

TRUTH AND LIFE

Doctrinal and Ethical Notes on the Bible

G. Wright Doyle, MDiv, PhD

Part I

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Volume 6

THE MINOR PROPHETS

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DOCTRINAL AND ETHICAL NOTES ON THE BIBLE

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THE OLD TESTAMENT

VOLUME 6

THE MINOR PROPHETS

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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 Minor Prophets (April 2019)*.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION to <i>TRUTH AND LIFE</i>	i
HOSEA	1
JOEL	38
AMOS.....	43
OBADIAH (<i>currently unavailable</i>).....	63
JONAH	64
MICAH (<i>currently unavailable</i>)	70
NAHUM.....	71
HABAKKUK.....	76
ZEPHANIAH (<i>currently unavailable</i>)	82
HAGGAI (<i>currently unavailable</i>)	83
ZECHARIAH.....	84
MALACHI.....	117

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

HOSEA

Hosea 1

Truth

Revelation

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

- ♦ The massacre at Jezreel, 4–5; *see 2 Kings 10:11*.
- ♦ God's promise to Abraham that he would have many descendants, 10; *see Genesis 22:17*.
- ♦ God's promise to make those who were not his people into his people and his children, 9–10; *see Romans 9:26*. Thus, this passage points to the New Testament revelation that Gentiles who believe in Jesus will become God's people.

Its historical roots

- ♦ Hosea prophesied after the kingdom of Solomon had been divided into two parts early in the reign of his son Rehoboam. Hosea lived in the northern kingdom of Israel, also called Ephraim, but he also spoke about Judah, the southern kingdom, 6–7, 11.
- ♦ Hosea prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel, and the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah kings of Judah, 1.
- ♦ His ministry took place between 753 B.C. and 722 B.C., though it may not have been that long.
- ♦ During this period, the Assyrian empire was on the rise; it would soon threaten and then conquer, Israel.
- ♦ The worship of Baal was common in Israel; this worship included cult prostitution. The worship of Baal constituted unfaithfulness to the God of Israel, that is, spiritual adultery, which is the theme of this book, 2.
- ♦ Jezreel, which means, "God plants," or "God scatters," was the name of a town in Israel. *See 1 Samuel 29:1; 1 Kings 18:45; 2 Kings 10:1–14; and Hosea 2:22*.

Its content

- ♦ Biblical revelation is the very Word of God, communicated in words which God gave to his chosen messengers, 1–2.

- ♦ Prophetic revelation sometimes included prophetic actions as well as words from God, like Hosea's first marriage to Gomer and his recovery of her in chapter, 3:1–3. *See Isaiah 20:1–4; Ezekiel 4:1–5:17; Jeremiah 32:1–15; and John 20:22, where Jesus' breathing on the disciples was probably a similar prophetic action, pointing to the giving of the Spirit on Pentecost).*

God

His greatness

- ♦ He has authority over individuals and can command them, 2.
- ♦ He has authority to give names, that is, to determine a person's character and destiny, 4, 6, 8.
- ♦ He has the power to punish nations, 4.
- ♦ He has the power to save nations, 7.
- ♦ He is the living God, 10.

His goodness

- ♦ He revealed his word – his will and his ways – to his people through the prophets, 1–2,
- ♦ He sees himself as the husband of his people, 2. *See Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 31:32.*
- ♦ He punishes sin, especially idolatry, 4.
- ♦ He carries out his threats to punish sin, 6, 9
- ♦ He remains faithful to his covenant with David and the kingdom of Judah, 7.
- ♦ Even after punishing Israel, he remained faithful to his promise to Abraham to make his descendants as numerous as the sands on the seashore, 10.

Christ

His person

- ♦ Christ is foreshadowed in the name Hosea, which means, “salvation,” as do the names “Joshua” and “Jesus.”
- ♦ Christ is also foreshadowed by the marital life of the prophet, since Jesus is depicted in the New Testament as the bridegroom of his people. *See Matthew 22:1–14; John 3:29; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25, 27; and Revelation 21:9.*

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Harlotry and prostitution, 2
- ♦ Departing from the Lord by worshiping idols, 2
- ♦ Shedding innocent blood, 4; *see 2 Kings 9:7-10:28.*

The People of God

Their identity

- ♦ In the Old Testament, they are all those who are descended from Abraham, including the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel, 9-10.
- ♦ In the New Testament, they are those who believe in Jesus as Savior, regardless of their ethnic background, 10. *See Romans 9:26; and 1 Peter 2:9-10.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Forsake all sexual sin, that is, all sexual activity outside of marriage.
- ♦ Forsake all idolatry, that is, putting our love, allegiance, and trust upon anyone or anything but God.
- ♦ Fear the just judgment of God upon all turning away from him. For Christians, this will take the form of severe discipline, perhaps including illness and even death. *See 1 Corinthians 10:1-14; 11:30-32.*
- ♦ See God as your only true mate.
- ♦ Believe in God's unrelenting love and faithfulness to his people.

Hosea 2

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is the righteous and sovereign Judge, 1.
- ♦ He has power over our lives and over the created order, to bless or to blast, 3, 6, 9, 18, 21–22.

His goodness

- ♦ He restored the family relationship between himself and his people, 1.
Note: "My people" echoes Hosea 1:9.
- ♦ He joined himself to his people as husband, 2, 7, 16, though he had to repudiate her for a while because of her infidelity, 2–4.
- ♦ To bring his people back, he restricted her from her sinful ways, 6–7, and withheld former blessings, 9, caused her open shame, 10, and took away her merriment, 11,
- ♦ Even after her adulterous acts, he once more allures her with tender words, 14, and gives her prosperity, 16.
- ♦ He transforms his people to love and serve him alone, 16–17.
- ♦ He once more joined himself to Israel as his bride forever, 19.
- ♦ He is righteous and just, 19.
- ♦ He is faithful, 20.
- ♦ He allows his people to know him intimately, 20.
- ♦ He showed mercy to his erring people, 23.
- ♦ He causes them once again to become his people, 23 and he is their God, 23.

Christ

His person: As Bridegroom of the church, he is foreshadowed in the entire chapter, which speaks of God as husband to his people. *See Matthew 22:1–14; John 3:29; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25, 27; and Revelation 21:9.*

Sin

It includes

- ♦ All sexual relations outside of marriage, 2, 5, 7
- ♦ Spiritual adultery, that is, seeking other “gods” and sources of “life” than God, 5–7a, 13, 16–17
- ♦ Forgetting that all good things come from God, 8, 13

The Last Things

The new heaven and earth: When God establishes the new heaven and the new earth, harmony between and man and the creation, and harmony between God and his people, as well as harmony among men, will be restored, as in Eden, 18–23. *See Revelation 21:11–5.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Flee all forms of sexual immorality.
- ♦ Renounce all forms of idolatry, that is, the worship of, serving, loving, and trusting anyone or anything but God.
- ♦ Accept God’s discipline, however harsh, as his loving rebuke and a summons to return to him.
- ♦ See Jesus as your true “Husband,” the love of your life, the most intimate companion, the only one who can satisfy all our deepest needs, and worship him alone.
- ♦ Worship God for his marvelous, merciful, faithful, and unending love.
- ♦ Eagerly await the return of Christ and the establishment of the new heaven and the new earth, in which righteousness will dwell. *See 1 Peter 1:13; and 2 Peter 3:13.*

Hosea 3

Truth

Revelation

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

- ♦ The ephod, 4, recalls the garment worn by the Aaronic priests. *See Exodus 25:7; 28:4-31.*
- ♦ David their king, 5, refers to God's covenant promise to David and his descendants (*see 2 Samuel 7:8-16*), and to the rebellion led by Jeroboam against the Davidic kingship; *see 1 Kings 12.*
- ♦ "Playing the harlot" refers to any kind of idolatry, which was often connected with ritual prostitution, 3. *See Judges 2:17; 8:27; Revelation 17:1-18; 19:1-3.*

Its historical roots

- ♦ After being conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. and its population deported, the people of Israel indeed had "no king or prince, sacrifice or sacred pillar," or priests and their ritual paraphernalia, 4.
- ♦ Sacred pillars were used in the worship of Baal, 4.
- ♦ Teraphim (that is, household gods) were common features of pagan worship, 4. *See Judges 17:5; 18:14; 2 Kings 23:24; and Zechariah 10:2.*

Its content: Prophetic revelation sometimes included prophetic actions as well as words from God, like Hosea's first marriage to Gomer and his recovery of her in this chapter, 1-5. *See Isaiah 20:1-4; Ezekiel 4:1-5:17; Jeremiah 32:1-15; and John 20:22, where Jesus' breathing on the disciples was probably a similar prophetic action, pointing to the giving of the Spirit on Pentecost).*

God

His greatness

- ♦ He governs the affairs of men and nations, often using wicked kings and peoples to carry out his plan, 4.
- ♦ He is God - Elohim - the powerful Creator, 5.

His goodness

- ♦ He is Yahweh – Lord – the faithful covenant God of his people, 1, 5.
- ♦ He forgave, and once again “married,” his unfaithful people, 1. *See Psalm 32:1; and Romans 4:7–8; 5:6–11.*
- ♦ He expressed his holiness by requiring Hosea’s wife to be disciplined for a period of time, 3.
- ♦ He gave them transformed hearts to seek him and his anointed King and to fear him, 5.
- ♦ He is inherently and essentially good, 5.

Christ

His person and work

- ♦ He is the divine–human Husband of his people, 1. *See Matthew 22:1–14; John 3:29; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25, 27; and Revelation 21:9.*
- ♦ He purchased the church, his people, with his own blood, 2. *See Mark 10:45; Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18–19; and Revelation 5:9.*
- ♦ He is the descendant of David, the anointed King of Israel and of all the world, 5. *See Isaiah 9:7; 55:3; Jeremiah 23:5; Ezekiel 34:23–24; Matthew 1:1; 2:2; 22:42; 27:11; 37; Romans 1:3; and Revelation 19:16.*

The Last Things

The last days

- ♦ In the “latter days,” the people of Israel will “return to the LORD their God and David their king,” 5. That is, they will both forsake their idolatry and will acknowledge the house of David as their true monarchy. Some refer this to a one–thousand–year earthly kingdom; others believe it points to the new heaven and new earth.
- ♦ They will also fear God and his good character; this points to a transformation of the heart. Again, some apply this to an earthly millennial kingdom, and others to the new heaven and new earth. *See Romans 11:23.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Do not divorce and permanently forsake a spouse who has committed adultery, but imitate God, who remained faithful to his adulterous wife, though he had to discipline her for a time.
- ♦ Forsake all kinds of idolatry, physical as well as mental.
- ♦ Accept God's discipline for sin as a necessary consequence of his holiness and our need for purification from sin.
- ♦ Eagerly await the coming of our Lord Jesus to establish his perfect kingdom.
- ♦ Seek God and his King, Jesus our Savior.
- ♦ Fear God and his goodness.

Hosea 4

Truth

Revelation

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

- ♦ The Ten Commandments, 2; *see Exodus 20:1-17.*
- ♦ The concept of Israel as God's bride, and idolatry as spiritual adultery; *see Judges 2:17; and Revelation 17:1-8.*
- ♦ The one central sanctuary and the only legitimate priesthood instituted by God these laws were violated by Jeroboam I, 6-10, 15; *see Deuteronomy 12:8-14; and 1 Kings 12:26-30.*
- ♦ Pagan idolatry on the hills, or high places, 13; *see Jeremiah 3:6.*

Its literary forms: Biblical revelation employs various literary forms. This chapter, like 2:2-23, and those that follow are in the form of a judicial case brought by God against his people. *See Isaiah 3:13-15; and Micah 6:2.*

Its content: Biblical revelation, including the words of the prophets, is the very "word of the Lord," 1.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is the universal Judge and also Judge of his people, 1.
- ♦ As ruler of the created world, he uses natural disasters to punish sin, 3.

His goodness

- ♦ He warns and rebukes his people through his prophets, that they may repent, 1-19.
- ♦ He punishes sin out of regard to his holiness and the moral laws he has instituted among men, 1-19, in keeping with the covenant curses announced through Moses. *See Deuteronomy 28-32.*
- ♦ He allows people who sin to reap the consequences of their evildoing, 3, 6-7, 9-10, 14, 16, 19.
- ♦ In his faithful love, he still calls rebellious Israel, "my people," 6, 8, 12.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Lack of truth = faithfulness or mercy = steadfast love in human relationships, 1; these are attributes of God. *See Exodus 34:6.*
- ♦ Not “knowing” God, that is, not seeking to know him personally according to his word, and even rejecting his revelation, 1, 6; *see Hosea 2:8.* This is a key theme in Hosea. *See John 17:3.*
- ♦ Breaking any or all of the Ten Commandments, 1–2; *see Exodus 20:1–17: false oaths, lying, killing, stealing, committing adultery.*
- ♦ For priests and religious leaders, failure to remember, teach, and obey the revealed will of God, 6; *see Leviticus 10:11; and Malachi 2:6–7.*
- ♦ Eating sin offerings, 8 (one interpretation)
- ♦ General failure to obey God, 10
- ♦ All forms of sexual immorality, including cult prostitution, 11–15; *see Leviticus 19:29; 2 Kings 23:7; and Amos 2:7–8.*
- ♦ Drunkenness, 11
- ♦ Any form of divination or idolatry, 12–13, 17–18

Its consequences

- ♦ Sin enslaves the heart, the inner being, of those who give themselves to it, 11.
- ♦ Sin leads to shame, 19.
- ♦ Idolatry, whether literal or mental, leads to sexual immorality, 12–13

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Read and know the Ten Commandments and the New Testament exposition of these, so that we may be aware of the will of God.
- ♦ Ask God for power not to break his revealed commands, but to obey them. *See Romans 8:13.*
- ♦ Seek “life” from God alone, and renounce and forsake all forms of idolatry, including idols of the heart, such as romantic love, sex, pleasure, personal autonomy. *See 1 John 5:21.*

- ♦ Seek to know God in a deep and intimate way, through Jesus Christ. *See John 17:3; and Philippians 3:10.*
- ♦ Take loss and disaster as possible rebukes of God for sin, and return to him in repentance and trust.

Hosea 5

Truth

Revelation

Its purpose: Revelation is meant to lead people to know God, 4.

Its conveyance and recipients: God is sovereign over his self-revelation, giving it to whom he will, when he wills, and withdrawing it from those who spurn him, 6.

Its trustworthiness: God's revelation through his prophets is sure and trustworthy, 9.

Its historical roots: Biblical revelation is set within history. This passage refers to events that are narrated in 2 Kings 16–17.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is Judge of his people, 1.
- ♦ He knows everything, even the inner hearts and “spirit” of people, 3–4.
- ♦ He compares himself to a wasting moth or to rottenness, or a ravaging lion, to show his destructive power towards sinners, 14.

His goodness

- ♦ He rebukes his people so that they will return to him, 2, 4.
- ♦ He withdraws himself from those who have turned from him, 6, 15.
- ♦ He is a holy God who pours out his wrath on unrepentant sinners, 10.
- ♦ He desires for his people to seek him and to find him, 15.

Sin

Its progression: Sin follows a progression: Not knowing God, then turning to spiritual “harlotry,” that is, giving oneself to another “god,” then refusing to act in a “Godward” fashion, 4.

It includes

- ♦ Abusing political and religious authority, 1
- ♦ Revolt against authority, 2
- ♦ Harlotry of any kind, 3
- ♦ Not turning one's actions and thoughts toward God, 4

- ♦ Pride, 5
- ♦ All lawlessness, 5
- ♦ Seeking God with religious ritual but not from the heart, 6
- ♦ All forms of idolatry, 7
- ♦ Defrauding people of their property, 10
- ♦ Removing or despising decisions and commitments made by our forebears, 10;
see Deuteronomy 19:14; 27:17; and Job 24:2.

Its consequences

- ♦ Political instability and slaughter, 1–2
- ♦ Ritual defilement, 3
- ♦ Stumbling because of sin, 5
- ♦ Not being able to enjoy fellowship with God, 6
- ♦ Civil war, 8–15
- ♦ National and personal desolation, 9
- ♦ Oppression by others, 11
- ♦ Wasting away internally, 12
- ♦ Moral and perhaps physical sickness, 13
- ♦ Deportation and exile, personal and national, 14

Salvation

Its conveyance: Salvation comes only to those who acknowledge their offense and earnestly seek God, 15.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Political and religious leaders must fulfill their duties to their people.
- ♦ Seek earnestly to know God; forsake all mental and physical idols; direct your steps toward turning to God and obeying him.
- ♦ When being disciplined by God, acknowledge your sin and turn to him with a sincere heart.

Hosea 6:1–7:10

Truth

Revelation

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

- ♦ “He has torn, but He will heal,” 6:1; *see Hosea 7:1; Deuteronomy 32:39; and Hosea 5:14.*
- ♦ “After two days . . . on the third day he will raise us up,” 6:2, is thought by many to lie behind Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 15:4, but others disagree. Still, the connection between Jesus and his people, and the idea of being restored to life by God after having died for sin, seem to tie these passages together. *See also Jonah 1:17 and Jesus’ reference to Jonah as the type of his own resurrection, Matthew 12:40.*
- ♦ “He will come to us like the rain,” 6:3; *see Psalm 72:6: and Joel 2:23.*
- ♦ “I have hewn them by the prophets,” 6:5, refers to the ministry of most of God’s prophets to his people.
- ♦ “I desire mercy and not sacrifice,” 6:6; *see Matthew 9:13; 12:7.*
- ♦ God’s distaste for hypocritical worship, 6:6; *see Amos 5:21–24; and James 2:18.*
- ♦ Breaking God’s covenant, either at the place of Adam, right after Israel entered the Promised Land, 6:7, or “like Adam,” who broke faith with God by violating his commands; *see Genesis 3:17.* The covenant referred to here was the Mosaic covenant, found in the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy (*see 2:18; 8:1*), with its promises of blessing for obedience and warnings of curses for disobedience; *see Leviticus 26; and Deuteronomy 28–32.*
- ♦ Gilead and Shechem, illegal places for worship according to the Mosaic Covenant; *see Deuteronomy 12:5–7; 1 Kings 11:36; 14:21; and Zechariah 14:17.*

Its historical roots: Biblical revelation is set within history and culture.

- ♦ References to “Ephraim,” 7:1, 8, 11, reflect the remaining territory of Israel after the rest was deported by the Assyrians in 734 B.C.

- ♦ “All their kings have fallen,” 7:7, reflects the series of short-lived kings in Israel during the period of 753–722 B.C., when most were removed by assassination; *see 2 Kings 18:15–30*.
- ♦ Samaria, 7:1, was the capital of the northern kingdom for most of its history, and is a shorthand way of referring to Israel.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He has the power to hurt and to heal, 6:1.
- ♦ He has the power to raise people from the dead, 6:2.
- ♦ He has properties of light and life, 6:3.
- ♦ He knows everything, 7:2.

His goodness

- ♦ He is Yahweh, the faithful covenant God of his people, 6:1; 7:10.
- ♦ He kindly warned his people through the prophets, 6:5.
- ♦ He is merciful – full of covenant love, 6:6.
- ♦ He longs for people to know him intimately, 6:6.
- ♦ He made a covenant with his people, to which he remains faithful, 6:7.
- ♦ He detests all forms of sin, 6:7–7:7.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Fickleness – professing to repent and return to God, 6:4
- ♦ Hypocritical worship, 6:6
- ♦ Breaking covenants with men or God, 6:7
- ♦ Violence, 6:8, 9
- ♦ Robbery, 6:9; 7:1
- ♦ Lewdness, 6:9
- ♦ Sexual immorality, including harlotry, 6:10; 7:4
- ♦ Fraud, 7:1
- ♦ Not living before God; not living as if God knows all, 7:2
- ♦ Lying, 7:2
- ♦ Scoffing and mockery, 7:5

- ♦ Rebelling against authority, 7:7
- ♦ Not calling upon God in truth, 7:7
- ♦ Failure to recognize the chastening of God, 7:9
- ♦ Failure to return to God or to seek his face, 7:10

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ When convicted of sin, return to God in true repentance, trusting that he will forgive.
- ♦ Seek to know God above all. *See Philippians 3:10.*
- ♦ Worship God in spirit and in truth.
- ♦ Forsake all sins as they are defined by the Bible.

Hosea 7:11–8:14

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is cumulative, with later passages referring to earlier ones, and various passages interpreting and illuminating each other.

- ♦ The “calf of Samaria,” 8:5; *see Exodus 32:1–4; 1 Kings 12:28–29; and 2 Kings 23:15.*
- ♦ Strongholds, the most secure place in each city, 8:14; *see 1 Kings 16:18; 2 Kings 15:25; Psalm 48:3; and Isaiah 25:4.*

Its source: The words of Moses – and of all the Old Testament and New Testament – were “written” by God through his chosen messengers, 8:1. *See 2 Timothy 3:16; and 2 Peter 1:21.*

Its historical roots: Biblical revelation is set within history.

- ♦ Israel tried to play Egypt and Assyria off against each other in a vain attempt to remain independent, 11. *See Isaiah 30:2–7; 31:1–6; Jeremiah 2:17–19; and Lamentations 5:6.*
- ♦ Finally, Israel was exiled to Mesopotamia, here referred to as “Egypt,” 13. *See 2 Kings 17:23.*
- ♦ Israel had sought political stability by changing kings through assassination, 1–6. *See 2 Kings 15:10, 14, 25, 30.*

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is omnipresent and omnipotent, 7:12.
- ♦ He is Most High, 7:16.
- ♦ He is the Maker of his people and all the world, 8:14. *See Genesis 1–2.*

His goodness

- ♦ He chastens his people out of love and holiness, that they might repent, 7:12, 15.
- ♦ He redeemed his people from Egypt, 7:13. *See Exodus 1–19; and Micah 6:4.*

- ♦ He made a covenant with his people at Mt. Sinai, 8:1. *See Exodus 20 – Deuteronomy.*
- ♦ He gave them his law as a guide for living according to his holy will, 8:1, 12.
- ♦ He is good, requires that we love what is good, and gives good things to those who trust and obey him, 8:3.
- ♦ He burns with anger against all idolatry, 8:5.
- ♦ He shatters the idols which his people have made for themselves, to deliver them from folly, 8:6.
- ♦ He allows his people to reap the consequences for their sins; in other words, he upholds the moral law that he has ordained for this world, 8:7–8.
- ♦ He ordained a sacrificial system by which his people could approach him but would not allow them to pervert that order, 8:13.
- ♦ He remembers iniquity and punishes sin, 8:13–14.

Christ

His person

- ♦ He is prefigured as the God who chastises his erring people, 7:12, 15. *See Revelation 3:19.*
- ♦ He is prefigured as the one who redeemed his people from sin, 7:13. *See John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18–19; and Revelation 5:9.*

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Seeking help from man and governments rather than from God, 7:11
- ♦ Running away from God, 7:13
- ♦ Speaking false things about God, to ourselves or to others, 7:13
- ♦ Not calling out to God when in trouble and anguish, 7:14
- ♦ Rebelling against God by worshiping him in a way he has not ordained, 7:14–15; 8:11–14
- ♦ Making evil plans against God, 7:15
- ♦ Cursing, 7:16
- ♦ Breaking God's revealed laws, 8:1
- ♦ Claiming to know God while in fact rebelling against him, 8:2–3
- ♦ Rejecting what is good, 8:3

- ♦ Setting up political authorities without regard to God's will, 8:4; *see Deuteronomy 17:14–20.*
- ♦ Making idols, 8:4, 11–14; *see 1 Kings 12:28–30.*
- ♦ Making alliances with pagan powers rather than trusting in God, 8:10
- ♦ Forgetting God, 8:14
- ♦ Depending on military might, wealth, or anything else for security rather than on God, 8:14; *see Psalms 20:7; 49:6–7; 1 Timothy 6:7; and Revelation 18:19.*

Its consequences

- ♦ God's active chastisement, 7:11–12, 15
- ♦ Destruction, 8:13
- ♦ Political instability, 7:16
- ♦ Defeat at the hands of enemies, 8:3
- ♦ God's anger, 8:5
- ♦ The destruction of all in which he had placed our false hopes, 8:6
- ♦ Frustration and failure, 8:7
- ♦ Loss of national and personal freedom, symbolized by bondage in Egypt, 8:9, 13; *see Hosea 8:13; 11:5; and Deuteronomy 28:68.*
- ♦ Bondage to our idols, leading to increasing degradation, 8:11
- ♦ National and personal destruction, 8:14

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Do not run to anyone or anything for help, but trust in God alone.
- ♦ Do not imagine that God will accept hypocritical worship.
- ♦ Return to God in repentance when he disciplines you.
- ♦ Seek to order political life by the revealed will of God.
- ♦ Reject all forms of idolatry, material or mental.
- ♦ Read, re-read, meditate upon, trust, and obey God's written revelation in Scripture.
- ♦ Do not think that he will accept worship that is not according to his revealed will.
- ♦ Keep God in constant remembrance.

Hosea 9

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is cumulative, with later passages referring to earlier ones, and various passages interpreting and explaining each other.

- ♦ “Return to Egypt,” 9:3, refers to Israel’s earlier bondage in Egypt.
- ♦ “The Lord’s land,” 9:3; *see Leviticus 25:23*.
- ♦ “Bread of mourners,” 3, points to the coming exile in Assyria and eating food on the occasion of mourning, considered ritually defiled; *see Deuteronomy 26:12–15*.
- ♦ Offering sacrifices not pleasing to God, 9:4; *see Jeremiah 6:20*.
- ♦ “Days of punishment,” 9:7; *see Isaiah 10:3; Jeremiah 10:15; Micah 7:4; and Luke 21:22*.
- ♦ The prophet as watchman, 9:8; *see Ezekiel 3:17; 33:1–7*.
- ♦ “The days of Gibeah,” 9:9, refer to the horrible crime perpetrated by the men of Gibeah; *see Hosea 10:9; and Judges 19:22–25*.
- ♦ The sin at Baal Peor, 9:10, recalls Israel’s sexual sin and idolatry during the wilderness wanderings; *see Numbers 25:3–18*.
- ♦ Loss of children, 9:11–14, was threatened by God as a consequence of breaking the covenant; *see Deuteronomy 28:32, 41; 32:25*.
- ♦ Gilgal, 9:15, a place where Israelites committed idolatry; *see Hosea 4:15; 12:1; and Amos 4:4*.
- ♦ Living as wanderers in a foreign land, 9:17, was included as part of the curses on covenant breaking; *see Leviticus 26:33–44; and Deuteronomy 4:27; 28:36–37, 63–68*.

Its historical roots: Biblical revelation is set within history and culture.

- ♦ Ritual prostitution took place at threshing floors and winepresses, 9:1–2.
- ♦ “Memphis shall bury them,” 9:6: Memphis was noted for its tombs and pyramids where the dead were buried.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He has the power of nations, to punish and send them into exile at will.
- ♦ He remembers everything, 9:9–10.
- ♦ He exercises the authority to withdraw himself from his people if they turn from him, 9:12.

His goodness

- ♦ He joined himself to his people as their divine husband, 9:1.
- ♦ He gave the land of Canaan, to them, 9:3.
- ♦ He delivered Israel from Egypt, 9:3.
- ♦ He instituted a sacrificial system so they could enjoy fellowship with him, 9:4.
- ♦ He punished them for their sin, because of his holiness, 9:1–17.
- ♦ He repeatedly sent prophets to warn them of impending danger, 9:8.
- ♦ He found them when they were lost and greatly prospered them, 9:10, 13.
- ♦ He allowed them to worship him in his house, that is, the tabernacle, 9:15.
- ♦ He carried out all his threats to punish them for breaking the covenant, thus confirming his word and his character as a consistent, faithful, reliable, and just God, 9:7, and the whole chapter.

Christ

His person: He is prefigured as the husband of his people, 9:1. *See Matthew 22:1–14; John 3:29; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25, 27; and Revelation 21:9.*

Sin

It includes

- ♦ All forms of sexual immorality, including prostitution, 9:1
- ♦ Putting our allegiance and first devotion anywhere but on God, 9:1, 10
- ♦ Despising God's prophetic revelation and his messengers, 9:7–9

Its consequences

- ♦ Loss of joy, 9:1
- ♦ Material lack, 9:2
- ♦ Exile, 9:3
- ♦ Deprivation of the right to worship God, 9:4

- ♦ Exile and bondage to pagan peoples, 9:6
- ♦ Loss of all wealth, 9:6
- ♦ Increasing moral degradation, 9:10
- ♦ Loss of children, 9:12–14, 16
- ♦ God’s enmity, wrath, and expulsion from his presence, 9:15
- ♦ Exile and a refugee life, 9:17

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ See Christ as your true “husband,” the love of your life, and worship him above all else.
- ♦ Forsake all sorts of sexual immorality.
- ♦ Listen to God’s prophets – now written in the Bible – and heed their messages and warnings.
- ♦ Fear what God will do to those who persistently rebel against him.
- ♦ Ask him to show you what idols you cherish in your heart, and renounce them.
- ♦ Do not be surprised when God’s wrath comes upon formerly “Christian” nations, like those in Europe and now North America.
- ♦ Prepare for the loss of all things in a national disaster brought by God for national rebellion against his revelation in the Bible.
- ♦ Prepare for a life of exile and wandering.
- ♦ “Set your hope fully on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ “ (1 Peter 1:13).

Hosea 10

Truth

Revelation

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

- ♦ Israel likened to a vine that God planted, 1; *see Deuteronomy 32:32; Psalm 80:8–11; Isaiah 5:1; Jeremiah 2:21; and John 15:1.*
- ♦ The departure of “glory” from a place of worship because of its sin, 5; *see Hosea 9:11; 1 Samuel 4:21–22; and Ezekiel 10.*
- ♦ The idolatrous calf at Samaria, 5–6; *see Hosea 8:5–6; 12:11; 13:2; and 1 Kings 12:28–29.*
- ♦ People facing God’s judgment calling on the mountains and hill to fall upon them, 8; *see Luke 23:30; and Revelation 6:16.*
- ♦ The awful sin at Gibeah, in Benjamin, part of what became the northern kingdom, 9; *see Judges 19–20.*
- ♦ God’s chastening of his people, 10; *see Proverbs 3:11–12; Hebrews 12:3–11; and Revelation 3:19.*
- ♦ We reap what we sow, 12–13; *see Job 4:8; Proverbs 22:8; and Galatians 6:7–8.*

Its historical roots: Biblical revelation is set within history and culture.

- ♦ Kingship ceased in Israel after the Assyrians deported them in 722 B.C., 3, 7, 15.
- ♦ Their idols were also carried into captivity, 6.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He knows the heart and its conflicting motives, 2.
- ♦ He alone is to be feared, for he alone is King, 3.
- ♦ He determines the destinies of men and nations, assigning limited sovereignty to whom he chooses, 7, 9.
- ♦ He knows the future and can predict it through his prophets, 5–8, 14–15.

His goodness

- ♦ He kindly warned his people of the awful consequences for unrepentant sin, 1–5.
- ♦ He chastens them so that they might return to him, 10–11.
- ♦ He rewards righteous conduct, 12.
- ♦ He rules human affairs according to immutable moral laws, including the principle that actions have corresponding consequences, 12–13.

Christ

His person

- ♦ He is foreshadowed as the only True Vine, the true Israel who obeyed God, and the founder of a new Israel that would obey his commands, 1. *See John 15:1–10.*
- ♦ He is foreshadowed as the loving Lord who chastens his people, 10. *See Revelation 3:19.*
- ♦ He quoted Old Testament Scriptures often, 8. *See Luke 23:30.*

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Allowing prosperity to encourage idolatry, that is, a love of this world, 1
- ♦ A divided heart that is partly loyal to God and partly loyal to something or someone else, 2
- ♦ Not fearing God, 3
- ♦ False oaths, 4
- ♦ All idolatry and grief when our idols are taken from us, 5
- ♦ Sowing wickedness instead of righteousness, 13
- ♦ Trusting in military might, 13

Its consequences: It brings terrible consequences: *see the whole chapter.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Do not allow prosperity to turn your heart from God.
- ♦ Fear God above all.

- ♦ Speak the truth and keep all promises, as long as they don't violate God's revealed will.
- ♦ Stand in awe of the coming day of judgment.
- ♦ Accept God's chastening as a warning to turn to him in sincere repentance.
- ♦ Consistently "sow" to the Spirit, that is, do things that foster the growth of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

Hosea 11

Truth

Revelation

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

- ♦ Israel as the beloved son of God, 1; *see Exodus 4:22–23.*
- ♦ “Out of Egypt I have called my son,” 1; *see Matthew 2:15.*
- ♦ Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, 1; *see Exodus 5–15.*
- ♦ Bondage in Egypt, 5; *see Exodus 1–11.*
- ♦ Conquest by Assyria, 5; *see 2 Kings 17.*
- ♦ Admah and Zeboim, cities that were punished for their alliance with wicked Sodom and Gomorrah, 8; *see Genesis 14:8–9.*
- ♦ “I am God, and not man,” 9; *see Numbers 23:19.*
- ♦ The Holy One of Israel, 9; *see Psalm 22:3; 78:41; 99:5; and Isaiah 1:4; 5:19, 24; 6:3; 10:20; and often in Isaiah; see also Mark 1:24.*
- ♦ The holy God in the midst of his people, 9; *see Psalm 11:4; 15:1; 46:5; 48:1; and Zechariah 2:5, 10–11; 8:3, 8.*
- ♦ God roaring like a lion, 10; *see Isaiah 31:4; Joel 3:16; and Amos 1:2.*

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is Most High, 7.
- ♦ He is the transcendent God, different from all creatures, even mankind, 9.
- ♦ He roars like a fierce lion, 10.
- ♦ He commands the destiny of men and nations, 10–11.

His goodness

- ♦ He adopted Israel as his own beloved son, 1.
- ♦ He delivered Israel from Egypt, 1, 4.
- ♦ He taught him how to walk, that is, he showed them his laws, 3.
- ♦ He healed their diseases, 3.
- ♦ He drew them to himself with bands of love, 4.
- ♦ He condescended to feed them manna in the wilderness, 4.

- ♦ He punished them for their waywardness and backsliding, in keeping with his warnings for those who would break his covenant, 5–7.
- ♦ He continued to love Israel, despite their sins, 8.
- ♦ He is compassionate and gracious, 8. *See Exodus 34:6; and Psalm 103:8–10.*
- ♦ He is angry towards sin, as a righteous God must be, 9.
- ♦ He does not punish his people as their sins deserve, 9. *See Psalm 103:8–10.*
- ♦ He is God, the unchanging and faithful one, who cannot break his promises, 9. *See Numbers 23:19.*
- ♦ He promised to return wayward Israel to their home after years in exile, 11.

Christ

His person: He is the true human Son of God, the true Israel, 1. *See Matthew 2:15.*

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Idolatry, 2
- ♦ Not realizing that all our benefits come from God, 3
- ♦ Refusal to repent after many warnings, 5
- ♦ Following the way of our own mind and plans, 6; *see Ephesians 3.*
- ♦ Backsliding from God, that is, going away from him and into sin, 7
- ♦ Hypocritical prayer to God, 7
- ♦ Lying, especially about our devotion to God, 12

Salvation

It includes

- ♦ Adoption as sons of God, entitled to his inheritance, 1; *see Romans 8:14–17; Galatians 4:4–7; and Ephesians 1:5.*
- ♦ Instruction by God, 3
- ♦ Being drawn to God by his love, 4; *see John 6:37.*
- ♦ Deliverance from bondage to sin, 4; *see Romans 6:15–23.*
- ♦ Provision from God, 4
- ♦ God's constant, persevering grace, 8–9; *see Romans 8:29–30.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Thank God for sending Jesus to represent us as the only obedient Man, and incorporating us in him as sons.
- ♦ Attend to the instruction of God by his Word and Spirit.
- ♦ Recognize God's hand in all our earthly blessings.
- ♦ Thank God for his constant love.
- ♦ Return to him even if you have backslidden for a long time.
- ♦ Walk with God, trembling with love and awe, 10–12.

Hosea 12

Truth

Revelation

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

- ♦ Wind as a symbol of transitoriness and futility, 1; *see Hosea 8:7; Job 6:26; 8:2; Psalm 78:39; Ecclesiastes 1:14; 2:11; and Isaiah 26:18; 41:16; 15:2, 3.*
- ♦ Israel making a treaty with the Assyrians, while also seeking an alliance with Egypt, 1; *see 2 Kings 17:4.*
- ♦ The sinfulness of making alliances with pagan nations, 1; *see Hosea 8:9–10; Exodus 34:12; and Deuteronomy 17:16.*
- ♦ God bringing a legal charge against his people, 2; *see Hosea 4:1; and Micah 6:2.*
- ♦ God punishes according to our actions, 2; *see Psalm 62:12; Proverbs 24:12; and Romans 2:6.*
- ♦ Jacob's struggling for supremacy with Esau at birth, 3; *see Genesis 25:26.*
- ♦ Jacob wrestling with the Angel of the Lord, 3–4; *see Genesis 32:24–28.*
- ♦ Jacob encountered God at Bethel and heard God make promises, 4; *see Genesis 28:12–19; 35:9–15.*
- ♦ Yahweh is the memorial name of God, 6; *see Exodus 3:15.*
- ♦ Boasting in one's prosperity, 8; *see Hosea 13:6; Psalm 62:10; and Revelation 3:17.*
- ♦ Dwelling in tents by the command of God, 9; *see Leviticus 23:42.*
- ♦ God repeatedly warning his people through the words and signs of the prophets, 10; *see Hosea 6:5; Deuteronomy 4:5–6; 2 Kings 17:13; and Psalm 147:19–20.*
- ♦ The idolatry at Gilead and Gilgal, 11; *see Hosea 6:8; 9:15.*
- ♦ Jacob's flight from his brother to his relatives in Syria, 1; *see Genesis 28:5.*
- ♦ Jacob's working seven years for Rachel, 12; *see Genesis 29:20, 28.*
- ♦ God leading Israel out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses, the first and greatest of the Old Testament prophets, 13; *see Exodus 12:50; and Psalm 77:20.*

Its authority: Old Testament prophetic revelation was the very speaking of God to his people, 10, 13.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is the universal King and Judge, with authority to bring charges against his people, convict them of guilt, and punish their offenses, 3.
- ♦ He is LORD God of the heavenly armies, almighty in power, 5.
- ♦ He is the unique, the only true God, who will not tolerate the worship of any rivals, who are only idols, empty shadows, 11.
- ♦ He has the power to determine the destinies of men and nations – the entire chapter.

His goodness

- ♦ He is eminently fair, dealing with us according to our actions, 2, 14.
- ♦ He graciously allowed Jacob to wrestle with his Angel and to “prevail,” giving him the blessing for which he begged, 3–4.
- ♦ He appeared to Jacob at Bethel and renewed his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and all their descendants, 4.
- ♦ He made himself known to his people, including Jacob, as Yahweh, the faithful covenant God of his people, 5, 9.
- ♦ He patiently and lovingly pleads with his erring people to return to him and depend upon him alone, 6.
- ♦ He calls himself “your God,” though they had abandoned him for idols, 6, 9.
- ♦ He took Israel out of Egypt, 9, 13.
- ♦ He graciously revealed his will and his ways through his prophets, and constantly warned them of impending doom if they did not repent, 10.
- ♦ He will not allow his people’s worship of idols to bring lasting benefit to them, 11.
- ♦ He graciously dealt with Jacob throughout his life, 12.

Christ

His person

- He may be foreshadowed by the Angel of the Lord, the Man with whom Jacob wrestled, and whom he considered to be “God,” 4. *See Genesis 32:22–30.*

- He is foreshadowed by the prophet Moses, 13. *See Deuteronomy 18:15–19.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Do not rely on men, even kings, for security.
- ♦ Do not put your heart or hopes in riches and prosperity.
- ♦ Remember God’s gracious dealings with his people in the past, and turn back to him in repentance and faith.
- ♦ Read and re-read the history of Israel and the prophetic interpretation of it, to fear God, learn his ways, and return to him.
- ♦ Imitate Jacob’s faith by “struggling” with God in prayer until he blesses you.
- ♦ Demonstrate true repentance with lovingkindness and justice.
- ♦ Wait upon, that is, fully hope in, God at all times.

Hosea 13

Truth

Revelation

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

- ♦ Child sacrifice as part of pagan worship, 2; *see Isaiah 57:5.*
- ♦ Worshiping calves, 2; *see Exodus 32; and 1 Kings 12.*
- ♦ Israel's bondage in Egypt and God's deliverance of them, 4; *see Exodus 1–15.*
- ♦ Israel's wanderings in the wilderness after the Exodus, 5; *see the book of Numbers.*
- ♦ The spiritual danger of prosperity, 6; *see Hosea 10:1–2; and Deuteronomy 8:11–14; 32:13–15.*
- ♦ Israel's request to have a king like the other nations, 10–11; *see 1 Samuel 8:5–6.*
- ♦ God's gift of a human king to Israel, and his taking away of that king (Saul), 11; *see 1 Samuel 8:7; 10:17–24; 15:10–33.*
- ♦ Birth pangs as a symbol of great distress, 13; *see Isaiah 13:8.*
- ♦ Sheol as a place of punishment after death, 14; *see Psalm 49:14–15.*
- ♦ Wind as a symbol of God's wrath, 15; *see Isaiah 4:11–12; 40:6–8, 24.*

God

His greatness

- ♦ God demands exclusive allegiance, 4. *See Exodus 20:2–3.*
- ♦ He is mighty, like a lion or other ravenous wild beast, 7–. *See Hosea 5:14; 11:10; Isaiah 31:4; Lamentations 3:10; Joel 3:16; and Amos 1:2; 3:12.*
- ♦ He is King of the universe and of his people Israel, 10. *See Psalm 103:19.*

His goodness

- ♦ He is Yahweh, the faithful covenant God of his people, 4. *See Isaiah 43:11.*
- ♦ Yahweh has been their God since he delivered them from Egypt, 4. *See Hosea 12:9; and Exodus 20:2.*
- ♦ He is the only Savior of his people, 4. *See Isaiah 43:11; 45:21–22.*

- ♦ God cared for them when they wandered in the wilderness after the Exodus, 5. *See Deuteronomy 2:7; 10.*
- ♦ He promised to ransom and redeem them from death and the grave [of exile], as he had from Egypt, 14 . *See 1 Corinthians 15:54–55.*

Christ

His person

- ♦ He is the Savior of his people, and is therefore equal with God (contrary to what Jehovah’s Witnesses teach), 4. *See Titus 2:13.*
- ♦ He is the true King of his people, 10. *See Matthew 21:5; John 19:19; and Revelation 19:16.*
- ♦ He is the ransom for his people’s sins, bringing redemption from God’s wrath and from slavery to sin and Satan and death, 14. *See Isaiah 53:12; Galatians 1:4; and Titus 2:14.*

The Last Things

Christ’s return: When Christ returns, he will raise his people from the dead and give them life everlasting, 14. *See 1 Corinthians 15:54–55.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Trust in Christ as the only Savior.
- ♦ Worship God alone and not any created thing.
- ♦ Beware lest prosperity turn your heart from a complete allegiance to God.
- ♦ Submit to God alone as King and Sovereign of your life.
- ♦ Thank God for sending Jesus to redeem us from sin, death, Satan, and the wrath of God.
- ♦ Set your hope fully on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, when death and all sorrow will be abolished and forgotten forever.

Hosea 14

Truth

Revelation

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

- ♦ Return to the Lord, 1; *see Joel 2:13*. “Return” signifies repentance.
- ♦ “Take away iniquity,” that is, forgive, 2; *see Exodus 34:7; and Psalm 32:5*.
- ♦ “Pay with bulls the vows of our lips,” this is, probably peace offerings, 2; *see Exodus 24:5; and Numbers 7:88*.
- ♦ No longer trusting in foreign nations to save, 3; *see Hosea 7:11; 10:13; 13:3–4*.
- ♦ Sin as sickness, 4; *see Hosea 5:13–14; Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 9:12; and 1 Peter 2:24–25*.
- ♦ Sin as backsliding away from God and his laws, 4; *see Jeremiah 14:7*.
- ♦ The tall and mighty trees of Lebanon, 6; *see Psalm 104:16*.
- ♦ The olive tree as a symbol of strength and beauty, 6; *see Psalm 52:8*.
- ♦ Israel as a vine planted by God, 7; *see Hosea 2:14; Isaiah 5:1–2; and Romans 11:17–24*.

God

His greatness

- He alone is God, the Creator of the universe, 1.
- He has the power to change sinners and cause them to return to himself, 4–7.

His goodness

- He is Yahweh, the faithful covenant God of Israel, 1.
- He forgives the sins of his repentant people, even though he disciplines them harshly for sin, 2. *See Exodus 34:6–7; and Psalm 103:8–10*.
- He is a father to the fatherless, 3. *See Psalm 10:14; 68:5*.
- He heals our backsliding, that is, he turns us from our erring ways, 4.
- He loves us freely, 4. *See Ephesians 2:4*.
- He turns away his anger from us, 4. *See Psalm 103:9*.
- He will refresh his repentant people like the morning dew, 5.

- He will make them beautiful, enlarge them, grant them beauty and a fragrance for others, 5–7. *See 2 Corinthians 2:15.*
- He does what is right and just, 9.

Christ

His person

- ♦ He is the true Vine whom God has planted, and into whom he has joined us branches, to derive all life and sustenance from him, and to bear fruit to bless others. *See John 15:1–10.*
- ♦ He is the one through whose sacrifice all the blessings noted above come to us. *See Ephesians 1:3–13.*

Salvation

Its conveyance: Salvation comes to those who

- ♦ Humbly confess their sins to God, 2
- ♦ Ask for his forgiveness and grace, 2
- ♦ Praise him with thanksgiving, 2
- ♦ Renounce all idols, that is reliance upon and worship of anyone or anything but God, 3

Its substance: Salvation comes as

- ♦ Forgiveness and grace, 2
- ♦ Deliverance from idols, 2
- ♦ Knowledge of God as Father, 3; *see John 17:3.*
- ♦ Spiritual refreshment, growth, flourishing, 5–7
- ♦ Fruitfulness, that is, doing good works, from union with God, 8; *see John 15:5.*
- ♦ The power to walk in the laws of God, 9; *see Ephesians 2:10: 4:17–24; 5:2, 8, 15; and 1 John 2:6.*
- ♦ Increasing understanding of God’s ways and will, 9.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ When God convicts you of your sin, repent, return to him asking for forgiveness, and trust him to restore you to fellowship with himself.

- ♦ Renounce all idols of the heart, including reliance on wealth. *See Ephesians 5; 1 Timothy 6:17; and 1 John 5:21.*
- ♦ Seek life in all its forms from God alone.
- ♦ Consider God's ways as revealed in Scripture, so as to walk in his will and avoid the stumbling that comes from disobedience.

JOEL

Joel 1:1–2:17

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with later passages referring to and incorporating earlier ones.

- ♦ Joel quotes and refers to words, images, and concepts from Old Testament prophets, and he is quoted and referred to in the New Testament.
- ♦ For example, the Book of Revelation makes allusions to Joel. *See Revelation 9:7, 9; 18:8.*

Its content

- ♦ God revealed both coming judgment and coming blessing to his people through his prophets, like Joel.
- ♦ He revealed his wrath through plagues of locusts, drought, and famine.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is Almighty: As Creator, he rules over nations and the animate and inanimate order, bringing drought, plagues of locusts, and famine to judge disobedient nations and individuals, 1:1–2:11.
- ♦ He is holy: He judges people who sin and do not repent, 1:1–12, 15–20; 2:1–11.
- ♦ He is merciful, kind, and forgiving to those who sincerely repent, 2:13.

His goodness

- ♦ He chose Israel as his special possession, heritage, and people, 1:6–7, 14; 2:1, 13, 17.
- ♦ He established among them a sacrificial system including priests, a temple, offerings, and regular and special assemblies, and he chose to manifest his presence among them in Jerusalem, on Mt. Zion where Solomon built the great temple, 1:14, 16; 2:1, 15, 17.
- ♦ He threatened to punish his people for their sins, but he promised to forgive and restore them if they sincerely turned to him in sorrow and contrition, 2:13–14.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Drunkenness (or more broadly, a life of self-indulgence), 1:5
- ♦ Outward religiosity without inward heart-worship, 2:13

The Last Things

The final judgment: Judgments upon the nations in the Old Testament prefigure the great day of the Lord, which will come upon all the earth and bring universal destruction for workers of iniquity, 1:15; 2:2. *See Revelation 18:8.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ See national and personal disaster as the work of God, and ask whether we need to repent of sins.
- ♦ If so – and that is usually the case – come before God individually and corporately with fasting, weeping, confession of sin, and pleas for mercy.
- ♦ Announce to everyone around us that judgment is coming upon individual nations, perhaps especially the United States in the near future, as well as upon the whole world, perhaps in our lifetime.

Joel 2:18–3:21

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is a progressive and cumulative whole, becoming clearer as the centuries pass and God reveals more of his plans and purposes.

- ◆ Here, Joel's prophecy of universal judgment amidst cosmic disturbances is omitted by Peter at Pentecost, but reflected later in Revelation.

Its source

- ◆ It comes from God through his holy prophets and apostles.
- ◆ Here, it comes through Joel, who is later quoted by Peter at Pentecost, 2:28–29, 32. *See Acts 2:17–21.*

God

His Triune nature: He is Triune.

- ◆ This is shown by his outpouring of the Holy Spirit, his own Spirit, upon his people, 2:28.
- ◆ From the New Testament we learn that it is Jesus who, receiving the Spirit from the Father, bestows him upon believers. *See Acts 2:33.*

His greatness

- ◆ He answers prayer. For example, 1:19 is answered in 2:18ff.
- ◆ He rules all of the created order. Thus, he can send wind, rain, crops, and new animals, and he can also produce vast changes in the heavens, 2:23–24, 30–31.
- ◆ He is jealous for his chosen people and will therefore restore them and terribly punish those who have afflicted them, 2:18–19; 3:1–16.

His goodness: He is merciful and gracious, abounding in steadfast love to repentant sinners, 2:18–32; 3:17–18, 20–21.

Salvation

Its substance

- ◆ It includes a reversal of judgment
 - Abundance replacing famine and drought, 2:19, 24, 26
 - Honor replacing reproach, 2:19
 - Joy replacing sorrow, 2:21, 23
 - Praise replacing complaint and questioning, 2:26
 - The presence of God rather than his distance, 2:27
- ◆ It also includes the gift of the Holy Spirit, enabling people of all sorts to speak God's words, 2:28–29.

Its source and conveyance: It comes from God's sovereign choice and only to a few – those who repent and call upon his name, now revealed as Jesus, 2:32. *See Acts 2:21–22, 38 and Romans 10:13.*

The Last Things

The last days

- ◆ We now live in the “last days,” when the Spirit is given to all who repent and trust in Christ, 2:28–29.
- ◆ There will be a last “day,” when God comes to judge the world, punishing the wicked with everlasting destruction and giving his people an everlasting dwelling with him on a renewed earth, 2:30–32; 3:14–21.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Submit now to God's righteous discipline, knowing that in his time he will restore to us “the years that the locusts have eaten,” partially in this life and fully and eternally after Christ returns, 2:25.
- ◆ Thank God for giving the Holy Spirit to all true believers.
- ◆ Call on God to enable us to praise him and speak his word by the power of the Spirit, as well as to have joy and gladness in him.
- ◆ Do not fret because of evildoers, for they shall soon be destroyed.
- ◆ Rather, prepare ourselves for the coming of the Lord.

AMOS

Amos 1–2

Truth

Revelation

Its origin and nature

- ♦ Biblical revelation comes of words written by special messengers of God, like the prophet Amos, 1.
- ♦ Bible revelation is the Word of God in the words given to and through his messengers, 1:1, 3–5, 6–8, 9, 11, 13, 15; 2:1, 3, 4, 6, 11, 16.
- ♦ Biblical revelation is personal, in that it came from a person, God, to persons, his messengers and, through them, the people, 2, etc.

Its historical setting: Biblical revelation came at particular times to particular men in particular places, 1; and it spoke to particular situations, as indicated in the different charges against the nations in these two chapters.

Its recipients: Biblical revelation came first to God’s chosen messengers, 1:1; then to his people 2:4, 6; then to all peoples (here, unusually though not uniquely, addressed before the messages to God’s people), 1:3–2:3.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is powerful, like a lion, 2.
- ♦ He is fearsome, like a lion, 2.
- ♦ He has authority over all the nations, 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6, 9, 10.
- ♦ He has the power to inflict punishment on nations of the world, often described as “fire,” 1:4, 7, 12, 14; 2:2, 5.

His goodness

- ♦ He graciously revealed himself to people through his prophets, warning people of the wrath to come, 1:1–2:16.
- ♦ He is holy and righteous, and therefore wrathful against sin, which he must punish, 1:3–2:16.
- ♦ He graciously revealed his will and his ways –“law,” or teaching – to his people, 1:4.

- ♦ He cares for the rights of the poor, righteous, and powerless, 1:6, 7.
- ♦ He gave the land of Canaan to his people, whom he allowed to drive out the pagan and very wicked inhabitants, 1:9–10.
- ♦ He brought his people out of captivity in Egypt, 1:10. *See Exodus 12–15.*
- ♦ He led his people in the wilderness and provided for them, 1:10. *See Exodus – Deuteronomy.*
- ♦ He raised up prophets from among the people, as well as Nazirites, 1:11. *See Numbers 12:6; 6:2–3.*
- ♦ He graciously warned people of his coming wrath, that they might return to him and avoid punishment.

Christ

His person: He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who may be prefigured here in the image of the lion roaring, 1:2. *See Genesis 49:9–10; and Revelation 5:5.*

Man

Our current state

- ♦ Though we are fallen, we are able to receive, understand, and transmit God’s Word to others, 1:1, 3, and often in these two chapters.
- ♦ Because of our reception of God’s general and special revelation, we are accountable to God for our response, as throughout these chapters.
- ♦ Moral actions have consequences, as these chapters illustrate.
- ♦ Human society is organized, with some placed in leadership at the top, who are especially accountable for their actions and those of their people, 1:4–5, 7–8, and often.
- ♦ Levels and functions of authority in society under the supreme ruler are essential for social cohesion and order; thus, the presence of judges and princes, 1:15; 2:3, 11.
- ♦ People are also organized into cities and nations, both large and small, 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13, 2:1, 4, 6.
- ♦ In biblical times, and in some places even today, there is a kinship relationship between peoples, though it might be distant, which leads to the use of the word “brothers,” 1:9, 11.

- ♦ The actions of a nation's leaders and a substantial number of its people will bring harsh judgment upon the entire population, as these chapters describe.
- ♦ Within each society, some people are stronger, faster, more courageous than others, 1:14–16.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Cruel treatment of enemies, 1:3
- ♦ Taking entire peoples captive, 1:6, 9
- ♦ Not remembering covenants or kinship ties, 1:9, 11
- ♦ Pitiless pursuit of enemies, 1:11
- ♦ Relentless rage and resentment, 1:11
- ♦ Terrible treatment of women and the unborn, 1:13
- ♦ Indulging a lust for territorial expansion, 1:13 (like Russia's Putin)
- ♦ Desecration of the bodies of the dead, 2:1
- ♦ Despising God's written revelation by not keeping his commandments, 2:4
- ♦ Lying, or believing in and acting upon lies, 2:4
- ♦ Imitating our forebears' folly and false ideas, 2:4
- ♦ Oppressing the righteous, 2:6
- ♦ Oppressing the poor, 2:6–7, 8
- ♦ Father and son having sex with the same girl; incest, 2:7
- ♦ Participation in idolatry, including sexual rites of idol worship, 2:8
- ♦ Tempting people to break their vows to God, 2:12
- ♦ Tempting people to violate their conscience, 2:12. *See Romans 12:15–23.*
- ♦ Silencing God's messengers, 12. *See 1 Thessalonians 5:20.*

Its consequences

- ♦ Fiery destruction from God, usually through human enemies, 1:4–5, 7–8, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 9
- ♦ Destruction of leaders, 2:2–3, 5
- ♦ Depopulation and exile, 1:8, 15
- ♦ Fatal loss of all power to protect oneself, 2:14–16
- ♦ Utter shame and destitution, 2:16

Salvation

New Testament salvation is pictured by

- ♦ Possession of the Promised Land, 2:9; this now refers to the blessings of the New Covenant, including the Holy Spirit and power to overcome sin and Satan, and the promise of life in a new heaven and new earth. *See Romans 4:13; and Revelation 21:1–22:5.*
- ♦ Deliverance from bondage, 2:10; this refers now to deliverance from bondage to sin, Satan, and death. *See Romans 5:9–10; 6:3–14.*

The People of God

Their identity: In the Old Testament

- ♦ The people of God were the children of Israel, 2:4–6, 10.
- ♦ They were marked by their history of deliverance from Egypt and possession of the Promised Land, as well as by the activity of oral prophets and God’s written revelation, 2:11.
- ♦ They were also marked by persistent disobedience to God’s written revelation and actions of idolatry and oppression of others, 2:4–12.

The Last Things

Christ’s return: When Christ returns, he will

- ♦ Destroy all the unrepentant wicked, including pagans and nominal Christians, 1:4–5, 7–8, 10, 12, 14–15; 2:5, 14–16.

Note: A major part of this destruction will consist of a consuming fire, as prefigured in 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:5. See Matthew 3:11; 9:44; Luke 12:49; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Jude 7; Revelation 20:14; and 2 Peter 3:10.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Hear and heed the awful warnings given to us in Scripture that evil actions will bring harsh discipline and even eternal death for those who don’t repent.
- ♦ Thank God for warning us.
- ♦ Avoid all the sins named in these two chapters.
- ♦ Pray for our national and regional leaders. *See 1 Timothy 2:1–2.*

- ♦ Remember constantly how God has saved us. *See Ephesians 2:11–22; and Titus 3:3–7.*
- ♦ Read the Old Testament regularly to see how God dealt with his people in the past and to understand New Testament concepts, such as God's fiery wrath.
- ♦ Have our minds renewed by God's Word, teaching us how to avoid the futile ways that we have inherited from our forefathers and our culture, 2:4. *See 1 Peter 1:18.*
- ♦ Prepare our hearts and lives for the time when we will meet Christ as judge, either when we die or when he returns. *See 2 Corinthians 5:10; and 2 Peter 3:10–13.*

Amos 3–4

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Later passages refer to and build upon earlier ones.

- ♦ “Which I brought up from the land of Egypt,” 3:1; *see Exodus 12–15*.
- ♦ “The LORD God has spoken; who can but prophesy?” 3:8; *see Acts 4:20*.
- ♦ “The altars of Bethel,” 3:14; 4:4; *see 1 Kings 12:25–13:34* (“Bethel was one of two religious sites, along with Dan, established by Jeroboam”); both had a golden calf; *see 1 Kings 15:34; 16:2, 19, 26; 2 Kings 17:21; 23:15*. “The prophet Hosea mocked Bethel (which means “house of God:”) by calling it Beth Aven (“house of iniquity”) in Hosea 4:15; 5:8; 10:5” (ZNIVSB).
- ♦ Houses and mansions, 15; *see Amos 3:9; 4:1; 6:3–6*.
- ♦ “Horns of the altar,” 3:14; *see 1 Kings 1:50; 2:28*.
- ♦ “Cows of Bashan,” 4:1. “Bashan was . . . famous for its pastures and cattle (Deuteronomy 32:14; Psalm 22:12; Jeremiah 50:19; and Ezekiel 39:18).” (ZNIVSB)
- ♦ Gilgal, 4:1; *see Joshua 4–5; 10*.
- ♦ Sacrifice of thanksgiving . . . freewill offerings,” 4:5; *see Leviticus 3; 7:11–21; 27:30–33*.

Note: “These ceremonies . . . express gratitude to God but do not include sacrifices for sin” (ZNIVSB).

- ♦ “A plague after the manner of Egypt,” 4:10; *see Exodus 7:14–10:29; 12:29–30*.
- ♦ Sodom and Gomorrah, 4:11; *see Genesis 18:16–19:2; 9; Deuteronomy 32:32; Isaiah 1:9–10; Jeremiah 23:14; Matthew 10:15; Mark 6:11; Romans 9:29; 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 1:4–7*.

Note: Some deny the historicity of the destruction by God of these cities, but Jesus’s statement about them shows that the biblical account is true and accurate.

Its origin and inspiration

- ♦ Biblical revelation is the word of God, in the words of God, spoken to and then through his chosen messengers, 3:1, 8, 10, 12; 4:1, 3, 5–6, 8–11.

Note: That is why we believe in the verbal, plenary (that is, total), inspiration of Scripture.

- ♦ Biblical revelation came in statements – propositions – expressed through different grammatical forms, such as declaratory sentences, imperatives, and questions.
- ♦ Biblical revelation is the unveiling of God’s formerly hidden mind to the prophets, his chosen messengers in the Old Testament, 3:7; 4:13.

Note: Biblical revelation came entirely as an act of God’s initiative; it was not the result of human reasoning or speculation, 3:7.

Its historical setting and nature: Biblical revelation is set within human history, refers to historical events, and makes historical statements, 3:1; 4:7–9, 11.

Its literary nature: Biblical revelation includes many literary features, such as several lists of five and seven, 3:3–6. *See Amos 4:4–11, 13; five visions in 7–9; seven items in 2:14–16. Amos 4:13 gives a fivefold description of God.*

God

His greatness

- ♦ He has the power to deliver his people from bondage in the world’s most powerful country at the time, 3:1.
- ♦ He has the authority and power to inflict calamity upon a city (or nation), 3:6, 11, and the other predictions of calamity in these chapters, including 4:6–11.
- ♦ He is powerful and fearsome like a mighty lion, 3:8.
- ♦ He knows and governs the future and can thus reveal it to his prophets, 3:11–12, and the other prophetic passages in Amos.
- ♦ He is God, the Creator, 3:7–8, 11, 13, 4:2, 5, 11–13.
- ♦ He is the mighty Lord of the heavenly armies, 3:13.
- ♦ As Creator, he has power over day and night, 4:13.
- ♦ He is transcendent, exalted, “treading the high places of the earth,” 4:13.

His goodness

- ♦ He is Yahweh, the covenant-keeping God of his people Israel, 3:1, 6, 8, 10, 13–15; 4:2–3, 5–6, 8–13.
- ♦ He delivered his people from Egypt, 3:1.

- ♦ He graciously chose Israel to be his people and he their God, 3:2, 13; 4:5, 12.
- ♦ He kindly reveals his intentions to his prophets, 3:7; 4:13.
- ♦ He cares about justice and the rights of the powerless, 3:8–9; 4:1.
- ♦ He is holy, utterly separated from sin, 4:2.
- ♦ He uses disasters to prompt his people to turn to him, 4:6, 8–11.

Christ

His person

- ♦ He is the “Lion of the tribe of Judah,” 3:4, 8, who may be prefigured here in the image of the lion roaring. *See Genesis 49:9–10; and Revelation 5:5.*
- ♦ He is the one “through whom the LORD God has spoken” in these last days, 3:8. *See Hebrews 1:1–2.*
- ♦ He is “the LORD God of hosts,” who leads the heavenly armies, 3:13; 4:13. *See Revelation 19:11–16.*

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Oppression of the weak and powerless, 3:9; 4:1
- ♦ Not “knowing” to do right; that is, choosing not to “know” or follow God’s revealed will, 3:10
- ♦ Idolatry, including worshiping God in ways he has not ordained, as Israel did at their new altars, 3:14; 4:4
- ♦ Luxurious living, especially luxurious houses and multiple dwellings, 3:15
- ♦ Drunkenness and abuse of drugs, 4:1
- ♦ Enticing others to sin, 4:1
- ♦ Worshiping God without repentance and a focus on God’s forgiveness of sins in Christ, 4:4–5

Note: Many churches today have exuberant “worship” services, but without any serious attention to our sins and the sacrifice of Christ.

- ♦ Not heeding God’s discipline; not repenting when he disciplines us, 4:6, 8, 10; *see Hebrews 12:3–11.*
- ♦ In worship and teaching, failing to teach people to listen for God’s voice of correction in their troubles so that they might repent

The Last Things

Christ's return: When Christ returns, he will judge the nations and mete out harsh punishment to those who have not repented, believed in him, and followed his commands. *See Matthew 25:31-46; and Revelation 2:26-27; 19:11-16.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Include confession of sin, not just praise songs, in our worship services.
- ♦ Focus our preaching on the salvation brought to us through the sacrifice of Christ for our sins.
- ♦ Read the Old Testament regularly, to know God in all aspects of his character.
- ♦ Avoid the sins catalogued by Amos in chapters 1-4.
- ♦ Prepare to meet our God when Christ returns in his glory, 4:12. *See Matthew 25:1-30; 26:64; and Revelation 2:16; 3:3.*

Amos 5–6

Truth

Revelation

Its nature

- ♦ Biblical revelation is the Word of God in words chosen, spoken, and revealed by God to his messengers, 5:1, 3–4, 16; and often.

Note: This means that (1) Scripture is not just, as some theologians say, a “witness” to the Word, but the Word itself; and (2) Scripture is verbally inspired in all its parts. See 2 Timothy 3:16.

Its content

- ♦ Laments, 5:1–3; *see the book of Lamentations.*
- ♦ Direct address by God to his people, including direct appeals, prophecies, rebukes, and commands, 5:4–5, 12, 16–17, 27; 6:8, 14.
- ♦ Woes, 5:18–20; 6:1–7

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is God, Elohim, the Creator and Governor of the entire universe, including the stars, 5:3, 14, 16; 6:8.
- ♦ He is Lord, Adonai, indicating his rule and sovereignty over his people and the world, 5:3, 16; 6:8.
- ♦ He knows and governs the future, so he can make predictions of coming events through his prophets, 5:3, 16–20; 6:9–1, 14, 27.
- ♦ He has power over nations and thus can use one nation to afflict another, 5:6, 27; 6:2, 7, 14.
- ♦ He is Lord God of hosts, the Commander of the heavenly armies, 5:14–16, 27; 6:14.
- ♦ He is omniscient, knowing all that people do and think, even in “secret,” 5:12; 6:2, 3–6, 8, 13.
- ♦ He is unique, demanding exclusive worship, 5:5, 21–26
- ♦ He is omnipresent and can be with his people at any time or place, 5:14.

His goodness

- ♦ He is LORD – Yahweh – the covenant God of Israel, 5:4, 8, 14, 16–18, 20, 27; 6:8, 10, 14.

Note: “LORD” is the translation of Kurios, the word used to translate the personal name “Yahweh” in the pre-Christian Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint; this usage was continued in the Greek New Testament.

- ♦ He chose the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), and Joseph (the northern tribes) to be his special people, 5:1, 4, 6, 15.
- ♦ He is gracious, pleading with his people to return to him and live, 5:4, 6, 14.
- ♦ He is holy and righteous, and thus sends both punitive and corrective calamities to his people to get them to return to him, 5:6, 9, 11, 16–17; 6:7, 9–11, 14.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Seeking God in the wrong places; idolatry of any kind, 5:5, 26–27; 6:13; *see Isaiah 1:11–20; 58:1–14; Jeremiah 7; Ezekiel 8; Micah 6:1–8; Zechariah 7; Malachi 1–3.*
- ♦ Perverting justice, 5:7, 12; 6:12
- ♦ Despising godly rebuke and even hating the one giving righteous counsel, 10
- ♦ Oppressing the poor financially, 5:11
- ♦ Building expensive houses with ill-gotten gain, 5:11; 6:8
- ♦ Afflicting the just, 5:12
- ♦ Taking or giving bribes, 5:12
- ♦ Offering worship to God while engaging in rank disobedience, 5:21–24
- ♦ Spiritual complacency in the midst of self-indulgence and sin, 6:1
- ♦ Pride in a nation’s defenses, 6:8; where “palaces” might mean ‘fortresses’
- ♦ Failure to learn from the punishments that God has inflicted on other sinners, 6:2
- ♦ Ignoring warnings of coming doom from God, 6:3
- ♦ Violent treatment of others, 6:3
- ♦ Luxurious living at the expense of the poor, 6:4
- ♦ Immersing oneself in frivolous entertainment during a time of national emergency (or suffering of many fellow citizens), 6:6
- ♦ Pride, either individual or national, 6:8

Its consequences

- ♦ Irrevocable falling into an utterly forsaken condition, 5:2
- ♦ The fiery, consuming discipline/judgment of God, often through other people or nations, 5:6; 6:14
- ♦ Ruin from God upon even the strong and apparently secure, 5:9
- ♦ Widespread death and destruction from the Lord, 5:16–17; darkness, danger, 5:18–20; 6:7, 9
- ♦ Inconsolable sorrow and grief, 5:16–17
- ♦ National exile and captivity, 5:27; 6:7–8
- ♦ Destruction of houses both great and small, 6:11

Salvation

Its origin and nature

- ♦ “Life,” either physical or spiritual, 5:14
- ♦ God’s gracious presence, 5:14
- ♦ Salvation of any kind comes only from God’s grace and mercy, 5:15.

Its recipients: The recipients of salvation include the very small minority of professing people of God who truly repent and turn from their evil deeds to God, 5:15. *See Amos 6:9–10; 8:3; 9:8.*

The Last Things

God’s judgment: All the judgments predicted or described in these chapters point toward the terrible final judgment of God upon the whole world. *See Romans 2:5–11, 16; and 1 Thessalonians 1:7–10.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Read the Old Testament regularly, including the prophets, to see what happens when people either obey or disobey God, and to gain a full understanding of God’s character and his ways with men.
- ♦ Hear God’s Word through daily reading, listening to it, and participating in common Bible studies and worship, 5:1.
- ♦ Have a healthy fear of the righteous wrath of God, as described in the prophets.

- ♦ Seek God so that we might live, 5:4. *see Isaiah 55:6; Hosea 10:12; John 3:16; and Colossians 3:1.*
- ♦ Avoid all the sins listed above, asking God for strength to do so.
- ♦ Hate evil and love what is good, 5:15. *See Romans 12:9; and 1 Peter 3:11.*
- ♦ Eagerly and humbly wait for the coming Day of the Lord Jesus. *See Romans 2:16; 1 Corinthians 1:8; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Peter 3:10; and Jude 6.*
- ♦ Actively pursue the execution of public justice in any way we can; this is true especially for those in authority, 5:15. *See Matthew 23:31–46; and James 2:5.*
- ♦ Beware of complacency in light of the coming Day of the Lord, lest we be found unready and liable to judgment, 5:18–20.

Amos 7:1–8:3

Truth

Revelation

Its nature

- ♦ Biblical revelation consists of the Word of God in the words given by God to his chosen messengers, 7:3, 6 8–9, 15, 17; 8:2–3.

Note: Thus, we speak of plenary – that is, complete – verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, which contain not only “concepts” but sentences composed of individual words.

- ♦ Although the vast majority of words and passages in the Bible are clear, some are not. We use the best tools of scholarship to try to understand them, but sometimes have to be content with a bit of uncertainty. For example: “plumb line” in 7:7–8 may also mean “tin.” In which case, the vision is of a wall made of tin, which looks solid from a distance, but is obviously very unstable when viewed up close. In that case, the meaning would be that the buildings and fortifications of Israel may have seemed impressive, but they would not stand against a strong attack.

Its content

- ♦ Visions and their interpretation, 7:2–3, 4–6, 7–10; 8:1–3
- ♦ These visions and words from God are called “prophecy,” which includes predictions of the future, 7:15–17.
- ♦ Records of conversations between people, 7:10–17

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is a personal God who communicates with his people, 7:2–3, 8–9; 8:2–3.

Note: Although the conversations between God and his chosen messengers or other specially blessed people as recorded in Scripture are uniquely true and authoritative revelation from God, he also speaks to those who wait upon him in faith. See Proverbs 3:6, 32.

- ♦ He is God, Elohim, the almighty creator of the entire universe, 7:1, 2–6; 8:1, 3.
- ♦ He is “Lord,” Adonai, the master of his people and of the world, 7:2, 4–5, 7–8.

- ♦ He rules all of nature, including insects, 7:1–3; and fire, 7:4–6; and the destinies of nations, 7:8–9, 17; 8:3; and of individuals, 7:17.
- ♦ He is eternal and omniscient, governing all things by his wisdom and power; thus, he can give his chosen messengers words of predictive prophesy, 7:7–8, 17; 8:2–3.

His goodness

- ♦ He is Yahweh, the LORD, the covenant God of Israel, 7:3, 6–7, 15–17; 8:1.
- ♦ He is longsuffering and compassionate, and often forgives the sins of his people in answer to penitent or intercessory prayer, 7:2–3, 5–6. *See Genesis 18:16–33; 1 Kings 21:17–29.*
- ♦ He kindly warns his people of impending doom for their sins, speaking through his prophets, Christ, and the apostles, 7:1–9, 1; 8:1–3. *See Matthew 24; and Romans 2:5–16.*
- ♦ He is holy and righteous, and must punish unrepentant sinners, 7:8–9, 11, 17; 8:2–3.
- ♦ He is a jealous God, loving his people exclusively and demanding their exclusive devotion, and thus he must punish them for spiritual adultery when they worship other “gods,” 7:9.
- ♦ He kindly chose Israel to be his people, 8:2.
- ♦ Though he is patient, his patience has its limits, after which there will be no delay in judgment, 8:2. *See Romans 2:3–10.*

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Idolatry of all kinds, 7:9
- ♦ Trying to silence God’s messengers, 7:10–16
- ♦ Prostitution, 7:17

Its consequences

- ♦ Destruction of the food supply, 7:1–2
- ♦ Unquenchable fire, 7:4
- ♦ Destruction of fortresses and cities, 7:9
- ♦ Death by violence, 7:11, 17; 8:3
- ♦ Captivity in a foreign land, 7:11, 17

- ◆ Loss of our children, 7:17
- ◆ Moral degradation and shame, 7:17
- ◆ Warfare, 7:17
- ◆ Death of our children, 7:17
- ◆ Loss of national sovereignty, 7:17

The Last Things

Christ's return: When Christ returns, he will destroy all unrepentant sinners forever; these temporal punishments are foretastes of the terror of God's wrath to come. *See Matthew 13:30, 42; 25:41–46; Romans 2:8–9; and Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 18.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Read the Old Testament regularly to see how God has dealt with his people in the past and how he will deal with us.
- ◆ Pray for sinners, that God may save them from the wrath to come, 7:2, 5.
- ◆ Warn unrepentant sinners of the consequences of sin, 7:8–9, 14–17; 8:2–3.
- ◆ Listen to God's messengers and not seek to silence them, 7:11–12.
- ◆ Stick to our calling as witnesses of Jesus Christ, no matter how the world threatens us, 7:14–16.
- ◆ Think often of the torments of hell and how God has delivered us from them through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Amos 8:4–9:15

Truth

Revelation

Its nature: The Scriptures are the Word of God in the very words of God, which he gave to his messengers to record, 8:7–9:4, 9:7–15. *See 2 Timothy 3:16.*

Its content

- ♦ Quotations from humans, 8:5–6
- ♦ Prophetic warnings from God, 8:7–14; 9:1–4, 7–10
- ♦ Promises of future restoration and mercy from God, 9:11–15
- ♦ Especially in the Prophets and Writings (Jobs, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon), vivid poetic images, 8:7–9:5; 9:9–10, 13

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is omniscient, knowing and remembering everything we say and do, 8:7.
- ♦ He is eternal, knowing and thus able to predict the future, 8:8–14; 9:1–4, 8–10, 12–15.
- ♦ He is omnipotent, ruling the heavenly bodies, the earth, the waters, 8:9–10; 9:5–6.
- ♦ He is Lord of Hosts, the commander of the heavenly armies, 9:5.
- ♦ He is God, Elohim, the almighty Creator, 9:5.
- ♦ He is Lord, Adonai, King over all the earth, 9:5.
- ♦ He is utterly sovereign over his revelation and in his dealings with mankind, 9:11, and this entire passage.
- ♦ He is utterly zealous for the exclusive worship due to him by his people, and will in his holiness punish all their sins, including idolatry, 8:13–14.
- ♦ He is omnipresent, exerting his power over everyone everywhere, 9:2–4.

His goodness

- ♦ He is holy and righteous and must punish sin, 8:7–14; 9:1–4, 8–9.
- ♦ He is the LORD, Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel, 6–8, 12–13, 15.

- ♦ He brought his people out of bondage in Egypt and into the Promised Land, 9:7.
- ♦ He did not completely destroy sinful Israel, 8.
- ♦ He will be faithful to his covenant promises to David, 9:11. *See 2 Samuel 7:12-16.*
- ♦ He will be faithful to his covenant promises to Abraham, to give his people a land and to bless the nations through him, 9:12. *See Genesis 12:1-3; 17:7-8.*
- ♦ He promised to bring his people back from the captivity into which he had sent them because of their sins, 9:14-15.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Dishonesty and fraud in business dealings, 8:5-6
- ♦ Despising God's appointed days and means of worship so that we can hurry on to our business, 8:5
- ♦ Idolatry, including calling on other "gods" to help us or affirm our oaths, 8:14
- ♦ Making any image of God, 8:14
- ♦ Despising God's warnings of impending doom because of sin against him, 9:10

Its consequences

- ♦ Disturbances in the earth, 8:8
- ♦ Sorrow and mourning, 8:8, 10
- ♦ Withdrawal of opportunities to hear (or read) the Word of God, 8:11-12
- ♦ Dearth by hunger and thirst, 8:13-14
- ♦ Death by violence, 9:1, 4
- ♦ God's relentless pursuit of them in holy wrath and punishment, 9:1-4
- ♦ Death by serpents, 9:3
- ♦ Captivity, 9:4
- ♦ National destruction, 9:8

Salvation

Its origin and nature

- ♦ Salvation comes entirely from God's grace, shown in faithfulness to his promises, 9:11-12.

- ♦ Salvation comes through the descendant of David, whom we know as Jesus Christ, 9:11.
- ♦ Being called by his name, that is, being affirmed as his people, 9:12; *see Romans 8:28.*
- ♦ Renewed prosperity, 9:13
- ♦ Deliverance from captivity, 9:14
- ♦ Eternal security in God's presence, 9:15

The Last Things

Christ's return: When Christ returns, all of God's promises to his people will be fulfilled in a new heaven and new earth. Thus, the material and physical blessings promised to his people will be enjoyed with him forever.

Note: Some interpreters believe that promises like those in 9:11–15 refer to a literal millennial kingdom on earth ruled over by Jesus Christ from his capital in Jerusalem.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Read the Old Testament often in order to know God and his dealings with his people.
- ♦ Not put our work before worship; not hurry through worship (including our daily quiet time) in order to get to work.
- ♦ Avoid the sins mentioned in this passage.
- ♦ Worship God as almighty Creator and King of the Universe.
- ♦ Fear God as the holy and righteous Judge. *See 1 Peter 1:17.*
- ♦ Take advantage of all opportunities to hear and read the Word of God, while we can. We never know what accident, illness, or persecution will make access to the Bible difficult or even possible.
- ♦ Eagerly anticipate the return of Jesus and all the blessings he will bestow then.

OBADIAH *(currently unavailable)*

JONAH

Jonah 1-2

Truth

Revelation

Its source

- ◆ God revealed himself through his Word, which came to his chosen prophets, whose writings still speak to us today, 1:1.
- ◆ He revealed himself in the fierce storm, 1:4.
- ◆ He also used the casting of lots to reveal something to the sailors, though this is not something we should use today since we have the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit to guide us, 1:7.

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is the almighty Creator and Ruler of the universe, and his rule extends over all of nature:
 - The wind and waves, 1:4, 15; 2:3-6
 - The mouth and alimentary canal of the great fish, 1:17; 2:10
- ◆ He is able to preserve life in the midst of death and by miraculous methods, 2:1-10.
- ◆ He alone can save, 2:9.
- ◆ He dwells in heaven, his holy temple, 2:4, 7.

His goodness

- ◆ He is merciful, cares for all peoples, and has always intended to save some of the Gentiles, including wicked Nineveh, 1:2.
- ◆ He hears the prayers of his desperate and believing people, 2:10.
- ◆ He uses people to proclaim his word to the lost, so that they may be saved, 1:2.

Christ

His prefiguration

- ◆ Jonah is a type of Christ, but also stands in stark contrast.

- ♦ Christ's similarities
 - He was sent to bring salvation to the Gentiles.
 - He came from Galilee. *See 2 Kings 14:25.*
 - He slept in a little boat in a stormy sea, 1:5.
 - He chose to offer himself to save others, 1:12.
 - His offering was efficacious and led to worship from people of all nations, 1:15-16.
 - He was in "Sheol" for "three days and three nights" (that is, parts of three consecutive days) and was raised from death to life on the third day (Christ literally, Jonah figuratively), 1:17. *See Matthew 12:40.*
- ♦ Christ's differences
 - He did not run away from God and his commission.
 - He had no sin.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Refusing to obey God's command to take the word of salvation to people we don't like
- ♦ Refusing to do all we can to obey the Great Commission. *See Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; and Acts 1:8*

Righteousness

It includes

- ♦ Calling on God when we are in trouble, 2:1
- ♦ Trusting that he will answer prayer, 2:1
- ♦ Looking toward his holy temple, which now is Christ, 2:4, 7
- ♦ Paying our vows to God, including baptismal and wedding vows, 2:9

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Obey God's leading in our lives, even when we don't want to.
- ◆ Be willing to offer ourselves as sacrifices in order to bring salvation to others (not as propitiation, like Jesus, but in selfless service).
- ◆ See Christ in the Old Testament Scriptures.
- ◆ Praise Christ for his obedience unto death, for it has brought us salvation.
- ◆ Tell others that "Salvation is of the LORD."

Jonah 3–4

Truth

God

His greatness

- ♦ He rules the whole world for his purposes.
- ♦ He can change the heart of entire nations, including kings, 3:5–9.
- ♦ He can cause a plant to grow, a worm to consume it, and wind and heat to drive a man to despair, 4:6–8.
- ♦ He is holy and just and will punish men and nations for unrepentant sin, 3:4.

His goodness

- ♦ He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, 4:2.
- ♦ He will forgive those who repent, 3:10; 4:3, 11.
- ♦ He often gives his people a second chance to serve him after rank disobedience, 4:1.
- ♦ He cares for all men and animals that he has made, 4:11.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Evil deeds of all sorts, 3:10
- ♦ Violence, 3:8
- ♦ Anger at God, 4:1, 9
- ♦ Self-righteousness that does not want others to be forgiven and considers one's anger against them and against God to be justified, 4:1, 9
- ♦ Wishing for death when trouble comes or when others prosper, 4:3, 8

Righteousness

It includes

- ♦ Obeying God's command to preach the gospel
- ♦ Repenting for sin and showing sincerity by fasting and changing our behavior, 3:10
- ♦ Caring for other people, even those who have harmed us, 4:11

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Obey God's command to go to all the nations and preach repentance, lest they perish in judgment. This judgment could come in the form of earthly disaster, and it will surely come when Jesus returns.
- ♦ Repent of our own sins, showing our repentance by fasting and changing our behavior.
- ♦ Imitate God, who is merciful to his enemies and slow to anger.

MICAH *(currently unavailable)*

NAHUM

Nahum 1

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with later passages building upon and fulfilling earlier ones.

- ♦ God predicted coming judgment upon his enemies and deliverance for his people through Old Testament prophets, 1, 15.
- ♦ Now, through those who preach the gospel of ultimate salvation through Christ, he reveals his greatness, glory, and unfathomable goodness to those who trust in Jesus, 15. *See Romans 10:15, which directly quotes this verse.*

God

His greatness

- ♦ He holds great power, 3.
- ♦ He rules the wind, clouds, sea, rivers, mountains, hills, and all the earth, 3-5.
- ♦ None can withstand the fury of his anger, 6.

His goodness

- ♦ He is jealous for his glory and for his reputation as the God of justice and the covenant God of his people, 2.
- ♦ He will, therefore, avenge the oppression inflicted upon Judah by Assyria and upon all of his people throughout the ages by wicked men, 2.
- ♦ Though he is slow to anger, he will eventually punish the wicked with utter and everlasting destruction, 3, 8-9, 15.
- ♦ He is good and protects his people, those who trust in him, 7.
- ♦ Though he afflicts them for their sins, he will eventually return and relieve them, 12-13.
- ♦ He makes total war against all that is vile, 14.

Sin

It includes: idolatry, 14.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ◆ Prepare for the destruction of wicked cities and nations, such as the United States and all other great empires.
- ◆ Trust in God when trouble comes, for it will be limited to our capacity to endure it and will end in God's deliverance.
- ◆ Announce to all around us and around the world Christ's works: the great destruction of evil and the deliverance from sin through faith in his death, resurrection, and ascension.
- ◆ Warn people of everlasting punishment in hell if they do not repent.

Nahum 2–3

Truth

God

His greatness: He is the almighty Lord of hosts (heavenly and earthly armies) and thus able to overthrow and completely demolish even the most powerful empire, like Assyria, and city, like Nineveh, in a very brief time, 2:13.

His goodness: He is against all evil and will punish ungodly men and nations, 2:13; 3:5.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Oppressing God's people, 2:2
- ♦ Militarism, 2:3–5
- ♦ Excessive wealth, especially when taken from others, 2:9
- ♦ Rapacious treatment of neighbors, 2:11–12
- ♦ Violence and murder, 3:1
- ♦ Lying, 3:1
- ♦ Robbery, 3:1
- ♦ Bodily and spiritual adultery and fornication, 3:4
- ♦ Excessive reliance on trade and commerce, 3:16

The Last Things

The final judgment: The fall of Nineveh looks forward to the overthrow of great Babylon, described in Revelation as the city which rules and pollutes the entire world with its idolatry, hedonism, and wealth. *Compare 3:7 with Revelation 18:10; 3:12 with Revelation 6:12, 13; 3:16 with Revelation 18:3, 11–19; and 3:17 with Revelation 9:7.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Expect all great empires to fall, sometimes quite suddenly.

- ◆ Expect God to judge America with terrible punishment, perhaps quite suddenly, since the United States resembles ancient Nineveh in many ways.
- ◆ Warn those around us to prepare for God's judgment, both temporal and eternal.
- ◆ Set our hearts on things above, not on things on this earth, and look to Jesus to come from heaven to save us.

HABAKKUK

Habakkuk 1–2

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, and its prophecies often have multiple fulfillments.

- ♦ Old Testament prophets often spoke of a time future to their own, predicting events that would happen in history, such as the coming invasion and later destruction of the Babylonians, as well as events of the end time, as allusions to these passages in the book of Revelation show.
- ♦ Compare the following passages in Habakkuk and Revelation:
 - Habakkuk 1:6 and Revelation 20:9
 - Habakkuk 2:2 and Revelation 1:19

Its interpretation: God's written revelation is clear enough for all with receptive minds to understand, 2:1.

Its literary forms

- ♦ Old Testament prophecy uses powerful poetry and vivid description.
- ♦ Here, revelation consists of a dialogue between the prophet and God.
 - The process of prophetic revelation included the prophet's patient waiting for God's word to come to him, 2:1.
 - Revelation was written down at God's direction, 2:1.

God

His characteristics

- ♦ He is eternal, 1:12.
- ♦ He is holy, 1:12.
- ♦ He is the unshakeable Rock of safety and security for his people, 1:12.
- ♦ He is utterly holy and pure, 1:13.
- ♦ He is transcendent, dwelling in his holy temple on high, 2:20.
- ♦ He is immanent, in that he rules over history:
 - He raises up nations and then destroys them in judgment, 1:5; 2:4–19.
 - He will finally fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory, 2:14.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Violence against fellow humans, 1:2-3
- ♦ Robbery and plundering of others' goods, 1:3
- ♦ Strife and contention, 1:3
- ♦ Lawlessness, 1:4
- ♦ Perverse judgment by those in office, 1:4
- ♦ Bitter cruelty and harsh conquest, 1:6-7
- ♦ Pride in one's own power and ability, 1:11
- ♦ Rejoicing in victory over others, 1:15
- ♦ Idolatry, especially the worship of oneself and one's accomplishments, 1:16; 2:18-19.
- ♦ Drunkenness, 2:5
- ♦ Pride, 2:5
- ♦ Insatiable covetousness, 2:5
- ♦ Gaining wealth wrongly, 2:9
- ♦ Trusting in wealth to provide security, 2:9
- ♦ Causing others to shame themselves through indulgence in wine and drugs, 2:15
- ♦ Wanton destruction of the environment, 2:17

Salvation

Its source and conveyance

- ♦ It comes to those who trust in God and rely on him entirely by faith, 2:4. This points towards faith in Christ alone for salvation. *See Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; and Hebrews 10:37-38.*
- ♦ It is made possible because Jesus drank the "cup" of God's wrath, 2:16. *See Matthew 28:39.*

The Last Things

The final judgment

- ♦ God will bring terrible destruction upon the entire world for idolatry, violence, robbery, and all other sins, especially pride.
- ♦ The “cup” which Babylon made others drink will become the cup of God’s wrath upon Babylon and then all the sinful world, 2:16, of which Babylon is a type. *See Revelation 14:10; 16:19; 17:4; 18:6.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Do not fret when we see evildoers prosper, either in our personal lives or in the world at large, or when wicked nations crush nations less wicked than themselves.
- ♦ Instead, wait for God’s judgment to come in its time, living by faith meanwhile and trusting in him as a holy and righteous God.
- ♦ Take God’s written revelation and share it with people all over the world, warning of judgment to come and proclaiming salvation for all who trust in Christ, 2:1.

Habakkuk 3

Truth

Revelation

Its literary forms

- ◆ The events of history
 - Great natural catastrophes, such as those inflicted upon the Egyptians, referred to often in this chapter, 5, 8-10
 - Israel's later history, 11; *see Joshua 10:12-14; chapter 12; Exodus, Numbers, Joshua-Ezra.*
- ◆ God's Word: Because revelation in the created order and in history is not self-explanatory, it must be interpreted through the lens of the prophetic word, as here and throughout the Bible.

God

His characteristics

- ◆ His character combines the capacity for both wrath and mercy, 1.
 - He is one, and simple: that is, he is not composed of many parts, and his attributes and his being are inseparable from each other.
 - His attributes do not conflict with each other or come from different parts of his unified being.
- ◆ He is holy, 3, and thus must punish all iniquity.
- ◆ He possesses transcendent glory, which includes beauty, brightness, majesty, and all his other attributes, both of goodness and of greatness, 3.
- ◆ As omnipotent Creator and almighty Judge and Savior, he rules over the earth and all that is in it, including nations, mountains and hills, the sea, invading armies, earth's deeps, and heavenly bodies, 4-15.
- ◆ He is eternal, 6, but reveals himself also as the God of history, as all the prophetic and historical books show, supremely the Gospels and Acts.

Salvation

Its substance

- ♦ Deliverance
 - Deliverance from earthly enemies, as in the return from the Exile predicted by the prophets, 18–19
 - Personal deliverance from sadness and fear, 18–19
- ♦ Joy
 - This comes to believers regardless of circumstances, 17–19.
 - In the New Testament, this is shown to be the Christian’s capacity—and obligation—to “rejoice in the Lord always.” *See Philipians 4:4 and 1 Thessalonians 5:18.*
- ♦ Strength
 - “He will make my feet like deer’s feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills,” 19.
 - This may refer to the power God gives us to rise above circumstances, to traverse difficult situations with agility, and to draw closer to him even when all else falls apart, 17–19.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Ask God to “revive [his] work in the midst of the years,” and in his wrath to remember mercy towards his people, 2–3.
- ♦ Rely on God’s strength to look beyond circumstances, no matter how awful, and to receive strength through him to rejoice and to leap lightly along the mountain paths of adversity.

ZEPHANIAH *(currently unavailable)*

HAGGAI *(currently unavailable)*

ZECHARIAH

Zechariah 1

Truth

Revelation

Its roots in history: Prophetic revelation is rooted in the history of Israel and its surrounding neighbors, 1, 7, 12.

Its content

- ◆ It contains the very words of God to the prophet, 1, 6-7.
- ◆ It includes clear statutes and laws from God, 6. (Remember that Moses was the greatest prophet.)
- ◆ It often features visions given to the prophet and interpreted by God or his angels, 8-11, 18-21.
- ◆ It comes through prophecies of the future, often referring also to the past, 14-17.

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is Almighty King and Captain of armies of angels (“LORD of hosts”=armies), 3-4.
- ◆ He rules the events of history to accomplish his purposes, 6, 15, 18-21.

His goodness

- ◆ He reveals himself and his will to his people through his prophets, 1, 7.
- ◆ He is holy and therefore angry with sin, 2, 15.
- ◆ He is kind and patient and offers to “return” to us in mercy if we “return” to him in repentance and faith, 3.
- ◆ He is patient, warning his people over and over again for 1,200 years through the prophets, 4.
- ◆ He is just and therefore punishes both his people when they stray, 6, and nations that oppress his people, 15, 21.
- ◆ He is committed to his people, whom he loves with a fierce jealousy, 14.

- ♦ He is faithful to his promises to restore his people after they have been chastised, 16–17.
- ♦ He is merciful to his people, forgiving and showing favor to them again, 12, 16–17.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Read the entire Bible, so that we can understand the historical setting and background of the Old Testament and New Testament books and their relationship to each other.
- ♦ Be careful to keep the laws God has revealed to us, especially those in the New Testament, which all have abiding authority over us.
- ♦ Quickly repent and turn to God when we disobey him, and ask for mercy, rededicate ourselves to obedience, and trust in his unfailing love.
- ♦ Trust that God will restore us after he has chastised us.

Zechariah 2

Truth

Revelation

Its content

- ♦ Prophetic revelation, especially in the first part of Zechariah, includes visions and predictions of the future, 4-5, 9, 11-12.
- ♦ It also contains mysterious and hard-to-understand, yet evocative, sayings that point to the Trinity, like “He sent Me,” indicating “Me” as a supernatural figure, possibly the Son of God (though perhaps it refers primarily to the prophet Zechariah), 8-9, 11.

God

His goodness

- ♦ He cares for his people and will be like a “wall of fire” around them when he chooses to protect them from their foes, 5.
- ♦ He chastises his people for their sins, in this case sending them into Exile in 586 B.C., 6.
- ♦ He identifies with his people so much that they are to him, as it were, the “apple of his eye,” 8.
- ♦ He promises to come to his people and dwell among them, 10-11.
- ♦ He remains faithful to his promises to “choose” Israel as his own special possession, and the land of Israel, especially Jerusalem, as a “holy” land, because he has set it apart for their inhabitation, 12.
- ♦ He is holy and dwells in a holy place, 13.

Christ

His person: Christ is prefigured here

- ♦ In God’s promise to be with his people and dwell among them, 10-11
- ♦ In his incarnation; *see John 1:14.*
- ♦ In his ongoing presence with his people now through his Spirit; *see Matthew 28:20.*

Spiritual Beings

Angels: They are the messengers of God to his people, and they are often the mediators of revelation to prophets, 1, 3.

Salvation

Its substance – for the Jews after the Exile

- ♦ Re–population of the land, including Jerusalem, which had been desolate, 4
- ♦ God’s protection, 8
- ♦ God’s presence as glory, 5
- ♦ Deliverance from Babylon, 6
- ♦ Punishment of the nations that had oppressed them, 9
- ♦ God’s dwelling among them, 10
- ♦ Knowledge that God has again “chosen” them as his special people, 12

The Last Things

The end of the age

- ♦ “That day” is a prophetic term for a future event of great importance—sometimes punishment on Israel or its enemies for sin and sometimes a time of future blessing.
- ♦ Here it points toward a time when many Gentile nations will be joined to Israel as God’s people, 11.
 - This was fulfilled initially on the Day of Pentecost. *See Acts 2.*
 - After that, it has been fulfilled successively throughout history as non–Jews have trusted in Christ and become part of God’s people.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Never despair that God has finally left his people to their enemies to be fully destroyed, for he will preserve a remnant and multiply them again.
- ♦ Rejoice over the outworking of God’s salvation in history and around the world in our own time, and especially in the fact that he dwells among us as our Savior, 10.
- ♦ Be silent and worship before God, who is holy and dwells among his people.

Zechariah 3

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with later passages referring to and incorporating earlier ones.

- ♦ Zechariah is replete with such allusions.
 - The name “Joshua” for the high priest, which is the same name as “Jesus” in Hebrew and Greek, 1
 - The Angel of the LORD, 1; *see Genesis 16:7.*
 - Satan, 1; *see Job 1:6.*
 - The gift of new, clean garments, 3–4; *see Revelation 7:9.*
 - The office and turban of the high priest, 7; *see Exodus 28:36.*
 - The “BRANCH” as a messianic figure, 8; *see Isaiah 11:1.*
 - God’s servant to come and save, 8; *see Isaiah 42:1.*

God

His Triune nature

- ♦ The Father—“God” or “the LORD”
- ♦ The Son—represented here as “the LORD,” 2
- ♦ The Spirit, 9; *see Zechariah 4:6.*

His greatness

- ♦ He is greater than Satan and the angels, 2.
- ♦ He is the LORD of hosts (that is, the armies of heaven), 10.
- ♦ He is the ruler over his people as their Savior, 9–10.

His goodness

- ♦ He chose Israel as his own people, with the capital in Jerusalem, 2.
- ♦ He is merciful and gracious in many ways
 - Forgiving sin, 4, 9
 - Rebuking Satan and imputing righteousness instead of sin, 2, 5
 - Revealing his ways and commands to his people, 7
 - Promising future salvation, 8–10

Christ

His person: Christ is prefigured here

- ♦ As the Angel of the Lord, 1
- ♦ As the high priest of Israel with the name Joshua (that is, Jesus), 1
- ♦ As the coming servant of God, 8
- ♦ As the BRANCH, a descendant of David, 8

Spiritual Beings

Satan: He is the accuser of God's people before the throne of God, 1, but he is rebuked and degraded by God, 2.

Salvation

Its substance

- ♦ Deliverance from Satan's accusations, 2
- ♦ Election, 2
- ♦ Removal of the stain of sin and bestowal of the status of righteousness, 4-5, 9
- ♦ Life as a sign before the world, 8
- ♦ Community life in conditions of peace and safety, 10

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Trust God to forgive our sins and to stand with us when Satan accuses us of sins which we have already confessed. *See Romans 8:1, 31-34.*
- ♦ Praise God for sending Jesus as the promised Messiah foretold by the prophets.
- ♦ Seek to walk as holy priests before God, obeying his commands. *See 1 Peter 1:13-16; 2:5, 9.*

Zechariah 4

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with later books employing images and vocabulary from earlier ones.

- ♦ The lampstand, 2; *see Exodus 25:31 and Revelation 1:12.*
- ♦ A mountain that can be removed by those who trust in God, 7; *see Isaiah 40:4; Matthew 17:20; 21:21; and 1 Corinthians 13:2.*
- ♦ God enabling us to complete, or himself completing, the work which has been begun, 9; *see Philippians 1:6.*
- ♦ The plumb line, 10; *see Amos 7:7.*
- ♦ The two offices of priest and kingly ruler, 14; *see Exodus 28–29 and 2 Samuel 7:8–17.*
- ♦ The two olive trees, representing two witnesses, 14; *see Revelation 11:4.*
- ♦ The seven eyes or spirits of the Lord investigating the whole earth, 10; *see 2 Chronicles 16:9.*
- ♦ Anointing oil, symbolizing empowerment by the Holy Spirit for God's chosen servants, 12–14; *see Leviticus 4:5; 1 Samuel 1:10; 16:6; Acts 10:38; and Hebrews 1:9.*

Its source

- ♦ Biblical revelation sometimes came through angels, as in this chapter. *See Matthew 1:20; 28:1–7; Luke 2:11–17, 26–38; and Acts 1:10–11.*
- ♦ Revelation also came through visions, especially in the prophets and the Revelation of John. These visions were interpreted by angels, by other persons, or by God, 2–14. *See Revelation 7:9–17.*

God

His Triune nature

- ♦ He has a Spirit, the Holy Spirit, 6.
- ♦ This points towards the plurality within the one God, later revealed as Father, Son, and Spirit.

Christ

His person: Christ is prefigured here

- ♦ In the persons and offices of high priest and kingly ruler (Zerubbabel), 9, 14; *see also Zechariah 3:1*.
- ♦ As the anointed one (Christ), 14; *see Psalm 110 and Hebrews 7*.

The Holy Spirit

His person

- ♦ He is named as the Lord's Spirit, 6
- ♦ He is represented as seven eyes, standing for perfect intelligence and knowledge, 10; 3:9
- ♦ He is almighty and powerful, enabling men to fulfill God's mission, 9-10

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Trust in God's strength, given to us by the Spirit, to work wonders in the performance of his will, 6. *See Galatians 3:2-5*.
- ♦ Do not "despise the day of small things," that is, the small beginnings of new life or a new work of God. He will cause it to grow into something significant.
- ♦ Believe that God will complete the work which he has begun in us, in our church, and in and through his church throughout the world.
- ♦ Worship Jesus as our High Priest and King, and turn to him to supply us with the Spirit to complete his work in us.

Zechariah 5

Truth

Revelation

Its content

- ♦ Biblical revelation includes the Mosaic Law, here represented as the flying scroll with two of the Ten Commandments written on it, with curses for those who disobey, as in the Mosaic Covenant, 3.
- ♦ It also includes prophetic revelation, often coming through angels, and expressed in interpreted visions, 3, 5-6.
- ♦ The moral law applies to the whole earth, 3.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is the Almighty LORD of heavenly armies (“hosts”), 4.
- ♦ He is jealous that his name be invoked with reverence and truth, 4.

His goodness

- ♦ He is holy and will punish violations to his moral law, 4.
- ♦ As a holy God, he will expel all wickedness from his chosen people and their land, 7-11.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Theft and perjury, 4
- ♦ All wickedness, personified here as a woman, who may represent idolatry and sexual sin, 8

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Read the Law of Moses to know the character of God and his law for his people Israel, and to discern abiding moral principles for our own time.
- ♦ Ask God for help to keep all the Ten Commandments.
- ♦ Fear the punishment that will come upon unrepentant sinners.

Zechariah 6

Truth

God

His Triune nature: He possesses a Holy Spirit, whose “winds” (which is the same word for “Spirit” in Greek and in Hebrew) go to all the earth, representing his omnipresence and omniscience, 5.

Christ

His person: Christ is prefigured here

- ♦ In the persons of Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the ruler of the Jews after the Exile, who oversaw the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, 12–13
- ♦ As the BRANCH, the “shoot” or offspring of David (typified by Zerubbabel), which will rule over God’s people, and which will build the new temple of God, the church, indwelt by his Spirit, 12–13; *see also John 1:45 and Ephesians 2:20.*

The Church

Its prefiguration: It is perhaps prefigured here by “those who come from afar,” namely, the Gentiles who will believe in Christ and help build his temple, 15. (However, this may instead refer to the returned exiles.)

The Last Things

Their prefiguration: The last days are prefigured here by the union of priestly and royal authority in Christ, bringing peace, 13.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Trust that God will establish peace on earth in his own good time, 8, 13.
- ♦ Thank God for sending Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophecies about the “BRANCH,” the descendant of David who would rule his people, and the prophecies about Christ as High Priest for us before God in heaven, 11, 13. *See Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 7.*

Zechariah 7

Truth

Revelation

Its roots in history: Biblical revelation is set within particular times and places in history, 1.

Its source: Old Testament revelation came through God's chosen messengers, including prophets, 3-14, especially 4, 7, 8-9, 12-13; their words were God's words. *See 1 Peter 1:11.*

God

His Triune nature: God exists as an eternal Trinity of Father (usually called "God"), Son (sometimes called the Word), and Holy Spirit, 12.

His greatness

- ♦ He is a Person and thus able to communicate with his people, listening to them and hearing them, 2-5, 8-10.
- ♦ He is omnipresent and omniscient, able to hear the prayers of his people and seeing all that they do, 2-4, 11-13.
- ♦ He is able even to see into the inner hearts and motives of people, 6, 12.
- ♦ He is the almighty commander of the heavenly armies of angels, 9, 12, 13.
- ♦ He governs the destinies of men and nations and is able to destroy nations and scatter their peoples, 14.

His goodness

- ♦ He condescended to speak to his people through his chosen messengers, 1, 4, 8, 13.
- ♦ He hears the prayers of his people, 2.
- ♦ He condescended to dwell in the tabernacle built by Moses and then in the Temple in Jerusalem, 2-3. *See Exodus 36-40 and 2 Chronicles 7:1-3.*
- ♦ He is righteous, loving, and compassionate, and he demands similar attitudes from his people, 9.
- ♦ He cares for the poor and powerless, 9-10.
- ♦ He is holy and thus must punish sin, 11-14.

Christ

His person: Christ is prefigured in the Old Testament both by the prophets and by the Word of the LORD that came to God's people through them, 1–3, 4, 8, 12, 13. *See Luke 4:18–21; John 1:1–3; and Hebrews 1:1–2.*

The Holy Spirit

His person

- ♦ He is the Spirit of God and thus fully divine.
- ♦ He is the Spirit of God and thus fully personal.

His work: He spoke to God's people through the prophets; his words were God's words, 12, 13.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Fasting and mourning, or feasting, not for God, that is, not with him and his will in mind, but merely to satisfy one's self-righteousness or appetite, 4–6; *see Matthew 6:16–18; 1 Corinthians 11:17–22.*
- ♦ Oppressing the weak and powerless, 10
- ♦ Planning evil or harm to another in one's heart, 10; *see Matthew 5:21–30.*
- ♦ Refusing to hear and heed God's words spoken or written through the prophets, 11–13

Its consequences

- ♦ Increasing inability to hear God's words, 11
- ♦ God's wrath, 12; *see Romans 1:18; Ephesians 2:2; 5:3–6.*
- ♦ God's refusal to answer prayer, 13; *see Proverbs 1:24–33.*
- ♦ Personal and national calamity; loss of all property and security, 14

The Last Things

Christ's return: When Christ returns, God will execute wrath in all who have rejected his words and disobeyed his commands, 12. *See Romans 2:5–9.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Read the Bible often, carefully, and prayerfully, and then obediently, 7.
- ♦ Fast and pray to be seen and heard by God alone, 5–6.
- ♦ Do justice, 9.
- ♦ Show mercy and compassion to all, especially the poor and powerless, starting with the church, 9–10. *See Galatians 6:9–10.*
- ♦ Proclaim God’s Word faithfully to his people and to the world, 7, 11–13.
- ♦ See calamities as possible visitations of God’s wrath and anger on disobedient people, 12, 14.

Zechariah 8

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with later passages referring to and incorporating earlier ones.

- ♦ Chapter 7, full of rebuke and judgment, is followed by Chapter 8, full of comfort and grace.
- ♦ Allusions to themes used earlier in the Old Testament
 - God's jealousy for his people and for Zion, 1; *see Joel 2:18 and Nahum 1:2.*
 - The mountain of God, 3; *see Isaiah 2:2-3.*
 - The promise that after the Exile Israel will again be God's people, and Yahweh will be their God, 8; *see Jeremiah 20:22; 31:1, 30.*
 - The exhortation to "let your hands be strong," 9; *see 1 Chronicle 22:13; Isaiah 35:4; and Haggai 2:4.*
 - The reminder of Haggai's prophecy, 9; *see Haggai 2:18.*
 - The promise that all nations would be blessed in Israel, Abraham's "seed," 13; *see Genesis 12:2.*
 - The promise that peoples will come from afar to Jerusalem to know the God of Israel, 20-21; *see Isaiah 2:2-3 and Micah 4:1-2.*

Note: This last promise was partially fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. See Acts 2.

Its structure

- ♦ Biblical revelation uses various literary forms.
- ♦ This chapter employs repetition and variance in stanza length to engage the reader.
 - The repetition of "Thus says the LORD [of hosts]"
 - The increasing length of the stanzas from the beginning (1-8) up to the center of the chapter (9-13), and then decreasing in length to the end of the chapter (14-23)

God

His greatness

- ♦ He is Almighty, as Lord of the heavenly armies (“hosts”), 1, 7, 9, 11, 14, 18, 20.
- ♦ He is the ruler of creation and thus able to bring agricultural prosperity, 12.
- ♦ He is able to save his people from strong enemies, 7.

His goodness

- ♦ He loves his people with great intensity, 2.
- ♦ He is willing to return to sinful, but forgiven, Zion to dwell with his people, 3.
- ♦ He is able to cleanse and renew his people, so that the city may be called “holy” again, 3.
- ♦ He is the giver of long life and youthful play, 4-5.
- ♦ He saves his people from the captivity into which he had sent them, 7-8.
- ♦ He joins himself to them as their God, 8.
- ♦ He is true and righteous and able to make his people lovers of truth and righteousness, 8-9.
- ♦ He is faithful to the promises he made through the prophets, 9.
- ♦ He is willing and able to reverse the previous curse upon his people for their disobedience and to restore peace and prosperity to them, 3-5, 12.
- ♦ He is determined to do good to them, 15.
- ♦ He gives joy instead of sorrow, 19.

Salvation

Its substance – to Israel

- ♦ Forgiveness
- ♦ God’s presence, 3
- ♦ The ordinary blessings of life, 4-5
- ♦ Salvation from enemies, 7-8

Its substance – to his people now

- ♦ Forgiveness
- ♦ God’s presence
- ♦ Deliverance from the power of sin, Satan, eternal death, and God’s wrath
- ♦ The promise of peace and prosperity in the new heaven and new earth

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Praise and thank God for his total faithfulness to all his promises, ever since he spoke to Abraham over four thousand years ago, and even earlier, since his promises to Adam and Eve. *See Genesis 3:15.*
- ♦ Thank God for his amazing grace in forgiving our sins through the work of Jesus; freeing us from bondage to sin, Satan, and death; and giving the gift of his presence through the Holy Spirit.
- ♦ Speak truth to each other.
- ♦ Order our society (including family and church) according to truth, justice, and peace, 16.
- ♦ Refuse to think evil of others, and hate false speech, 17.
- ♦ Love truth and peace, and rejoice in God's grace and mercy, 19.
- ♦ Live so that others will come from afar and ask us how to know God, 20–23. *See 1 Peter 3:15.*
- ♦ Look forward to the new heaven and new earth, in which righteousness will dwell, as the perfect fulfillment of all these promises of blessing, peace, and prosperity. *See 2 Peter 3:13.*

Zechariah 9

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, and its prophecies often have multiple fulfillments.

- ◆ The first fulfillment(s) often occur in history contemporary to or following shortly after the prophecy
 - The fall of Tyre, 4
 - The subjection of Philistia to Greek invaders, 5
 - The protection of Jerusalem from the armies of Alexander, 8
- ◆ Later fulfillments often refer to the last things
 - The coming of the Messiah, 9
 - The future state of perfect peace, 10

Its structure

- ◆ Prophetic revelation includes a variety of forms, mostly expressed in poetry.
- ◆ It commonly includes figures of speech
 - Personification: such as treating cities and countries as if they were people, 3, 5, 9
 - Metaphor: such as calling Judah God's "bow" and Ephraim his "arrow," 13

God

His greatness

- ◆ As King of the world and Ruler of all nations, and as the great Warrior God, he uses other nations to punish cities and people who do not honor him, 4, 6.
- ◆ He sets prisoners (like those in the Exile) free from captivity, 11.
- ◆ He uses them to defeat other nations, 13.

His goodness

- ◆ He protects his people and saves them from their enemies, 8, 12, 15–16.
- ◆ He remains faithful to his covenant with his people given through Moses (as well as all other covenants), 11.
- ◆ He restores double to those whom he has previously afflicted for their sins, 12.

- ♦ He is good and beautiful, 17. (Even if these verses refer to Jerusalem, its beauty derives from God.)
- ♦ He cares for his people as a shepherd takes care of his flock, 16.

Christ

His person: Christ is prefigured here

- ♦ As the King who comes meekly and lowly to his people; this was fulfilled when Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, 9; *see Matthew 21:5 and John 12:15.*
- ♦ As the King who will later rule visibly over all the earth, 10

The Last Things

The final judgment

- ♦ The destruction of God's enemies, 4-6, and even their sanctification and incorporation into the people of God, 7
- ♦ The end of all war, 10
- ♦ The universal rule of Jesus as King on earth, 10
- ♦ The glorification and beautification of his people, 16
- ♦ Peace, joy, and gladness for all people, 17

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Thank God for fulfilling the warnings and promises he gave through his Old Testament prophets.
- ♦ Trust God for the fulfillment of all prophecies in his own time and way, including the prophecies of the return of Christ and the blessed state of the new heaven and new earth.
- ♦ Set our hopes on the return of Christ and our enjoyment with him of a recreated world, even while we are in "prison" on earth, 12.

Zechariah 10

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with later passages referring to and incorporating earlier ones.

- ◆ Allusions
 - The vanity of idols, 2; *see Jeremiah 10:8.*
 - The false comfort of false prophets, 2; *see Jeremiah 27:9.*
 - God's people wandering like sheep without a shepherd, 2; *see Ezekiel 34:5-8 and Matthew 9:36.*
 - God as shepherd of his people, 3; *see Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:11; and John 10.*
 - God's anger against bad shepherds, 3; *see Jeremiah 24:32-36 and Ezekiel 34:2.*
 - The cornerstone, 4; *see Isaiah 28:16.*
 - God "whistling" like a shepherd to summon a people to serve him, 8; *see Isaiah 5:26.*
 - Redemption and deliverance from captivity, as at the Passover in Egypt, 8; *see Exodus 12-15.*
 - Passing through the sea, as at the Red Sea, 10; *see Exodus 14-15.*
 - Crossing the Nile, which was made dry by God, 11; *see Isaiah 11:15.*
 - God strengthening his returning exiles, 12; *see Isaiah 40:31.*

God

His greatness

- ◆ As Creator and Ruler of the world, he gives rain, 1.
- ◆ He is a mighty warrior in battle, 5.

His goodness

- ◆ He is holy and jealous for his own glory and thus angry with bad leaders, 2.
- ◆ He shepherds his people, 2.
- ◆ He strengthens them to fight their enemies, 5-6.

- ♦ He has mercy on his people and hears their cry for help, 6.
- ♦ He restores them as if they had never been rejected, 6.
- ♦ He deigns to be with them and be their God, 6.
- ♦ He redeems his people from captivity, 8.

Christ

His person: Christ is prefigured here

- ♦ As the Shepherd of his people, 2-3; *see John 10; 1 Peter 2:25; and Hebrews 13:20.*
- ♦ As the means of redemption, 8; *see Ephesians 1:7.*

Salvation

Its substance – to Israel after the Exile

- ♦ Provision of rain and grass, 1
- ♦ God's ongoing care and protection, 3
- ♦ Strength to fight against their enemies, 5-6
- ♦ Gladness and joy, 7
- ♦ Redemption from captivity, 8
- ♦ Increase of their population, as in Egypt long ago, and in keeping with God's promise to Abraham, 8
- ♦ Return to the land, 9
- ♦ Fellowship with God, 12

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Thank God for keeping all his promises to Israel, and trust him to keep his promises to us.
- ♦ Thank God for his repeated forgiveness of our sins through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.
- ♦ Trust that God someday, perhaps after long affliction and maybe not until we reach heaven, will restore to us more than we have lost.

- ♦ Take hold by faith daily of God's strength to do battle against Satan, the temptations of this world, and the sinful desires of our fallen nature. *See Ephesians 6:10.*

Zechariah 11

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness

- ♦ Kings portrayed as mighty trees (here, cedar, 1, juniper, 2, and oaks, 2; 1–3); *see 2 Kings 14:9 and Daniel 4:10–27.*
- ♦ Lebanon and Bashan symbolizing pride, 1–2; *see Isaiah 2:12–13.*
- ♦ Shepherds compared to ravenous lions, 3; *see Jeremiah 25:36–38.*
- ♦ Israel compared to a flock of sheep marked for slaughter, 1; *see Jeremiah 12:3.*
- ♦ Bad shepherds who exploit their flock, 5, 15–17; *see Jeremiah 23:1–2; Ezekiel 34; and John 10:1, 8, 12.*
- ♦ Cannibalism, 9; *see Deuteronomy 28:53; Jeremiah 19:9; and Lamentations 2:20; 4:10.*
- ♦ The covenant God made with Israel, his people, 10; *see Isaiah 3:13 and Micah 1:1–2.*
- ♦ The word of the LORD, that is, God’s warning of exile if his people broke the covenant, 11; *see Deuteronomy 28:36, 63–64.*
- ♦ Thirty pieces of silver, that is, the price of a slave, amounting to an insult to the prophet, 12; *see Matthew 26:14–15.*
- ♦ “Throw it to the potter,” 13; *see Matthew 27:9–10.*
- ♦ The dividing of the kingdom between Israel and Judah, 14; *see 1 Kings 12.*

Its roots in history: The destruction of Israel by a king took place in 586 B.C. under Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, 6.

Its literary forms: Prophetic books sometimes contain what are called sign-actions, like those in 4–17.

God

His greatness: He has the power to govern the destinies of nations, including the power to destroy those who oppress his people, 1–17.

His goodness

- ♦ He broke the power of the invading Assyrians, who had invaded Judah, 1–3, and in order to cause the division of the kingdom into north and south, Israel and Judah, 14.
- ♦ He is Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel, 4, 11, 13, 15.
- ♦ He cares for the poor and powerless, including his entire people when they are oppressed, 16.
- ♦ He made a covenant with his people Israel, 10.

Christ

His person: Christ is prefigured here

- By contrast to the wicked shepherds who came before him, Jesus is the Good Shepherd of those who follow him; *see John 10:1, 8, 12.*
- In the payment of thirty pieces of silver, the amount paid to Judas for his treachery; *see Matthew 26:14–15.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Trust that God will bring down the high and mighty rulers and nations who oppress his people.
- ♦ Expect that God will allow suffering to come to his people, even though he loves us.
- ♦ Thank God for sending Jesus to be our Good Shepherd; *see 1 Peter 2:24–25; 5:4; and Hebrews 13:20.*
- ♦ Thank God for allowing Judas to betray Jesus and thus to deliver him up to be killed on our behalf.
- ♦ Pray for the elders of our church, that they may be good under-shepherds of God's people; *see 1 Peter 5:1–4.*

Zechariah 12

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is consecutive, cumulative, comprehensive, and Christ-centered, with later parts referring to earlier ones, and all of them pointing directly or indirectly to Jesus Christ.

Its interpretation

- ◆ Prophetic revelation contains some passages, like the final chapters of Zechariah, which are so hard to interpret that the most learned scholars disagree sharply among themselves about the details.
- ◆ In such cases, we must focus on the main points and the clearest parts and also rely on other parts of the Bible, including the New Testament's use of these passages, for clues as to their meaning.

God

His Triune nature: It is foreshadowed in the persons of God the Father ("I"), God the Son (the one "pierced"), and God the Holy Spirit ("the Spirit of grace"), 10.

His greatness

- ◆ He created heaven and earth and continues to rule over them for his purposes, which include the good of his people, 1-9.
- ◆ He is able to use his people to judge other nations, 2-9.

His goodness

- ◆ He revealed himself to his people through his chosen messengers, the prophets, 1.
- ◆ He not only saved Israel but also employed them to destroy his enemies, 3-8.
- ◆ He especially regards his people, 4.
- ◆ He makes his people strong in the LORD, 5.
- ◆ He reversed the Exile and caused Jerusalem to be inhabited again, 6.
- ◆ He took away the shame and curse and will make Judah, Jerusalem, and the house of David glorious, 7.
- ◆ He will defend his people and make them powerful like David, 8.

- ♦ He gives them his Holy Spirit in a show of favor and grace, 10.
- ♦ He gives them the Spirit to enable them to pray, 10.

Christ

His person: Christ is prefigured here

- ♦ As the one who is identified with God (“Me,” or perhaps this is the rejected prophet Zechariah), who was pierced for our iniquities, 10; *see John 19:34, 37; 20:27.*
- ♦ As “firstborn,” 10; *see Colossians 1:15, where “firstborn” does not refer to one of several equals in a sequence, but one who is preeminent over all others.*

The Holy Spirit

His person and work

- ♦ He is God’s supreme gift of himself to his people.
- ♦ He is poured out by God upon them, communicates God’s grace (love) to them inwardly, and enables them to pray from the heart, 10.
- ♦ He opens their eyes to “look upon” Christ on the Cross and to mourn for his suffering on their behalf, even as they rejoice in the salvation it brings, 10.

Salvation

Its substance

- ♦ God’s powerful weapon against his enemies, 2–6, 9
- ♦ Salvation from Exile and depopulation, 7
- ♦ Restored glory and honor, 7
- ♦ Defense from enemies, 8
- ♦ Receiving the Holy Spirit, 10
- ♦ The ability to pray from the heart, 10

The Last Things

The last days

- ♦ Interpreters differ as to the proper understanding of this passage, but all agree that “that day” refers to the Day of the Lord, in which God manifests himself in judgment and salvation, 3–4, 6, 8–9, 11.

- ♦ The “last days” are usually taken to have begun with the Incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and outpouring of the Holy Spirit by Jesus. *See Acts 2:16–19 and Hebrews 1:2.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Thank God for sending Jesus to die on the Cross for our redemption.
- ♦ Meditate upon the sufferings of Christ, and ask God to give us, at least to some degree, a spirit of mourning for what Jesus had to endure to save us.
- ♦ Thank God for giving his Spirit to all who truly repent and trust in him.
- ♦ Ask God to work in us by his Spirit so that we might be moved to pray according to God’s will and with his heart. *See Ephesians 6:18.*
- ♦ Ask God daily to make us strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, so that we might fulfill his will and withstand all Satan’s wiles. *See Ephesians 6:10 and Colossians 1:11.*

Zechariah 13

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with similar themes occurring in different books of the Bible.

- ◆ Repeated themes
 - A fountain (river or spring) that would cleanse the people and the land from sin and give new life, 1; *see Leviticus 14:5; Ezekiel 47:1-12; and Revelation 22:1-2.*
 - The idea of sin as defilement and the need for cleansing, 1; *see 1 John 2:1.*
 - False and true prophets, 3; *see Matthew 24:11.*
 - Unclean spirits, 3; *see Mark 5:8.*
 - The Messianic Shepherd, 7; *see Psalm 23 and Hebrews 13:20.*
 - The refining of God's people, 9; *see 1 Peter 1:6-7.*

Its source

- ◆ It came through God's true prophets, who spoke (and sometimes wrote) what God had given them, which was consistent with the total revelation of God already bestowed, especially the Books of Moses.
- ◆ This true message was often counterfeited by false prophets, who spoke what the people wanted to hear, and who led them astray to worship foreign idols. Such false prophecy was a horrible abomination to God and deserved death, 2. *See Deuteronomy 13:6-10.*

God

His greatness: He is the LORD of hosts (heavenly armies), 2, 7.

His goodness

- ◆ He cleanses his people from sin, 1.
- ◆ He allows his people to pray to him and to be in fellowship with him, 9.

Christ

His person: Christ is prefigured here

- ♦ As the Shepherd who was struck, with the result that the “sheep” (that is, his followers) were scattered, 7; *see Matthew 26:31.*
- ♦ As a man who is at the same time the Companion, who is equal and intimate with God, 7; *see John 10:30.*

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Worship of idols, 2
- ♦ False prophecy, which includes religion that leads people to worship idols, 3

Salvation

Its substance

- ♦ Cleansing from the guilt and ritual defilement of sin, 1
- ♦ Deliverance from false religion and the worship of worthless idols, 2–3
- ♦ Gradual freedom from sin through continual refining by trial, 9
- ♦ The privilege of prayer and intimate communion with God, 9

Note: All of these, which came to Israel, are now also ours in Christ.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Come to God each day for forgiveness and the removal of the defilement of sin, trusting God that blood of Jesus is sufficient to remove our guilt.
- ♦ Beware of all false messengers who would turn us away from trusting, loving, and serving God and towards worthless substitutes (idols).
- ♦ Thank Jesus for allowing himself to be “struck” in our place, so that we might not be “struck” by God in just punishment for our sins.
- ♦ Thank God for trials, and respond to them with faith, for God can use them to purify us from sinful thoughts and habits.
- ♦ Constantly call upon God in the name of Jesus, seeking intimate fellowship with him.

Zechariah 14

Truth

Revelation

Its interpretation

- ♦ Some prophetic passages, like this chapter, contain details that are so difficult to understand that the most learned and godly interpreters disagree on even the major possibilities.
- ♦ In such cases, the best approach, most likely, is to mine the passage for the clear teachings in it, rather than to argue with others about the proper interpretation or to build elaborate theories upon what is not clear.

God

His greatness

- ♦ As King, the LORD of hosts (heavenly armies), and the Ruler of the nations, he is sovereign over all events of history and can use wicked nations and men to wreak great suffering upon each other and even upon his people, 2, 16.
- ♦ He has the power to defeat all earthly nations and to defend his people, 3-5.
- ♦ As the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, he has the power to change the courses of the heavenly bodies, 6-7. (This passage may only refer figuratively to world rulers, but even so, the larger reality is also true.)
- ♦ He has the power to alter the topography of an area, 8-10.
- ♦ He has power over disease and can strike entire nations with deadly plagues, as he did during the Exodus period, 12, 15.
- ♦ He has the power to move the hearts of men, so that they turn against each other, 13.
- ♦ He has the power to move in the hearts of pagan peoples to make them want to abandon their hostility to God's people, worship with them, and give them gifts, 14-17.
- ♦ He is the one and only true and living God, in total contrast to the multitude of "gods" invented and worshiped by pagans, 9.

His goodness

- ♦ As Yahweh, the covenant God of his people, he rescues them, enriches them with the treasures of their enemies, defends them, and empowers them to fight victoriously, 3–5, 14.
- ♦ He provides constant supplies of fresh water for them, 6.
- ♦ He keeps his promises to fill the Promised Land with inhabitants and will one day allow it to enjoy perpetual peace, 10–11.
- ♦ He is utterly holy and thus finally delivers his people from all sin and moral pollution, such that even the most common utensils are sanctified, 20–21.

Christ

His person: Christ is prefigured here

- ♦ As the one who will come to save his people, 5; *see Revelation 3:11*.
- ♦ As the one who gives “living waters” (indicating that Jesus is equal with God the Father), 8; *see John 4:14*.

Salvation

Its substance

- ♦ It came to Israel in all the ways listed in “His goodness,” above.
- ♦ It will come to Christians in similar ways at the end time.

The Last Things

The last days

- ♦ Some think this passage will find literal fulfillment in the events surrounding the “first” second coming of Christ, to establish a literal one thousand–year reign in Jerusalem on earth.
- ♦ Others believe the passage refers to the conditions attendant upon the “one and only” second coming of Christ at the end of this age when he comes to establish a new heaven and new earth.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Expect that God will send us hard times, as he did to Israel, for a variety of purposes, but mostly to refine us from our inner idols, 2. *See 1 Peter 1:6-7.*
- ♦ Expect God to give us all we need when we are attacked, oppressed, and otherwise suffering great trials.
- ♦ Turn to God in faith for provision, protection, refreshment, strength, and everything else we need.
- ♦ Expect that God will one day bring us to a place of rich fulfillment, perhaps partially in this age, and certainly in the age to come.
- ♦ Seek to be holy, as God is holy, in every aspect of our lives. *See 1 Peter 1:16.*
- ♦ Set our hopes fully on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

MALACHI

Malachi 1:1–2:9

Truth

Revelation

Its cumulative fullness: Biblical revelation is a consecutive, cumulative, and coherent whole, with earlier themes repeated in later books.

- ◆ Repeated themes
 - The “burden of the word of the LORD,” a common prophetic term, 1:1
 - The election of Jacob over Esau, 1:2–3; *see Romans 9:13*.
 - Edom as an inveterate enemy of Israel, 1:4
 - The sacrificial system and its requirement of pure offerings, 1:6–14
 - God’s future glory among the Gentiles, 1:11; *see Isaiah 60:3, 5 and Acts 1:8*.
 - Blessings and curses for obedience and disobedience, 1:14
 - God’s covenant with the family of Levi, 2:4; *see Numbers 25:12*.

Its literary forms

- ◆ Though most prophetic revelation takes the form of poetry, some, like Malachi, is written in prose.
- ◆ Like almost all of the Bible, Malachi is carefully structured.
- ◆ Malachi has a concentric (chiastic) order, which is common in the Bible. *See the ESV Study Bible for details.*

God

His greatness

- ◆ He is the “LORD of hosts” (that is, heavenly armies). This phrase is used proportionally more in Malachi than in any other book of the Bible, 1:4, 8, 10–11, 13–14; 2:2, 4, 7–8.
- ◆ He is the great king over all the earth, 1:14.
- ◆ He is utterly sovereign in his choice of individuals for salvation, 1:2–3. *See Romans 9:13 and context.*
- ◆ He is master of his people, 1:6.
- ◆ He is universal in his rule, 1:11.

- ♦ He is fully deserving of glory and honor, 2:2.

His goodness

- ♦ He is the God of unconditional electing love, 1:2.
- ♦ He is Father to his people, 1:6.
- ♦ He is willing to give favor and grace to those who ask, 1:9.
- ♦ However, he is also utterly holy and pure, requiring holiness and purity of worship from his people, 1:10-14.
- ♦ He is willing to be worshiped even by Gentiles, 1:11.
- ♦ He is absolutely opposed to sin and sinners, such as deceivers, 1:14.
- ♦ He has made a covenant of life and peace with the descendants of Levi, 2:5.
- ♦ He is author of all truth and is willing to reveal it to his chosen servants, 2:6.
- ♦ He reveals his justice and truth to his people through his chosen messengers, 2:7.

Salvation

Its substance: It comes to us as unconditional love, based on God's electing grace alone, not on our deserving, 1:2-3.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Thank God for choosing to save us.
- ♦ Offer God pure sacrifices, that is, bodies, minds, and hearts utterly devoted to him. *See Romans 12:1-2.*
- ♦ Live to God's glory, and do not profane it before others by half-hearted or impure worship and service to God.
- ♦ Speak truth, justice, and knowledge of God as we serve as his priests.
- ♦ Live and walk with justice, peace, and fairness.

Malachi 2:10–3:5

Truth

God

His Triune nature

- ♦ A Trinity of distinct yet inseparable and equal Persons
- ♦ God (the Father, “I”), 3:1
- ♦ His “messenger,” “the Lord whom you seek,” 3:1
- ♦ The Spirit, 2:15

His greatness

- ♦ He created the world, including all mankind, 2:10.
- ♦ He is the LORD of hosts (that is, heavenly armies), 2:12.
- ♦ He is all-knowing and sees our past commitments, our present actions, and our inner spirit, 2:14–15.
- ♦ He is powerful like a fire and is able to purify people, 3:2–3.
- ♦ He is the fearsome Judge, 3:5.

His goodness

- ♦ He relates to his people as Father, 2:10.
- ♦ He made a covenant with his people, through Abraham and at Sinai, 2:10.
- ♦ He deigned to dwell among them in the sanctuary, 2:11.
- ♦ He instituted a system of offerings and sacrifices for people to draw near to him, 2:12.
- ♦ He is willing to be called “the God of Israel” despite their sins, 2:16.
- ♦ He cares for the weak and helpless, 2:15.
- ♦ He is also morally good, that is, he is holy, and therefore cannot abide hypocritical worship, 2:12–13.
- ♦ He is the God of justice, 2:17; 3:1.
- ♦ He will purify his people so that they can offer pure worship to him, 3:4.
- ♦ He will judge unrepentant sinners, 3:5.

Christ

His person: He is prophesied as the messenger of God and the messenger of the covenant, who is equal with God, and who will come quickly to his temple with refining holiness, 3:1–2.

The Holy Spirit

His person and work: God gives his Spirit, to some degree, to his people, 2:15.

Sin

It includes

- ♦ Marrying someone who is outside God’s covenant, 2:11; in the Old Testament, this meant a non-Israelite; in the New Testament, this means a non-Christian.
- ♦ Divorce, 2:14
- ♦ A heart that does not love one’s spouse, 2:15–16
- ♦ Complaining against God, especially when our circumstances are hard, and doubting his justice, 2:17
- ♦ Sorcery, adultery, swearing falsely, and oppressing laborers, widows, orphans, and alien residents—all of which stem from not fearing God, 3:5

Marriage

Its nature and purpose

- ♦ It is a covenant relationship with our spouse and also with God, 2:14.
- ♦ It involves companionship, 2:14.
- ♦ It creates a unity of being “one flesh,” 2:15. *See also Genesis 2:24 and Matthew 19:4–5.*
- ♦ It is meant to produce children, especially godly children, 2:15.
- ♦ It should be marked by love, 2:16.
- ♦ It is meant to be a lifelong commitment and binding alliance, 2:16.

The Last Things

The last days

- ♦ These began with the preaching of John the Baptist and the ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, and outpouring of the Holy Spirit by Jesus, 3:1–4.

- ♦ They will be completed when he returns in judgment on all the world, 3:5. *See Acts 2:17-40 and 2 Peter 3:10.*

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Do not marry those who do not share our faith in Christ.
- ♦ Remain faithful to our marriage partner.
- ♦ Do not complain against God or question his justice and fairness in his dealings with us.
- ♦ Avoid all sin and be prepared always for the sudden return of Christ.

Malachi 3:6–4:6

Truth

Revelation

Its source

- ♦ Old Testament revelation was given through Moses—the greatest of all the prophets and the chief among the so-called “writing prophets”—and his writings. Known collectively as the Law, or Torah (which means, broadly, “teaching”), these writings included laws and ordinances, as well as history, prophecy, and blessings and curses for obedience and disobedience, 3:7, 14; 4:4.
- ♦ It also came through the other prophets, both the writing and non-writing ones, of whom the greatest non-writing prophet was Elijah, 4:5.
- ♦ This prophetic revelation ceased after Malachi. In this sense, though the Old Testament Scriptures remained as God’s Word to Israel, the Lord fell “silent” for nearly four hundred years.
- ♦ This reminds and warns us that if the revelation of the Bible is not heeded, God will not show himself authoritatively to his people in any other way.

God

His greatness

- ♦ He does not change, unlike all created beings and things, 3:6.
- ♦ He is the Lord of heavenly armies (or “hosts”), 3:7, 14; 4:1.
- ♦ He is able to pour down rain from heaven and cause crops to grow up on the earth, 3:11.
- ♦ He is omnipresent and omniscient, fully aware of all that happens on earth, 3:16.
- ♦ He is able to consume the wicked in a terrible fire of judgment, 4:1.
- ♦ He is able to heal those whose sins have made them “sick,” 4:2.
- ♦ He is able to strengthen his people for victorious battle, 4:3.
- ♦ He is the sovereign Ruler and King, with authority to command obedience, 4:4.
- ♦ He is able to communicate through chosen men, 4:5–6.
- ♦ He is able to change the hearts of men, 4:6.

His goodness

- ♦ He remains faithful to his covenant promises to Abraham by not destroying his sinful people, as he had destroyed rebellious Edom, 3:6. *See Malachi 1:2–5.*
- ♦ He remains merciful, offering to “return” to his people in fellowship and favor if they will “return” to him in repentance, faith, and obedience, 3:7.
- ♦ He rewards faith that gives the required contributions for his worship and service with overflowing abundance of provision, even miraculously, 3:10. *See Luke 6:38.*
- ♦ He turns his people from ugly, cursed rebels into lovely, delightful, blessed ones in the sight of the nations, 3:11–12.
- ♦ He takes note of those who genuinely “fear”—that is, believe in, love, and revere—him, 3:16.
- ♦ He treats these people as his beloved children and his own special possession, his “jewels,” 3:17. *See 1 Peter 2:9–10.*
- ♦ He grants them the wisdom to see the value of serving God rather than doubting his fairness, 3:13–15, 18.
- ♦ He will enable his people to gain the victory over their enemies. In the Old Testament these were the nations that oppressed them; in the New Testament this is Satan, the temptations of the world, and our own sinful tendencies, 4:3.
- ♦ He will someday send a prophet who will speak so powerfully that he will restore estranged family relationships, 4:5–7.
- ♦ He is morally good, in the sense of holiness, and therefore must chastise his people for sin, 3:9; 4:1.

Christ

His person

- ♦ He is foreshadowed in the promise of the coming of the “Sun of righteousness” who will come with healing, 4:2. *See Matthew 4:16; Luke 1:78; and 2 Corinthians 4:4. First Peter 2:24–25 also points to the spiritual healing Christ would bring.*

Note: Jesus is often compared to a divine light, and healing is featured prominently in his ministry.

- ♦ He is predicted as the one whose way will be prepared by a new “Elijah” (later revealed as John the Baptist). *See Matthew 11:14; 17:10-13; Mark 9:11-13; and Luke 1:17.*

Sin

It includes

- ♦ “Turning” from God and disobeying his revealed will, 3:7
- ♦ Withholding financial resources from the use of God’s work and from poor believers, 3:8
- ♦ Thinking it is useless to serve God, since the wicked prosper, 3:14
- ♦ Serving God only because it is “useful” to do so, which is worse, 3:14
- ♦ Neglecting or even not loving our children, 4:6
- ♦ Not reverencing and obeying our parents, 4:6

Salvation

See above, “His goodness.”

The Church

Its characteristics

- ♦ It is prefigured here as the group of people who fear God and thus become a means of blessing to all nations, 3:12, 16.
- ♦ It is God’s special possession, 3:17. *See Ephesians 1:14 and 1 Peter 2:9-10.*

The Last Things

The last days

- ♦ These were proclaimed John the Baptist, who announced the coming of Christ, 4:5.
- ♦ They were inaugurated by the coming of Jesus Christ in his ministry on earth.
- ♦ They will culminate on the “great and dreadful day of the LORD,” when Christ returns to judge the living and the dead, 4:5.

Life

Ethical imperatives

- ♦ Study and heed the entire Old Testament, even if we do not seem to “hear” a prophetic word. For us, though God can still speak through those who have the gift of prophecy, Scripture alone is authoritative and should be our constant meditation, 3:16; 4:4.
- ♦ Repent of all our known sins, which are caused by turning away from God as our love and the object of our fear.
- ♦ Give one-tenth of our income for the spread of the gospel, and give generously to alleviate the poverty of needy Christians.
Note: Some believe the tithe was only for Israel. Though this may be true, legally, the New Testament always deepens Old Testament moral standards, so we should take the tithe as a general principle. At times, it may have to be subordinated to urgent needs, but these should not, of course, become an excuse for not giving.
- ♦ Make sure to have regular fellowship with other believers and to talk with them about God and his Word.
- ♦ Eagerly await the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who will deliver us and this world from all wickedness, evil, and pain, and who will reward the righteous and punish the unrepentant wicked.