

OpenTheo

Ezekiel Overview (Part 2)



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

In this overview, Steve Gregg discusses the major visions and significant parts of the book of Ezekiel, including difficult passages such as the one where he bears the iniquity of the house of Judah for forty days. Gregg explains that Ezekiel foretells the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, and also predicts the unification of Jews and Gentiles into one body in Christ. While some of Ezekiel's prophecies may not be literal, they are rich in imagery and serve to represent different things in different contexts.

Transcript

We were talking about the major visions in Ezekiel, which make up a significant part of the book. But there are only four of them, and there's quite a few other aspects of the book that we need to talk about. One of them are the acted prophecies, which I mentioned earlier.

I mentioned that lots of the prophets acted out prophecy. Usually, the acting was of a very peculiar sort. The thing they did was not really very... it's certainly not self-explanatory.

In some cases, just bizarre. Actually, there are some liberal scholars who argue that Ezekiel had a mental illness, because he thought God was going to do all these weird things. But liberal scholars are not very trustworthy.

I'm not sure that liberalism isn't itself a mental illness. So, we have God telling Ezekiel to do these things because they have meaning, they have significance, and because they are bizarre. So I want to talk about some of these.

I mentioned already earlier in the first part that one of the things was that he didn't speak, except when he prophesied. Until Jerusalem fell, then he could speak. I mean, I don't know... there's no explanation of why that is.

Except it may be... that might not have been so much of a sign as it was just to prevent Ezekiel from saying something that wasn't inspired at a time so critical for Israel when they needed to hear only what God had to say to them. But... and maybe to just teach

him the discipline. Maybe he had a tendency to go off on his own a little bit before... in the early days of being a young man and a prophet, but maybe this is how God was disciplining him, training him to make sure he doesn't speak in the name of God, unless he really is speaking from God.

I don't know. There's no explanation of why he was mute for that period of time. Now, chapter 4 has several acted parables at the very beginning.

Now, chapters 1 through 3 are the first vision that we're talking about. The chariot vision. And certain things happened there we didn't discuss.

He saw a scroll, he was told to eat the scroll, the scroll was sweet in his mouth but bitter in his belly, and so forth. Which, by the way, is something that's also found to be true in Revelation chapter 10. John eats a scroll, it's sweet in his mouth but bitter in his belly.

There are about 48 allusions to Ezekiel in the book of Revelation. And it's not the most frequently alluded to Old Testament book in Revelation. Most of the things in Revelation, I think, come from Psalms.

But Ezekiel and Zechariah, and of course Daniel and Isaiah also feed a lot of imagery into the... it's rearranged differently in the book of Revelation, but it's from these older books. But Ezekiel's a very prominent source of imagery for the book of Revelation. And one of the things is eating the scroll, and the sweet in the mouth, bitter in the belly.

Another is the river of life that flows out of the temple in chapter 47, which also comes out of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 22. The marking on the foreheads of the remnant in Ezekiel 9 is found in the marking of 144,000 in Revelation 7 and so forth. There's a lot of this kind of thing.

Even the cherubim we were describing, although they're not reproduced in Revelation, the imagery of a lion and an ox and an eagle and a man are reproduced in the four living creatures. So there's a lot of allusions back to Ezekiel in Revelation. And chapter 4 then moves from this vision of the first three chapters to his first acted parables, and there are several of them in a row.

They're short. The first one, he is told to take a tile and depict the city of Jerusalem. It's not clear whether he built a model or just drew it on there.

It simply is not described. He's supposed to depict Jerusalem and to lay siege to it and to surround it with siege works and with armies and so forth. So again, I don't know if he's just drawing this on a tile or putting little toy soldiers on the thing or what he's doing, you know, but he's making a miniature of Jerusalem besieged by armies.

And then he's supposed to take a metal pan, a bronze pan, and put it between him and the city and then kind of like scowl at it like he's God angry. And God's angry because

there's this barrier between God and Jerusalem. God's not coming to their aid.

And that's just a really simple thing he was supposed to do, which is supposed to depict that God is alienated and upset with Jerusalem. And these armies surrounding the city depicted on the tile are the result of God's anger toward them. Very simple.

The next in the same chapter, that's chapter four, verses one through three. Then in verses of the same chapter, verses four through eight, we have one of the more difficult passages. And we're going to discuss this.

I guess we could discuss it now. I have it in separate notes later in the notes. But this is kind of interesting.

He says in verse four, lie also on your left side and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it. According to the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their iniquity. For I have laid on you the years of the iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days.

So you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And when you have completed them, lie again on your right side. And then you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah.

Forty days I have laid on you a day for each year. Therefore, you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem. Your arm shall be uncovered.

And you shall prophesy against it and surely I will constrain you so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have ended the days of your siege. Now, what is that about? Apparently, he lies on his left side for three hundred and ninety days and on his right side for forty days. And this represents the same number of years.

One of these represents the years, the longer number against Israel and Israel's iniquity. That was the northern kingdom or it could be the whole kingdom before it divided up through the end of the northern kingdom because the nation was called Israel until Rehoboam's time when it split into two. And then only the northern kingdom was called Israel, the southern was called Judah.

And here's a distinction between Judah and Israel. Lay the iniquity of Israel on, you know, for the thirty, three hundred and ninety days and then Judah for forty. Now, what does that have to do with anything? Nobody knows for sure.

I have in your notes, if you look to the pages are not numbered, but I have a discussion of this. I put together from a number of different commentators opinions. It's really quite a difficult thing to see here.

Under it's on the back of the third sheet of your notes and it's ahead of the sheet. So that's where you find this. Now, I don't know the answer to this, but I'm in good company

because nobody knows the answer.

And you can see that from the various opinions given by different countries. One thing, let me just say this. It's not even clear whether he did three hundred ninety days on his left side and then forty days on his right side.

So it's a total of four hundred and thirty days. Or if he did the forty days within the three hundred ninety. So the longer number is the whole number three hundred ninety and forty is a smaller number within it.

That's not known because it's no one believes that he just laid on his side and did nothing else for three hundred ninety days. That's more than a year. Not moving.

He'd have bed sores, which would be something that God would not be unable to make him endure. But the thing is, he's told to do a lot of other things, too. At the same time, he's got some other actions, some other processing.

He's not going to be laying twenty four seven for four hundred ninety days on one side. He may have simply slept every night of three hundred days on his left side, then forty days on his right. Or even since this was assigned to people, there may have been some time of the day that he simply went out and laid on his side for an hour or two in public.

And then he went home and did those other things. And then then he came and laid on his other side for forty days. We don't there's not enough information here.

Ezekiel knew because he did it. His readers are at least his contemporaries knew because they saw it. We're reading it without enough detail to really get the whole picture.

So that's one reason there's some serious questions that says that God would lay the iniquity of Israel on his side, his left side for four three hundred ninety days. And then the iniquity of Judah. What does it mean to lay the iniquity on? Now, the three hundred ninety days represents three hundred ninety years.

But I would have a three hundred ninety years of committing iniquity or three hundred ninety years of being punished for iniquity. That's that's also something scholars aren't sure is the three hundred ninety years, the period of Israel's sins that have brought now judgment on them because for the past three hundred ninety years they've been sinning. Or is it three hundred nine years that God is punishing them for the whole three hundred ninety years? Is it the punishment or the sin? That's the picture.

There's just difference of opinion because we're not given a clear answer in the scripture. Let me show you some of the some of the possible answers that have been given. Well, there's other problems, too, because in the Septuagint, which is the Greek Old Testament, instead of three hundred ninety, it says one hundred ninety.

So that follows things up a little bit, too. It's a textual question. Is it was it three hundred ninety or was it one hundred ninety? So I got a feeling you better you better learn to be disappointed if you're hoping to go home knowing for sure what this means.

But if it's the iniquity, that is, if this is the period that they're committing iniquity rather than a period, they're being judged for their iniquity. Then here's some of the theories. FF Bruce and his commentary and also the New Living Translations study Bible said that the three hundred ninety years is the time from Solomon's apostasy.

In the nine sixties, B.C. to the fall of Jerusalem in five eighty six, that'd be sensible from the time that Solomon, who had inherited David's kingdom, went astray himself and the whole nation with him went astray for the better part of well until Jerusalem fell. That's about three hundred ninety years. So that would make it possible for this to be the period of time of their sinning.

Of course, the judgment came in the fall of Jerusalem in five eighty six B.C., but their sinning was for the three hundred ninety years before that. That's the theory on that particular point. Another theory is the three hundred ninety years is from Jeroboam's apostasy, which wasn't very much later than Solomon's.

Solomon's apostasy, we don't know exactly when it was the last few years of his reign. He was apostate. And then Jeroboam took charge of the ten northern tribes.

So it wouldn't be very much longer than Solomon's. But some say and this would be in a commentary that's called Shepherds Notes. From Jeroboam's apostasy in three nine thirty one B.C. to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Treasurer's description knowledge also has that figure. The total is actually only about three hundred and forty five years. But if it's taken to the end of the exile, then it comes to three hundred ninety two years.

This is more confusing than enlightenment. I just want you to see why. Why it's confusing.

The 40 years on that view, if it is the iniquity, would be the length of time from Jeremiah's call to the fall of Jerusalem. Jeremiah's ministry is about 40 years. And Jeremiah was called to warn Judah about the impending doom from 40 years beforehand until it actually happened.

And they rejected his testimony. So their iniquities that caused the fall could be seen as their rejection of Jeremiah's ministry, which was 40 years long and ended with the fall of Jerusalem. Alternatively, the treasure of scripture knowledge suggests that the 40 years is the period of gross idolatry from Josiah's reforms failing.

That is when Josiah's reforms failed, then gross idolatry prevailed for 40 years or for a

generation or so after that. And so those are some of the theories really hard to hard to really totally endorse any of them with wholeheartedly. And that all of those assume that the years are the years of sinning.

There's another whole set of theories that they are talking about the years of punishment for their years of sinning. The numbers are not the years of their sinning, but of their punishment for it. And on that view, for example, Haley's handbook says that the 390 years is the exact period from 722 BC, which is when the Northern Kingdom fell to the Assyrians to the conquest of Alexander in 332 BC, who showed great lenience and favor to the Jews.

So from the destruction of Samaria in the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC, that's the beginning of the period of punishment. And that it ends with Alexander the Great coming to Jerusalem and showing great leniency to the Jews. He is conquering everybody else and punishing them, but he was very good to the Jews according to Josephus.

When he came to Jerusalem, intending to conquer it, he was met by a train of priests carrying out the book of Daniel to him, which predicts Alexander's conquest. And they showed Alexander the book, the prophecy of Daniel, and he was impressed. And not only because of that, because according to Josephus, Alexander said to one of his companions there, he said, I saw this man in a dream last night.

And he had a dream about these priests coming out to meet him. And then he saw in Daniel's prophecy that it was predicted, so he didn't destroy the temple. This is also predicted in Zechariah 9, that it has the advance of Alexander the Great coming from all the countries he conquered toward Jerusalem.

And then it says that God would guard his house and would prevent it from falling. So that was so. Alexander's conquest becomes kind of the time when God begins to show mercy again to Israel.

So the period of 390 years from the fall of the Northern Kingdom to the leniency given by Alexander is what at least one suggestion is. The punishment ended at that point. A problem with that is that there was more punishment for them after that.

Certainly the problems they had with Antiochus Epiphanes were every bit as bad as any other problems that they had in terms of troubles of evil. But one could argue that wasn't the judgment of God. One could argue that God's judgment ended at a certain point, but they still had suffering because the devil was pretty malicious.

They had persecution for righteousness in that case. So maybe, hard to say. The 40 years, according to the New Living Translation Study Bible notes, is symbolic of a lost generation, that is those who are in Babylon, which is reminiscent of the lost generation in the wilderness when they came out of Egypt.

When they came out of Egypt, a whole generation of Israel was lost to just wander around until they all died. And that this is symbolic of or corresponding to the generation lost in Babylon. I'm not supporting this necessarily, but that's one of the theories that's out there.

There's many. Another theory is that the 40 years is a round figure representing the time from 586 BC, which is when Jerusalem fell, to 539 BC, when the Jews were allowed to go back and rebuild it. It was not exactly 40 years, in fact it was more like 47.

Guesses are abundant. And another theory is that the 40 years may denote a generation, generally speaking, representing the time from the prophecy to the end of the captivity. That is from the time Ezekiel is speaking and doing this, till the captivity ended in 539 BC.

That's possible. Then taking the two figures as joined, because you've got 390 years on one side, then 40 years on the other. There's a total of 430 years.

There's theories about that. The 430 years is from the end of David's monarchy, and to the deportation of Jehoiachin, who was the last of the Davidic kings who was taken into Babylon. From that to the Hasmonean kingdom, when the kingdom was restored to Judah in a sense, after the Maccabean victories.

If you don't know that history, this is going to go right over your head, but there was in fact, of course, the end of the Davidic dynasty when Jehoiachin was carried into Babylon. And 430 years later, we have the rise after the Maccabean revolt, where Israel is liberated from their oppressors, and they actually had 100 years existing as an independent nation, before the Romans came and conquered them again. Anyway, some think that's that period of time.

One other theory, in William MacDonald's commentary, he says, no explanation of the total seems satisfactory, which you might be already coming to that conclusion. 430 years may echo the captivity in Egypt. Remember, Israel was 430 years in Egypt.

And so, maybe symbolic of another captivity, namely in Babylon, which was not literally that length, but in principle, it's like the Egyptian captivity, and therefore compared with the numbers. These kinds of answers are mostly unsatisfying, but they're the best that are out there. There's not much there.

There's not much else out there. There just isn't a good answer. Or we might say there's several answers that might be good.

There's several answers that could possibly be the answer, but no one knows for sure. You say, what good is a prophecy if no one knows for sure what it means? I'm not sure. But presumably, it made sense at the time.

You had to be there, you know. And that's true with a lot of these active prophecies. You kind of had to be there.

Otherwise, you can't really make out what's going on. And my guess is that we're only being told by God what, I mean, told what God told Ezekiel to do. We're not told what Ezekiel said by way of explanation to the people.

So the people may have gotten a clear explanation of this, and we're just casting about for someone to make sense of it. So remember, the Bible was not written to us. It is written for our advantage, but it was written to people a long time ago in a different place and time.

It was written to exiles in Babylon, for example. And they had not only what Ezekiel wrote, they had his verbal ministry with them, which means that probably an awful lot of things got explained that aren't explained in the written record. So it leaves us really sometimes scratching our heads.

And for people who are addicted to certainty, it's got to be a nightmare. And I'm fortunate I got over that addiction a long time ago. So that's one of his strange acted prophecies.

Then there's another one in the same chapter. And that's, he was supposed to limit his food and cook it over human dung. That is, use human dung for fuel for his stove, for his oven, and to bake his food over there.

Now, this time Ezekiel kind of objected. I mean, honestly, this is the first time he actually doesn't just go along. He says, oh, come on, God.

You know, I've never eaten anything unclean. Human excrement? You've got to be kidding me. And God says, okay, I hear you.

You can use cow dung instead. So he kind of made that modification because cow dung is used for fuel sometimes. I mean, but human dung, not so much.

And cows are clean. Humans not. And so, you know, God gave him that break.

But here's what he's told to eat in verse nine. Also take for yourself wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt, and put them into one vessel and make bread of them for yourself during the number of days that you will lie on your side. Three hundred and ninety days you shall eat it.

Now, see, this is interesting. He says that you're laying aside for three hundred and ninety days. What about the forty days? He doesn't mention that.

So maybe that was contained within the three hundred and ninety also. Maybe he did both on certain days, but we don't know. And he says, in your food which you eat shall

be by weight twenty shekels a day, which isn't very much.

From time to time you shall eat it. You shall also drink water by measure one sixth of a hend. That's very little.

I think it's like a pint a day or something like that. From time to time you shall drink it. And you shall eat it as barley cakes and bake it using fuel for human waste in their sight.

Then the Lord said, So shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, for I will drive them. So I said, Ah, Lord God, indeed, I have never defiled myself from my youth till now. I have never eaten what died of itself or what was torn by beasts, nor has vomitable flesh ever come into my mouth.

Then God said to me, See, I'm giving you cow dung instead of human waste, and you shall prepare your bread over it. Now, what is that about? It's funny, you can go to any health food store and buy some Ezekiel 4.9 bread. Have you ever seen that? And what's it made from? It's made from Ezekiel 4.9. Wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt.

Now, I've heard people argue that this must be the perfect diet because Ezekiel could live over a year eating nothing else but this. So it must be a very nourishing diet. As if God is saying this is the way people ought to eat.

Now, that's not the message. God's not saying, by the way, you guys are in a national crisis, but I just thought I'd give you some dietary tips about what's really healthy to eat. That's not what he's doing.

He's making your bread out of stuff you don't usually make bread out of. And this is before the days of multigrain breads. You know, they didn't make multigrain breads back then.

They made wheat or barley bread. It was all wheat or all barley. They didn't have a taste for beans and lentils and stuff like that in their flour.

This, what he's saying is, it's going to be siege rations. The city is under siege. People will be desperate for food.

They won't have the luxury of having their wheat bread or their barley bread. They're going to have to sweep the house for any kind of edibles they can find and put them all together and grind them up and make bread from that. So there's going to be all kinds of weird stuff in there.

Lentils and barley and spelt and who knows what else. Whatever you got. The idea here is this is not, I mean, it may be a very healthy kind of bread to eat.

I'm not saying it isn't. Maybe some of you buy that stuff. Maybe it's good, but that's not what it's about.

He's not saying this is the healthy diet I want everyone to eat. He's saying this is what I want you to eat to convey the idea of eating really strange food. Because when you're under siege, you're desperate.

You'll eat what you can get. And this is how you're going to depict that. You're going to eat that stuff.

Now you're going to cook it over human dung. And then he changes it to cow dung. But the idea is there's not going to be a lot of fuel in the siege either.

Well, you know, when a city is under siege, the enemies are all around the city on the outside of the walls. And inside, the people are trying to hold the enemy out. But there's no room inside the walled cities to grow food.

The farmlands are all outside. In times of invasion, the farmers all come from the villages. They come into the walled cities, shut the gates and try to wait for the enemy to go away.

So they can get back out to where their food is. They've got some food stored in the city, but not very much. And so if the siege goes on for very long, people start to starve.

This happened when the Babylonians besieged Jerusalem. It happened when the Romans did. It happened when Samaria was besieged by the Assyrians.

You read about people eating their babies. They get so hungry. Josephus records that that happened in the siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

People ate their babies sometimes. They were that hungry, that starving. The idea here is you're not going to have your favored foods.

You're going to be scratching together whatever you can get out of desperation. And same thing for fuel. There's not going to be a lot of fuel left.

You have to use dung for that. Use your own dung to cook your food. No, no, don't do that.

Okay, you can use cow dung. But it'll represent human dung because that's what they're going to be doing. And so this active parable is simply to depict the fact that they're going to have to be eating starvation rations, pretty much, in the siege.

That's the meaning of the vision. Then there's this really funny one. I guess all of them are funny in their own way.

But in chapter 5, verses 1 through 4, And you, son of man, take a sharp sword and take it as a barber's razor and pass it over your head and your beard and take the balances to weigh and divide the hair. So you shave your hair and your beard, gather up the hair and

weigh it in balances into three equal groups. You shall burn with fire one third in the midst of the city when the days of the siege are finished.

Then you shall take one third and strike around it with the sword. And one third you shall scatter into the wind. I will draw out the sword after them.

And you shall also take a small number of them and bind them in the edge of your garment. Now, when he does this, he shaves his head, his beard, he cuts, you know, chops up a third of the hair, burns a third of it, and scatters a third of it to the wind after he's gathered a little bit and binds it in his garment. And God says in verse 8, verse 5, Thus says the Lord, This is Jerusalem.

I have set her in the midst of the nations and the countries all around her. She has rebelled against my judgments, etc., etc. And he goes on to explain a third of them are going to go into captivity.

That's the one scattered to the wind. A third of them are going to be burned with fire in the judgment of the city. And a third are going to be slain with a sword.

There's going to be a remnant that God has preserved that will survive through it. So, Ezekiel's hair represents the children of Israel, or Judah in Jerusalem. And the different fate that will come upon them, they won't all die the same way.

They will all die some way, except for that little remnant that is preserved. Now, the next act of prophecy is in chapter 12. And in this one, there's not much to it, except that he packs his bags.

And like he's in exile, he's going into exile. And then he digs through the wall of his own house, apparently. I think when the sun's going down, he digs through the wall of the house to escape with his baggage of exile on his back.

Now, the meaning of this, people are supposed to ask him, why are you doing this? He would say, well, because the king, Zedekiah, the king of Judah at the time when Jerusalem fell, is going to escape through the wall of Jerusalem and try to escape from the Babylonians like an exile. So, he's representing the king of Jerusalem, Zedekiah, at the time that the city fell, trying to escape through the wall of the city. Actually, what happened was Zedekiah did do that, but he was captured by the Babylonians.

He brought before the commander and his sons were slain before his eyes, then his eyes were put out. So, the last thing he got to see was the death of his own children. Kind of awful, but he brought it on himself.

He was a very wicked king. In any case, Ezekiel kind of mimics this, escape through the wall that the king's going to attempt and fail. Then in chapter 21, verse 6, this is not very elaborate, not a very elaborate act, probably, but he's told to groan and clap his hands,

which in that culture, clapping of the hands was often done to show grief.

We sometimes clap hands to show pleasure or amusement or we're entertained or whatever, but it was to show grief. And so he's groaning and grieving. And in 21.6, he says, sigh, therefore, son of man, with a breaking heart and sigh with bitterness before their eyes.

And it shall be when they say to you, why are you sighing? That you shall answer because of the news. When it comes, every heart will melt, all hands will be feeble and every spirit will faint. That is the news of the city falling.

If you skip down to verse 14, he says, therefore, son of man prophesy, strike your hands together. A third time, let the sword do double damage. Now he may have actually held a sword for this.

We don't know if this is symbolic or if he's actually grabbed a sword and he's using it in this action. It's not very clear. A third time, let the sword do double damage.

It is the sword that slays the great men and enters their private chambers. I've set the point of the sword against all their gates, et cetera. So he's just talking about the city being captured and the sword coming against them and the people moaning and groaning and beating their hands together in grief.

Not a very elaborate acted parable in that case. But then, of course, I mentioned in chapter 24, verses 15 through 27, his wife's death, his failure to mourn. His wife's death was the sign.

And it's because God says he's losing his wife. And apparently God's not mourning for her. So Ezekiel is supposed to depict that by not mourning for his wife when she dies.

That's a pretty rough one to go through. And then there's a really famous one. The last acted parable is in chapter 37.

This is the one the Mormons think supports their religion. Let me show it to you. In Ezekiel chapter 37.

I don't think you can get into a conversation with a Mormon for very long before they bring this up. And demonstrate that they know nothing about what it's saying. Ezekiel 37, verses 15 through 23.

Again, the word of the Lord came to me saying, As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it, For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions. Then take another stick and write on it for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, And for all the house of Israel, his companions. Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick.

And they will become one in your hand. And when the children of your people speak to

you, saying, Will you not show us what you mean by these? Say to them, Thus says the Lord God, Surely I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, And the tribes of Israel, his companions, and I will join them with it, With it the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, And they will be one in my hand. And the sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes.

Then say to them, Thus says the Lord God, Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, Wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side, And bring them to their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land on the mountains of Israel, And one king shall be king over them all. They shall no longer be two nations, Nor shall they ever be divided into two nations and kingdoms again.

They shall not defile themselves, etc. etc. And it goes on to talk about the Messiah.

We don't have to get that far to make the point of the sticks. But I mentioned the Mormons think this proves their religion is true. How do they use this? They say, and if you talk to a Mormon, I can quote them verbatim.

I've had many conversations with them. They say, in those days books were scrolls wrapped around a stick. So a stick represents a book.

And one book says for Ephraim, and the other for Judah. So it talks about two books. One book for Judah must be the Bible because that's for the Jews.

The stick for Ephraim is the Book of Mormon. So you can see that God predicted in this vision the Book of Mormon. What could be clearer than that interpretation? Well, first of all, the interpretation fails simply on the grounds that the Bible gives the intended interpretation.

It has nothing to do with any books at all. But secondly, there's no reason to see a stick as representing a book. A stick can represent a lot of things.

A shepherd's staff is a stick. A king's scepter is a stick. You know, who knows? Sticks can be used for lots of things.

But to represent a stick as a book when you could actually use a book. I mean, they did have scrolls, after all. I mean, this is ridiculous.

But more than that, suppose we even started with their premises and gave them that. Okay, let's say this is talking about two books. One for Judah and one for Ephraim.

Why not see it as the Old and the New Testament? Instead of the Bible and the Book of Mormon? Where would we get the Book of Mormon out of this? It's ridiculous, obviously. But the point here is there's no books involved in it at all. He says the stick of Judah represents the tribe of Judah.

Well, that's a hard one to associate, isn't it? And the stick of Ephraim represents the house of Ephraim, which is another name for the northern kingdom of Israel. Ephraim was the largest tribe in the northern kingdom, just like Judah was the largest tribe in the southern kingdom. There were smaller tribes there, too.

Judah had Benjamin, but Judah was the big one, so they called the nation Judah. In the north, the biggest tribe was Ephraim. There were other tribes, too, but they sometimes called the nation Ephraim.

So putting Judah and Ephraim together again, he says, I'm going to make them one nation again. Now, they were divided in the days of Rehoboam, in the generation after Solomon. They had never been one nation since.

So that was hundreds of years earlier, but he says, I'm going to make them one nation again. And that's represented by taking these two sticks and making them one. Now, by the way, what actually happened? Did these two sticks literally merge into one stick? Could be.

It sounds that way, but Ezekiel is not known to have done any other miracles. And I don't know if we're supposed to see it like Moses throwing a stick down, it becomes a snake, then picking it up, it becomes a stick again. Like they're doing supernatural things with the stick.

It's very possible, since to make the point, he wouldn't have to miraculously join them. He could simply take one stick, hold his hand, one stick comes out the top, one stick comes out the bottom, and it has the image of being one stick. You've made the two into one stick, so to speak, visually.

If someone says, no, I'm going to take it literally, he made them one stick, that's fine. I don't have any complaints against that. But I think the wording does not necessarily require that he worked a miracle in this case.

He might have just used wood glue or something. But actually, in all likelihood, if he didn't do a miracle, he's just holding them to appear like one stick to make the point. This is Judah, this is Ephraim.

Look, they're one now in my hand. In your hand, they become one stick, he says. So anyway, whether it's a miraculous or just a visual, the point is, it's the joining of the two nations together.

Now, in what context, in what time frame, when is this supposed to happen? Well, the prophecy goes on and says, in the latter part of verse 23, I will cleanse them, and they shall be my people, and I shall be their God. David, my servant, which is a code name for the Messiah. Any king descended from David could be called David.

It's a dynastic name. Rehoboam was called David. When the people of the north rebelled against Rehoboam, it says, see to your own house, David.

They called Rehoboam David. Isaiah, when he was addressing Ahaz, another king from the dynasty of David, called him, O house of David. David was simply the dynastic name.

So, Jesus is the king, the final king of the house of David. So the Messiah is sometimes called David. Here and in chapter 34 and also in Hosea, chapter 3, verse 5, the Messiah is referred to as David.

But here, they'll serve David, my servants, I'll be over to them, and they shall have one shepherd. Now, notice there's two kingdoms that are put together, and they now have one shepherd, they're one flock. That's like words that Jesus deliberately mimicked.

In John chapter 10, he says, I have other sheep you don't know about. I must go and bring them too, and then there'll be one flock and one shepherd. He's talking about Gentiles there.

And the northern kingdom of Ephraim had been intermixed with Gentiles for hundreds of years by this time. They fell hundreds of years before Ezekiel's time. And they went out and they intermixed with Gentiles.

They were not really a... they hadn't maintained the integrity of their Hebrew ancestry at all. They were essentially Gentiles now. So there were still the people of Judah who had not done that.

They were the Jews. Then there were the people of Ephraim and the other tribes that had intermixed. They were like Gentiles now.

So putting the two together strikes me as very probably representing the Jews and the Gentiles becoming one body in Christ. And he goes on to say this in verse 26. Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them.

I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them forever. Now, he talks about making a covenant of peace, putting a sanctuary among them, and of course joining the two into one. If you look over to Ephesians chapter 2, it's rather interesting these themes occur together in Paul's... what may be Paul's interpretation of this vision.

I won't argue that it must be, but it's got an awful lot in common with it, and I don't have any personal doubts that Paul is alluding to this. He says in verse 11, Ephesians 2, 11. Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision made in the flesh by hand, that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the

covenants, a promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus you, who once were far off, have been made near by the blood of Christ, for he himself is our peace. Now, remember he said I'm going to make a covenant of peace between them. He says, he himself is our peace, who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us, and having abolished in his flesh the enmity, that is the law and commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that he might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

And he came and preached peace. There's all this talk about peace, because it's a covenant of peace by which the two, Jews and Gentiles, become one. To you who are far off and those who are near, for through him we both have access by one spirit into the Father.

Now therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief congressman, in whom the whole building being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. Now in Ezekiel 37 he says, I'm going to make a covenant of peace, these two nations become one nation, and the Messiah will lead them, my servant David, they'll serve him, and my sanctuary will be among them. That is, my temple will be among them.

And Paul says, well that's right, you are being built upon the foundation of the holy apostles and prophets, Christ being the chief congressman, and you are growing into a holy temple in the Lord, a habitation of God through the Spirit. These ideas from Ezekiel 37 seem to be in Paul's mind, or else he's very coincidentally just mentioning all the same points. And I think it's very likely that we have an inspired interpretation there of the two sticks coming from Paul's pen.

Now, in the little time we have left, I want to say we've talked about his visions, we've talked about his signs, his acted signs, there's also parables or metaphors. In chapter 15, he has a parable about a torched vine. Now, in this he basically says, what good is the wood from a vine? Presuming that's all you've got left, there's no fruit, there's no grapes.

Once you don't have anything but the wood, what is it good for? He says, can you take it and make something? Can you build furniture with grapevine wood? Hardly. I mean, it's just twisted wood. You can't do anything with it.

He says you can't even take it and make a peg for your home to hang things on from it. This is what he says, a vine without any fruit is worthless. Then he says, how much more after it's been burned? Now, what he's saying is this, he's alluding back to Isaiah's

parable in Isaiah chapter 5 where God compared Israel to a vine.

And he planted them in a very fruitful field, he looked for fruit. He said the fruit he was looking for in Isaiah 5, 7 was justice and righteousness. He established Israel like planting a vine to produce the fruit.

He wanted a nation that would produce justice and righteousness. And he said they didn't produce it, he got wild grapes instead of good grapes. And so he says he's going to tear it down, he's going to let wild bees come in.

In other words, he's going to judge them. Now, Israel then is seen as a fruitless vine. And Ezekiel takes that image and says, okay, once a vine is fruitless and it's just wood, what's it good for? Nothing.

It's just going to be burned and then it will be even worth less. Now, Israel was a fruitless vine in the days of Isaiah, a hundred years before the exile. Now that they've been burned up, you know, in God's judgment, they're even more worthless.

That's the point he's making, they've got no value in their present state. And Jesus, of course, told a parable about Israel being fruitless too. A slightly different twist on Isaiah's parable, in Matthew 21, Jesus said a man planted a vineyard in a fruitful hill and he built a wine press in it and did all the things to make it have vine.

But he leased it out to tenants and the tenants wouldn't give him the fruit. They were supposed to pay rent on the property, but with fruit. And he sent his messengers and they killed the messengers instead of giving the fruit.

And last of all, he said, I'm going to send my son. And they said, let's kill him too. They killed him.

And so God never got his fruit. And so Jesus said to the people, what do you think that owner of that vineyard is going to do to those wicked men who did that? And the crowd said, he's going to utterly destroy those wicked men and lease his vineyard out to others who give him the fruit. And Jesus said in verse 43, Matthew 21, 43, Therefore, the kingdom of God is taken from you and given to a nation that will bring forth the fruit of Israel.

The nation did not bring forth the fruit, but he said, I'm giving it to another nation who will. Well, who's that? Well, Peter wrote to the churches in first Peter 2, 9, he says, you are a chosen generation of a holy nation. A peculiar people.

The church is a new nation, a holy nation. It's all those things that were said about Israel in Exodus 19, when God established them as his kingdom. Now, Peter says, that's true of the church now.

God took the kingdom from them and gave it to another nation that would bring forth the fruits. What is the fruit? Justice and righteousness. And the church had better produce it.

Because Israel didn't. And we see what happened to them. But the point here is this fruitless vine, the wood of the vine, it's now been burned.

It's worthless. It's good for nothing. It's dead.

Now, there's also two very elaborate parables. One is in chapter 16 and one's in chapter 23. Both of them make the same point.

That is that Israel has cheated on God, like a wife cheating on her husband. When Israel worshipped other gods, that was like a wife cheating on her husband to God. He was their husband.

They're not supposed to worship others. And so he describes in chapter 16 that he describes a story where he found this baby girl that had been abandoned at birth and left out to be exposed and die. Her umbilical cord had not been cut.

She had not been washed. She was still covered with blood from the birth. And someone's left her off in the middle of the wilderness.

And he found her. He cleaned her. He fed her.

He nourished her. He brought her up and she became a beautiful young woman. And so he betrothed her to himself.

And so she became his. But because he did all these things to make her beautiful and healthy and voluptuous, all the other men wanted her too. That is the other gods.

And whenever the pagans came around with their gods, she compromised with them. And I'm putting it delicately, Ezekiel does not. Ezekiel talks about how she spread her legs to everyone who came around.

He's very, very coarse. It's a very awkward chapter to read because he just describes her as a harlot. And he said, that's what Israel has been like to me.

Here I made her beautiful. I picked her when she had no hope. I created her from scratch as a nation.

I adorned her. I made her rich. I made her a prosperous nation.

Gave her good leadership and a good piece of land. But now look, she's just cheating with everyone. And he says that's why he's bringing judgment on her.

Now chapter 23 is similar except there's two women. And they're both his wives. One is

Ahola and one is Aholabah.

And they represent, Ahola and Aholabah represent the two nations, Israel and Judah. Ahola means her own tabernacle. And Aholabah means my tabernacle is in her.

Now the reason he calls the northern kingdom her own tabernacle is because the northern kingdom broke off and didn't worship in Jerusalem. They set up their own golden calves to worship in their own tabernacles in defiance of God. Aholabah is Judah.

He says my tabernacle is in her, meaning the temple. But they're both sisters. And in the story they both cheat.

The first one cheats and she comes under judgment. She gets herself killed because of her adultery. But her sister Judah doesn't learn a lesson and goes even worse.

And so she's getting herself killed too. That's what the story is. These are incorrigible harlot wives.

And so that's what these two stories are about. And they explain the degree to which God is offended. And by the way, it's a pretty effective thing.

You know, say, well, why did God get so angry at those people for that? Well, let's put yourself in this position. Suppose you had a wife that you saved her life and married her and made her beautiful and rich and gave her a great life and then she just slept with everyone who walked by. You know, how you feel about it.

That's how God feels. That's what these stories are getting across. There's also in chapter 17, a parable about eagles and a vine.

And this has to do with some of the kings of Judah. In chapter 17, it says a great eagle, verse 3, with large wings and long opinions, full of feathers of various colors, came to Lebanon. This is actually Babylon is the eagle coming to Jerusalem.

And it says he cropped one of its topmost young twigs and carried it to a land of trade. This is Jehoiakim, the king who is carried off into Babylon in 597 B.C. And it mentions that in verse 12. In verse 12, it says, say now to the rebellious house, do you not know what these things mean? Tell them, indeed, the king of Babylon went to Jerusalem and took its king and princess and led them with him to Babylon.

So, you know, it's interpreted for us. The first eagle in the story is Babylon. And the first king, the young twig that's plucked off and carried off into Babylon is King Jehoiakim.

Now, then there's another king this happens to. But it says in verse 5, then he took some of the seed of the land, which would be Zedekiah, and made him king, planted him in the fertile field. And he became a low spreading vine, not a tree.

And it reached out toward Egypt. And another eagle, which is Egypt in verse 7, comes. And Zedekiah, the king in this question of Israel, leaned toward him.

Now, you have to know the story. This is in 2 Kings. But if you haven't familiarized yourself with the stories of the kings, you don't realize what this is really talking about.

But they did. There were several sons of Josiah, a good king, who in their own turn reigned in his stead. When Josiah died, his son Jehoahaz reigned for three months.

He was wicked and he got carried off into Egypt in captivity. Then Jehoiakim became the king. And he reigned for 11 years.

But when he died, and he was, by the way, the brother. As I recall, yeah, but he was the brother of Jehoahaz, so another son of Josiah. He reigned for 11 years.

Then when he died, another brother, which was Jehoiakim, became king. And he reigned, or Jehoiakim, excuse me, and he reigned for three months and was carried into Babylon, which is what that parable was about. Then he was replaced by Zedekiah, who was the uncle of all three of those kings.

And he was Josiah's brother. And he ruled for 11 years and then was wicked and he brought on the destruction of Jerusalem. So all that history was known to Ezekiel's people.

And you have to kind of know the history for that. Same thing with chapter 19. Chapter 19 has another story about a lioness and her cubs.

And it refers to Judah and her kings. One of them gets carried away to Egypt. One gets carried away to Babylon and so forth.

And it's talking about these kings. We won't go into that detail because of time. Chapter 24, there's a parable of a rusty cauldron.

Judah is the rusty cauldron. It's got scum in it. And he keeps putting it on the fire to get the scum out.

It won't come out. And so he's just going to let the fire burn through it. He's going to just leave it empty on the fire until it gets red hot or whatever happens.

And he's basically, that refers to going into battle and being put on the fire to be cleansed or to be destroyed, one or the other. And then finally, we're looking at chapter 37. Chapters 34 and 37 have similarities.

They both talk about shepherds. In chapter 34, the leaders of Israel are called the shepherds of Israel. It says, Woe to the shepherds who feed themselves.

Should not the shepherds feed the sheep? And he addresses the leaders of Israel, both the spiritual and political leaders. He says, You have not fed the sheep. You have not gathered those who have gone astray.

You haven't protected them from the wild beasts. You've just fed yourselves. And he says, So I'm going to come shepherd the sheep.

I will shepherd them. I will gather the strays. I will feed them.

I will take care of them. I will deliver them. And then it moves into this parable, And David their prince will rule over them, which is, of course, the Messiah.

Now, of course, when Jesus came in, in John 10, said, I am the good shepherd. He was using a phrase that all the Jews would think of Ezekiel 34, because God had described himself as the good shepherd who would come and do what the bad shepherds had failed to do. He would take care of the sheep and gather them and so forth.

And then you've got the Messiah in that picture, too. Jesus is the Messiah, and he's also a good shepherd, and he brings that up. So we have some of these parables are alluded to in the New Testament and some of them even by Jesus about himself.

Now, there's things in your notes that we simply do not have to go through. But I do want to jump down to one point, and I think that'll be the last point I'll mess with today because of our limited time. And that is on, I don't know what pages because these pages are not numbered, but it's Roman numeral five Ezekiel in the New Testament.

Just wherever we were to number a couple of pages and you'll see it near the bottom of the page. Ezekiel in the New Testament. The man Ezekiel is not mentioned in the New Testament by name.

In fact, outside of the book of Ezekiel, he's not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. It's interesting because Daniel is mentioned in Ezekiel and Jeremiah is mentioned in Daniel and Micah, the prophet, is mentioned in Jeremiah. These prophets, you know, they sometimes spoke about each other or there is reference to them.

But no one ever talked about Ezekiel, at least not on record. There's no one outside of the book of Ezekiel that mentioned him by name. However, his book was well known and respected in the New Testament and by the Jews, too.

The New Testament alludes to passages in Ezekiel 65 times. And of those, 48 of them are in the book of Revelation. So there's 48 allusions to Ezekiel just in the book of Revelation and 17 other allusions to it throughout the rest of the New Testament.

The good shepherd I mentioned from Ezekiel 34. Not only does Jesus refer to himself as the good shepherd, but he also speaks of the parable of the shepherd who goes for the

lost sheep. He has 101 goes astray, leaves the 99, goes and collects the one.

That's like what the good shepherd in Ezekiel 34 is to do. Jesus is called that great shepherd of the sheep in Hebrews 13:20. Peter refers to him as the chief shepherd who's going to come and reward the elders who are good shepherds if they are in first Peter 2:25.

Excuse me, first Peter 5, 4. There are also references to Christ as the shepherd in first Peter 2:25. Peter says, for you were as sheep going astray, but you've now returned to the shepherd and bishop of your soul, referring to Christ as the shepherd. We very naturally think shepherd Jesus, right? We've seen all the pictures of Jesus with the little lamb and so forth.

In fact, if you ask a lot of people, what do you think Jesus's job was before he was a preacher? Oh, he's probably a shepherd, right? I mean, you never picture with a hammer and nails, you picture with a sheep. But that imagery of him as a shepherd comes from only one place. Well, I shouldn't say only one place, but primarily the description comes from Ezekiel.

It's true that David said, the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. But the fact is that the imagery of the shepherd gathering the sheep, caring for the sheep, that comes from God's description of himself in the Messiah's ministry in Ezekiel 34.

And that is alluded to a lot of places in the New Testament. And we don't think it's strange because the image of Jesus as a shepherd is a very common one in Christian art and so forth. But we have to remember, Jesus never shepherded sheep.

Jesus never was a shepherd. So when the Bible refers to him as the shepherd, it's alluding to one of his messianic titles from the Old Testament, and that's in Ezekiel. So when Peter says, when the chief shepherd will come, you'll be rewarded.

Or you are like sheep of God's sheep, you return to the shepherd of your souls. It's there alluding to Isaiah 53, but in Isaiah 53, it doesn't mention the shepherd. In Isaiah 53, it says, all we like sheep have gone astray.

We've turned everyone to his own way, but the Lord laid on himself, on him, all the iniquity of us all. He doesn't mention the shepherd by name, doesn't speak of a shepherd, only sheep going astray. Peter says, you have all been like sheep going astray, but you've returned to the shepherd.

So he's mixing Isaiah 53, 6, and Ezekiel 34, and the imagery from those. So that's, the New Testament makes a lot out of that particular image from Ezekiel. Another thing is, I mentioned, that there's a lot of allusions to it in Revelation.

And this is the other way in which most of the allusions to Ezekiel come up in the New

Testament. I've mentioned some of them, I've listed some here. The cherubim described in Ezekiel certainly seem to be echoed in the four living creatures in Revelation chapter 4. The marking of the foreheads of those who sigh and cry over the wickedness in Jerusalem in Ezekiel 9. It resembles the marks of the forehead on the remnant to spare them in Revelation 7. The eating of the scroll, we've mentioned, chapter 3 of Ezekiel, verse 1, also paralleled in Revelation 10.9 and following.

The battle of Gog and Magog, we didn't talk about that. Maybe we should, is it another 10 minutes to hear about Gog and Magog? Who doesn't want to know about that, huh? I mean, anyone who's studied Bible prophecy or has read eschatology talks or books, they've heard about Gog and Magog from Ezekiel 38 and 39. Now we do find the terms Gog and Magog in Revelation 20, when Satan is loosed after a thousand years from the pit, he goes and gathers the nations, Gog and Magog, like the sand of the sea shore to come and besiege the beloved city.

So you only read of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38 and 39 and in Revelation 20. Now, what is Gog and Magog? Now, the popular teaching is, Gog represents a power in the end times, which is associated in their minds with Russia. Or back when it was the Soviet Union, they used to say the Soviet Union.

But one thing is it says in the King James Version of Ezekiel 38, that Gog is the chief prince of Magog and Tubal. Well, chief prince actually, in the Hebrew is prince of Rosh. And for example, Hal Lindsey in his book, *The Late Great Pioneer of Earth* and many others following him, or maybe he was following others before him, said Rosh is Russia.

Sounds like it, Rosh, Rosh, Rosh-sha, Rosh, okay. So he's the prince of Rosh, which is an old way of saying Russia. Says who? I don't know of any time in history that Russia was called Rosh, but I will say this, Rosh is the normal Hebrew word for chief or head.

And modern translations don't say he's the chief of Rosh, they say he's the, that he's the prince of Rosh, he's the chief prince. Rosh simply means chief, it's not talking about some place called Rosh. Now Magog and Meshach and Tubal are places that are mentioned in Genesis 10 as different nations that arose up after the time of the flood.

The popular teaching of the dispensationalists is that they represent Magog is, well, we won't worry about Magog, but Meshach is Moscow and Tubal is the Russian city of Tobolsk. And therefore we're told that this is talking about Russia. And in the prophecy, Gog and Magog come, or it's not really Gog and Magog, it is in Revelation, it's Gog and Magog.

In Ezekiel it's Gog, the chief prince of Magog. So Magog's like the place and Gog's the person. But Gog, the chief prince of Magog in Ezekiel comes down to the land of unwalled villages and the people have been brought back from captivity.

So it's apparently after the return of the exiles from captivity, which was predicted in the previous chapter of Ezekiel, chapter 37. So we've got chapter 37 predicted the return of the exiles, then chapter 38, some power that comes against those who've returned from exile. Not thousands of years later, but those who've returned from exile, they're coming against the unwalled cities.

And what happens is they come in great masses and they have confederates. A lot of different countries in the area are named as confederate with Gog. And they come against Israel, apparently, the land of unwalled villages.

And God intervenes to save Israel from them. And God's forces are destroyed by fire and brimstone out of heaven, which is echoed also in Revelation 20, verse 9. Fire from heaven comes down and destroys Satan and his troops. But fire and brimstone come down from heaven, destroy Gog and his troops.

Then it takes seven months to bury the bodies and seven years to burn the weapons. Now, that's the story. This power comes from the uttermost parts of the north, invades Israel, an overwhelming army that would certainly destroy Israel.

But God intervenes, fire and brimstone from heaven, destroy the invading army. This takes seven months to bury the dead, seven years to burn the weapons. Now, I want to say this.

Is this a future battle or an ancient battle? Now, the popular view is this is a future battle. But someday Russia will invade Israel and this actual, these things will really happen. Fire and brimstone will come down, destroy Russia.

And it'll take seven years to, seven months to bury the dead and seven years to burn the weapons. Boy, do you don't burn metal weapons for seven years. I know they can burn as long as they have fuel in them.

You know, you can burn a tank if its tank is full, if its fuel is there. But you don't really burn metal. That's not how you get rid of metal.

And it's not very good fuel. Well, Haaland said never worry about that. Russia is building weapons out of wood now.

It doesn't seem like wood. It's a special kind of product of compressed wood. It's like multiple sheets of plywood compressed really tight together.

They've got more tensile strength than steel. And therefore, if they burn, they'll burn for a long time. That's what he said in the late great plan of, that the Russians are making their tanks and stuff out of wood now.

Well, outside of how Lindsey and those who quote him, I don't know. I've never heard

anything about the Russians making weapons out of wood now. And if they are, maybe we should be doing it too.

I mean, it seems to me like weapons are for, they probably buy their weapons in many cases from other countries anyway, or sell to other countries. I mean, the weapons trade is international. I mean, it seems like if there's wood tanks around, we'd see some of them in our military too.

But anyway, the point is the burning of the weapons makes it sound like we're talking about wooden weapons. Well, there's more things about the story that make it sound like it's an ancient battle, not a modern one. For example, they are all invading on horseback, it says.

Now, how is it no problem there? One tribe of in the region of Russia called the Cossacks have always been skilled horsemen. Okay, so in a future battle, they're going to send in the cavalry. Why wouldn't the Uzi's in Israel just mow down all the horses? I mean, let's face it, I don't think any serious battle is ever going to be fought on horseback again.

Now, some would say, but the horses simply represent a vehicle. It says horses, but it's really referring to modern vehicles. Also, by the way, it describes it being fought with bows and arrows and spears.

And swords. If you read the chapters, this horseback army comes with bows and arrows and spears, and they end up getting wiped out by God and their weapons end up being burned for a long time. Now, this gives a lot of impression of being an ancient battle.

Now, when I was a dispensationalist, I just would have said, well, it's told in old terms, but they correspond to modern weaponry. And that's not an impossible way, but I mean, that could possibly be true. But here's the thing.

Something has got to be not literal. If it's a past battle in ancient times, there was not literal fire and brimstone coming down from heaven to end it. Nor armies burying the dead for seven months and burning weapons for seven years.

That has never happened historically. And that in itself would make some say, oh, it must be future because that's never happened. But those could be symbolic.

If it is future, then the weapons and the horse and all that, that's symbolic. Something is symbolic. If it's an ancient battle, the fire and brimstone from heaven, the seven years, the seven months, that's got to be not literal because that didn't literally happen.

But if it's a future battle, then the horses and the bows and the arrows and the spears are not literal. In other words, no one can take this literally. Whether you take it as an ancient battle or a future battle, something is not literal.

To my mind, the fact that this is placed immediately after Israel is restored from Babylon and it states that God is coming against the people who have recently come back from captivity, this should place it somewhere in pre-Christian times. Judah was restored as a nation beginning in 539 BC with the decree of Cyrus. And they had a number of conflicts in the years following that.

Two of them in particular have been suggested as possible identifications for this battle. One was in the time of Esther. The danger that came upon the Jews in the time of Esther.

And Haman, you know, was the enemy and he tried to wipe out all the Jews. Now God intervened, not with literal fire and brimstone out of heaven, but he intervened supernaturally to put Esther in the position to intervene and save the nation. And that this could be seen as a supernatural intervention in apocalyptic terms, such as we find there, is not impossible.

Another theory is that it's talking about the time of Antiochus Epiphany, it's a bit later. Still before the time of Christ. Antiochus Epiphany is also trying to destroy the nation of Judah.

And the Maccabean revolt seemed to have divine assistance in preventing that too. And they drove out the superior forces of the Syrians and liberated Israel from that danger. Now these two historical things did happen to the Jews after they returned from captivity.

And they were ancient battles. But there wasn't literally fire and brimstone or seven years of burying the dead. But seven is a very common symbolic number in apocalyptic imagery.

Check out the book of Revelation for how many sevens there are there. And it's more of an impressionistic thing. Fire and brimstone out of heaven, by the way, originally comes from Sodom and Gomorrah story.

When God wiped out Sodom and Gomorrah in that exact way, that became a precedent for imagery like that to be used to speak of other battles that didn't literally have fire and brimstone. For example, in Ezekiel chapter 30, Isaiah chapter 34, the destruction of Edom, which took place almost six centuries before Christ, is described as fire and brimstone. You know, running through their rivers and things like that coming on the fire.

I mean, the imagery of Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction becomes a paradigm repeated in symbolic visions of other major destructions of nations that God brings judgment on, even when it's not literal. So it's very possible this is talking about either the problems Israel had in the time of Esther or in the time of Antiochus Bifidus. Now in your notes, I actually, if you'll take time, I won't because we're out of time.

But in your notes, I actually go through some of the arguments for each of these. I

actually consider both of these as possibilities. Of course, the other possibility is that Hal Lindsey's right and there's going to be a future battle of Gog and Magog.

Now, some might say, but Revelation certainly places the battle of Gog and Magog in the end times, doesn't it? Well, I do think that Revelation chapter 20 is describing something at the end of the world. I do, at the time of the second coming of Christ. But Revelation 2 is very symbolic and borrows images from Ezekiel and lots of other places, refitting them for a new purpose.

Just because you find the term Gog and Magog in Revelation, which is clearly borrowed from Ezekiel 38, doesn't mean that Revelation is talking about the same thing. Just like when the two witnesses in Revelation 11 are said to be the two olive trees. Well, in Zechariah 4, the two olive trees are Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest.

They're called the two olive trees. Now the two witnesses are called the two olive trees, but no one thinks that's Joshua and Zerubbabel. The imagery is regurgitated in a sense, reused.

One commentator in Revelation called it a rebirth of images. Hundreds of images from dozens of Old Testament books come back alive in the book of Revelation in new settings to represent different things. But in principle, they're similar.

And so the similarity is not identity. Therefore, in Revelation 20, this battle that's described there, it mentions Gog and Magog, and it has other features borrowed from Ezekiel 38 and 39. But it would be incautious to assume that it's talking about the same battle that was described in Ezekiel 38 and 39.

It could, but there's every reason to question it, especially in view of the fact that it seems to describe an ancient battle fought with ancient weapons, ancient vehicles, at a time when Israel had returned from her captivity. I know what the dispensation is doing. Oh, yeah, those passages in Ezekiel 37 about the return of captivity, that's modern time.

That's modern day Israel coming back together. Well, it is true that Jews come from many parts of the world to Israel, but they're not coming from captivity. The Jews have not been in captivity for a very long time, thousands of years.

They've been scattered, but they've not been in captivity. They're free people. They can migrate here if they want to, and they do.

They migrate to America, they migrate to Israel, they migrate all over. This is not a return from captivity. Whatever's happening in Israel right now is not the return from captivity.

The return from captivity happened in the days of Cyrus and the Persians, and that's apparently when the Battle of Gogamega occurred. Again, if you're interested, I did take

the time to include in these notes, and I think they're not in the notes online because I added them at a later date, the actual arguments for it's on almost the last page. It's the third from the end of the notes.

Roman numeral 5, identifying the Battle of Gagamaga. And I give arguments for all the views. And leave it to your scholarly interest to study that and make a decision if you feel there's enough evidence for one.

All right, so I'm going to stop there. Thank you.