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Jesus as the Greater Ezekiel

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Exploring possible echoes of Ezekiel in Luke 3-4.

Transcript

One of the questions I often get asked is how I read the Bible, which is often raised when I've brought forward some interpretation of a passage that people seem to think is rather surprising or strange or just remarkable that they'd never thought about it before. So I thought for this video, and maybe if this works out well, some other videos, I will have a brief discussion of how I read a particular passage and talk through the process by which I come to interpret a passage. So it's not just the actual interpretation, but it's thinking through how I'd arrive at that interpretation.

So I thought this time we could start off with Luke 3-21 to Luke 4-30, which is the passage concerning Christ's baptism and his temptation in the wilderness and his sermon in Nazareth. And a voice came from heaven which said, Now Jesus himself began his ministry at about 30 years of age, being, as was supposed, Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for 40 days by the devil. And in those days he ate nothing.

And afterward, when they had ended, he was hungry. And the devil said to him, But Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, Then the devil, taking him up on a high mountain, showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to him, And Jesus answered and said to him, Then he brought him to Jerusalem, set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, And in their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.

And Jesus answered and said to him, And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time. Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of him went out throughout all the surrounding region, and he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. So he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up.

And as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. And he was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, Then he closed the book and gave it back to the attendant and sat down.

And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, So all bore witness to him and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, And he said to them, Whatever you have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in your country.

Then he said, And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian. Then all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of the city. And they led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw him down over the cliff.

Then passing through the midst of them, he went his way. So this is a striking passage in a number of respects. First of all, we have the account of the baptism of Christ, which is found in three of the other Gospels, and then also alluded to in John's Gospel as well, with the vision of Jesus at his baptism being described by John.

But here there is a description that is slightly different in certain respects. So the reference to Jesus being about 30 years of age when it occurs, and the reference to while he's praying, that's something that you find within Luke's Gospel that you don't find in the other Gospels. The emphasis on Jesus praying at the time of his baptism, at the time of his transfiguration, etc.

And so when we're trying to get our bearings on this passage, one of the helpful things to do is to first of all think about how it differs from the other Gospel accounts. What makes it stand out? What are some of the similarities? What are some of the differences? What are some of the contrasts? So, for instance, Matthew's Gospel begins with the genealogy. Luke's Gospel has it between the baptism of Christ and his temptation in the wilderness.

That's worth thinking about. Then we have the fact that the baptism in Mark's Gospel begins the story. So John's baptism and then Jesus being baptized by John in the Jordan.

Whereas in Luke and Matthew, it comes after the account of the nativity and the events of Jesus' early childhood and John the Baptist. So that's another difference. The other difference that's worth noticing is that each of the Gospels expresses the force moving Jesus out into the wilderness differently.

So Matthew's Gospel, Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness. And that's a familiar form of phrase that we've accounted many times. For instance, in reference to

the Exodus, primarily in reference to the Exodus, the people are led up out of the wilderness, out into the wilderness by the Spirit, by the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire.

Then you have a Mark's Gospel. Jesus was cast out into the wilderness by the Spirit. There's a propelling outwards, sort of exile type language or the language of maybe Saul driving David out from his court into the wilderness.

But Luke's language is striking. And Luke already has emphasized the Spirit bringing people into particular places. Simeon is brought by the Spirit into the temple.

But here, Jesus being filled with the Holy Spirit returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. That's not just led up by the Spirit into the wilderness. There's the filling and then there's the leading out into the wilderness.

And so that's worth paying attention to as well. What is the difference between these? These differences between these accounts. Why is that there? That's a question that we need to register at this point.

Other things to notice. Matthew's Gospel has the temptations listed. Luke or Mark does not record the temptations in the exact events.

Whereas Luke has the same temptations but in different order. So the final two temptations have been switched around. Another striking thing is that Matthew has in response to the first temptation, Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from out of the mouth of the Lord.

Now that is a striking difference from here. I'll read it actually to make sure that I've got it properly. I don't want to misquote it.

Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. And here it says, Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God. Now that's a difference that is worth noting again.

The quotation of Deuteronomy 8.3 is slightly changed. So you have the description of being led into the wilderness. That's different.

We have the description of the temptations. They're different order. And then we have the account of the response to the first temptation.

Again, that's different. And so we can register those things. Other things to register beyond that are some of the things that strike us as we read further on.

So for instance, Jesus goes to Nazareth. And when he's in Nazareth, he's handed this book. And then he speaks to the people, addresses the people from the word.

And then they marvel at the gracious words which proceed from out of his mouth. Now that's strange. That proceeding from out of his mouth seems to relate to the quotation that's not finished in the response to the first temptation.

But is finished in Matthew's quotation in response to the temptation of Satan. So another thing to note. What that does is create a possible connection, just possible at this stage, between the first temptation and the response to and what happens when Jesus speaks to the people.

And as he's handed the scroll in that event of preaching. And that's worth thinking about for the time being. But then later on, we have Jesus brought on to the pinnacle of the temple in the third temptation and then told to cast himself down and that the angels will take charge of him and he won't dash his foot against a stone.

And then you have another thing at the end of the account. They rise up, thrust him out of the city and lead him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw him down over the cliff. And Jesus avoids that as well.

Now, again, it's worth asking. We have two different accounts here where Jesus has to throw himself down or people want to throw him down from a high place. What is going on there that these happen in short succession? Is there some connection? And since we've already noticed the possible connection between Jesus being handed the scroll and preaching and Jesus answer to the first temptation.

And now we've noticed another connection. Could it be that there is a threefold pattern here? Let's think about the middle temptation and then think about whether that relates to what takes place between those two events. So as you look between those two events, what you notice is that Jesus is told by the men of Nazareth that, well, he reports what they would say.

Physician, heal yourself. Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in your own country. Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country.

So he wants. The assumption is Jesus wants acceptance. If he wants to establish a rule and a kingdom and a ministry as a prophet and get some real momentum for his work, he should appeal to the people of his hometown.

And that means doing for them what he's done elsewhere, really. Doing favors for his locality. And he resists that and he speaks about the experience of Elijah and Elisha and how they minister to various other people outside of Israel, but not to their specific locations.

Could that relate to the second temptation? The second temptation, the devil takes him up on a high mountain, shows him all of the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to him, all this authority I will give you and their glory for this has been

delivered to me and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if you will worship before me, all will be yours.

I think there is a connection. So if we look at the second account, if we look at the count in Nazareth, Jesus is referring to the townsfolk of Nazareth, his fellow countrymen, saying that if he would just serve them, they would support him in having the full kingdom. They'd go behind his mission and uphold it and support it on its way.

But he resists that. He's not going to become the servant of a particular locality or particular people. He is sent to on a greater mission as the minister, the servant sent by his father.

And so we have three loose connections there. Let's try and see what we can do more with them. So that initial quote is striking.

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. So rather than proceeds from out of the mouth of the Lord. Then when Jesus refers to or the people refer to the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, what might be going on there? Well, first of all, you have the reference to what is Jesus answer, initial answer given in response to? It's given in the response to the temptation to turn the stones into bread.

So the temptation is you've got extreme hunger. You've got these stones. Why not turn these into bread? And Jesus answer is man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

So the word of God and bread are set up in opposition or in contrast to each other. But then there's also a relationship, the sense that you can live, you can feed on this bread, that there's some sense in which God's word is bread that you can live and find sustenance from. What happens immediately before Jesus has these gracious words proceeding from out of his mouth? He's given the scroll and he preaches the word and he preaches the word as something that has come to pass in the hearing of the people who are present.

So the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has appointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to preach the acceptable view of the Lord. So he's taking the word of God and he takes it as something that's not just spoken about some reality out there, but a reality that he is himself embodying.

That's striking. So he's handed the scroll and he opens the scroll. And then he speaks and that word comes from out of his mouth.

Now the description of it coming from out of his mouth, not only does that create a connection with the first answer to the first temptation, it also suggests something about

the word being internal to Christ. That it's not just a word that he is speaking that's out there on the page that he's speaking to people, but there is something about this word that he's embodying there in that particular location, in that context. And the way that he speaks about himself, that he is the embodiment, that these things are coming to pass, that he is the one of whom the prophet is speaking.

Again, that's striking. He's speaking this word as a word concerning himself. So when you look at that, and that would create some sort of connection that would suggest that Jesus, as it were, as he takes this scroll, it's almost as if he takes it into himself and then that word proceeds from out of him.

So he's feeding on that scroll almost. There's that suggestion implicit within it. The second temptation, the temptation to serve Satan or to serve his country folk.

Again, we see a parallel there. And the final one, what is the temptation to cast yourself down from the temple? The temptation, I would suggest, is the temptation to abandon the mission. The temptation to just appeal to divine protection and abandon the mission, which requires suffering, which requires commitment to going with the people, even if they will reject, but staying there and not abandoning.

And so Jesus does not allow his fellow country folk to cast him down from the high place. Again, he continues his mission. He sticks to it, even if his fellow countrymen will reject him.

And I think we see some similar patterns later on, this temptation, three temptations that face Jesus as he's associated with, as he faces the time of the cross. So there's the temptation associated with eating or drinking, this, the cup that he's given, that he will not, he does not reject it. He takes the cup and he drains it.

That's the cup that God has given. He has given his bread and now he gives this cup and it's a bitter cup that must be drained. And he drains that rather than rejecting it.

He lives by what God has given. The second one, standing before standing before Pilate and giving an account of himself. Again, it's the question of the kingdoms.

Whose is the kingdom and will he bow to some other authority rather than deny his kingdom? The final one, cast yourself down from the cross. The high place, is he going to abandon his mission? All the legions of angels would come to his aid if he did, but he would have abandoned the mission and the people would be destroyed. And so we see three temptations there, three temptations associated with his sermon, three temptations or three parallels associated with the sermon in Nazareth, Nazareth and then the three temptations by Satan in the beginning of chapter four.

And so there are parallels there and so these are worth registering. Other things that are worth thinking about. Why are some of these details there? So the 30 years of age, what

associations does that bring to mind? Well, first of all, it brings to mind the association of the priests.

The priests begin their ministry at the age of 30. Another thing that it brings to mind is the fact that this is an initiation event, a prophetic initiation, something that's akin to events with Isaiah or Ezekiel or Moses. These events where there's an encounter with God, a theophanic encounter with God, and the prophet is set out, inaugurated for their mission and they're sent out and they begin their mission.

And so we have an account like that in Isaiah 6, in Ezekiel 1, in chapter 4 of Exodus and elsewhere in Scripture, that these experiences of people meeting with God and then what happens after that as they're sent out on their commissioned course. And when you look more closely at that, it would seem that there's a specifically strong connection with the character of Ezekiel. And why would that be? At the beginning of the book of Ezekiel, we read, Now it came to pass in the 30th year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the ribchibar, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.

And so something comes out of the heavens, this throne chariot, and Ezekiel sees this vision and he's set up for his mission. And so what we have here is something very similar, that Jesus is about 30 years of age and Jesus, as he prays, the heaven is opened and the spirit descends in bodily form like a dove and a voice comes from heaven and speaks to him. And so we have a very similar sort of account here with Ezekiel and Jesus being parallel to each other in various ways.

Now, that connection is suggestive. Is there anything more that we can make of that? Well, I would suggest that if we look through the temptations, we can see a sort of false apocalypse taking place. So if you look through the book of Ezekiel, you'll see a number of key events.

At the beginning of chapter 37, Ezekiel is led into the dry place, the valley of dry bones, the place of, as it were, hunger and thirst. The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the midst of the valley, and it was full of bones. So again, that's an interesting account.

It's being brought out in the spirit, being filled with the spirit and brought in the spirit into this particular location. That's the language that we have at the beginning of the temptation account. Elsewhere, you have something like chapter 40.

In the 25th year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the 10th day of the month, in the 14th year after the city was captured, on the very same day, the hand of the Lord was upon me and he took me there. In the visions of God, he took me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain. On it, toward the south, was something like the structure of a city.

And so he's set in this location. And then, in the chapters that follow, he's sent to different extremities of the temple. So what we see here is a very similar pattern to the pattern of the temptations that Jesus experiences.

It's a sort of false apocalypse. It's like Ezekiel's vision, but a perverse vision that's given by Satan of what could be the alternative to his mission. And so as Jesus responds to that, he is responding as a greater Ezekiel.

The other thing is, when Ezekiel receives his mission, he is sent to the children of Israel and he's given a scroll. Now, when I looked, there was a hand stretched out to me and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. And he spread it before me and there was written on the inside and the outside.

And written on it were lamentations and mourning and woe. Moreover, he said to me, Son of man, eat what you find. Eat this scroll and go speak to the house of Israel.

So I opened my mouth and he caused me to eat that scroll. And he said to me, Son of man, feed your belly and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you. So I ate it and it was in my mouth like honey and sweetness.

And he said to me, Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with my words to them. For you're not sent to a people of unfamiliar speech and of hard language, but to the house of Israel. Not to many people of unfamiliar speech and of hard language whose words you cannot understand.

Surely had I sent you to them, they would have listened to you. But the house of Israel will not listen to you because they will not listen to me. For all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted.

Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces and your forehead strong against their foreheads. Like adamant stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead. Do not be afraid of them, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house.

Moreover, he said to me, Son of man, receive into your heart all my words that I speak to you and hear with your ears. And go get to the captives, to the children of your people, and speak to them and tell them, Thus says the Lord, whether they hear or whether they refuse. So again, we have some similarities here.

Ezekiel receives the scroll, takes it into himself, and then he prophesies that word out. That word is born within him. Jesus handed the scroll, and then the words of God proceed from out of his mouth.

And so again, there's a parallel here. Now what would this tell us, even if we recognize these patterns? Now there's a lot of other patterns that are going on here. The 40 days, I

haven't really commented on that.

Is this the 40 days associated with Goliath standing before the children of Israel after David's anointing? Maybe. I'm not sure that's the first place I'd look for it. I think that was more likely to be found in Mark.

Is it 40 years in the wilderness? Certainly has that sort of association. That's a stronger association in the book of Matthew. But what you do have here, I think, is an association with Ezekiel.

That Ezekiel is the prophet who's set apart as the one who ministers to this hard-hearted people of Israel. He's the one constantly described as the son of man. Over 90 times within the book of Ezekiel, he's described as son of man.

And that's very powerful and pregnant language when we come to the Gospels, because Jesus continually refers to himself as the son of man. Not in this immediate context, but throughout the book, there are these references. And so this account of Jesus' baptism and his temptation in the wilderness in his first sermon might suggest a connection between Jesus and Ezekiel.

As we unpick that, there's a lot of other things that emerge. Ezekiel is someone who goes to Jerusalem with a message of destruction and actually brings about that destruction as one who speaks as the son of man. It's a very striking thing as you read through the book of Ezekiel, just how powerful his role is as he goes and speaks and prophesies against them as the son of man and then brings them to destruction.

And so in one passage, it talks about him. I don't remember how it puts it, that when I destroyed the city or something like that, that he comes as the son of man and as he prophesies against it, he brings destruction. Again, these are powerful comparisons to draw.

And so Jesus here, he sets up his ministry in a number of ways. He's the new Ezekiel. He's the one who is the son of man who brings a message of judgment, but also of salvation.

He's the one who resists the devil. He's the one who receives this false apocalypse but stands against it. And he's faithful where Israel was unfaithful.

And so he uses all these words of God from Deuteronomy. So these temptations that he's facing in the wilderness, he answers with the words of Moses that were given to the people in the wilderness. So he's learnt the lessons, as it were, that what he shows that the lessons of Deuteronomy, the lessons of the wilderness are strong against Satan at this point.

When he goes to Nazareth, again, he references Elijah and Elisha and their ministry. And

elsewhere we see parallels between these two characters. So the widow of Zarephath is alluded to later with the widow of Nain and her son is given life.

And then the Naaman the Syrian in reference to Elisha, again, shortly afterwards, we have a reference to the centurion's servant. And so these accounts provide a connection between Jesus' ministry and the ministry of Elijah and Elisha. And so all of this passage is pregnant with Old Testament symbolism.

It's not the most immediate parallels that we might, they don't jump off the page to us. And most cases, many people miss these things. But they're there when you look a bit more closely.

A lot of it comes with just paying attention and noticing, following the clues. So if there's a detail there that surprises you, pay attention to it, register it, because it may lead to something. Maybe it won't.

There are certain things that aren't as obvious as others. So the book of Luke is often alluding to 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel in ways that are more pronounced than other books of the Old Testament. Whereas here, Ezekiel comes to the foreground.

And Ezekiel is not someone we usually think about when we read the New Testament Gospels. And so that introduces a theme that maybe we could unpack a bit more. What else is there associated with Ezekiel? How might we learn about Jesus as the Son of Man when we think about Ezekiel as the Son of Man? What might that tell us, for instance, about Daniel's prophecy when the Son of Man comes to the ancient of days? Is the one like the Son of Man at that point, is that an Ezekiel-type character? What could we learn from that? And so in all of these cases, we see Jesus setting up his ministry within a framework that's provided by the Old Testament.

Now you can read this account by itself and you'll get most of its basic message. But if you look a bit more closely, you'll see a lot of other factors that are brought in. So whether that's Isaiah's prophecy that sets up this Jubilee year that Christ has bring, the year of liberty, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

Or whether you see the way that the whole book is bound together by these themes of temptation. So Jesus' temptation at the cross and Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, that there's connection between them. And that helps us to understand part of Satan's attack upon Jesus and where that is aimed at and the particulars.

Or how the work of Satan is seen in the voice of Jesus' fellow countrymen. Again, these are things that we should be paying attention to. The parallels with the other Gospels are also helpful.

The parallels and the contrast. Because the different Gospels tell the same stories in

different ways. So why is it that John's Gospel mentions in the account of the feeding of the 5,000 that there was much grass where they were? I mean, why mention that detail? Again, we need to register that and think within the context of John what might help us to understand the significance given to that particular detail.

We need to ask these questions. Also to recognise the specific emphases of the particular Gospels. Things like the prayer as associated with the Transfiguration and the Baptism and other events like that.

Again, you can associate the Baptism with the Transfiguration later in Luke. In Luke chapter 9 there is a number of ways in which this can be paralleled, these two events. You have the ministry or the witness of John the Baptist.

Then you have the Baptism of Jesus and this theophanic event and the witnessing of that. And then you have Jesus coming down and going into the wilderness and facing Satan in some form and casting out unclean spirits later. And then you have that cycle ending with the death of John the Baptist.

And the question of whether Jesus is John the Baptist raised from the dead. A new cycle begins with the witness of Peter, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. Then it happens, you have the Transfiguration, a theophanic event, the witness of God from the heavens that are open, this is my beloved son, hear him.

And then from there you have the end of that cycle with Jesus raised from, died and raised from the dead. And so there are parallels within the structure of the book. And then we see other parallels with the beginning of the New Testament, of the Book of Acts, where the New Testament pattern of beginning with the Baptism and the ministry of John the Baptist.

You then have beginning with the Baptism of the Church at Pentecost. So these two events, the Baptism of the Church at Pentecost and the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan, again these are held together. You have people praying in the temple, you have the spirit descending and the setting apart for ministry.

And so when you recognise these structures, again these help to alert you to particular features and details. So again it's a prophetic initiation event. It's a prophetic initiation event that follows on from, it's a form of succession from a previous prophet.

So for instance, Elijah ascends into heaven, Elisha sees Elijah ascend and the spirit of Elijah descends upon Elisha. And he's clothed with the spirit of God, the spirit of Elijah from on high and he continues his mission. In the same way, Jesus is commissioned here, the spirit descends on him like a dove.

At the end of his mission he ascends into heaven and his spirit descends upon the church at Pentecost and they continue his mission. So it's similar to Elijah and Elisha. The

one prophet ascends and the other prophet gets the Pentecost event as the spirit of the former prophet descends upon them.

And so as we read these events within a larger structure, whether that's comparing them to other books, contrasting them to the other accounts and how they differ, whether it's a matter of recognising the structures of something like Acts and how that relates to the structures of Luke, or whether it's a matter of recognising the Old Testament structures that are alluded to, things like the book of 1 Samuel or the things like the book of Ezekiel. All of these things alert us to things that are going on within the text, as do the fine details, the things that aren't mentioned, the things that are mentioned, the strange ways of wording things, the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. Why put things that way? Again, all of these details are there mostly for a reason.

The writers of the Gospels weren't the sort of people who wasted their words. When they write things, they write them in a particular way to draw your attention to particular connections. It's a very musical thing in the sense that each note is carefully placed and each note has some of the movement of what's taking place within it.

You need to pay attention. And so the different introductions to the Temptations, again, those are things we should be paying attention to. They don't necessarily answer all our questions.

They don't necessarily tell us exactly how we should read the passage. But they give us that initial clue that we register and then we see, does anything else arise from this? And then when we think about all these things, if we step back, we can draw certain connections. So this enables us to draw a connection that we would not previously have been alert to, the connection between Jesus and Ezekiel.

Now, most people have not given that connection much thought. But here Luke presents it to us in a subtle and careful way through soft allusions within the text. Now, when you see them, they are fairly clear, but you have to look for them.

You have to have your eyes opened. And when you have your eyes open to them, then you can recognise that Jesus is a new Ezekiel. And that helps you understand who Jesus is, what he's doing.

It also helps you understand what Ezekiel is doing. Ezekiel suddenly becomes a much more interesting book when he brings destruction upon the city of Jerusalem. How does that relate to the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven? And the judgment that comes with him? These connections are all things that help us to read our Bible better.

Typology is not just a matter of fancy literary comparisons. It's a matter of showing the inner fibres of the text, how things are connected to each other. And how if you explore one particular thread, it will connect things together that give you a firmer grasp of both.

So this helps us to understand Ezekiel better, and it helps us to understand Jesus' ministry better. Jesus is the greater Son of Man. He is the true Son of Man.

Ezekiel is like a Son of Man, but Jesus is the one who comes and he completes this greater mission. And so when we're reading this text within the context of Luke as well, it helps us to think elsewhere in the book of Luke. Where might we find these themes being explored? So for instance, the Elijah and Elisha themes are picked up later on, where you have these two accounts told in short succession.

The account of the widow of Nain and her son being raised from the dead, and then the account of the centurion and his servant. In both of these cases, you have a parallel back to Elijah and Elisha, and it helps you to understand what's taking place there. So this is just an example of one particular text, and I've barely scratched the surface of this.

And I've just been looking at one particular aspect of this particular text, which is a huge text with many things to say about it. I've hardly gotten into the stuff concerning Isaiah or the other references from Deuteronomy. I've not really explored what's going on there.

The connections with the Exodus event, again, I could say a lot more about that. But it gives, hopefully, an introduction to some of the ways that we read the text, some of the things that we look out for. Much of it comes down to just paying attention, knowing your Bible very well, reading these things again and again, so that when these themes come up, you think, OK, I recognize 30 years of age is a significant age.

It's the age where the priests begin their ministry. It's the age when Ezekiel saw his visions. And so you're prepared to recognize that connection, which someone who did not know their Bible well, they'd miss it.

But one of the ways I found this easier to remember my Bible and to learn my Bible is just listening to this. So I listened to the Bible on audio. I have done a lot in the past, less so nowadays.

I don't have so much time, but it's a very helpful way to get the text into your ear because much of this is about hearing the text, not just picking out the message. The message is found very much in the specific wording, the ways that things are spoken and specific details. Why 40 days? Again, that's a fairly straightforward one.

There are a number of 40 days periods in the Old Testament that are significant here, whether that's related to Moses or to Elijah or to the children of Israel or whether it's related to Goliath standing against the people of Israel and David's going out to meet him as the champion. All of these provide us some ways to understand what's going on in that reference to 40 days. But this is an important way to read your Bible, to just know it well and then to pay attention, to listen carefully, to pick up the clues and register

them and then see if anything comes of them.

Because each clue that you notice will alert you to possible other clues. So if you were not to notice the 30 years, maybe you'd notice the reference to being filled with the Spirit and led by the Spirit into the wilderness. That is language that's very similar to the way that Ezekiel was brought on his various journeys.

And so maybe you'd register that and then return to the 30 days and think, ah, or 30 years and think there is a connection there too. So I've gone far longer than I've intended to go, but I might do another one of these in the future if you find this helpful.