebellion for many years, while he sent prophets to them to warn them of impending doom if they did not repent, 3–5, 12–13.
- ♦ He is holy and just, punishing unrepented wickedness thoroughly and radically, as at Shiloh, 6, 15.

Christ

His prefiguration: He was like Jeremiah, who spoke against the Jerusalem Temple and its religious leaders, and was murderously opposed by them, 7–8.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Imitate Jeremiah's courage and obedience to God, proclaiming his words of judgment against sin even in the face of total opposition and deadly danger.
- ♦ Heed the words of modern-day prophets who criticize hypocrisy and unbiblical practices in the church.

- ◆ Expect religious leaders to be the most ferocious in attacking those who question their privileges and practices. Some possible examples: Big pastors, big buildings, big budgets, big bands?

Jeremiah 27–28

Truth

Revelation

Its content

- ♦ It generally runs against the flesh, offering conviction to those who are complacent and comfort to those who are despondent, 28:12–22.
- ♦ False prophets typically speak things that either downplay God’s justice and judgment or downplay his mercy to those who truly repent, 28:1–11.
- ♦ God cares for his truth and will punish false prophets severely, 28:17.
- ♦ God is faithful to his covenant, and he will fulfill his promises, bringing back his people from exile after they have been purged from idolatry, 27:22.

Its source: It came sometimes through symbolic actions which God ordered the prophets to take as visible signs of the message, 27:1–7.

Note: These point forward to baptism and the Lord’s Supper as visible signs of God’s grace.

God

His greatness: He owns the entire world and all in it and disposes the affairs of men and nations according to his own just and holy purposes, 27:5–7.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Be willing to submit to political oppressors until God delivers us.
- ♦ Beware of false prophets who incite us to rebellion and who do not lead us and our nation to repent for its sins and ours.
- ♦ Expect true revelation to be distorted, and even counterfeited, by false prophets. These today include “prosperity gospel” preachers like Joel Osteen.

Jeremiah 29

Truth

Revelation

Special revelation

- ♦ God's word to his people is specific when necessary (e.g., 70 years), and less so when we don't need to know the details (e.g., "thoughts of peace, a future and a hope"), 10–11.
- ♦ His word/his purpose is good, 10.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is almighty—Lord of the armies of heaven, 4.
- ♦ He is the God of Israel, 4.
- ♦ He is sovereign, the one who does to his people what he thinks best, 4.

His goodness

- ♦ He is faithful to his promises—he will bring them back to Israel after 70 years, 10.
- ♦ He longs to be known by us, 12–13.
- ♦ He is just and fair, punishing those who refuse to listen to his repeated warnings, 17, 19.
- ♦ He is gracious to sinners, treating other people who are equally sinful with kindness and mercy, 19.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Settle, build and dwell in houses, have families, and seek the peace of the city in which we dwell, though we are sinful pilgrims in a pagan land, 5–7.
- ♦ Be willing to forsake all to follow Christ, to lose our homes and families, and to go into all the world to preach the gospel, as the New Testament also challenges us. *See Matthew 28:19–20.*
- ♦ Believe that, as Christians, though we live in a pagan land, God has thoughts of good for us.

- We have a future and a hope in the return of Jesus to save us from our sins.
- He will make us dwell in a new heaven and new earth forever with himself.
- He will answer our prayers and reveal his goodness to him when we seek him with all our hearts, 11–14. *See many New Testament passages, especially Colossians 3:1–3 and 1 Peter 1:3–13.*

Jeremiah 30:1–31:26

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is a progressive and cumulative whole, with many prophecies and or types having a meaning for their own time and an additional, complementary, and fulfilling, meaning for a later time, 31:15. *See Matthew 2:17–18.*

Its content

- ♦ God gave to his prophets (and, later, apostles and New Testament prophets), words to write down.
- ♦ Both the general message (the “word” of God) and the specific words are from God, and they are inerrant and infallible, 30:1.
- ♦ It is internally consistent, centering upon God’s sovereign grace to his redeemed people, by which he draws them irresistibly by his love, 31:3. *See John 6:44 where the word for “draw” refers to the drawing of a sword from a sheath or a net full of fish from the sea.*

God

His greatness: He is fiercely jealous for his name and fame and will harshly punish those whom he employs to punish them, 30:16.

His goodness

- ♦ He is merciful beyond our imagining, bringing his chosen people back from exile after chastening them for their terrible sins, 30:3, 10, 11, 17–18, etc.
- ♦ He heals them from the wounds he has inflicted upon them, 30:17.
- ♦ He restores prosperity and joy to them, 30:18–20; 31:4–14, 23–25.
- ♦ He satisfies his people with his goodness, love, and mercy, 31:14, 25.
- ♦ He is Father to Israel, his “firstborn,” that is, the most favored nation, the one intended—through Christ and through the Word of God—to rule all other nations in due time, 31:9, 20.
- ♦ He is faithful to his covenant promises to Abraham, 30:3.
- ♦ He is Shepherd to his people, 31:10.
- ♦ He is the God of his chosen people, as promised long ago to Abraham, 30:22.

- ♦ He is holy and just, chastening his people and causing them to repent of their sins, so that they might return to his ways, 30:11, 14; 31:18–20.

Christ

His person: He is the promised King, descendant of David, who will rule over all God's people, 30:9.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Do not complain about the discipline God metes out to us for our many sins; instead, we should repent and return to him with weeping and with supplication, 30:15; 31:9.
- ♦ Trust that God will restore us to fellowship with himself, as he did rebellious Israel, if only we repent and return.
- ♦ Thank God daily for his immense and love towards us, shown by his abundant mercy and by his overflowing grace to sinners, grace that super-abounds over our sins. *See Romans 5:20.*

Jeremiah 31:27–40

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is a progressive and cumulative whole, moving with God's covenantal dispensations with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and the New Covenant in Christ.

Note: This chapter, especially 31:31–34, predicts the New Covenant, which was inaugurated when Christ suffered, died, rose, and poured out his Spirit upon the church. Jesus refers to this passage at the last Supper, Luke 22:20, and Hebrews quotes it extensively. See Hebrews 8:8–12, 10, 17.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is almighty, as creator of the heavens and the earth, 31:35.
- ♦ He is powerful, able to work within people to change their behavior, 31:33.

His goodness

- ♦ He is merciful, not only forgiving Israel, 31:34, but promising a time when his law would work inside their hearts to enable them to do what the Law of Moses could not, 31:31–34.
- ♦ He is Husband to his people, with Jesus now being Bridegroom to the church, 31:32. *See Ephesians 5:22–33 and Romans 7:1–4, etc.*
- ♦ He desires to be known by his people in an intimate way, 31:34.

Christ

His person

- ♦ He is mediator of the new covenant. *See passages quoted above.*
- ♦ He is Bridegroom to the church and is thus identified as Yahweh of the Old Testament.

Salvation

It includes

- ♦ Forgiveness and restoration to the promised land, for Israel

- ♦ Inner renewal by the Holy Spirit, transformation of motives, intimate knowledge of God in Christ, for us; *see John 17:3*.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Thank God for his infinite mercy, for forgiving our sins and even bringing us into a deeper knowledge of himself after he has chastened us.
- ♦ Thank Jesus for shedding his blood to ratify the New Covenant.

EZEKIEL

Ezekiel 1

Truth

Revelation

Its roots in history: Biblical revelation is rooted in history and largely concerns historical events—past, present, or future to the prophet and to us—and not dealing with abstract concepts or principles, 1–2.

Its source

- ◆ It comes to God’s chosen prophets in the Old Testament, 1–3.
- ◆ Though predominantly expressed in propositions (including narrative) or poetry and metaphors that can be turned into propositions, it sometimes came in the form of visions, especially to Ezekiel.
- ◆ These visions, though communicated in words we can understand, “describe” something or someone far beyond our capacity fully to comprehend and written more to evoke a general sense of awe, or fear, or beauty, or love, as in this chapter.

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is
 - Inconceivably glorious, majestic, beautiful, brilliant, “colorful,” complex, intricate
 - Powerful, awesome, massive, overwhelming the senses of sight, sound, and feeling
 - Holy, exalted, transcendent; and also immanent, coming to man in revelation that shows him to be concerned with us
 - Centered upon the Son of Man, the glorious Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, later revealed as the incarnate, crucified, and glorified Jesus Christ, “seen” here as the likeness with the appearance as a majestic Man on a throne, as in Revelation 1
 - Creator of all things living, which/whom he animates with a “spirit” that is from his own Spirit, and which, in their diversity and beauty, and in their strength, speed, and soaring flight reflect God’s own being, 5–25

Christ

His person

- ♦ He is the very image and exact representation of God himself, equally glorious and majestic, 26–28. *See Hebrews 1:3 and John 1:1–3, 14, 18.*
- ♦ He is essentially “capable” of becoming “human,” in the form of Jesus, the incarnate Word and eternal Son of God, 26.
- ♦ He is sovereign Lord of the universe, upholding the worlds by the word of his power, through whom and for whom all was made, always sitting on the throne with God, the Father, at his right hand, and ruling with him in indissoluble unity of will and power, 26. *See Colossians 1:15–16 and Hebrews 1:2–3.*

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Before such a God, all creatures, and especially sinful humans, can only bow in humble adoration and absolute submission, “lost in wonder, love, and praise” (Charles Wesley, “Love divine, all loves excelling”).

Ezekiel 2:1–3:21

Truth

Revelation

Its veracity: Revelation is revelation—an unveiling of God’s truth—regardless of whether men receive it (contra Karl Barth and some others), 3:11.

Its clarity: Revelation is clear and intelligible even to unbelievers; they are therefore accountable for whether they accept it or refuse it, 3:6, 11, 16–21.

Its source

- ♦ It came to Old Testament prophets both in visions and in words, but predominantly in words, 2:4, 7.
- ♦ Most of these words were written down later as from God himself, 3:1–3.

Note: The very words of the prophets, and, later, New Testament apostles, are the words of God, not just some general ideas or principles—God’s revelation is verbal and propositional.

- ♦ It came first to God’s chosen people Israel, and then later to Christians, who were/are God’s primary witnesses to the rest of the world, 3:4.
- ♦ The prophets (and apostles, and also all who would speak for God today), had to receive God’s words into their hearts, “listen” to them intently through meditation, and then convey them to others, 3:10–11.

Its recipients: The recipient of revelation—which today includes all believers in Christ—has a divinely given duty to pass it on, regardless of how people respond, and despite their threats, 3:17–21.

Its application

- ♦ Before proclaiming warning of impending doom, the prophet (and believers today) must “sit where they sit” for a period of time, to understand them, identify with them as sinful humans, and earn the right to be heard by them, 3:15.
- ♦ If the prophet were speaking of judgment to come, he must do it with terrible awe at God’s holiness and the suffering that he will inflict upon unrepentant sinners, not with a joyful attitude, 3:15.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is sovereign over all of history, and over the hearts of men, so he knows who will repent and believe, and who will not, 2:2–5; 3:7.
- ♦ He is holy and just, giving ample warning to sinners before finally punishing or chastening them, 2:4, 3:17–21.
- ♦ He is great and glorious, 3:12–13.
- ♦ He is fair, rewarding all according to their deeds, especially their latter deeds, 3:18–21. *See Psalm 62:12 and Romans 2:6.*

Sin

It includes: The failure to do our duty to warn others of God's coming judgment upon unrepentant sinners, 3:18, 20

Its substance: Sin consists largely in rebellion against God, issuing in (or stemming from) disregard of his revelation, 2:3, 6; 3:7, etc.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ “Eat” God’s Word as it is given us in the Scriptures, by reading, studying, meditating upon it, and obeying it.
- ♦ Share God’s Word, by telling others what we have learned, so that they too might be saved.
Note: Our message must include warning of coming judgment for unrepentant sinners, with specific sins pointed out (as Ezekiel will later do in this book).
- ♦ Fear God rather than men and trust him for strength to declare God’s words boldly, even if we are fiercely opposed and even threatened, 3:8–9.
- ♦ “Sit among” our non-Christians friends, trying to understand, sympathize, and build relationships with them, so we can be more readily heard by them. But we should not keep silent forever!
- ♦ Leave the results of our speaking to God, who alone can give people a heart of repentance. Our duty is only to bear witness, not to convert.

Ezekiel 3:22–5:17

Truth

Revelation

Its source

- ♦ It came to Old Testament prophets
 - Who were real men like us, and who therefore feel down on their faces before the glory of God, 3:23–24
 - Who were “raised up” by the “hand” (power) of God and filled with the Spirit of God, 3:24
 - Who were given words to speak by God, 3:27
- ♦ The prophets often became “signs” to the people of the truths they were relaying from him, and these often included suffering and hardship for the prophet, 4:1–5:4, just as Jesus became a sign to Israel and suffered the penalty due to them during his life and on the Cross.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He reveals himself clearly through the written words of the prophets and apostles, 3:27, and all through this book.
- ♦ He reacts with furious and righteous anger against the sins of his people (and of all peoples, as will be seen later in Ezekiel), 5:8–17.
- ♦ His purpose in all this is that they will know that Yahweh, and he alone, is God and LORD of both Israel and all the world, that they must love and obey him above all else, that their terrible sufferings have come directly from him, and as he warned through the prophets, whom they consistently ignored and reject, 5:13.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Despising and disobeying all God’s commands and ordinances as revealed in the Bible, 5:6–7

- ♦ Disdaining the privilege of being God’s people, knowing his favor, and receiving his special revelation, so that they become even worse than those around them, 5:6–7, 11

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Earnestly receive and respond to God’s revelation with worship and obedience.
- ♦ Prepare to suffer as “signs” to this wicked generation of what all sinners, including us, deserve, and as examples of how to bear the rod of God’s rebuke and chastening with faith and patience, knowing that we deserve far worse.
- ♦ See our entire lives as “signs” of God’s truth and love, his justice and his mercy, and his revelation in Jesus, and must consciously be “witnesses” of Christ to the world.

Note: Americans should prepare for sudden and terrible punishment from God, for he set us, too, at the “center” of the nations, with a strong Christian heritage and the knowledge of his will, but we have turned our backs on him and defiled this beautiful land. Christians have been guilty of idol worship and will suffer along with others, but we must do so with humility under God’s righteous chastisement and as examples to others of how to endure trouble with hope of eternal life and power to live with joy each day.

Ezekiel 6–7

Truth

Revelation

Its structure

- ♦ It includes repetition, as God repeatedly warns of looming disaster and declares his fury and anger over and over again—rather like an angry woman!
- ♦ It also includes events of history, such as God’s destruction of Israel through the Babylonians, though not without necessary prophetic interpretation, so that people may know that this has come from God in his holy anger, 6:7, 10, 13, 14; 7:4, 9.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is holy and righteous and cannot forever tolerate sin, but he must punish it severely in his righteous anger and indignation at the time of his choosing, 7:2–12.
- ♦ He is true to his word, including his threats and warnings, which will come to pass at the appointed time, 6:10.

His goodness

- ♦ He is loving towards his people, and therefore jealous of their undivided affection and allegiance towards him. He is not only angry, but “crushed” when they desert him for idols, 7:9.
- ♦ He is merciful, leaving a remnant to survive disaster, so that they may know what they have done and repent from their hearts, 6:9.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ “Leaving” God and turning towards false “gods” of our own making, 6:9
- ♦ Idolatry, 6:4–6
- ♦ Pride, 7:10

- ♦ Violence, 7:11, 23
- ♦ Reliance upon silver and gold (i.e., money and possessions) for security, 7:19

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Avoid idolatry of all sorts, especially dependence on what our hands have made or on money for security and satisfaction.
- ♦ Cling to God, hear his word, repent daily of our sins, and seek his mercy to us in Christ.
- ♦ Tremble before God's majesty and his righteousness and fear his wrath and indignation.
- ♦ Worship him for his power and his pity and love him for his tender heart towards us.
- ♦ Warn others of the punishment that will come upon unrepentant sinners and even nations that as a whole have left God and worshipped idols. The most outstanding current example is the United States, which will soon suffer sudden and comprehensive destruction from both internal enemies and external foes.

Ezekiel 8

Truth

Revelation

Its source

- ♦ It came to Old Testament prophets sometimes in visions, which fill this entire chapter.
- ♦ The prophets (and others during the Exodus and the consecration of Solomon's temple) sometimes saw the glory of God in some "visible" way, 8:4.
- ♦ Visions were invariably interpreted to the prophet by God, or they would have been incomprehensible and open to all sorts of wrong interpretations (the same is true of purported "visions" today), 8:6, 12–13, 15, 17–18.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He has a Spirit, who is his primary means of revealing his word and his works to men, 8:1, 3.
- ♦ He is gloriously transcendent and majestic, 8:4.
- ♦ Yet he condescends to show himself to chosen people for his revelatory purposes, 8:4.
- ♦ He is zealous for the love and devotion of his people, and therefore furious when they turn from him to worship idols, 8:6, 9, 12–13, 15, 17–18.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Idolatry, which consists essentially of worshiping "the creature rather than the Creator"; *see Romans 1:15.*

Note: This idolatry is here illustrated by worshiping "gods" of nature, the sun, fertility and sex, 8:10, 14, 16, and almost always manifests in the form of visible images.

- ♦ Manifestation by violence, which results from making the things of this world, especially material things, the center of our life, 8:17.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Thank God for making his glory fully manifest in the Incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of his Son Jesus, whose glory the first disciples saw and recorded in the New Testament.
- ♦ Do not think that God does not see us when we sin in “secret.” He sees and knows all, and his vision penetrates to the depths of our heart and the things we do in darkness.
- ♦ Do not imagine that God does not respond with anger and fury, followed by awful judgment, towards our sins and the sins of professing believers.

Note: The sins are worse when they are committed by religious leaders. Like the 70 men in the Temple, teachers in the church, and all in authority (like parents), bear greater responsibility for their actions and will suffer greater judgment for their sins (e.g., Aaron, Moses, David).

- ♦ Beware of visual images that tempt us to forget God and concentrate upon this material world. Today, these images come at us from all directions, including TV, the Internet, movies, magazines, etc., and they are the greatest threat to our meditation upon the Word of God (as Carl Henry said long ago in the first chapter of God, Revelation, & Authority).
- ♦ Instead, we should focus on reading and meditating upon the Bible. When we look at the beauties of this world, including the beautiful women and handsome men, we should turn our admiration into worship of their even more beautiful Creator.

Ezekiel 9–10

Truth

Revelation

Its source

- ♦ It came verbally, and sometimes vocally, though how this could take place in a vision is unclear, 9:1.
- ♦ It came also through angels to the prophets, who saw and heard them, both in the forms of men and of heavenly creatures like cherubim and seraphim, 9:2; 10:3.

Its content: It included some visions and images that are impossible for us to visualize, since they contain features that could not be realized on earth as we know it, (such as the movement of the cherubim and the wheels, 10:9–17), all of which are meant to reveal to us the surpassing beauty, majesty, and mystery of God.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is marvelously and wonderfully beautiful and complex, surpassing all our categories and yet capable of being expressed in words that we can more or less understand, 1:4, 11–22.
- ♦ He is holy and therefore furious at sin, which he punishes with fire that both destroys and purifies, 10:6–7.
- ♦ At a certain point, when his long patience has been exhausted by persistent and unrepentant sin, he manifests the purity of his righteous anger in a pitiless and thorough destruction of willful enemies of his will and ways, 9:5, 10.
- ♦ He withdrew his presence (and glory) from the Temple in Jerusalem for almost six hundred years as a result of the terrible sins of his people but returned it again when Jesus came as the Savior. *See Luke 2:9 and John 1:14.*

His goodness

- ♦ He is also merciful and faithful to his covenant with Abraham, preserving a small remnant and saving them from the full fury of his wrath, 9:4. *See Revelation 7:1–4 on “the mark.”*

- ♦ In Jesus, God dwelt fully as in the true Temple, in whom now God and men may meet together in peace. *See John 2:19–21; John 15:1–5; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:14–18; and 1 Peter 2:4–10; etc.*

Sin

It includes: Not mourning over the sins of the world around us, 9:4

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Mourn over the abominations which are being committed in our land, especially in America, where the knowledge of God has been so accessible, and where Christians have participated in worshiping the idols of the people around them—money, sex, power, pleasure, fame, etc.
- ♦ Be prepared for sudden and terrible destruction of our nation for all its wanton rebellion against God.
- ♦ Thank God for revealing his glory to us in Christ and for enabling us who trust in him to be transformed daily into the likeness of his glory. *See 2 Corinthians 3:18.*

Ezekiel 11

Truth

Revelation

Its content: It includes both judgment, 11:7–11, 21, and grace, 11:15–20.

Its source

- ♦ It came through visions, 11:1, 24.
- ♦ It came by the Spirit of God to the prophets chosen by God, in words given by God, 11:4–12, 15–21.

Its recipients: Biblical revelation was and is adapted to the different conditions of people to whom it is addressed, from the complacent and proud (i.e., these people who think that they are the choicest “meat” of Israel), 11:3, to the despondent and discouraged, 11:25.

Its purpose

- ♦ It is meant to bring us to a real knowledge of the one true and living God, Yahweh, 11:12.
- ♦ It is intended not just to impart information but to change our lives through repentance, faith, and good works, 11:18–20, as the Spirit applies the Word to our lives.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He has a Spirit, through whom he speaks and by whom he renews the hearts of men, 11:5, 19.
- ♦ He knows the hearts, words, and actions of all men, 11:2–3, 5, 8.
- ♦ He is holy and just, and he will therefore punish proud and unrepentant wicked men, 11:8–12, 21.

His goodness

- ♦ He will make himself known as rest and refuge, security and home to those whom he has caused to be scattered in foreign places as discipline for their sins, 11:16.

- ♦ He will keep all his promises, including the promise to bring a remnant back from exile which he gave to and through Moses, 11:17.
- ♦ He will also keep his promise to the patriarchs to be their God and have them as his people, 11:20.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Devising evil, 11:2
- ♦ Self-righteousness, 11:3
- ♦ Self-generated predictions about the future, always in their favor, 11:3
- ♦ Giving bad counsel to others, 11:2
- ♦ Failure to obey and execute God's laws, 11:12
- ♦ Imitating the actions, especially the worship, of pagans around us, 11:12
- ♦ Desiring things that are detestable to God, 11:21

Salvation

It includes

- ♦ A new heart and a new spirit (or, Spirit) that will cause us to obey God's revealed will, 11:19–20 (fulfilled at Pentecost and in the lives of all who repent and receive the Spirit of God; *see Hebrews 8:10*)
- ♦ Restoration to previous positions of privilege in God's eyes, and "dwelling in the land," that is, enjoying the peace and prosperity that God has promised when Christ returns, 11:17
- ♦ Knowing God intimately, 11:20

The Last Things

The last days: They have already begun, with the coming of Christ, his death, resurrection, and ascension. These last days have begun especially with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon his people, beginning at Pentecost, when he fulfilled the promise of 11:17–20 to bring back a remnant from all the places to which he had scattered them, to give them a new heart and his spirit, and to enjoy life with God in Jerusalem. *See Acts 2:17, 40–47.*

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Do not imagine that we understand God's workings in the lives of others who are suffering; perhaps they, and not we, are the ones who are especially blessed by God.
- ♦ Do not devise evil things or imitate the actions of pagans around us, especially in worship but also in daily values.
- ♦ Seek security and a "home" in God alone, no matter where we are or how insecure life seems to be at the moment.
- ♦ Ask God to transform our hearts and lives by his Holy Spirit.
- ♦ If we have not yet received the Spirit, we should ask God to give us repentance, faith, and regeneration.

Ezekiel 12–13

Truth

Revelation

Its source: It sometimes came through prophetic actions that were later explained by God to the prophet and then to us, 12:1–12.

Its content

- ♦ It included predictions of the future, such as King Zedekiah's being blinded by the Babylonians after his capture outside Jerusalem, 12:12–13, 17–20 (see 2 Kings 25:4–7), thus showing God's full knowledge of, and power over, the events of history, past, present, and future.
- ♦ It often included predictions that were not fulfilled until many years later, causing many to doubt God's word through the prophets, 12:21–28 (see 2 Peter 3:1–13), but which will surely come to pass in God's time, and suddenly, when least expected, 12:25–28.
- ♦ False prophets, on the other hand
 - Proclaim what they themselves have concocted in their own minds, not what they had heard from God, 13:2, 17
 - Often use divination and other magic arts to deceive the people, 13:6, 18
 - Speak nothing but lies, 13:8, 22
 - Usually proclaim "Peace" to people when God is actually about to bring destruction, 13:10, 16
 - Will be proven wrong by events, and totally disgraced by God, 13:9–16, 20–21, 23

God

His greatness

- ♦ He has total lordship over the lives of his servants, with authority to command them to do things that seem weird but are prophetic signs to their generation, 12: 1–9, 17–20.
- ♦ He will execute his threatened judgment upon consistently rebellious and unrepentant sinners, and will do so with ruthless severity and thoroughness, 12:13–15; 13:9, 11–15.

- ♦ He does all things that people might know that he alone is God, inflicting punishment on the wicked and sparing some out of his mercy, 12:15–16; 13:14, 21, 23.
- ♦ He is faithful to his promise to Abraham and the patriarchs and thus will spare a remnant from total destruction, 12:16.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Be willing to appear like fools to our family, friends, and neighbors, if that is what God calls us to do. But we must be sure that we are following his word and not our own foolish ideas!
- ♦ Test all so-called prophecies by the written word of God and by events; we should be on guard against false prophets today, of which there are many. In America, Joel Osteen is perhaps the best known of them; in China, there are many charismatics and others who claim to have a word from God but who may only be speaking from their own heart.
- ♦ Be open, on the other hand, to true prophecy, without giving it the authority that only the Word of God should have in our lives.

Ezekiel 14–15

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness

- ♦ Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with later passages referring to and incorporating earlier ones.
 - The figure of Israel as the unfaithful vine in Isaiah 5 is used here by Ezekiel.
 - The New Testament takes up Old Testament themes and shows their fulfillment, as with the figure of Israel as an unfaithful vine, which Jesus uses to apply to himself as the True Vine. His believers are the branches, and the burning fire of fruitless branches is the eternal punishment of those who claim to belong to him but do not bear the “fruit” of good works. *See John 15:1–8.*

Its source

- ♦ It often came orally through the prophets, who later wrote down what God had said to them, 14:2.
- ♦ It was withheld from those whose rebellious hearts were not ready to respond properly to God’s word, 14:3.
- ♦ Sometimes it was given to them in the form of severe punishment, 14:7–8.
- ♦ It was meant to turn people from their sins in sincere repentance, 14:6.
- ♦ It was counterfeited by false prophets, who said what people wanted to hear, but who were themselves punished, 14:9–10.
- ♦ It was finally intended to enable them to return to God and know that he was their God and they were his people, 14:10–11.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He can reveal himself through his prophets, 14:2–8.
- ♦ He rules over both “natural” forces such as agriculture, wild animals, epidemic diseases, and human action, like war, 14:13–21.

His goodness

- ♦ He is merciful, forgiving and restoring a remnant of his people through times of judgment, 14:21–23.
- ♦ He will not be used by people who only want to hear words that confirm them in their sin, 14:3.
- ♦ He requires full allegiance and loyalty in the heart from his people, 14:3–7.
- ♦ He will punish all unrepentant sinners, 14:8–11, 12–21; 15:1–8.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Any allegiance or desire in our hearts that causes us to turn away from total love and service of God, 14:7
- ♦ Unfaithfulness to God, 18:8
- ♦ Speaking falsely in the name of God in order to please people, 14:9

Salvation

Its recipients

- ♦ It came to a remnant of God's people who survived the judgment of Israel's destruction and were brought out of Babylon back to Israel and comforted, 14:22–23.
- ♦ It comes to believers in Christ, who will be saved from the universal conflagration at the end of time. *See 2 Peter 3:1–13.*

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Probe our hearts to see what idols we have set up there, such things that prevent us from loving God wholeheartedly.
- ♦ Repent of worshipping these idols, casting them out of our hearts and asking God to give us a sincere love for him.
- ♦ Speak to people's hearts, not just to their minds, challenging them to examine their goals, dreams, ambitions, deep desires, and to reject anything that keeps them from being satisfied in God alone.

Ezekiel 16

Truth

Revelation

Its literary forms

- ♦ It may be quite graphic and explicit about sex and violence, because these things are a part of life.
- ♦ It often uses figures of speech, such as adultery and harlotry to represent unfaithfulness to God and the worship of idols.
- ♦ It may contain very strong language, such as “Woe! Woe!” to express God’s anger and sorrow over sin and its consequences.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is jealous and furious when his people forsake him for idols.
- ♦ He is strict, inflicting severe discipline upon his wandering people.

His goodness

- ♦ He chose Israel to be his special people, whom he loved unconditionally from the beginning, and with whom he entered into a relationship he likened to marriage.
- ♦ He is generous, giving his people lavish gifts of all sorts.
- ♦ He is merciful, eventually restoring them to favor after a time of suffering for their sins.

Mankind

Our human nature: Women as well as men can be lustful and even insatiable in their sexual desires.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Idolatry
- ♦ Adultery and fornication of all sorts

- ♦ Pride
- ♦ Excessive love of beauty
- ♦ Refusal to heed God's warnings
- ♦ Above all, a failure to forget, and to be grateful for, God's great mercy to us

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Remember God's gracious salvation of us from sin through the death, resurrection, ascension, and outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon us.
- ♦ Carefully avoid all unfaithfulness—to our marriage partner but especially to God.

Ezekiel 17

Truth

Revelation

Its conveyance

- ♦ It came often in parables, riddles, figures of speech, like this parable and the parables of Jesus, all of which needed divine interpretation in order for God's message to be understood.

Its content: It included predictions of the future, as here, where the futures of the first group of exiles and the second group are contrasted.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is sovereign over all history, both of his people Israel (and Christians) and of pagan nations among whom they dwell, like Babylon and Egypt, the mightiest empires in the Near East at that time.
- ♦ He makes war on all pride, 17:14.
- ♦ He holds all covenants, even covenants made with non-believers, to be binding, as if they had been made with himself, 17:16, 18–19, and punishes all violation of covenants, 17:19–21 (including the marriage covenant).
- ♦ He does all things for his own name and fame, 17:24.

His goodness: He is merciful, shown here by his promise to restore a remnant of Israel to their place and cause them to prosper, 17:22–24.

Sin

It includes: Breaking solemn agreements

Salvation

Its substance: Some words in the passage point forward to the parables of Jesus, which speak of the growth of the eternal kingdom of God, 17:23. *See Matthew 13:31–32.*

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Do not presume to know the future fate of different sorts of people. God has his own plans, hidden from us.
- ♦ Thank God for his mercy to his people even after they have sinned against them.
- ♦ Keep all our solemn agreements.

Ezekiel 18

Truth

Revelation

Its content

- ♦ It includes general principles such as
 - “The soul that sins shall die”
 - The uncovering of God’s heart, such as, “I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies”
 - Earnest exhortations, including, “Therefore turn and live!”
- ♦ All of these are meant to show us God’s ways and lead us to knowledge of him as God and Savior.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is fair, punishing each person only for his sins.
- ♦ He is just, punishing those who turn from good and commit evil.

His goodness

- ♦ He is kind, forgiving those who turn from their wickedness in sincere repentance and change of life.
- ♦ He is fundamentally longing for his creatures to have life through holiness and seeking him.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Idolatry
- ♦ Adultery
- ♦ Violation of ritual laws in the Old Testament
- ♦ Oppression
- ♦ Robbery
- ♦ Withholding good from the poor
- ♦ Charging high interest rates

Righteousness

It includes: The reverse of all the actions mentioned above

The People of God

Their identity

- ♦ Israel was chosen and greatly favored by God, but then severely punished for unfaithfulness to him.
- ♦ Israel was like a vine, planted by God to be fruitful, but plucked up for not bearing fruit.
- ♦ Jesus is the true vine, the faithful Israel of God, who fulfilled all his will and who will now enable us to do God's will by the indwelling of his Holy Spirit in us. *See John 15.*

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Never become proud of our past deeds of righteousness, lest we turn from God, commit sin, and be disciplined or punished.
- ♦ Never be despondent over past sins, for if we repent and return to God, he will forgive us and accept us.
- ♦ Beware of those who talk about "generational sins." That concept is found in the Bible, but also seems to be rejected here.
- ♦ Trust that God is basically fair and kind, always willing to take us back to himself if we truly turn to him. *See the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15.*

Ezekiel 19

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, as the image of the vine for Israel, 19:10–14, has antecedents in the Old Testament, including Isaiah’s prophecy in chapter 5 of his book.

Its content: Old Testament revelation includes

- ♦ Prophecies
- ♦ Narratives of the fulfillment of those prophecies
- ♦ Prophetic comments on these events, including parables like the two in this chapter
- ♦ Lamentations for the sufferings of God’s rebellious people, 19:1, 14

God

His greatness: As sovereign Lord of the world, he disposes the affairs of men and nations so that wicked empires and kingdoms execute his will even when they savagely oppress and even seek to destroy God’s people, as when Pharaoh Neco carried King Jehoahaz into captivity in Egypt, 19:4 (*see 2 Kings 23:31–34*), and Nebuchadnezzar took King Jehoiakim to Babylon, 19:9. *See 2 Chronicles 36:5–6.*

Christ

His person

- ♦ In contrast to the devouring “lions” who oppressed their people, he is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah who not only conquers all his enemies but also protects those who trust in him, for he is also the Lamb of God who takes away their sins. *See Revelation 5:5.*
- ♦ In contrast to the evil, fruitless vine of rebellious Israel, he is the True Vine, and believers are his branches, who by abiding in him bear fruit and become an obedient people of God. *See John 15:1–10.*

Spiritual Beings

Satan: He is represented here by evil political rulers who, like him, are roaring lions that seek to devour God's people, 19:3, 6. *See 1 Peter 5:8.*

Mankind

Our fallen nature

- ♦ In our fallen state, we tend to rebel against God and against human authority, as well as to oppress those under us, as Judah's kings and their sons did, 19:3, 6.
- ♦ We also tend not to learn from previous mistakes and their painful consequences, as Israel failed to learn from the fate of the wicked Jehoahaz.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Do not be surprised when political rulers lord it over their people and exploit the people for their own ends.
- ♦ See our real enemy not as wicked rulers, but Satan, who works through them to tempt us not to love, trust, and hope in God above all, but to put our hopes in earthly things.
- ♦ Do not be surprised when evil empires ravage the people of God, for they are always instruments of God's grand design to purify his people.
- ♦ Do not trust in human rulers to save us.
- ♦ Beware of becoming like fruitless Israel; rather, by indwelling in Christ and thus having the power of the Holy Spirit, we should seek to bear good fruit to God's glory. *See John 15:5-7 and Galatians 5:22-23.*

Ezekiel 20:1–44

Truth

Revelation

Its content

- ◆ It (revelation) is sometimes denied to us, at least in the form we request it. Here, when the elders of Israel sought to inquire of God, probably to hear what to do next or to hear good news, he declared them unworthy to have an intimate relationship with him, 20:1–3.
- ◆ It includes signs and wonders of judgment and deliverance within history, 20:5.
- ◆ It includes specific commands from God to cease from sin and specific commands about how to worship and serve him, 20:5, 7, 11, 18–20.
- ◆ It includes much historical narrative, both in the form of the historical books and also in the Psalms and in the prophets, as here, and always with interpretation, which is often lacking in the historical books.
- ◆ It is always meant to lead us to a knowledge of God, 20:42, usually through a recognition of, and repentance for, our sins, 20:43.

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is a living God, 20:3.
- ◆ He is completely sovereign over the times, manner, and content of his revelation to his people, 20:3–4.
- ◆ He chose Israel and promised to give them the land of Palestine as an inheritance, 20:5.
- ◆ He responds with fury and wrath to the rebellion of his people, 20:8, 13, 21, 23.
- ◆ He will cause his name to be glorified, rather than despised, in the eyes of the Gentiles through the new life of his people, 20:42.
- ◆ He does all this for the sake of his name and fame, and not because his people deserve anything but wrath, 20:9, 14, 22, 44.

His goodness

- ♦ He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, withholding the full expression of his righteous indignation time after time, 20:9, 14, 17, 22.
- ♦ He will finally restore them from the countries to which he had scattered Israel for their persistent rebellions, 20:34–38, 40–42.
- ♦ He will cleanse his people from their idolatry and cause them to follow his ways faithfully, 20:37–38.
- ♦ He will even accept their new worship, 20:40–41.

Christ

His work: Though not mentioned here or often explicitly in Ezekiel, he is present throughout implicitly, for—to take the main example—his future substitutionary, vicarious offering for sinners enables God both to forgive and accept repentance sinners and to retain his justice.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Often review our life history, asking God to show us where we have disobeyed him and thus have deserved his fierce punishment but have been mercifully spared.
- ♦ Reflect on the times when he has disciplined us severely but has not given us over to death, in order to lead us to repentance and new obedience.
- ♦ Thank God for his repeated kindness and patience toward us.
- ♦ Ask God to give us a heart to serve him alone, rather than all the idols that we usually cherish.

Ezekiel 20:45–21:32

Truth

Revelation

Its content

- ♦ Biblical revelation sometimes begins with an unclear parable, which we have to ask God to clarify through further reading of the Scripture, following the course of the prophet's experience here, where the fire image is replaced by the sword image, and "the south" is further identified as the land of Israel, which is "south" from Babylon, where Ezekiel was at the time, 20:45–21:2.
- ♦ Biblical revelation was part of the life and heart of the prophets and apostles, who rightly grieved for the coming judgment upon God's people, 21:6, 12, as Jesus also did over the impending destruction of Jerusalem, (*see Matthew 23:37*), and Paul did over the damning unbelief of the Jews. *See Romans 9:1–3*.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He shows his holiness and righteousness by punishing all people, both "righteous" and "wicked," for all, in his sight, are unrighteous, and by especially punishing rulers for their failure to represent his justice on earth, 21:3, 12, 26.
- ♦ He punishes pagan nations as well, 21:28–32.
- ♦ He exercises total sovereignty over the nations, using one nation to fulfill his purposes against another nation (before eventually punishing that nation as well), 21:21–24.

The Last Things

Their stages

- ♦ They come in several stages, often both predicted and prefigured in Old Testament history and prophecy, as here, where the destruction of Israel and Jerusalem in 587 BC look forward to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.
- ♦ This destruction will come upon them for failing to receive the Messiah (and many other sins).

- ◆ History and prophecy also look to the doom coming upon the entire world at the return of Christ, who will wield a deadly sword, slaying all his enemies and consigning them to eternal fire, fulfilling both parts of Ezekiel's visions recorded here. *See Revelation 19:11-21; 20:7-10; 21:8. See also Revelation 14:11 and Matthew 3:10-12; 7:19, 13:40-42, 49-50; 25:41, 46.*

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ◆ Do not expect to escape the terrible troubles that will come upon all the earth at the end, or our own nation in our lifetime, or even the common troubles of this fallen world, such as illness, for we will certainly suffer along with others.
- ◆ Acknowledge God's justice when we suffer, when suffering inflicts upon us a tiny foretaste of what we would experience in hell if Jesus had not redeemed us from God's wrath, then humbly thank him for his mercy and kindness to us.
- ◆ Live holy lives now and wait expectantly for the return of Jesus to judge the world and save his people from ultimate ruin in hell.
- ◆ Boldly preach the coming judgment of God, as did Ezekiel, the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles, so that some may repent and be saved.

Ezekiel 22

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is consistent, with one section of the Bible building on another, because God is internally consistent and unchanging.

Its application: The Old Testament prophets applied the Mosaic law and especially the Ten Commandments to the life of Israel, and they judged the people according to this enduring standard, as here, where all the commandments are referred to, though not in order.

- ♦ Idolatry (1st & 2nd)
- ♦ Taking God's name in vain (3rd)
- ♦ Profaning the Sabbath (4th), dishonoring parents (5th)
- ♦ Murder and violence (6th)
- ♦ Adultery (7th)
- ♦ Theft (8th)
- ♦ False witness (9th)
- ♦ Covetousness (10th)

Its literary forms: Its figures of speech and modes of speaking vary, as here, from sword (chapter 21) to a furnace refining silver.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He knows all, even the hidden actions and attitudes of men, 9.
- ♦ He hates all manner of sexual immorality, 10-12.
- ♦ He will surely carry out his threats, 14.
- ♦ He will cause men to "know"—acknowledge—him, either willingly or, as here, as a result of brutal punishment, 15-16.

His goodness

- ♦ He cares for the weak, the widows, orphans, and oppressed, 7, 29.
- ♦ He loves justice and hates iniquity.

- ♦ He requites sin with appropriate punishments, as here, causing Israel's name to be despised because they have caused God's name to be reproached.

Sin

Its nature: It extends to all persons, in all classes and positions in society, including prophets, priests, princes, and ordinary people.

Its substance: Sin consists in any violation of God's commands.

It includes: Sin includes inner sinful inclinations as well as outward actions.

Its consequences: It will inevitably bring punishment.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Meditate on the Ten Commandments and on the New Testament exposition and repetitions of them (*e.g., Matthew 5–7 and Romans 13*), as well as on Jesus' intensification of the commands, to know God's will for us.
- ♦ Contemplate what happened to Israel, God's chosen people, to see what God will do even to professing Christians who willfully and repeatedly violate his commands. *See 1 Corinthians 10:1–13, 11:30–32; and 1 Peter 4:17–18.*
- ♦ We should not be afraid to tell people around us exactly, and in detail, what constitutes sin. Preachers should especially do this, applying God's Word to each situation.

Ezekiel 23

Truth

Revelation

Its literary forms

- ◆ Next to historical narrative, Biblical revelation includes poetry most frequently in the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms and Prophets.
 - Through poetry, God could express vividly and powerfully his thoughts and his emotions.
 - As with all poetry, it includes figures of speech and metaphors, some of them quite extended, as in this chapter, often to serve also as historical narrative.
- ◆ Frequently in the Old Testament, prophecy begins or ends with a statement like, “Thus says the LORD God,” indicating that the words of the prophet are the very words of God himself, 1, 22, 32, 35.
- ◆ Revelation also includes direct speech, through the prophet, from God to his people, 1–27, 32–35.

God

His greatness

- ◆ He rules as sovereign over all nations, using one nation to judge another, especially God’s people, through delegated judgment, 22, 24, just as God delegated to Pilate the authority to kill Jesus. *See John 19:11 and Romans 13:1–4.*
- ◆ He chose his people Israel (here distinguished as the northern kingdom Israel, whose capital was Samaria, and the southern kingdom Judah, whose capital was Israel), to be his own special possession, 4.
- ◆ He is terribly jealous for the unique loyalty of his people, whom he considers to be his “wife,” 25.

His goodness

- ◆ He cannot abide sin and so alienates himself from unrepentant sinners, 18.

- ♦ He pours out his wrath upon unrepentant sinners, including his own people, 32–34.
- ♦ He will make himself known through his righteous and devastating punishment of his people, 49.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Forgetting God and turning away from him, 35
- ♦ Idolatry, 37
- ♦ Sexual immorality of all sorts, including lust, 5, 14
- ♦ Violence, 37

Note: Idolatry attacks the very nature of God as sole Creator and Lord, and sexual sins and violence violate the nature of man as created in the image of God.

Salvation

Its conveyance: It was brought to us when Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath which we deserve, 32–34. *See Matthew 26:39, 42.*

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Do all we can to remember God and keep him in the forefront of our thoughts at all times, lest we forget him, turn from him, and give ourselves to useless and deadly idols.
- ♦ Avoid all sorts of sexual lust and sin, for these represent both unfaithfulness to God and to others and defile our nature as created in God's image for a unique relationship with one person of the other sex in lifelong marriage.
- ♦ Be careful what we put before our eyes, for images will draw our attention and affection away from God.

Ezekiel 24

Truth

Revelation

Its source

- ◆ It comes
 - In parables, 1–8, and explanation of parables
 - In predictions, 15–18, and explanations of their fulfillment, 19–27
 - Often, in the lives of God’s messengers like Ezekiel, whose obedience to God despite suffering becomes a witness to the people, 15–27
 - Ultimately, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the ultimate prophet and “sign” to God’s people and to the world

God

His greatness

- ◆ He afflicts his people in order to refine them and purify them of their sins, 11.
- ◆ He will finally destroy fully those who refuse to be corrected and changed by their afflictions, 13.
- ◆ He demands our total loyalty and obedience, even above family, whom he may take from us in order to use us as witnesses to him in this world, 15–18.

Mankind

Our created nature: We are created in the image of God, especially as male and female, so that one’s wife becomes “the desire of your eyes,” that is, the source of great delight and enjoyment and the object of our desire, 16.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ◆ Learn from God’s harsh discipline of us for our sins, and repent, so that we may not be completely destroyed by him in hell.
- ◆ Place God before all else in our lives, even our most beloved person, and be willing to have that person or thing taken from us for God’s greater purposes.

- ◆ Place our ultimate desire on God alone and seek comfort from him and from doing his will, as Jesus did, for our hope is in heaven with Christ in God. *See Colossians 3:1-3.*

Ezekiel 25

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness

- ♦ Biblical revelation is consecutive, cumulative, and coherent, as seen in these prophetic applications of the principle stated long ago by God to Abraham that those who blessed him and his people would be blessed, and those who cursed him would be cursed. *See Genesis 12:1–3.*
- ♦ Its coherence also appears in the case of Ammon, Moab, and Edom, of whom the first two were descendants of Lot and the last the descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother. *See Genesis 19:30–38; 25:21–24.*
 - All of these groups opposed Israel as the people made their way from Egypt to the Promised Land and later in history, especially when they joined with the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem and its temple.
- ♦ Its consistency is seen in the fulfillment of the principle that God will repay each person according to his deeds, as all these nations suffered those calamities that they had rejoiced to see befall Israel. *See Psalm 62:12.*

Its content: Biblical revelation contains many prophecies which were fulfilled in history, as were these prophetic judgments against nations which had despised and attacked Israel, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia.

Its source: Biblical revelation is given through prophetically–interpreted history and is meant to help both God's people and Gentiles know that he is God—the God of Israel, the almighty, holy, just, and jealous God who will pour out his anger and wrath upon all his enemies, 7, 11, 14, 17.

Its purpose: It is meant to bring us to know that Yahweh, and he alone, is God. *See passages quoted just above.*

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is holy and thus must punish his people for sin.
- ♦ He will also punish all those who hate, despise, and mistreat God's people.

- ♦ He is ruler of the nations and thus able to use one nation to destroy another as it suits his will.
- ♦ He is jealous for his name and his dwelling place, as well as the welfare of his people, and will not long withhold judgment from those who despise his people and their worship, 3, 6, 8, 12.

His goodness: He is faithful to his covenant promises, like the one to Abraham to curse those who curse him. *See above.*

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Despising God's name, worship, and people, 3, 6, 8
- ♦ Taking revenge, 12, 15
- ♦ Displaying a spiteful, resentful, hateful heart, 15

The Last Things

The final judgment: He will completely fulfill all the preliminary judgments in previous ages against individuals and nations that refused to obey God when Christ returns to smite the nations with a rod of iron and afflict them with eternal hellfire. *See Psalm 2:1-12 and Revelation 2:27; 6:16-17; 19:15; 20:9-10.*

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Do not be surprised when unbelievers mock us for our worship and laugh at us when we suffer for our disobedience.
- ♦ Pray for our enemies, for unless they repent and trust in Christ, they will be punished with everlasting torment.
- ♦ Wait patiently for the second coming of Christ, when all things will be put right.
- ♦ Expect wars and conflicts on this world until the Lord returns, though of course we should also pray and work for peace.

Ezekiel 27–28

Truth

Revelation

Its nature and content

- ♦ It speaks to matters of commerce, lifestyle, international relations, individual conduct, and the motives of the heart.
- ♦ It includes prophecies with multiple fulfillments, like the predictions of the total destruction of Tyre, which was subdued by the Babylonians, but not finally and fully destroyed until Alexander the Great's conquest of it in 332 BC.
- ♦ It includes prophecies which point toward the final judgment of the world by God and the restoration of his people, 27:33–36. *See Revelation 18–19.*
- ♦ It also includes indirect references to spiritual warfare, like the similarities between the king of Tyre and Satan, 28:14–15.

Its recipients: Though mostly directed toward God's people, some of the Bible is also spoken to the Gentile nations, indicating that God rules the world, and that the whole world is accountable to him for its response to general revelation in the created order and in conscience and is therefore guilty before him. *See Romans 1:18–32.*

God

His greatness: He is jealous for his title, "God," and will utterly exterminate all rival claimants to deity, 28:6–10.

His goodness

- ♦ He is merciful to his people and faithful to his promises to restore them and prosper them, 28:25–26.
- ♦ He will judge all nations, both in this world and in the next, according to general revelation of his nature and moral demands.
- ♦ He will cut down all those who exalt themselves, 28:17. *See also Luke 18:14.*

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Avoid all pride.
- ♦ Avoid all luxury and self-indulgence.
- ♦ Do not set our hearts on the riches and glory of this world, for they are fleeting.

Ezekiel 29–30

Truth

Revelation

Its roots in history

- ♦ It came to the prophets and apostles in history and speaks into specific historical situations, 29:1–2, 17; 30:20.
- ♦ It contains predictions of historical events which later happened as God said they would, 29:8–16 (e.g., Egypt’s power would be broken, and it would never become a strong empire again).

Its content: It includes messages of coming judgment as well as of coming deliverance for God’s people, 29:19–21.

Its purpose and effects

- ♦ It is always intended to make people know that he alone is God, 29:6, 16, 21; 30:26.
- ♦ It shows that God uses pagan nations to execute his judgment on other pagan nations and to chastise or deliver his people as he sees fit, 30:22–26.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ All forms of pride and self-sufficiency, 29:3
- ♦ Reliance upon creatures for life and security, 29:6–7
- ♦ Idolatry, 30:13

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Trust that God controls all international and national affairs. He is working all things together to manifest his glory to the world and to cause his people to trust in him alone.

- ♦ Do not fear the power of great empires, nor should we be proud of our own nation when it is powerful and great, for God will bring all empires to a violent and terrible end.

Ezekiel 31–32

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: All of these Biblical literary forms demonstrate the fundamental unity and coherence of the entire Bible.

Its literary forms

- ◆ In the Bible, Biblical revelation usually comes in tightly-organized, complex literary documents, whose structure forms part of the message (exceptions include part of Proverbs 10–30 and much of the book of Jeremiah), as in Ezekiel 25–32.
 - This passage contains seven oracles against seven nations—seven representing the totality of the Gentile world.
 - The last oracle, chapters 29–32, is against Egypt, composed of seven shorter sections, perhaps pointing towards Egypt’s dominating influence upon Israel for more than five hundred years, and perhaps indicating the totality of God’s revelation to pagan nations, including both judgment and mercy, of which the presence of laments perhaps gives a hint.
- ◆ It features many parables and metaphors from the created order, thus reminding us of the revelatory quality of both history and the material creation, when interpreted by God, as in 31:1–9 and 32:2–6.
- ◆ It contains highly figurative language, as in 32:8, which link cosmic phenomena to earthly events but also remind the reader of the Ten Plagues of Moses’ day.
- ◆ It features images and tropes that point towards the end times, like 32:10, which will be taken up in the lament for “Babylon” in Revelation 18:9–10.
- ◆ It reveals God to be both the creator of language and the master-poet, a story-teller, history writer, and literary artist.

Its recipients: Biblical revelation applies to, and often explicitly speaks to, all nations of the world.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is the author of all earthly glory, beauty, power, and prosperity, even among pagans, 31:9.
- ♦ He opposes, therefore, all pride, and will bring down those who exalt themselves, 31:10–11.

Sin

Its consequences

- ♦ It entails disaster not only for humans, but for their earthly environment, as part of God's curse on the land, 32:13.
- ♦ It brings death eternal in the Pit of hell, 32:17–32.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Study the Bible carefully, using helps when necessary, to note its structure as well as its verbal content, for both are part of its message to us.
- ♦ Beware of all pride over things which God has given us that make us “superior” to others in some ways lest be brought down by God.
- ♦ Do not fret over the temporary prosperity of even the most powerful nations—or evil rulers—for they will be brought to destruction by God. *See Psalm 37.*
- ♦ Wait patiently for God's coming judgment upon all evildoers and prepare ourselves by bringing our lives under God's rule, trusting in Christ, and setting our hope fully on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. *See 1 Peter 1:13.*

Ezekiel 33

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is cumulative.

- ◆ Here, where God through Ezekiel refers to prohibitions against certain sins in the books of Moses, 25–26; *see Leviticus 3:17; 7:26; 17:10–14.*
- ◆ The Jews appeal to Abraham as their forefather, 24. *See Genesis 12:1–3; 15:7.*
- ◆ In the prophets, Biblical revelation is either meant
 - To warn them of impending judgment from God so that they may repent and be saved, 3, 6, 8–9, 10–11
 - To comfort them with the reminder that God does not delight in the death of a sinner and wants them to avoid judgment, 11
 - To assure repentant sinners of forgiveness; it is meant for us not only to hear or to know about, but to act upon with sincerity of heart, 30–33

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is just and fair, dealing with each person according to their conduct equally, 18–20.
- ◆ He is holy, and thus obligated by his own character to punish sin, 25–29.

His goodness

- ◆ He is kind, warning his people of impending judgment unless they repent, 11.
- ◆ He is faithful to both his threats, 21, and his promises, 22.
- ◆ He is merciful, forgiving those who truly turn from their sins, 14–16.

Christ

His prefiguration: He is prefigured by the entire ministry of Ezekiel who, as watchman, warned Israel of God's coming judgment upon them, and as comforter, later consoled them in their desolation and conveyed God's promise of forgiveness and restoration.

Mankind

Our nature: Man is a responsible being, able to understand God's revelation and obligated to obey it. In our fallen state, we tend to evade responsibility, deny our sins and our liability to punishment for them, and even to blame God for not being fair, 17–20.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Trusting in our own supposed righteousness, 13
- ♦ Accusing God of being unfaithful when it is we who are unjust, 20
- ♦ Appearing to want to hear God's Word when in fact we are seeking our own profit, 30–31
- ♦ Hearing God's Word but not acting upon it, 32; *see Matthew 7:21–28.*

Salvation

Its conveyance: It comes through hearing God's Word, repenting, and turning to him, 11, 14–16.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Thank God that he will forgive our past sins and remember them no more if we truly repent and turn from them.
- ♦ Seek opportunities to hear the words of the prophets and apostles, both by our own reading or listening, and by joining with others in meetings to hear his Word, 30–31, with a sincere desire to hear and obey.
- ♦ Act upon what we hear from God.
- ♦ Bravely and boldly warn our generation of God's imminent judgment upon sinners, even if there is no response. This applies to our nations, which are endorsing sins wholesale now.

Ezekiel 34

Truth

God

His greatness: He rules his flock through under-shepherds, who were political and religious rulers in Old Testament times, and who are now elders and pastors, 1–10.

See 1 Peter 5:1–4.

His goodness

- ♦ He chose Israel as his “flock,” to whom he is Shepherd and caregiver, 6, 8, 10.
 - He will deliver his flock.
 - He will make them lie down in good pastures.
 - He will feed them.
 - He will lead them.
 - He will bring the lost and erring sheep back to them.
 - He will heal the injured among them.
 - He will judge between them.
 - He will give them one Shepherd, “David,” 23, to rule over them, and make a covenant of peace with them, 1–25—thus demonstrating his pity, his power, his faithfulness to his covenant and to his promises to David.

Christ

His prefiguration: He is prefigured as the son of David, the Good Shepherd who will save and care for his people, 23. *See Matthew 9:36; John 10:1–30; Hebrews 13:20; and 1 Peter 5:1–4.*

The Church

Its prefiguration: It is prefigured here by the image of the flock of God, as in the Scriptures referenced above.

Salvation

Its conveyance

- ♦ It came to the Jews as return from exile and restoration in their land, at least to a degree.
- ♦ It comes to us now as return to “the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls,” Jesus.
See 1 Peter 2:25.

Its content: Healing, provision for our material and spiritual needs, protection from spiritual enemies, etc., will come later when Jesus is revealed to establish a new heaven and a new earth, in which all the promises of 20–31 are fulfilled.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Meditate often upon Psalm 23 as a picture of the care Jesus the Good Shepherd will exercise over us, satisfying all our true needs and protecting us from spiritual enemies, and finally giving us residence in his heavenly/earthly temple forever.
- ♦ Trust this Good Shepherd to take care of us every day.
- ♦ Care for other members of God’s flock, and do not take advantage of them; this is especially true of elders and pastors, who must care for the flock that God has committed to their charge.

Ezekiel 35:1–36:15

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness

- ♦ Biblical revelation is cumulative, as the prophet (speaking for God) uses words from Genesis 1–3 and from Leviticus 26 to describe both the curses and the blessings that will come upon the land as a result of the people’s disobedience or obedience to God.
- ♦ Ezekiel also refers to earlier prophecies in his book as well. *See Ezekiel 25:12–14; 6:1–7, 11–14.*
- ♦ Biblical revelation is coordinated, as chapter 35 is almost exactly balanced by chapter 36:1–5.

Its literary forms: It often uses figures of speech, like the personification of places, to refer to people, as here, where mountains represent the peoples of Edom and Israel, respectively.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is holy and righteous and therefore opposes those who treat others unjustly, 35:3–4.
- ♦ He repays people and nations according to their deeds, 35:11, 15.
- ♦ He is jealous for his reputation and also for the reputation and prosperity of his chosen people, 36:6.
- ♦ He reveals himself as holy and faithful by his treatment of unrepentant wicked people and of penitent people, 35:11, 15.

His goodness

- ♦ He is faithful to his covenant to Abraham to bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him, 35:5–15. *See Genesis 12:3.*
- ♦ Because of his steadfast love and his faithfulness to his promises, which now come to us in Jesus, he is “for” his people, 36:9, and will never separate them from his love. *See Romans 8:1, 31–39.*

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Holding resentment for a long time, 35:5; *see Matthew 6:12, 14–15, 18:35; and Ephesians 4:26–27, 31–32.*
- ♦ Rejoicing when our enemy encounters suffering, 35:15

Salvation

Its conveyance

- ♦ It comes to us as deliverance from our enemies, 36:7, 15.
- ♦ It comes to us from the favor of God, 36:9.

The Last Things

The new creation: It will include restoration of the land to an Edenic-like condition, with fruitfulness, beauty, harmony between men and beasts, and the return of his people to their land. Some take this to refer to a literal 1,000-year time when Israel will live in the land of Canaan under the personal rule of Jesus Christ, while others see it as referring to the life in the new heaven and the new earth.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Do not fret when the enemies of God and his people temporarily triumph, for they will soon be punished fully for their sins.
- ♦ Trust in God's goodness and love towards us, even when we suffer reproach from non-Christians or when we are being disciplined for our sins, for God is "for" all those who trust in Christ. *See Romans 8:1.*
- ♦ Warn non-believers that a time of judgment is coming.
- ♦ Comfort Christians with the promise of redemption when Christ returns and establishes a new heaven and a new earth.

Ezekiel 36:16–38

Truth

Revelation

Its source

- ♦ Prophetic revelation often came as if all aspects of a prophecy would be fulfilled at the same time, but later events show that some parts are fulfilled first, then others.
- ♦ Here, the promise of a new heart came later.
 - It came after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.
 - It came subsequently on all who repented and believed in Christ, when God gave believers a new heart (a new center of will, thinking, feeling) as well as his Holy Spirit. *See Acts 2:4, 17–18, and other places in Acts, Hebrews 8:7–12, quoting Jeremiah 31:31–34, but referring to this passage also.*

Its content

- ♦ It can be argued that God’s sprinkling Israel from all uncleanness, which indicates forgiveness and restoration to favor, took place when they returned from exile in Babylon, but inner fulfillment came with the New Covenant, under which the blood of Jesus cleanses repentant believers of all sin. *See 1 John 1:9–10.*
- ♦ Revelation also includes the Law of Moses, with all of its stipulations, 36:27.

God

His Triune nature: He exists as a Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit, here indicated by his distinguishing himself “God” from his Spirit, whom he would send to his people, 36:27.

His greatness

- ♦ He is Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel, 36:3.
- ♦ He is jealous for his holy name and furious when it is profaned, but intent also on vindicating his name by keeping his promises to his chosen people, 36:18–23.
- ♦ He is holy and righteous, pouring out his just anger and wrath upon unrepentant sinners, 36:17–18.

- ♦ He is intent upon making himself known to Israel and to the Gentiles as Yahweh, covenant-keeping God of his people, and therefore Savior, 36:23.
- ♦ He is almighty and thus able to deliver his people from exile, transform the human heart, and cause agricultural abundance, 36:26–30.

Salvation

Its conveyance: It comes to us now as “sprinkling from uncleanness,” by the shed blood of Jesus, which brings forgiveness of sins and restoration of communion with God, 36:25. *See Titus 3:5 and 1 John 1:9.*

It includes

- ♦ A change of heart, that is, of motives, mindset, and decisions, and the implantation of a new “spirit,” 36:26
- ♦ The indwelling of God’s own Holy Spirit, leading us to fulfill the righteous requirements of God’s law, 36:27; *see Romans 8:14–16 and Galatians 5:22–23.*
- ♦ Consciousness of God as our God and of ourselves as his chosen people, 36:28
- ♦ Deliverance from the power of (still) indwelling sin, 36:29; *see Romans 6:6–14.*
Note: The “water” and “Spirit” in this passage probably form the background to John 3:5, the best interpretation of which is that “water and the Spirit” refer to the same thing, i.e., the cleansing action of the Holy Spirit when he causes us to be born again and gives us new life. See Titus 3:5, “washing of regeneration” = “washing that is regeneration.”

Christ

His prefiguration: He is prefigured here as the one who saves us from our sins and gives us his Spirit. *See Matthew 1:21 and Acts 2:33.*

Church

Its characteristics

- ♦ Some see the reference to sprinkling with clean water, 36:25, as connected to the ancient and current practice (in some churches) of sprinkling as a mode of baptism, especially since it is connected to
 - Ritual cleansing = forgiveness and reconciliation
 - A new heart
 - The gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit
 - And all of which are connected to saving faith and baptism in the New Testament

The Last Things

Christ's return: Some believe that this passage speaks of a time when, in a literal 1,000-year period, the Jews will again live in their land and experience the inner spiritual renewal here prophesied; others take it to refer to the inner spiritual renewal now for all believers, followed by renewal of the entire earth after Jesus returns (for his second and only future time).

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Look forward to a new heaven and new earth, when all God's promises to Israel will be fulfilled for the Jews and for all who now believers in Jesus.
- ♦ Ask God to work by his Holy Spirit in us to lead us into good works and overcome the power of indwelling sin daily.
- ♦ Tremble before God's jealousy for his holy name and shrink from anything that would cause non-believers to disrespect him.

Ezekiel 37

Truth

Revelation

Its literary forms

- ◆ Biblical revelation uses many figurative words and pictures.
 - The vision of the dry bones refers to Israel in exile and dispersion, as well as the spiritually dead.
 - The name “David” refers to the coming Messianic King, who must be Christ and cannot literally be David.

Its purpose: Biblical revelation is meant to show that God, and he alone, is Yahweh, the creator who saves his people and wishes for them to know him personally through his Word and Spirit, 14.

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is living, and he is the source of both physical, psychological, and spiritual life, as well as the source of national “revival” through restoration as a nation and returning to the Promised Land.
- ◆ His life, therefore, is another word for his almighty power, 1–14.
- ◆ He exists as a Triune Being, with his own Spirit, whom he can give to men as he pleases, 14.
- ◆ He is holy and therefore must sanctify his people, 23–28.

His goodness

- ◆ He chose Israel as his own people and revealed himself to them as their faithful, covenant-keeping God, Yahweh, 12–13, 23.
- ◆ He keeps his covenant with David, 24 (*see 2 Samuel 7:1–17*) and Abraham, 25–26 (*see Genesis 12:1–3, 15:5–21*).
- ◆ He is the God of peace, who makes peace between his people and himself, and between his people and the land in which he sends them to dwell, 26. *See Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:14–18; and Hebrews 13:20.*
- ◆ He condescends to dwell among them by his Spirit and his Word, 26.

Christ

His person: He is prefigured here as the Shepherd-King David who will rule over a reunited Israel (Judah and Ephraim, i.e. the scattered ten northern tribes and the exiled two tribes), 22, 24. *See John 10:11 and Matthew 1:1.*

Holy Spirit

His person: He is revealed here as God's Holy Spirit, whom he gives to dwell among and within his people to sanctify them, 14, 26–28. *See Titus 3:5–6 and 1 Peter 1:2.*

The Church

Its substance: It is now the place where God makes his dwelling by the Holy Spirit in individuals who trust in Christ as King and obey him, 24, 27–28 (*see Ephesians 2:19–22*), through the preaching and believing of his Word, 4.

The Last Things

Their interpretation

- ♦ Some believe this passage refers to the restoration of Jews to the land of Israel, basing their interpretation on what they see as a literal reading of the Bible. The problem with this interpretation is that the entire passage is obviously figurative, including the use of the name “David” to refer to one who cannot be the former king David.
- ♦ Others see it as referring to
 - The current state of the church, composed of people who have been brought from spiritual death to life by the power of the Spirit, who dwells among them; *see Ephesians 2.*
 - The eternal state of the blessed in the new heaven and the new earth after the general resurrection from the dead; *see Revelation 21–22.*

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Trust God to be able to “bring life from the dead” in many ways, such as renewed health; spiritual rebirth and subsequent renewal; restored relationships, including marriages and relationships between Christians; and the

new heaven and new earth that will consummate all of God's grand design of mankind and the created order.

- ♦ Ask God for our own spiritual renewal and the renewal of broken relationships.
- ♦ Speak God's Word faithfully even to apparently "dead" people and situations, trusting that he can use it to bring life as and when he sees fit.

Ezekiel 38

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is cumulative and coordinated, as this passage and others like it show up as background to Revelation 20:8, which speaks of a great last battle before the final destruction of Satan and all his allies.

Its content: It contains some passages which defy definitive interpretation, like this chapter and the chapters that follow. Literal interpretative methods fail to convince, because such details as horses, shields, and other equipment from ancient times are not easily foreseeable either in the near or the far future, unless the so-called millennial kingdom will be one with an agricultural, pre-modern economy, which is of course possible.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is all-powerful and totally sovereign over history, even to the point of raising up enemies against his people with the intent of defeating them and disposing of all claims that he was unjust to send his people into exile in Babylon or that he forsook them there and broke his covenant promises to Abraham, the patriarchs, and David, 1-23.
- ♦ He is jealous for the glory of his name as holy, 16, 23.
- ♦ He is totally sovereign over the created order and capable of causing earthquakes and other physical disasters at will, 19.
- ♦ He will make himself known as the sovereign, holy, great ruler of all nations by judging those who attack his people and slander his name, 23.

Mankind

Our fallen state: We tend toward pride, ambition, greed, lust for power, rapacity, cruelty, violence, and disdain for both God and his people, 10-14.

The Last Things

Their interpretation

- ◆ Some interpreters take this chapter and the one following it to refer to the near future, when a coalition of nations will attack Israel, only to be defeated by the direct intervention of God himself.
- ◆ As noted above, this interpretation falls at the point of details, such as horses, shields, bows and arrows, as well as the defenseless, peaceful dwellers of the land of Israel, which now is an armed and fortified camp.
- ◆ It also falls at the point of the larger context, which requires both the moral and spiritual transformation of Israel prophesied in chapters 36 and 37, the union of the people under a Davidic king who will reign everlastingly, 37:24–25, and the presence of God in his tabernacle in Jerusalem, 37:27.
- ◆ Other interpreters see this passage literally as descriptive of a final attack against Israel at the end of a 1000-year long rule on earth from Jerusalem by Jesus, an interpretation that has been challenged on many grounds (see “Revelation,” above). Still others see it as the final attack by Satan and his allies before the last judgment, but not after a literal millennial rule by Christ on earth.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ◆ Do not fret when God’s enemies attack his people. They are under his sovereign control, and their assaults will end in defeat and in the further glory of God’s name.
- ◆ Do not expect war and violence to cease in this age, but only to increase, with greater and greater numbers of soldiers and resulting devastation.
- ◆ Do not set our hopes on the return of Christ to judge the world and establish his eternal kingdom of peace.

Ezekiel 39

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is cumulative and coordinated.

- ◆ Here, the sacrificial system given through Moses is inverted, as God sacrifices men to animals, in punishment for their wickedness, 17–20.
- ◆ The invitation to the birds and the beasts looks forward to a similar invitation in Revelation 19:17 after the final battle of Armageddon, 17.
- ◆ It includes the use of certain numbers to refer to certain realities, as here the number seven, the number of completion, is used in various ways, to refer to the Gentile nations attacking Israel and to indicate their worldwide extent and the totality of their defeat, 9, 12.

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is righteous and will therefore punish all evil men and especially those who persecute his people and blaspheme or mock his name, 1.
- ◆ He will also severely afflict his people when they cause his name to be blasphemed by their evil behavior, 23–24.
- ◆ He is jealous for his reputation among the Gentiles (now, all unbelievers), and thus he will keep his promises to his people by delivering them from their foes and causing them to be holy, 25, 27.
- ◆ He will hide his face, that is, remove the sense of his gracious presence and favor, from his people for a while because of their sins, but then restore his presence to them out of regard for his name, and so that they may know him as Savior, 24–29.

Christ

His prefiguration: Christ is prefigured in the sacrificial “feast” offered by God, when evil men are utterly destroyed and God’s people are delivered, just as Jesus was counted as a sinner and was offered as a human, not animal, sacrifice by God, not men, to save evil people.

Salvation

Its conveyance: It comes to God's people as restoration to God's favor, deliverance from their enemies—especially spiritual enemies such as sin, Satan, and eternal death because of God's wrath—and the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit, 25–29.

The Last Things

Their interpretation

- ♦ Some take this passage to refer to events at the end of the literal 1000-year period when Christ rules from Jerusalem.
- ♦ Others take it to refer to the time after the last assault by Satan upon God's people just before the first and only "second coming" of Christ.
- ♦ In any case, the total burning over a long time of these enemies points forward to eternal fire in hell for unrepentant sinners.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Be ashamed of our past sins, for they have dishonored God and given Satan a chance to oppress us.
- ♦ Rejoice in God's compassion, mercy, kindness, and forgiveness towards us at the same time despite our sins, expressed fully and finally in the sacrifice of Christ for us on the Cross. *See Romans 5:8.*
- ♦ Be aware that Satan will mobilize a vast number of evil forces and people to come at us from all directions, so that we cannot stand against him on our own power, but must be "strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might," and resist them by faith in his Word. *See Ephesians 6:10–20.*

Ezekiel 40–41

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is cumulative and coordinated.

- ◆ Here, these chapters mirror the description of the desecrated Temple in Ezekiel 8–9.
- ◆ The whole last section of Ezekiel refers back to the beginning and also forward to the future. *See below on “God.”*

Its interpretation: It contains some passages so difficult to interpret that no one is sure of the intended meaning.

- ◆ Some believe that the temple described here refers to a literal temple to be built on earth in history.
- ◆ Others think it will be constructed during a literal 1,000–year “millennial rule” of Jesus Christ on earth from Jerusalem.
- ◆ Others think it refers to the church today.
- ◆ Still others see it as figurative of the presence of God among his people in the New Heaven and New Earth after Christ returns for the first and only “second coming.”
- ◆ Since so much of the later chapters of Ezekiel seem to be figurative, the last two interpretations are probably more likely.

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is a God of holiness, symbolized here (as in the Tabernacle revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai) by the decreasing size and increasing height of the spaces which led to the Holy of Holies, and by the necessity of sin offerings for those who would have fellowship with him, 40:39; 41:4.
- ◆ He is an unchanging God, whose arrangements for the future fulfill the intentions and sometimes the external forms of his original dealings with man.
 - Here, the palm trees and the cherubim remind us of the Garden of Eden, as the gate facing east, whence Adam and Eve left the Garden, which was guarded by angels. *See Genesis 3:23–14.*

- This echoes the final state of mankind, in a new Garden of Eden, as it were, in the New Heaven and New Earth. *See Revelation 21, where also the new city is a cube, as is the most holy place, Ezekiel 41:4.*

His goodness

- ♦ He longs to dwell among his people.
- ♦ He is a God of order, beauty, symmetry.
- ♦ He is a God of planning, purpose, and meticulous attention to details.
- ♦ He is a God of restoration and renewal, giving his people fresh access to his gracious presence despite their—our!—constant sins against him.

Christ

His prefiguration

- ♦ He is prefigured here by the Temple itself, for Jesus referred to himself as the Temple of God. *See John 2:19.*
- ♦ He is prefigured by the sin offering and trespass offering, which in the New Testament is fulfilled in the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. *See Romans 8:3 and 1 John 2:1, etc.*
- ♦ He is prefigured also by the reference to the priests, 40:46, who point forward to Jesus Christ as our great High Priest. *See Hebrews 4:14–15; 7:26.*

The Church

Its prefiguration: It is prefigured here by the Temple, the dwelling place of God, with its various rooms and personnel for various ministries, as the Body of Christ also has many members with different gifts and ministries. *See Romans 12:3–9; 1 Corinthians 3:9–17; 12:1–31; Ephesians 2:10–22; and 1 Peter 2:4–5.*

The Last Things

The new creation: There will be an eternity of fellowship with God in our midst, as the New Heaven and New Earth are both a Garden like Eden, a city like Jerusalem, and a Temple like the Tabernacle and the one described here.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Thank God for her mercy and grace, in giving us access to him despite our many sins, because Jesus died for us and rose again and now serves as our great high priest at God's right hand. *See Romans 5:1; 8:34.*
- ♦ Do all we can to live holy lives, and to urge other believers to be holy as well, that we may be suitable dwelling-places of God.
- ♦ Do what we can to order our lives in a way that reflects God, who is a God of order, symmetry, beauty, and efficient function; and to order the church likewise.
- ♦ Eagerly look forward to the time when God will truly dwell among his people in an unmediated way in the New Heaven and New Earth.

DANIEL

Daniel 1

Truth

Revelation

Its forms

- ♦ Biblical revelation takes various forms, including both historical narrative and so-called “apocalyptic” visions. Some believe that Daniel 1–6 is historical narrative, which it is, but that chapters 7–12 are apocalyptic visions.
- ♦ Others hold that the whole book of Daniel is historical narrative, including the last six chapters, which record visions given to Daniel, and that these should be considered prophetic visions with apocalyptic form.
- ♦ Daniel can also be divided by the two languages used.
 - 1:1–2:3, Hebrew
 - 2:4–7:28, Aramaic
 - 8:1–12:13, Hebrew
 - The Hebrew parts “pertain primarily to the people of Israel, which is fitting since Hebrew was Israel’s national language. Aramaic was the international language of that time. Fittingly, the Aramaic section of Daniel demonstrates God’s dominion over the international Gentile nations.” (HCSB)

Its roots in history: Biblical revelation is rooted in history. Daniel and his three friends were among those taken into captivity after Babylon attacked Jerusalem the first time, in 605 B.C. Their experiences can help those living in similar situations – i.e., a culture that is “toxic” to faith (ZNIVSB).

God

His greatness

- ♦ God rules over the affairs of men and nations, usually working through human agents, like Nebuchadnezzar, to whom he “gave” the city of Jerusalem and its king Jehoiakim, along with the sacred gold and silver vessels from the temple, 1–2.
- ♦ He possesses all wisdom, 17.

His goodness

- ♦ He is willing and able to keep from temptation and sin those who are fully consecrated to do his will, 8–16, like Daniel and his friends, who would not defile themselves by eating the rich food served at the court in Babylon, 8–16.
- ♦ He gives learning, skill, and wisdom to his people in secular situations, so that they may glorify him among the Gentiles and also benefit the people among whom they live, 17.

Christ

His prefiguration: Christ is obliquely foreshadowed in Daniel, to whom God gave wisdom and knowledge for surpassing others, 7–10. *See Colossians 2:3.*

Mankind

Our fallen state: In our fallen state

- ♦ Men make war on each other and take each other captive, 1.
- ♦ Human captivity is a reflection of our captivity to Satan and sin.
- ♦ Still, people can possess excellent qualities, such as good looks, wisdom, knowledge, and general competence, 4.
- ♦ We can also learn new things, 5, 17, 20.
- ♦ Human culture, though fallen and infected with many fundamental errors and idols, is still worth our knowing, since some of it still reflects God's truth and wisdom, 17.

Our created nature: Humans were actually created to be herbivores; though meat is not forbidden to us, we thrive best on a whole-food, plant-based diet, 12–15.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Aggression against others, 1
- ♦ Rebellion against rulers, as Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, for which he suffered greatly, 2; *see 2 Chronicles 36:5–6.*
- ♦ Defiling oneself with the idolatry of pagans, 8

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Do not rebel against God by breaking treaties and promises that we have made, as Jehoiakim did.
- ♦ Do not fret when evil rulers oppress God's people, for God is in control and is working out his wise and loving plan.
- ♦ Expect God's people to be put into secular situations where they will be tempted to compromise their faith.
- ♦ Hold fast to our faith in God and refuse to compromise with evil.
- ♦ Trust that God will give us grace to overcome all temptations.
- ♦ Learn the "language" and culture of the people among whom we live, so that we might understand them and share the gospel with them. Missionaries, especially, should take the time and trouble to learn the language and culture of the people whom they have been sent to serve.

Daniel 2

Truth

Revelation

Its source

- ♦ God alone reveals mysterious to men. Mysteries are truths that are hidden unless and until God reveals the meaning of them, 22, 28–29.
- ♦ Revelation sometimes came through dreams. These, however, had to be interpreted by an angel or by one of God’s chosen messengers, like Daniel, 27–28.

Its content: Biblical revelation includes predictive prophecy, because God knows all that will happen and chose to reveal aspects of the future to his prophets, 34–35. Here, the king’s dream pointed towards the rise of three kingdoms after his own: Medo–Persia, Greece, and Rome.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is eternal, 20.
- ♦ He possesses wisdom and power, 20.
- ♦ He rules sovereignly over kings and empires, 21.
- ♦ He dwells in “heaven,” indicating his transcendence, 44.
- ♦ He possesses, and will establish on earth, an everlasting kingdom, 44.
- ♦ He is God of gods and Lord of kings,” 47.

His goodness

- ♦ He reveals his will to his chosen people, and through them to the world, 21–23.
- ♦ He protects his people from danger in order that they may continue to serve him as witnesses among the Gentiles, 49.

Christ

His person: He is predicted here as the founder of an eternal kingdom that will smash other kingdoms, 44.

The Last Things

The last days: Jesus Christ inaugurated the last times when he came to dwell among us and began his earthly ministry in the days of the Roman Empire, establishing the beginnings of his kingdom on earth through the church. This kingdom, now composed of believers, will grow and grow until it fills the earth, and at the end of time Jesus will visibly establish his rule on earth, completely destroying and replacing all other kingdoms, 44.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Trust God to take care of us in difficult and dangerous times.
- ♦ Trust that God is ruling over the affairs of men and nations, and that he establishes rulers and then removes them when their work for him is done.
- ♦ Look to God for understanding and wisdom when confronted with difficulty, and trust that he will grant us sufficient wisdom to guide our steps. *See James 1:5.*
- ♦ Give God all the praise and honor when we are able to use the wisdom he gives us to help others.

Daniel 3

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is able to save his people even from fire, 18, 25.
- ♦ He is the Most High God, 26.

His goodness

- ♦ He is with his people even when they go through fire, that is, even in the most difficult and dangerous trials and temptations, 25.
- ♦ He rescues his faithful servants so that they may bear witness to them, 25, 27–28.

Christ

His prefiguration: Christ is prefigured here in the person of the “angel” whom the king saw walking with the Israelites in the midst of the fire, 25. *See Matthew 28:20.*

His person: He is not only “like a son of the gods,” but he is the unique, eternal, incarnate Son of God. *See John 1:49; Romans 1:4; and Hebrews 1:1–3.*

Mankind

Our fallen state: Even in our fallen state, people are capable of “creating” (in a secondary, derivative sense) many forms of goodness and beauty, like ordered government and music, as described in this passage, 2–5, 7, 10, 15.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ At root, sin is idolatry, that is, not worshiping God exclusively and above all else, and pride, which is putting ourselves in God’s place. The king’s image and his insistence upon obedience to his command reflect these twin sources of all other sin, which include, as here, making and worshiping images, 1–7.
- ♦ Malicious envy and slander, 8, 12

- ♦ Anger and murderous actions, 13–15, 19–21

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Honor those in authority over us, 16–17.
- ♦ Obey rulers when they command us to sin against God, 16–18.
- ♦ Avoid pride.
- ♦ Reject all forms of idolatry, whether of the heart or in the form of images.
- ♦ Be willing to suffer for our faith and refuse to worship the culture's idols.
- ♦ Trust God either to save us or to allow us to die for our faith.
- ♦ Trust that Christ will be with us in the midst of the most fiery trial.

Daniel 4

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is cumulative, with later passages referring to or alluding to earlier ones, like the “tree whose top reached to the sky,” 10–12, which harks back to Genesis 11:4 and the Tower of Babel, also an instance of human arrogance.

Its content: Biblical revelation sometimes includes documents from secular sources, like Nebuchadnezzar’s report of his dream and later madness and restoration by God. Though Babylonian documents do not refer to this event, that is not surprising, for court histories rarely talk about failures or embarrassing setbacks. Greek historians do speak of a strange illness of Nebuchadnezzar not long before his death, however.

Its source: Revelation sometimes comes through dreams, though these need interpretation by God’s Spirit, 5–27.

Its purpose: Revelation is meant to lead us to repentance, trust in God alone, and praise of him, 27, 34, 37 .

God

His Triune nature: God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, 18 .

His greatness

- ♦ He is God Most High, doing great miracles and wonders, 3.
- ♦ He rules over all the universe, including kings and kingdoms, 3, 25, 32, 34–35.
- ♦ He is everlasting, 3; 34.
- ♦ He is sometimes called “Heaven” in the Bible, to emphasize his transcendence, 26.
- ♦ He has the power to make people crazy and also to restore them to mental clarity, 31–36.

His goodness

- ♦ He warns people before inflicting judgment upon them, 27.
- ♦ He reveals his will to his chosen messengers, like Daniel, 24–27.

- ♦ He abases all who are proud. *See Proverbs 3:34; 29:23; James 4:7, 10; and 1 Peter 5:5–6.*
- ♦ He restores those who are penitent, 36.
- ♦ He is true and just in all his ways, 37.

Spiritual Beings

Angels: Angels are servants of God who observe human activity and carry out God's will for mankind, 13

Mankind

Our fallen state: Even in our fallen state, we are capable of magnificent achievements, like the marvelous city of Babylon that was built under Nebuchadnezzar's direction, with its palaces, huge walls, and legendary "hanging gardens," 37.

Sin

Its substance: Pride is the root of all other sins, which include injustice and oppression of the weak and the poor, 27, 30.

Salvation

Its recipients: Salvation comes to those who humble themselves under the mighty hand of God and repent of their pride and rebellion against God, 34–35. *See 1 Peter 5:6.*

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Resolutely renounce all pride in our own accomplishments.
- ♦ Ask God to interpret our dreams for us, though we should be careful, since dream interpretation is a highly risky and uncertain endeavor.
- ♦ Honor and respect even pagan rulers, 19–20.
- ♦ Warn others against pride, lest they suffer a terrible judgment.
- ♦ Humble ourselves under his mighty hand, confessing and renouncing our sin and professing praise to him as the only God when God humiliates us for our

pride, perhaps through illness, failure, rejection, or some other painful experience.

- ♦ Do not fret when evil men and nations prosper, for they will inevitably fall under God's harsh judgment, as the history of all world empires and "great men" amply illustrates.

Daniel 5

Truth

Revelation

Its roots in history: Biblical revelation is rooted in history.

- ♦ The events of this chapter took place in 539 B.C., on the last day of the Babylonian empire, while the city was besieged by the Medes and Persians.
- ♦ Though some scholars doubt the historicity of Daniel, ample historical and archaeological evidence exists to validate the accuracy of the account, such as:
 - Belshazzar threw a huge drinking party the very night in which his city was taken.
 - The palace walls were covered with plaster.
 - The king's father, Nabonidus, still ruled, though from a different city, and so Belshazzar was "second" in the kingdom, and the interpreter of the writing on the wall would thus be "third."
 - The "queen" was most likely the queen mother, who was old enough to remember how Nebuchadnezzar had been driven mad and then restored.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is Most High God, 18.
- ♦ He rules sovereignly over men and nations, determining the rise and fall of kings and kingdoms, and holds the life of each individual in his hand, 18–19, 21, 23.
- ♦ He possesses complete knowledge of all that is and all that is to come, 12, 18–29.

His goodness

- ♦ He reveals his will to his chosen messengers, that they may relay the truth to others, 11–12.
- ♦ He casts down all those who are proud, and restores those who are penitent and humble themselves before him, 20–21.
- ♦ He protects his people amidst pagan nations, like Daniel, and even uses them as a warning and as a blessing to their neighbors, 18–29.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Complacency in the face of danger, 1
- ♦ Drunkenness and revelry, 1
- ♦ Blasphemy, idolatry, 3–4
- ♦ Arrogance, pride, and a hard heart towards God, 20
- ♦ Failure to learn from the lessons of history, 22

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Do not ignore clear and present danger, as Belshazzar did when he trusted that his city would be impregnable against all attackers.
- ♦ Do not indulge in drinking parties.
- ♦ Do not forget the experiences of our forefathers.
- ♦ Do not engage in blasphemy or idolatry.
- ♦ Seek out and heed the words God has revealed to his chosen messengers.
- ♦ Do not be lifted up with pride and arrogance.
- ♦ Honor kings and rulers, for God has given to them their authority.
- ♦ Pander to kings and rulers, for they are only servants of God.
- ♦ Do not seek worldly honors.
- ♦ Prepare for the fall of all empires, including the American empire, which could happen suddenly.

Daniel 6

Truth

Revelation

Its content: Biblical revelation contains some problem passages, like the mention of “Darius the Mede” in 5:30 and in chapter six. His identity remains a mystery, since secular records do not mention this name “Darius the Mede” may be another title for Cyrus, king of Persia, who conquered Babylon in 539 B.C.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is the “living God,” the only “God” who really lives, 20, though Darius may not have meant to ascribe this exclusively to Yahweh.
- ♦ He is able to save his servants from apparently impossible situations, since he rules over all of creation, including the wild animals, 20.
- ♦ He sends angels to execute his will, 21.
- ♦ He endures forever, 26.
- ♦ He rules over an eternal and indestructible kingdom, 26.
- ♦ He is able to rescue, to save, and to perform signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth, 27.

His goodness

- ♦ He invites and hears the prayers of his people, 10.
- ♦ He sometimes rescues his faithful servants, 16, 20, 22, 27.
- ♦ He punishes the enemies of his people, who are also therefore his enemies, sometimes with the very punishment they sought to inflict on others, 24.
- ♦ He often enables his people to prosper on this earth as they serve him faithfully, 28.

Christ

His prefiguration: Jesus Christ may be prefigured here in the person of the angel who was with Daniel in the lions’ den and who kept the lions from hurting Daniel, 21.

Mankind

Our fallen state

- ♦ Even in our fallen state, government is instituted among men for our good, and is sometimes administered by well-meaning rulers and officials, 16–20, 24.
- ♦ Government exists for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. *See 1 Peter 2:14.*

Sin

It includes: Sin includes envy, slander, malice, 13–14.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Serve God faithfully in whatever calling God has placed us, like Daniel.
- ♦ Obey rulers and those in authority.
- ♦ Seek to be innocent of all offense against just laws.
- ♦ Do not obey orders which require us to violate the clear commands of God. *See Acts 5:29.*
- ♦ Expect to face persecution for obeying God before all else.
- ♦ Trust God to take care of us when we encounter persecution and temptation, either by saving us from it or – as in the case of Stephen (Acts 7) by enabling us to be faithful unto death.

Daniel 7

Truth

Revelation

Its content: Biblical revelation contains passages of prophecy and visions which are filled with symbolism and thus often hard to understand. Interpreters differ, for example, about the identity of the four beasts, though most see them as predicting the rise of our empires: The lion = Babylon; bear = Medo-Persia; leopard= Alexander the Great and the four Hellenistic empires that followed him; and the last beast = the Roman Empire, which crushed all the others.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is eternal (“Ancient of Days”), 9.
- ♦ He is omnipotent and totally sovereign, (sitting on a throne), 9.
- ♦ He is a consuming fire, 9–10.
- ♦ He is the ruler of countless hosts of angelic beings, 10.
- ♦ He is a judge over all the earth, 10.
- ♦ He is able to subdue and destroy all mighty empires and enemies, 11–12, 26.
- ♦ He is possessor of all authority, and competent to give it to whom he will, 13–14, 26–27.
- ♦ He is glorious, 14.
- ♦ He is the Most High God, 18, 22, 25.

His goodness

- ♦ He is pure (garments as white as snow), 9.
- ♦ He is wise (white hair), 9.
- ♦ He is a holy (fire), 9.
- ♦ He is just and holy, in that he will punish all who rise up against him and who persecute his people, 25, 27.

Christ

His person

- ♦ Jesus called himself “Son of Man” many times, referring both to his full humanity and to his identity with the Son of Man of Daniel, 7.
- ♦ He is eternal, as is his kingdom, 27. *See also Matthew 24:30; 26:64; and Luke 1:33–34.*

His work

- ♦ He came “with the clouds of heaven,” indicating divine power and majesty, 13.
- ♦ To him was given dominion and glory and an everlasting kingdom over all the earth, 14, 17.

Mankind

Our fallen state: In our fallen state, we are bent upon exalting ourselves and using or even “consuming” others, both as individuals and as nations and empires. Though created in the image of God, we can be like beasts, ravenous and cruel.

The Church

Their identity

- ♦ First Israel, and then all believers in Christ, are the people of the Most High, 27.
- ♦ They are considered holy, consecrated to God and set apart for his use, and are thus called “saints,” 18, 27.
- ♦ They are united to Christ by faith, they receive his kingdom, 27, just as they also, like him, are persecuted, 25.

The Last Things

Christ’s return

- ♦ Throughout history, empires will rise and fall, conquering and “devouring” each other, until the end of time, when Christ will return, judging and destroying all his enemies, and all who persecute his people.
- ♦ He will establish his eternal kingdom on earth, and share the rule with his people, 14, 18, 22, 26–27. *See also Revelation 5:11; 19:14, 20; 20:12.*

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Do not fret or rejoice when empires rise and fall, for their times are totally in God's hands.
- ♦ Expect pagan empires to persecute God's people.
- ♦ Ask God for strength to persevere under trial.
- ♦ Trust in Christ alone as the Son of Man who will come to judge the entire earth, punish the wicked, and give eternal life and authority to those who have trusted and followed him.
- ♦ Set our hope fully on the grace and glory to be brought to us when Christ returns.

Daniel 8

Truth

Revelation

Its source and content

- ♦ Biblical revelation sometimes came in visions, as here in Daniel's vision. These needed interpretation in order to be understood; this interpretation sometimes came through the ministry of angels, 15–26.
- ♦ This vision predicts the overthrow of the Babylonians by the Medes and Persians, and then their destruction at the hands of Alexander the Great, who died young and was succeeded by four generals who became kings of four large areas. One of these, Antiochus Epiphanes (the "little horn" of 7:8, who ruled 175–164 B.C.), horribly persecuted the people of God, desecrating the temple and causing all true religion to cease, until he died of illness or suicide, 23–25.
- ♦ The prediction of 2,300 days, 14, precisely fits the duration of this time of pagan violation of the temple in 164 B.C.). Antiochus also points toward the Antichrist. *See Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:19; 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, 9–10; 1 John 2:18; Revelation 11:1–2; 12:6; 13:1–10; 13:5.*
- ♦ God, knowing the future, gave predictions through his prophets to his people, that they may know of his sovereignty over men and nations, be warned of coming trouble, and be strengthened in their afflictions by the knowledge that God is in control and working out all things to his glory.

God

His person and work

- ♦ The precise nature of these predictions shows that God knows all that will happen, and that he controls all the events of history, without in any way absolving humans of their responsibility. This is a mystery, impenetrable to human understanding.
- ♦ Because of our transgressions, 23, God allows his people to suffer terrible persecution at times, in order to purify us and to allow us to demonstrate our faith in him before the Gentiles. *See also 1 Peter 1:6–7; 2:9; 4:1–2, 12–19.*

Christ

His person: Many interpreters believe that the pre-existent Christ is foreshadowed in the “one having the appearance of a man,” 15, who commanded the angel Gabriel to interpret the vision to Daniel, 16. Since he is pre-incarnate, he has only “the appearance” of a man; yet, he has divine authority to command an angel to reveal truth to the prophet Daniel.

Mankind

Our fallen state: Human rage, greed, ambition, and cruelty manifest themselves in the recurring rise and fall of kingdoms and empires, ruled by men who aspire to control others and to gain almost god-like status.

The Last Things

Christ’s return: Throughout history, God’s people have had to endure harsh and sometimes deadly persecution. This will continue until the end times, when Christ will return and destroy all those who have harmed his followers. At the end, the Antichrist will arise and seem to have total mastery, but he will be destroyed. See references in “Revelation,” above.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ◆ Read the entire Bible in order to know the true meaning of history and of our own lives.
- ◆ Expect the rise and fall of nations and empires and the rule of evil men.
- ◆ Be comforted by the assurance that God knows and even rules over all events, and that he has set a limit to the time when his people will have to suffer.
- ◆ Expect Christians to be persecuted.
- ◆ Hold firm to our faith when we face persecution.
- ◆ Be confident that God will destroy all wicked tyrants, and that in the end he will also destroy the Antichrist.
- ◆ Grieve when we learn of the sufferings of other believers, like Daniel, and be heavy-hearted in the knowledge that worse is to come, even as we rejoice in the Lord always for his inevitable victory.

Daniel 9

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is cumulative and coherent, with later passages referring to and building upon earlier ones.

- ♦ In this chapter, Daniel refers to
 - The prophecy of Jeremiah, 2; *see Jeremiah 25:9–12; 27:6–8; 29:10; 2 Chronicles 36:21.*
 - The laws given through Moses, 5
 - Both oral and written prophets, 6
 - The curses given through Moses when he predicted the apostasy and subsequent punishment of Israel, 11; *see Leviticus 26:14; and Deuteronomy 28:15–68.*
 - The Exodus from Egypt, 15
- ♦ And his prayer is redolent with words, phrases, and concepts from the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Its interpretation

- ♦ Biblical prophecy contains some passages whose meaning is disputed among godly interpreters.
 - Concerning the “seventy “weeks” (literally “seventy sevens”) prophecy, most interpreters agree that “weeks” mean years, but they disagree about the proper understanding of when “the going forth of the command to restore Jerusalem” took place, and especially about the meaning of verses 25–27.
 - The most likely interpretation seems to be that these events took place during the time of Jesus’ birth, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, and outpouring of the Spirit upon his people, followed by the destruction of the temple by the Romans in 70 A.D.
 - The least likely interpretation would seem to be that of the Dispensationalists, who posit a “gap” of (now) more than two thousand years between the 69th week and the 70th week; such a reading would violate the normal rules for interpreting the Bible according to its plain and most natural sense.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is “lord” (Adonai), and “God” (Elohim), Maker and Master of the universe and of all history, 1.
- ♦ He is great and awesome, 4.
- ♦ He knows the future, because he has determined to carry out his will, 24–27.

His goodness

- ♦ He keeps his covenant promises, which flow from and guarantee his mercy towards his people, 4.
- ♦ He is holy and must carry out his threats to punish sin and wickedness, 5, 7–8, 11–13.
- ♦ He revealed his will for us in his laws, 5.
- ♦ He sent his servants the prophets to warn his people, 6.
- ♦ He is full of mercy and forgiveness, 9, 18.
- ♦ He is Yahweh, the covenant God, 10.
- ♦ He is righteous in all his works, including his works of judgment, 14.
- ♦ He is angry towards sin and rebellion, 16.
- ♦ He chose Israel as his people, 16.
- ♦ He hears the prayers of his penitent people, 17–20.
- ♦ He promised to send the Messiah to save his people from their sins and to judge the wicked, 24–27.

Christ

His person

- ♦ He is “the Lord,” along with God, and is thus equal with God the Father, 17.
- ♦ He is Messiah, the Anointed Savior sent by God, 26.
- ♦ He is the Prince, 25.
- ♦ He may also be the referent of the phrase, “the Most Holy,” 24, though this could also perhaps refer to the people of God, who were anointed with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

His work: His earthly career included events predicted in verses 14–17.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Rebellion, expressed by departing from God's precepts and judgments, 4–5, 9, and from his words of warning through the prophets, 6
- ♦ Unfaithfulness to God, 7
- ♦ Transgressing God's law, 11

Its consequences

- ♦ Shame and loss of face before God and man, 7–8
- ♦ Dreadful afflictions from God's hand, 11–14
- ♦ Receiving God's anger, 16
- ♦ Reproach by God and Gentiles, 16
- ♦ A sense of alienation from God and the need for forgiveness of sins, 18–19

Salvation

Its conveyance

- ♦ Salvation comes to us through the work of Christ, who came to “finish the transgression, make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness,” “confirm a [new] covenant with many,” all accomplished by his death and resurrection, 24, 27, and “bring an end to sacrifice and offering” prescribed by Moses' law, since he fulfilled all these in his death, 27. That is, he paid for all our sins, reconciled us to God, and brought us a status of unending righteousness before God by his atonement, inaugurating the New Covenant which abolished the sacrifices and offerings of the old covenant under Moses.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Pray to God with great earnestness, especially when we are particularly struck by our sin and the sins of God's people and by the consequences which we and they are suffering as a result of sin.
- ♦ Confess our sins without excuse to God when praying.

- ◆ Speak of God's righteousness, justice, and also his mercy and compassion, to which we should appeal when we ask for forgiveness and deliverance from sin.
- ◆ Thank God for fulfilling the prophecy to Daniel by sending Jesus Christ to die for us and to bring in the New Covenant, as well as by destroying the city of Jerusalem, thereby setting us free from the old order of sacrifices and offerings.
- ◆ Expect war and desolation, partly as the result of our sins, and partly as the result of the sins of others.

Daniel 10–11

Truth

Revelation

Its interpretation

- ♦ Biblical revelation contains passages hard to understand, with godly interpreters differing among themselves, and skeptical scholars doubting the veracity of the Bible as a result of the difficulty.
 - The first part of the vision recorded and interpreted by the angel here (10:1–11:35) includes amazingly precise predictions of the history of the Near East from 530 B.C. to around 168 B.C., during which the Persians, then the Greeks, and finally the Romans contested power. For this reason, skeptics, who don't believe in predictive prophecy, say the Daniel was written late in the second century B.C., while conservative scholars admire the accuracy of the prophetic vision.
 - The details of the second part of the vision (11:36–45) do not accord with the facts of history as known at the present time, so skeptics see this as a failed prophecy, while conservatives generally believe it applies to the end times, since “the time of the end” is specifically mentioned in 11:35 and again in 11:40, and because the actions of “the king who exalts himself,” 11:36, exceed what we know of kings since the awful Antiochus IV. Daniel 12:1–3 seems to describe eschatological events treated also in the New Testament. *See, for example, Matthew 24:21; Mark 13:19; and Revelation 16:18.*
 - For true understanding of the Scriptures and their meaning for us today, God's servants sometimes resorted to extraordinary measures, such as fasting and prayer, 10:2–3.

Its purpose: Biblical revelation is meant not only to convey information, but also to produce effects on God's people. Thus, Daniel was overwhelmed by the vision concerning the terrible sufferings which will come upon his people in the following centuries, 10:8, 15.

God

His greatness

- ♦ God knows the future, because he has determined what will happen, yet without removing responsibility from human actors; this is a mystery which no one can resolve. *See Romans 11:33–36.*
- ♦ He sets times and limits to the rule and power of kings and kingdoms, 11:29, 40.
- ♦ His plan is written in the “Scripture of Truth,” 10:21.

His goodness

- ♦ God reveals his will to his people through his prophets, so that we are not unaware of the real meaning of history or unprepared for the sufferings that will come upon us, 10:14; 11:30–35; 12:1. *See Matthew 24:21 and Mark 13:19.*
- ♦ He allows terrible suffering to fall upon his people, to “refine them, purify them, and make them white,” 11:33–35. *See also 1 Peter 1:6–7; 4:12–13.*

Spiritual Beings

Angels: There are heavenly, spiritual beings, both good and evil. The former, like Gabriel and Michael, serve God and protect his people; the latter, like “the prince of Persia” and “the prince of Greece,” motivate and manipulate humans to do the will of the devil, 10:13, 20–21.

Mankind

Our final state: Human history, which appears to consist largely of the rise and fall of rapacious tyrants and their tyrannical rule, is not circular, but linear, moving towards an “end” already planned by God, 11:35.

The Last Things

The last days

- ♦ Many interpreters believe that 11:36–12:1 prophesy a time when the Antichrist, of whom Antiochus IV was a type, will rise up, “exalting himself also above every god and blaspheming God,” 11:36, and ushering in a time of great tribulation and trial for God’s people, 12:1.

- ♦ Interpreters differ, however, about whether this person, earlier identified as “the little horn,” 7:8, 20, 24–25, and “the coming prince,” 9:26, will come just before Christ returns for the first and only time, or whether he will come at the end of the so-called Millennium, a literal period of 1,000 years during which Christ will (according to this interpretation) rule bodily from the city of Jerusalem.
- ♦ They differ also about whether the details of this prophecy are to be taken literally as referring to events taking place in Israel, 11:45, and then a battle at Mount Megiddo (see Revelation 16:13–16), or whether these words are meant to be taken less literally, to refer to a great battle at the end of time.
- ♦ Interpreters differ also about whether this prophecy refers only to people belonging to the physical nation of Israel, who will suffer terribly under this Antichrist, or whether believers in Christ also will be present.

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Thank God for assuring us that the events of history are already determined by him according to his wise and loving plan for his people.
- ♦ Expect wars to continue until the end of time.
- ♦ Expect God’s people to suffer terribly at the hands of wicked rulers and their followers.
- ♦ See these times of trouble as opportunities to be refined and purified by God.
- ♦ Seek to “know God,” and pray that in times of trouble we will “be strong, and carry out great exploits,” 11:32.
- ♦ Seek to “instruct many” about the truths of God, especially in the days of difficulty and danger.

Daniel 12

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness

- ♦ Michael the archangel, 1; *see Daniel 10:13, 21.*
- ♦ “Time of [unprecedented] trouble,” 1; *see Daniel 9:12; Isaiah 26:20; Jeremiah 30:7; Ezekiel 5:9; Matthew 24:21; and Mark 13:19.*
- ♦ Names written in the book [of life], 1; *see Exodus 32:32; Psalm 56:8; Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; and Revelation 3:5; 13:8.*
- ♦ Resurrection of the righteous, 2; *see Isaiah 26:19.*
- ♦ “Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the firmament . . .,” 3; *see Daniel 11:33, 35; Proverbs 3:35; Matthew 13:43.*
- ♦ “Those who turn many to righteousness,” 3; *see Proverbs 11:30; and James 5:19–20.*
- ♦ “Seal the book,” 4, 9; *see Isaiah 8:16; and Revelation 22:10.*
- ♦ “Many shall run to and fro,” 4; *see Amos 8:12.*
- ♦ “Many shall be purified . . .,” 10; *see Zechariah 13:9; and 1 Peter 1:7; 4:12.*
- ♦ “But the wicked shall do wickedly,” 10; *see Isaiah 32:6, 7; and Revelation 22:11.*

Its interpretation

- ♦ Biblical revelation contains some passages about the meaning of which godly interpreters differ.
 - Most interpreters take Daniel 11:36–12:3 to refer to the final days before Christ returns for the first and only time, but some believe it speaks of a period just before the beginning of a literal 1,000-day rule of Jesus from Jerusalem, when the Antichrist will launch a last, furious, and desperate attack upon the nation of Israel, Christians having previously been “raptured” by Christ upon his first and secret return (the first of three returns). They also posit a 1,000-year gap between the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the wicked in 12:2.
 - These latter interpreters seek to preserve a literal sense of 11:36–12:2, as well as of other passages in the Bible, like the 1,000 year reign of Christ and his saints mentioned in Revelation 20. Such an attempt would appear to

founder on several rocks, however, including the normal rules of interpretation in Daniel 12:2, as well as the impossibility of taking all parts of the Scriptures to which they refer literally.

- Daniel 12:4–9 would seem to caution against too great a confidence in the exact meaning of prophecies about the end times.
- At the very least, 12:4–9 shows that (1) even the prophets did not understand the full significance of all that they wrote; (2) God ensured that the revelation he gave would be “sealed,” that is, protected and preserved, until the end of time, so that his people might be instructed, strengthened, and encouraged during terrible times.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He commands armies of angels, who are wise, powerful, and beautiful, 12:1, 5–7.
- ♦ He determines the events of history, and the timing of them, 12:1, 7, 11.
- ♦ He lives forever, 12:7.
- ♦ He has power over all the events of history, power to raise people from the dead; authority and power to give everlasting life to his faithful people and to consign unrepentant wicked people to eternal shame, 12:2.

His goodness

- ♦ He sends help to his people when they are in extreme danger, as he will send his angel Michael to “stand up” for God’s people during the Great Tribulation to deliver his people, 12:1.
- ♦ He will give everlasting life in a resurrected body to his faithful servants, 12:2.
- ♦ He will punish the unrepentant wicked with everlasting shame and torment, 12:2.
- ♦ He will greatly honor those who are wise and who have turned “many to righteousness,” 12:3.
- ♦ He allows the power of his people to be completely shattered by their earthly persecutors for a limited period of time, 12:7.
- ♦ The reason for this trial is that, though he considers his people positionally “holy” even now, 12:7, he seeks their utter practical holiness, and will even use suffering to purify and refine them, 12:10.

- ♦ He has given his people revelation concerning the future, so that they may be strengthened and comforted, 12:6–10.
- ♦ He allows his people to “understand” what is going on when they endure terrible trials, 12:10.
- ♦ He will reward those who persevere to the end, 12:12.
- ♦ He gives rest at death for his faithful servants, as they wait for the final resurrection, 12:13.
- ♦ He will give an eternal inheritance to his faithful servants, 12:13.

The Last Things

The last days: The end times will be preceded by, and will include

- ♦ Great trouble, 1; Interpreters differ whether Christians will have to endure this “great tribulation.” The most likely view is that believers will, in every age, face trouble, and will also have to go through a terrible time of suffering before Christ returns.
- ♦ Final deliverance by God for those whose names are written in the Book of Life, 1; *see Romans 11:26.*
- ♦ The bodily resurrection of the dead, some to eternal life and others to eternal death in hell, 2. *See Matthew 25:46; John 5:28–29; and Revelation 20:12–15; 21:3–8; 22:1–5, 11, 14–15.*

Note: The Bible in some places refers to what is called “the intermediate state,” in which both the unrepentant wicked and those who are righteous by faith now “sleep,” or “rest,” awaiting the resurrection of the body, 2, 13. See Luke 16:19–31; 23:43, 46; Acts 7:55–60; 2 Corinthians 5:1–10; Philippians 1:23; and Revelation 6:9–11; 7:13–17.

- ♦ The details of the timing of the end remain hidden to us, 4–7.
- ♦ God’s people will “rise to [their] inheritance at the end of the days,” 13. *See 1 Peter 1:3–4; and Colossians 1:5, 12.*

Life

Ethical Imperatives

- ♦ Expect great trouble in this life, 1. *See John 16:33.*
- ♦ Trust God for final deliverance and eternal salvation, 1. *See John 10:28–29.*

- ♦ Be bold to preach the message of both heaven and hell, 2.
- ♦ Do all we can to turn others to righteousness by sharing the gospel and teaching the whole counsel of God, 3. *See Matthew 28:18–20.*
- ♦ Be careful about seeking to know or to predict the timing of the Lord's return, 4–7.