



Ezekiel 3-4

Tape #7314
Ezekiel 3-4
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Ezekiel, chapter three, as we continue our journey through the Bible. Ezekiel chapter three. In the third chapter we find God calling Ezekiel to minister to the people who are in captivity in Babylon. As Jeremiah is ministering to those who are still left in Jerusalem, chapters three and four actually take place approximately in the fifth year of Zedekiah, and thus Jeremiah is still prophesying there in the, Jerusalem.

The Lord said unto me, [Ezekiel said] Son of man, eat that which you find; eat this roll, and go and speak unto the house of Israel (3:1).

Now in the previous chapter, verse nine and ten, the Lord put a roll of a book, and it had, He spread it out before him, and there was writing within and without. So now the Lord commands him to eat it.

Now that doesn't mean he was to literally you know, put ketchup on it, and eat it. But quite often we speak of a person, "devouring a book". Now we don't mean that, "My that was such a good book, I just ate it up!", you know. But it's a term that we refer to a person, "reading it, absorbing the contents of the book". So the, the command is actually to just absorb the contents of this book, this scroll, and then, "go and speak to the house of Israel".

So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat the roll. [Or to devour the contents] And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I may give thee. And then I did eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness (3:2-3).

As he was reading it, it was, it was, the contents seemed to be good! God promises really a glorious new day. The new age of the spirit, of which the counterfeit is trying to be established now, by Satan. But there is coming a glorious day of the Lord. Before we can receive, or enter into that glorious day of the Lord, there are some very bitter experiences that the world is going to go through.

We find John having a very parallel experience in the book of Revelation, where he was given the scroll, told to devour it, and it was in his mouth, as sweet as honey. But he said, "it was in, in my belly, it became bitter". As you realize the things that will transpire, and must transpire of the judgment of God upon the earth, those things are bitter, but yet, the sweetness of the hope and the promises of that new glorious era that is coming in the kingdom of God, when Jesus shall come and shall reign in righteousness! That's always a very pleasant and sweet subject to talk about!

But we realize that that day cannot come, until the earth first experiences this bitter time of tribulation. As Jesus said, "And there shall be great tribulation such as the world has never seen before, nor will ever see again, and immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall they see the sign of the Son of man coming with clouds, and great glory." So he's to devour the contents of the book, and then he is to go and speak to the people, having really devoured, or, or having the word just really become a very part of his life, and absorbing this word of the Lord.

And so he said to me, Son of man, go, and get unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them (3:4).

His call to the ministry, to go to the house of Israel. The task of the ministry was to speak the word of God to them. That is the true job of a minister, speaking the word of God to the people.

Now I may have a lot of concepts, a lot of ideas, and a lot of opinions. But I will tell you frankly, right now, my opinions and my ideas, and my concepts are often wrong. I don't really encourage you to listen to my opinions. Whenever I get into that area, I'm in shaky ground.

A lot of times people come, and they, they ask me questions about the Bible that call for a speculative answer. Because the Bible doesn't have any clear teaching on the subject. I will often just say to them, "Well that, that's just causes me to speculate, and I'll just tell you right now, my speculation is worthless!" It's not what I have to say, it's what God has to say!

If we could only learn that. That it is the word of God that is alive and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, and has that ability to minister to the spirit of man! When I might say, and I might read a few jokes, and get an entertaining speech, and it might touch you emotionally, you might get a big laugh over the, the jokes that I tell. I might tell you some sad stories that would make you cry. I might tell you exciting things that would get you all hyped up! But, but that emotion, you might go out and say, “My wasn’t that great! Oh, I just really laughed so hard!”, and, “My I never cried so hard!” You know, and you went through the gamut of emotions. A lot of sermons are filled with, with stories and all to take you through the gamut of emotions. But they never reach the spirit. It is only the word of God that can truly feed the spirit of man. So the Lord’s command was to give His word to the people.

For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of a hard language, but you’re sent to the house of Israel (3:5);

He’s not sent as a missionary to some foreign country, to deal with people whose language he doesn’t understand. But he’s sent to the house of Israel.

Not to many people of strange speech and of a hard language, whose words you can’t understand. But surely, [had I sent you to them, and they would have hearkened] had I sent you to them, they would’ve hearkened unto you (3:6).

Now here God is sort of taking a back-handed slap at Israel, because of their hardness of heart. They won’t listen to the word of God, they’re in captivity because they wouldn’t listen to the word of God. That’s the reason why their captives. They were stiff-necked, they were hard-hearted, and they refused to listen to Isaiah who warned them that they would go into captivity. They refused to listen to Jeremiah, and, and the words of the prophets came to pass. They’re now in captivity, but the interesting thing is that they are still not ready to listen to the word of the Lord.

Now the Lord said, “If I did send you, had I sent you to, as a missionary, and you were talking to people whose language is hard, and you don’t understand, they would’ve listened to you!”

It is interesting that when Jonah the prophet went to Ninevah to warn them of God’s pending judgment, that the men of Ninevah repented in sackcloth and ashes! Yet, God speaks to His own people, and they won’t listen to the voice of God. So God really sort of warns him, “You’re not going to really have a successful ministry, they’re not gonna listen to you.” It is interesting that God continues to speak, though He knows that they won’t listen. He still commands that His word be given to them, though they have hardened their hearts to the word of God. So...

The house of Israel [He said, verse seven, very plainly] will not hearken or listen to you; for they will not listen to me (3:7):

I don’t know how it is that we often times think that we can sort of do a better job than God! We think, “Well surely they will listen to me!” Paul the apostle had a tremendous desire to speak to the Pharisees, having been a Pharisee, knowing how the Pharisees thought, studying in their schools, knowing, and learning the scriptures from their teachers. He thought, “I know that if I could just get back there with my old Frat brothers, I could convert them! I know what they’re thinking, I know how they think, and I know I could convert them, if I could just share with them!” But the Lord sort of kept Paul from the opportunity of sharing with the Pharisees, but he was determined to do so!

So he finally got his chance. He had gone to the Gentile churches, gathered offerings for the church in Jerusalem that was suffering under persecution, and was going through some great financial problems. So he, he gathered offerings from among the Gentiles, brought it back to Jerusalem, and desired to be there for the feast. The Jewish feasts were the traditional things, and they’re so inbred it was just an important thing. It’s sort of like our Christmas, our Easter, or for some people, the Super Bowl, you just, you know that’s your thing, “I want to be there you know! I always sit on the forty yard line!” It’s just their thing! So with the Jew the thing was to be in Jerusalem for the feast days, and it was just so deeply inbred traditionally, it was just the longing, and the desire, it was just a part of them. So he, he longed to participate in the feast there in Jerusalem.

So when you had been away from Jerusalem, and you’ve been away from the, the religious rites, there was a necessity to go through a period of purification, which involved a lot of baths in running water going

down to the spring of Gihon, and taking your bath in, in this running water, and all of these purification rites. Paul was going through all of the practices of these purification rites, and then you could enter in to the festival in the temple mount, in the court of the Jews.

So Paul was going through these rites, and some of the Jews who were in Asia, who were also there for the holidays, saw Paul, and they knew that he had been preaching to the Gentiles. They saw Trophimus??? with Paul, and they figured that Paul had taken him in to the men's court, which was forbidden for a Gentile. So they began to create a squabble. They, they stirred up the people, said, "This is the guy that's been preaching to the Gentiles, and he's talking against the law of Moses, saying, The law can't save you!"

So they began to beat Paul up. The captain of the guard who was there at the fortress of Antonio, saw this disturbance down in the temple mount area. So he sent some of the soldiers down to rescue Paul from the crowd. As they were bringing Paul back up to the Antonio Fortress, as they came up on the porch elevated above the ground below, Paul said to the captain, "Do you mind if I speak to these people?", and he says, "Sure, go ahead!" So Paul said, "Hey brothers! Listen to me! I know what you're thinking! I know how you feel! I was just like you! When this new sect sprang up, I was determined to wipe it out, because I figured you know, it was wrong, and I was zealous, and I had, the high priest, he'll bear witness, he gave me papers, and I was on my way to Damascus to imprison those that were calling upon the name of the Lord! While I was just outside of Damascus, there came a bright light from heaven, brighter than the noonday sun. I fell on the ground, and there was a voice that came unto me, and said, Saul, Saul...", and the people were listening. Then he said, "He commanded me, the voice commanded me to go unto the Gentiles", and when he said "Gentiles", the whole crowd went into an uproar. They began to throw dirt in the air, they began to yell, "Kill him! Kill him!", you know, and began to rush the Antonio fortress! The captain said, "Get him inside quick!" Paul was speaking to them in Hebrew, so the captain of the guard didn't understand what he was saying, and so he said, "Scourge the guy to find out what he was saying to those people, got em' in such an uproar!" That's when Paul called on his Roman citizenship, he said, "Do you scourge a Roman citizen who hasn't been condemned of anything?" He said, "Are you a Roman citizen?" Paul said, "You bet your life I am!" Ha, ha! The captain said, "Well I purchased my citizenship." That was a possibility in those days. Paul said, "Not me man, I was free born." So he did not scourge Paul, but Paul with this lifelong dream, "I know they'll listen to me!" But they wouldn't listen to the Lord, so who did Paul think he is that they would listen to him. So the Lord says that, "they won't hearken to you, because they've never hearkened to me Ezekiel!"

because the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted (3:7).

Now here's the thing, because they wouldn't listen, they were in captivity. But, even in captivity they weren't listening! They had false prophets who were saying to them, "Hang loose boys! Jerusalem will soon be freed!" Rumors were coming, Zedekiah was getting the Egyptians to help him. The rumors were flying that you know, "Soon the Babylonian armies will be destroyed, and we'll be able to go back from this captivity. So don't get involved. Don't build houses, don't plant a vineyard, it's only a matter of time till we're freed, and we go home."

Jeremiah even sent a letter to them and said, "That's not true! The Lord says that you're gonna be there for seventy years. So settle down! Build houses, plant vineyards, get comfortable there because it's gonna be awhile!" But they didn't want to hear that. They didn't listen to that. Even now they're being hardhearted. That's basically the message that Ezekiel is gonna give to them. That Jerusalem is gonna be besieged. We get that in chapter four, as we move on. That it isn't going to be a quick return, but Jerusalem is going to fall. So they are hardhearted, they are impudent.

And I have made your face strong against their faces, ["You just stand up in their face, and they have a hard face or they're, they're strong in their ways, but you are to be strong!"] and your forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant [Now "adamant" is translated, "diamond" in another place, the same Hebrew word.] harder than flint have I made your forehead: ["I mean, you're to hang in there, hang tough!"] fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house (3:8-9).

Now when you're telling people they don't want to hear, sometimes they begin to grimace, they begin to look fiercely at you. They try to cow you by their sour, dour looks, to show their disapproval. The Lord said,

“Don’t pay any attention to that. You know, I’m gonna make you tough against them.”

Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all of the words that I shall speak unto you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears (3:10).

It is so important to get the word of God planted in your heart! Our tapes go all over the country, and we have many people across the country who are teaching Bible studies and pastors who get our tapes. Once in a while, as I go across the country, I’ll have fellows come up, and they’ll say, “You know, I teach a Bible study”, or, “I pastor a church, and I’ve got to confess, I listen to your tapes, and then I make notes, and I preach your sermons.” I say to them, “Look if as I am teaching the word of God, the truth hits you, if as you’re listening you say, ‘Wow yeah that’s true! Right on, that’s good!’” I said, “The moment you receive it, the moment you can see it, the moment it hits, it’s now yours. So use it! Don’t worry about where you got it, just use it! When it, when it, the truth hits home, and really ministers to your heart, at that moment, the truth becomes yours! It’s yours to share! So never worry about you know, using something that has ministered to you. Pass it on!” So the Lord tells him to, “get the word in his heart. Once it’s there, it’s yours. Now pass it on!”

And go, and get you to those of the captivity, [He said] to the children of your people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God; [And, doesn’t make any difference] whether they hear, or not, you’re to speak (3:11).

“It isn’t yours to worry about the result, or the fruit, what comes of it.” God wanted Ezekiel to warn them again. “Whether they listen or not doesn’t matter, you give them the warning.”

We live in a society where the success is measured by the ability to get the customer’s name on the bottom line. We are paid according to our ability to get the person signed up, commission. But not so in serving the Lord. You get a straight salary! It doesn’t matter if you get the name on the line or not, if the person receives it, that isn’t your concern, and that shouldn’t be your worry. Your responsibility and obligation is to speak the word of the Lord. The fruit, or the results of it are in the hands of God.

Now some, so many times we feel discouraged because we have witnessed to a person for a long time, and they show no signs of, of changing from their life of sin. But the fact that you have given them the witness is, is as far as God is concerned, you’ve accomplished your obligation before the Lord. The importance in just witnessing, the fruit, or the results are His.

That is also, then goes that when there is a lot of fruit, you can’t go around puffed up saying, “Well you know look how many notches I’ve got on my belt! You know, I led this guy, and this guy, and this guy!” Because it was the Lord that did the work of drawing them in. So you can’t really glory in the, in the success of the ministry, or the in fruit that came of it. You are to just give them the truth, give them the word, and the rest is up to the Lord.

Now with Ezekiel as long, as with Jeremiah, it’s gonna be an unfruitful ministry. They’re not gonna listen, they’re not gonna hearken. “But that’s, that’s no, that’s not your problem Ezekiel. Your job is just to witness to them. Witness to them the word of God.” As a minister your responsibility and obligation is to give the people the word of God.

So the spirit took me up, I heard a voice of a great rushing, [Like a, like a wind] and it said, Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place. And I heard also the noise of the wings of those living creatures [the cherubim] that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing. [So as he was moved now by the Spirit, he, he got this rush from the Spirit, and these noises of the power of, of the Spirit of God.] So the spirit [he said] lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness (3:12-14),

Now again you remember the word of God was like honey as he devoured it. But now, as John, that experience of bitterness, as he realizes that these people, because of their hard hearts are going to experience the continued judgment of God even there in the land.

and so in the heat of my spirit; [an embitterness] but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me. [I like that, when you’re doing the work of God, the hand of the Lord will be strong upon you.] So I came to them of the captivity to Telabib (3:14-15).

Now “Tel” means a mound. In Israel you have all of these Tels that are the sites of ancient cities. In days

gone by, when a city was destroyed in war, they would rebuild the city on the top of the ruins of the old city. So gradually as cities would be conquered, and rebuilt, conquered and rebuilt, it would build up a mound. So you see all of these Tels around Israel. They're very fascinating! Some of them, several hundred feet high, where one civilization has been built on the top of another. Or, one generation on the top of another.

In the Tel of Megiddo, you can count seventeen separate layers of, of how they built on top of the ruins of, of the former city that was there, that was destroyed, leveled off, built on top of it, and it, and it goes quite high there in Megiddo. So the Hebrew word means "mound". Thus "Tel-abib", "abib" is "corn". So the city was called "the mound of corn". Evidently it was the Iowa of Babylon, a good corn growing area.

It was there near the river of Chebar, and so he dwelt by the river of Chebar, [Which is about two hundred miles north of the city of Babylon, a river that is a tributary to the Euphrates.] and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them for seven days (3:15).

Now he, first of all has the call of God to the ministry. He then has the anointing of God for the ministry, as the power of God's Spirit comes upon him. Now he is being equipped for the ministry, as he sits where they sit.

Sitting where another person is sitting is so helpful in understanding that person. A lot of times we, we see people whose actions repulse us. They anger us, we get upset, we wonder, "How could they do that?" We're incensed with their insensitivity. But if you understood that person, if you understood their background, if you understood the things that they've gone through, or the things that they are going through, so often as you begin to understand the pressure, the hardships that they're experiencing, then you interpret their actions in the light of your understanding of where they are. It changes your attitude completely. Rather than being angry or upset, you have compassion. You say, "Oh that poor person, going through all of those things. I can understand the way they are striking out! I can understand the way, why they are reacting like that!" Because you have an insight into the conditions which quite often are very severe.

So it is important to seek to sit in another person's place. "I sat where they sat." To catch the feelings, to catch the fears, the anxieties that they were going through. As he sat there beginning to understand, understanding is the key to compassion.

As Jesus looked upon the multitude, He had compassion upon them because He understood. "They were like sheep without a shepherd. They were wandering aimlessly. They didn't have anybody to lead them. No wonder they had no sense of direction! No wonder their lives were so mixed up!" He saw them, understanding that this is what's going on. "They have no sense of direction for life." He had compassion on them. He said, "I'm the good shepherd, follow me." He called them, because of that compassion.

Compassion really is necessary for any effective ministry. You can't really minister to people until you first have a real compassion for those people. To have that compassion so often takes understanding. So he speaks of, of just sitting where they sat, for seven days, just in, in silence, and then...

It came to pass at the end of the seven days, that the word of the Lord came to me saying, Son of man, I have made you a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word of the Lord at my mouth, and give them warning from me (3:16-17).

Now having compassion and understanding, he is commissioned by God to give them warning. And God said...

When I say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and you give him not warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at your hand (3:18).

Now that's the responsibility of the ministry. You are responsible to warn. The Lord says, "Whether they hear or not is not your responsibility. But your responsibility is to warn. If I say to the wicked, You're gonna die, and you don't warn them, they will die in their wickedness, but I'll require their blood at your hand. You're responsible to me, to give them that warning."

We don't like the subject of hell. It is an unpleasant subject. We don't like to talk about it, we don't like to think about it. The hell that is described in the scriptures is a very unpleasant miserable place. A place of suffering, a place of torment, extreme torment, unending torment. We don't like, we, we repel at the thought

of such suffering and torment. As Jesus described, “A place of outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Where the worm dieth not, neither is the fire quenched.” We don’t, we don’t like to hear that, that’s harsh, that’s hard! But the Bible says that, “The wicked will be cast into hell, and all nations that forget God.”

Now if God’s word says that, and warns that the wicked are going to suffer punishment in hell, and I do not warn them, being commissioned by God to warn them, if I do not warn them, then God will hold me responsible, if God has called me to that mission.

Now God has not called every one of us to that mission. We all have a ministry, but our ministries vary. With Ezekiel, this was God’s commission to Ezekiel. The responsibility, and every minister who is ministering to a group of people has a responsibility to those people, to bring to them the truths of God. God holds that minister responsible.

When Paul was talking to the elders at Ephesus for what he thought was the last time, he said, “I want you to bear record of me, I want you to go on record, that I am pure from the blood of any man, because I did not shun to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. I, I was square with you. I was straight with you. I gave you the whole counsel of God. Thus I am free, I am pure from the blood of any man.” Paul could walk away from Ephesus knowing that he was pure, there was no one’s blood upon him, because he had been faithful in declaring to them all of the counsel of God.

James warns about being a teacher. He said, “Don’t be anxious really to be a teacher, knowing that you will receive the greater condemnation.” I think of how fearful it will be for some of these men who have occupied the pulpits across the country, who have comforted people in their sins. Who, as the false prophets of Jeremiah’s day said, “Peace, peace!”, when there was no peace, and have given to people a false sense of security, when they are actually living in sin, and have not spoken against that sin, nor warned them of the judgment to God, the judgment of God that is going to come against sin.

It is a solemn, awesome responsibility that is upon the minister to warn the people of the truths of God. So God said, “When I say to you, Warn the wicked, you better warn them because if you don’t, they die in their wickedness, their blood is on your head. If you warn them, then you’re free. They’ll die in their sin, and they will receive that judgment, you’re free.”

And then also, When a righteous man turns from his righteousness, and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because you have not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at your hand. Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; and you have delivered your soul (3:20-21).

Again, the idea is not to comfort the sinner in his sin. Not to comfort the wicked in their wickedness. But to warn them, that they must turn, or they will bear the consequences of their sin.

So the hand of the Lord [he said] was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, and go forth into the plain, and I will talk to you there. [So leaving the area of Telabib, he’s now to go to the plain, to hear the voice of the Lord.] And I rose, went forth to the plain: and, behold, the glory of the Lord stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar: and I fell on my face. [So God’s presence with him.] And the spirit entered into me, and he set me upon my feet, and he spoke with me, and he said to me, Go, and shut yourself within your house (3:22-24).

Now Ezekiel’s gonna go through a series of, of rather strange and bizarre actions. But they have a, a purpose of, of speaking to people. If you remember, as we were going through Jeremiah, we found Jeremiah doing some weird things! But in so doing, they became illustrated sermons to the people. They caught the people’s attention, and then he used them to, to bring home the truth, and the lessons to them. They’re sort of like, living parables.

So Jeremiah was told to buy this beautiful robe, and to wear it through Jerusalem, and then he was told to take that beautiful robe, and bury it under a rock by the river Euphrates. Then later on, he was told to go and dig the robe up. Now it was soiled, the bugs had eaten holes in it. The material was rotted, and the colors were all running together. The Lord said, “Now put the robe on again, and wear it through the streets of Jerusalem. Then preach to the people that, Judah was once like a beautiful robe, admired, and glorious in the

eyes of God. But because of their iniquity, they're rotten, they're filthy, they're no longer pleasant, they're no longer enjoyable." Thus, the message was illustrated by the actions.

Now Ezekiel's gonna go through a series of things whereby the attention of the people will be drawn, and he will use them as the base of speaking the truth of God to the people. So, "the Spirit entered into me, set me on my feet, and said, Go into your house, shut yourself up within your house"...

But thou, O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and they shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them: ["So you're to stay in your house now for a period of time, otherwise they will, they will imprison you."] *But I will make your tongue cleave to the roof of your mouth, and you'll not be able to speak,* [So, so now he's gonna go through a period of silence, it's all gonna be visual, his message to the people, as, as his tongue sticks to the top of his mouth, he's not able to talk just with grunts and so forth, but yet, it's gonna be drawing attention of the people.] *you will be dumb, and shall not be to them a reprover: for they are a rebellious house. But when I speak to you, I will open your mouth,* ["So you can only say what I tell you to say"] *thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that won't hear, let him not hear; for they are a rebellious house (3:25-27).*

Chapter 4

So you take a tile, and lay it in front of you, and there draw a map of the city of Jerusalem: [On this tile, or tablet, he was to draw this map of the city, which they would all recognize, and then He said,] *Lay a siege against it, build a fort against it,* [So a little dirt or sand forts that he is building now around this tile that is portraying the city of Jerusalem.] *then cast a mount against it;* ["Build up this little earthen mount against the tile."] *and set the camp also against it, and set the battering rams against it around it (4:1-2).*

So he is portraying that Jerusalem is going to experience a siege, and is going to be destroyed. Now the false prophets are saying that, the alliance with Egypt is going to stand, and Babylon is gonna be destroyed. Ezekiel is saying, or the Lord is saying to Ezekiel, "Let the people know that Jerusalem is going to fall. It's gonna be besieged by the Babylonians, and they're gonna set the mounts against it, they're gonna build their camps around it, and they're gonna take the city of Jerusalem. The captivity is not gonna be over immediately.

So take a pan, an iron pan (4:3),

These were sort of a flat type of iron skillet in which they often would cook their bread. They made this real thin, flat bread. It's about as thin as a piece of leather, and it's about as chewy as a piece of leather. Ha, ha! They would lay the dough in sort of like a pancake almost, I guess like a crepe, real thin, and then they would bake it on these flat iron pans. So he's to take one of these iron pans, and he's to...

set it up like a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set your face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. And this shall be a sign to the house of Israel (4:3).

So here he has this little tile portraying Jerusalem, sets the iron pan, puts his face against it, and it all is to show the siege of Jerusalem.

Then you're to lie on your left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity. [Or, to show their iniquity.] *For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of days, three hundred and ninety days: so thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. Now when you've accomplished that, then lie on your right side, and you're to bear the iniquity of the house of Judah for forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year (4:4-6).*

So it's to represent forty days, forty years and three hundred and ninety years.

Now this of course has caused the Bible commentators to scramble. What is the three hundred and ninety equivalent to, as he bears the iniquity? First of all, in the Septuagint it doesn't read three hundred and ninety years, but it reads one hundred and ninety years. From the time of the Assyrian capture of the city of Samaria, and the taking away of the Israel as captives, it was a hundred and ninety years, to 444 B.C., which was approximately the time that Nehemiah was sent back to restore, and rebuild Jerusalem. So some go along with the Septuagint, and say that the three hundred and ninety years was a mistake by a copyist, or a mistake in translation of the Hebrew, and it should read one hundred and ninety years, and thus, it was

equivalent to the time that Israel was in captivity.

The forty years, if you take the final destruction of Jerusalem in 586, and or, that, you take the forty years, I mean, 486, that can't be. I read that in a commentary, but I've just seen in my mind it doesn't make sense, so forget that one! I didn't think it through as I was reading in the commentary, because he, I don't know where he got the 486, because he said, you take the forty away from that, and you get down to 446. But it was in 586 that the thing fell. So you've got a hundred years. So I'm in as much confusion as I was before! Let it be said that there are about five different interpretations by the commentators on this, and none of them are fully satisfactory, they still sort of question.

Now Chuck Missler comes up with something that is interesting, as he always does. He goes back in Leviticus where God talks about the judgment that was gonna come upon them for three hundred and ninety years, and he said, "And if for all of this you do not turn to me, then I will add unto it seven times." So He, because they did not really turn to God, He then multiplies the three hundred and ninety by seven, typical Chuck Missler style, and he takes the time in which they went into captivity, and you have now a period of about four hundred times seven, so about two hundred, two thousand eight hundred years, slightly less. Chuck dates it from the time of their captivity, and you take the seventy times three hundred and ninety, it brings you to June 7th, 1967. Which is quite fascinating in that, that is the day that the Israeli army took Jerusalem under control again.

So as typically, Chuck, he comes up with those fascinating things, and you wonder, "Where in the world did he get that?" But it, it's there in the scripture, and that's probably as, as good a commentary as I have discovered on this particular text. Chuck has written about that in his book on Babylon, and you might want to check out his figures on that. But that seems to be a very plausible explanation in that the dates do work out very interestingly.

But at any rate, the two nations, the northern kingdom of Israel, lying on his left side to represent their years of iniquity, that is the judgment for their iniquity. It was to be four hundred and, I mean, three hundred and ninety years. I was just thinking again though, the forty years, if you, if you go from the, from the 586, remember Jeremiah said it would be seventy years, but there was thirty years that, from the first attack of, of uh Nebuchadnezzar to the final fall, and so you get your total seventy. So it does work in there, and I'll let you go ahead and work that one out. Believe me, I will too when I get home.

Now you're to set your face [The Lord said] against Jerusalem, and your arm shall be uncovered (4:7),

So he is to set his face, looking at this siege. Now he's in a catatonic state. He's like a statue, like one of these Indian statues that just, you know is almost in a catatonic state, just staring. He is to, to lie in this position staring at this siege of Jerusalem, with his arm uncovered, in other words I guess, pointing towards it.

And, behold, I will lay bands upon thee, that you'll not turn from one side to another (4:8),

The Lord's gonna stiffen him there in that one position, where he'll not be able to turn. Sometimes the Lord can put you sometimes, in miserable constraints! "And you'll not be able to turn from one side to another..."

until you have ended the days of the siege (4:8).

So for three hundred and ninety days, lying there on his, I imagine that was a great relief when he was able to turn to his left side, but there's forty more days lying there! Now he is to...

Take wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentils, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one vessel, and make bread out of it, according to the number of days that you will lie on your side, three hundred and ninety days you will eat of this bread (4:9).

So he had the rations of this uh, yucky bread. I mean, adding this, this other stuff. Now usually the bread was made out of wheat for the rich people. The poor people usually had barley type bread. But then when you start mixing in all of these other ingredients, it makes a very unpalatable bread, but it is the bread that represents the bread of siege. In other words, you make bread out of anything you can find. You throw in anything, and everything to make the bread. Just anything that is there. It's to represent the bread that is experienced during siege. So it is to represent the fact that Jerusalem is going to be under this siege, until the people are starving. Just making bread out of anything that they can get hold of. So he is to eat this

unpalatable bread for the three hundred and ninety days.

And your meal which you shall eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day: [Or about twelve ounces of this bread every day.] *and you will drink water by measure, the sixth part of a hin:* [Which is a little over a pint of water a day, so strict rations, this old tasting bread and water for three hundred and ninety days, representing the difficulties that the people will be experiencing during the time of the siege.] *And you're to eat it at an appointed time each day. And you will eat it as barley cakes, and you will bake it with dung that comes out of man, in their sight (4:10-12).*

Yuck! Now when a city was under siege, very quickly, of course they usually had wood fires. The women would go out and gather wood, and they would have wood fires to bake their bread. But when a city was under siege, very quickly the wood would be one of the first things that would be used up in the city. When the wood was used up, then they would burn as a general rule, the cows' dung that was dried. They would use that as a fuel for a fire. That is something that you read about in the Old Testament. It was quite common as a fuel for fire.

The human excretion of course, was considered unclean. Thus, it was not to be used as a fuel for fire. Yet, because of the, of the people in their condition, God is, is saying to do this, but at this point Ezekiel objects! He said...

For the Lord said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them. [In other words, God is showing that they're gonna be going into a, a place of separation from God, uncleanness, defilement among the Gentiles, but thus they are to be eating their bread under the defilement of the Gentiles.] *And then I said, Ah Lord God! behold, my soul has not been polluted: for from my youth up even till now I've not eaten anything which died of itself,* ["Lord I've, I've kept myself according to the law, you know ceremonially, I've not you know, I've always been kosher, so I've never eaten anything that died by itself."] *or is torn in pieces; and neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth.* [Even there in Babylon he had kept strict kosher laws.] *So he said unto me, Lo, I have given you the cow's dung for man's dung, and thou shalt prepare your bread with it.* [That is, use it for the fire.] *Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight,* [They're gonna have to ration out their, their wheat and so forth.] *and with care; they will drink water by measure (4:13-16),*

There's gonna be a shortage, and indeed, this did happen when Jerusalem was under siege, the people actually began to starve to death, and Josephus gives some awesome accounts of the starvation and of the, the resultant fighting over food, killing for food, and then ultimately, mothers boiling their own children, and cannibalizing, eating their own children because of the fierce hunger that they experienced under the siege before Jerusalem finally fell to the Babylonians.

So here the Lord is, is predicting this. Too many people that didn't want to hear it. They were all excited you know that they had made the league with the Egyptians, and the Egyptians were gonna save them. They were looking for salvation from Egypt, but the Lord says, "It's not going to be. They're going to be besieged, they're gonna fall, but they're gonna go through." This is the bitterness, this is the heavy stuff. They're going to go through this horrible time of siege, suffering before this city finally falls, because, their hearts are rebellious against God. Because they won't listen to the voice of God. Because they won't take heed when God speaks.

The Bible tells us that, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." It's a fearful thing to, to be stubborn against God, and the things of God. It's a, it's an awesome thing to set your heart, and your life against the Lord. This is what these people were doing, and this was the consequence of that action.

So Ezekiel is now gonna portray this in a very graphic way, that the people might, who won't listen to God, might have an illustration before them for three hundred and ninety days. Then for another forty days, they're gonna be reminded of this whole thing, as they see that prophet lying there in a catatonic state, and they see this little tile with Jerusalem, when they see the forts around it, and the mounds against it, and this iron pan and all. He's just lying there with his arm uncovered, and in this catatonic state. It's gonna, it's gonna be heavy as they, as they watch him, and as they begin to talk about it. But God will be speaking to them through this illustration. So, as we said, we go straight through, we hit every verse. Not all of them are

easy, but take them anyhow.

Shall we pray?

Father we thank You for Your Word. Lord we want to be faithful to Your word, to keeping Your Word, obeying it's injunctions. Lord we want, with Paul, to be pure of the blood of all men, to declare to them the whole counsels of God. To not hold back, but to speak the truth in love, that we might be faithful servants Lord, unto You. Faithful ministers of Your truth. Lord help us that we will also be hearers of truth, and doers of the Word. Give us a heart to receive, and a world to respond. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.