

Ezekiel 13 - Warning and Judgment for the False Prophets & Prophetesses in Israel

I. Imminent judgment upon Judah (Ezek 1:1—24:27)

(2) Prophecies of coming judgment against Judah and Jerusalem (Ezek 4:1—24:27)

(B) Shattering false securities (Ezek 12:1—19:14)

(c) Third false security: false prophets and prophetesses (13:1-23)

(i) False Prophets (13:1-16)

(a) Sin (13:1-7)

(b) Judgment (13:8-16)

(ii) False prophetesses (13:17-23)

(a) Sin (13:17-19)

(b) Judgment (13:20-23)

False Prophets

There were two classes of false prophets:

(1) Those who were representatives of some object of worship other than the true God, i.e., Baal, Moloch, et al.

(2) Those who falsely purported to speak in the name of YHWH (Cf. Micaiah's opposition to the prophets of Ahab: 1 Kings 22:5-28)

- Some of the strongest denunciations of these deceivers are by Jeremiah, who opposed them on moral, personal, and political grounds (Jer 23:9-32)

Ezekiel 13

(c) Third false security: false prophets and prophetesses (13:1-23)

(i) False Prophets (13:1-16)

(a) Sin (13:1-7)

1 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

1 Then the word of the LORD came to me saying,

1 This message came to me from the LORD:

1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 "Son of man, prophesy against the **prophets of Israel** who prophesy, and say to those who **prophesy from their own inspiration**, 'Listen to the word of the LORD!

2 "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy from their own inspiration, 'Listen to the word of the LORD!

2 "Son of Man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel, who even now are prophesying, and tell those prophets that keep on prophesying according to what they wish would happen, 'Listen to what the LORD says.'"

2 Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD;

- "...prophets of Israel" - Ezekiel was now tasked by God to address the men accountable for the sins outlined in 12:24 ("false visions and deceptive divinations")

- God listed eight specific sins committed by these false prophets:

- "...prophesy from their own inspiration" - prophesying out of their own inspiration rather than under the inspiration of Christ; basically, they fabricated prophesies as if they had come for God Himself

— What came out of their hearts was nothing more than personal opinions influenced by their own assessments of the circumstances

— Unfortunately, the audience for these false prophets was not able to discern the difference between opinion and divine revelation

— Jeremiah consistently confronted these imposters (Cf. Jer 5:30-31; 14:13-18; 23:9-40; 29:8-9,21-23)

3 This is what the Lord GOD says: "**Woe** to the foolish prophets who are **following their own spirit** and have **seen nothing**!

3 Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe to the foolish prophets who are following their own spirit and have seen nothing.

3 "This is what the Lord GOD says, 'How terrible it will be for the false prophets who walk according to their own wrong inclinations and see nothing.

3 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!

- "...Woe" - Hoy, this word is often used by prophets, such as Isaiah, in anticipation of a pronouncement of judgment (Cf. Is 10:5), and carries a sense of foreboding

- "...following their own spirit" - these false prophets developed oracles out of their own self-induced ecstasy; they literally fell into self-induced trances

- "...seen nothing" - they had seen nothing, and they knew it; they spoke as if they could see the future, but they saw nothing

4 Israel, your prophets have been like **jackals among ruins**.

4 O Israel, your prophets have been like foxes among ruins.

4 Israel, your prophets have become like foxes among ruins.

4 O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts.

- "...jackals among ruins" - a jackal or fox is a destroyer; they benefit by scavenging in ruins

— This verse hints that the Jewish society of that day was destroyed, and the false prophets were having their way scavenging the ruins

5 You have not gone up **into the breaches, nor did you build up a stone wall** around the house of Israel to stand in the battle on **the day of the LORD**.

5 You have not gone up into the breaches, nor did you build the wall around the house of Israel to stand in the battle on the day of the LORD.

5 You didn't go up to repair the breaches in the walls and you didn't build the walls so Israel's house would be able to endure battle on the Day of the LORD.

5 Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD.

- "...into the breaches" - there were breaches (weak spots) in the (defensive) walls of Jerusalem, literally and spiritually, and the false prophets had not been "repairers of the breach" (Is 58:12; Ps 106:23)

— Normally, soldiers would be dispatched to try to fill the gap/breach, but Israel's false prophets instead exploited the devastation for their own gain. They neglected to defend these vulnerable spots in society.

- "...nor did you build up a stone wall" - they were unwilling to strengthen the wall to enhance Israel's defenses, thus the city became unable to withstand the battle on the day of the LORD

- "...the day of the LORD" - the predominant designation for the future Tribulation period in both the Old and New Testaments

— The emphasis here is that the false prophets of Israel, both in the past and persistently, have established a precedent that will ultimately lead Israel into the Tribulation

— According to both OT and NT prophets, the primary responsibility for this outcome lies with the leadership of Israel. The Jewish people tend to follow their leaders. Because of this tendency, the pattern set forth in the OT continued into the future, including the present age, ultimately resulting in Israel's entrance into the Tribulation.

6 **They see deceit and lying divination**, those who are saying, '**The LORD declares,**' when the LORD has not sent them; yet **they wait for the fulfillment of *their* word!**

6 They see falsehood and lying divination who are saying, 'The LORD declares,' when the LORD has not sent them; yet they hope for the fulfillment of *their* word.

6 Instead, they crafted false prophecies and divination.

“They say, “...declares the LORD,” even though the LORD didn’t send them. And they hope for the fulfillment of their message.

6 They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word.

- “...They see deceit and lying divination” - their visions were of demonic origin, not from God (Cf. 1 Kings 22:19-23)

- “...The LORD declares” - the false prophets claimed to be speaking in God's name, using the correct formula (“Thus says the Lord”), yet God had not sent them

— They had falsely impersonated a prophet, self-appointed and self-commissioned, yet God had nothing to do with them

- “...they wait for the fulfillment of *their* word” - they made men hope that their word would be confirmed/fulfilled; they created a deceptive sense of hope and security among the people, all while spewing lies

7 Did you not see a false vision and tell a lying divination when you said, ‘The LORD declares,’ but it is not I who have spoken?””

7 Did you not see a false vision and speak a lying divination when you said, ‘The LORD declares,’ but it is not I who have spoken?””

7 You’ve crafted a false prophesy and spoken deceptive divination, haven’t you? But then you say, “...declares the LORD,” although I haven’t spoken a single word.

7 Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The LORD saith it; albeit I have not spoken?

- Two accusatory questions:

- “Did you not see a false vision?” - the question inherently demands an affirmative answer
- “Did you not tell a lying divination?” - this question is rhetorical and demands an acknowledgement of guilt

(b) Judgment (13:8-16)

8 Therefore, this is what the Lord GOD says: “Because you have spoken deceit and have seen a lie, therefore behold, I am against you,” declares the Lord GOD.

8 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, “Because you have spoken falsehood and seen a lie, therefore behold, I am against you,” declares the Lord GOD.

8 “Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says, “Because you’ve spoken falsehood and deceptions, I am therefore opposing⁶ you,” declares the Lord GOD.

8 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord GOD.

- “Therefore” - because of their actions described in v1-7...

9 "So My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. **They will have no place in the council of My people, nor will they be written down in the register of the house of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel,** so that **you may know that I am the Lord GOD.**

9 "So My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. They will have no place in the council of My people, nor will they be written down in the register of the house of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel, that you may know that I am the Lord God.

9 My hand will oppose the prophets who see false visions and speak deceptive divinations. They won't be included with the council of my people, nor will they be entered into the registry of Israel's house or enter Israel's land. Then you'll know that I am the Lord GOD,

9 And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

- God outlines three aspects of punishment that He intended to impose on these false prophets...

1. "...They will have no place in the council of My people" - the false prophets would lose their influence over God's people
2. "...nor will they be written down in the register of the house of Israel" - they would be excommunicated from citizenship in Israel (Cf. Ezra 2:62)
3. "...nor will they enter the land of Israel" - banned from the Land; they would not participate in the return of the exiles from Babylon back to Israel. They would die as exiles in Babylon.

- "...you may know that I am the Lord GOD" - when these three judgments came to pass, the false prophets and those who followed them would finally acknowledge the true authority of God

Metaphor of the Whitewashed Wall

10 It is definitely because they have misled My people by saying, 'Peace!' when there is no peace. And when anyone builds **a wall**, behold, they plaster it over with **whitewash**;

10 It is definitely because they have misled My people by saying, 'Peace!' when there is no peace. And when anyone builds a wall, behold, they plaster it over with whitewash;

10 because they've truly caused my people to stray saying, "Peace," but there's no peace."

"When someone builds a wall, they coat it with whitewash.

10 Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar:

- One of the primary offenses of the false prophets was that they misled the people into a false sense of security, believing their was "peace" when there was no peace (Cf. v6)
- "...a wall" - *chayits*, a thin wall made of stacked stones but no mortar
- "...whitewash" - untempered mortar; the false prophets simply covered everything up, like using untempered mortar on a flimsy, thin wall. While this mortar improved the appearance of the wall, it did nothing to strengthen it.
- The prophets were compounding Israel's difficulties by hiding problems that needed to be exposed, basically whitewashing everything
- The *chayits* symbolized the vain hopes of the people, and the false prophets promised the realization of all false expectations

11 so tell those who plaster *it* over with whitewash, that it will fall. A **flooding rain** will come, and you, hailstones, will fall, and a violent wind will break out.

11 so tell those who plaster *it* over with whitewash, that it will fall. A flooding rain will come, and you, O hailstones, will fall; and a violent wind will break out.

11 Tell those who coat it with whitewash that it will fall. It will be washed off by the rain. Great hailstones will fall and a stormy wind will strip it off.

11 Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it.

- This flimsy, whitewashed wall was ripe for destruction
- "...flooding rain" - throughout Scripture, a flood, when used symbolically, represents a military invasion
- Given that v9 mentions the wall as a symbolic representation of the people's hopes, the flood could also hold symbolic significance. If so, it means that the wall of false hopes erected by the false prophets would be swept away by the flood of the Babylonian invasion.

12 Behold, *when* the wall has fallen, will you not be asked, 'Where is the plaster with which you plastered *it*?'"

12 Behold, when the wall has fallen, will you not be asked, 'Where is the plaster with which you plastered *it*?'"

12 Look! When the wall collapses, won't it be said of you, 'Where's the coat of paint that you spread all over the wall?'

12 Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it?

- The destruction brought on by Nebuchadnezzar's imminent invasion would result in humiliation for the false prophets

— As everything collapsed, people would ask them where was the fulfillment that they had prophesied? The false prophets would face ridicule and mockery because their predictions did not come to pass.

13 Therefore, this is what the Lord GOD says: "I will make a violent wind break out in My wrath. There will also be in My anger a flooding rain and hailstones to consume *it* in wrath.

13 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, "I will make a violent wind break out in My wrath. There will also be in My anger a flooding rain and hailstones to consume *it* in wrath.

13 "Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says, 'In my burning anger, I'll rip it open with a windstorm. In my anger, I'll rinse it off with rain, and put an end to it with a hailstorm in my destructive rage.

13 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it.

- Because of what God declared in v11-12, God Himself would make sure that this wall of false hope was destroyed

— In His fury, He will let loose a violent wind, flooding rain, and hailstones. The Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem would be His doing.

14 So I will tear down the wall which you plastered over with whitewash and hurl it down to the ground, so that its foundation is exposed; and when it falls, you will perish in its midst. And you will know that I am the LORD.

14 So I will tear down the wall which you plastered over with whitewash and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation is laid bare; and when it falls, you will be consumed in its midst. And you will know that I am the LORD.

14 I'll tear down the wall that you've smeared with whitewash, level it to the ground, and tear out its foundation. Then it will collapse—and you'll perish with it! Then you'll know that I am the LORD.

14 So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

- God declared His intention to demolish this wall of false expectations, and when the hopes of the people crumbled, the false prophets themselves would be consumed in the midst

— The prophets were buried beneath the collapsing walls (Cf. Is 25:12; Lam 2:2; Amos 9:1)

— This underscores the danger of making prophecies for the near future, especially when one is still alive to witness their failure. According to the Mosaic Law, the false prophets should have all been stoned to death for their sins (Deut 13:1-5).

15 So **I will expend My wrath** on the wall and on those who have plastered it over with whitewash; and I will say to you, 'The wall is gone and those who plastered it are gone,

15 Thus I will spend My wrath on the wall and on those who have plastered it over with whitewash; and I will say to you, 'The wall is gone and its plasterers are gone,

15 "'That's how I'll vent my anger on the wall and on the ones who coated it with whitewash. And I'll say to you, "The wall is gone and so are those who coated it."

15 Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it; - "...I will expend My wrath" - the judgment would bring about the culmination of God's wrath upon these false prophets

— Both the wall, those who constructed it, would vanish. God's wrath would be fully unleashed upon these false prophets.

16 *along with* the prophets of Israel who prophesy to Jerusalem, and who see a vision of peace for her when there is no peace,' declares the Lord GOD.

16 *along with* the prophets of Israel who prophesy to Jerusalem, and who see visions of peace for her when there is no peace,' declares the Lord GOD.

16 The prophets of Israel prophesied about Jerusalem and saw visions of peace concerning her, yet there's no peace,'" declares the Lord GOD.

16 To wit, the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord GOD.

- A reiteration of who God's wrath will be directed toward: the (false) prophets of Israel, who predicted peace for Israel when there is no peace

(ii) False prophetesses (13:17-23)

While v1-16 focused on male false prophets, v17-23 reveal that the problem of deception extended beyond men. There were also false prophetesses in Judah, and Ezekiel addressed them by first outlining their actions (v17-19) and then explaining the judgment that God would bring upon them (v20-23).

It is worth noting that this passage in Ezekiel stands out among the prophetic writings of the Hebrew Scriptures because it specifically addresses the phenomenon of false prophetesses. While there are three other sections critical of women in the Prophets (Is 3:16—4:1; 32:9-13; Amos 4:1-13), Ezekiel is the only one who revealed the involvement of women in this specific type of sin.

(a) Sin (13:17-19)

17 "Now you, son of man, set your face against the **daughters of your people** who are talking like prophets from their own imagination. Prophecy against them

17 "Now you, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people who are prophesying from their own inspiration. Prophecy against them

17 "And now, Son of Man, turn toward and oppose the women of your people who prophesy according to their own wrong inclinations and prophecy against them.

17 Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophecy thou against them,

- "...daughters of thy people" - this is the only OT passage where God speaks out against the false female prophets (prophetesses)

— Similar to their male counterparts, they delivered oracles out of their own heart, basically fabricating their prophecies

Gifted Women

Several godly, gifted women are referred to in Scripture as prophetesses:

- Miriam (Ex 15:20-21)
- Deborah (Judges 4:3-5)
- Isaiah's wife (Is 8:3)
- Huldah (2 Kings 22:14-20)
- Anna (Luke 2:36)
- the four daughters of Philip (Acts 21:8-9)

In the next section, the prophetesses were counterparts of the false prophets, forerunners of the modern palmists, fortune-tellers, and mediums...

18 and say, 'This is what the Lord GOD says: "Woe to the women who sew ***magic bands*** on all wrists and make ***veils for the heads*** of *persons* of every stature to capture souls! Will you capture the souls of My people, but keep the souls of *others* alive for yourselves?

18 and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe to the women who sew ***magic bands*** on all wrists and make veils for the heads of *persons* of every stature to hunt down lives! Will you hunt down the lives of My people, but preserve the lives of *others* for yourselves?

18 Tell them, 'This is what the Lord GOD says, "How terrible it will be for those women who sew magical bracelets on all their wrists and make one-size-fits all headbands, in order to entrap their souls. Will you hunt for the souls of my people and remain alive?

18 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the women that sew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you?

- Unlike the male prophets, these prophetesses engaged in occult practices

- "...*magic bands*" - *keseth*, covered amulets, false phylacteries, used by false prophetesses to support their demonic fortune-telling schemes
 - These were magical bands that were sewn and placed on the wrists of those who were inquiring of the false prophetesses
 - These bands symbolized the binding power of the women's incantations and their control over the people consulting them, akin to certain practices in voodoo
 - The "sewing" was intended to signify the covering or wrapping of the joints, preventing God's touch. In so doing, the prophetesses obscured and concealed the true Word of God with false prophecies.
- "...veils for the heads" - *mishpachot*, a long veil
 - The false prophetesses meticulously sewed veils tailored to fit the heads of the individuals about whom or to whom they were prophesying. Through these kerchiefs, the women sought to hunt the souls of God's people. Utilizing rituals, spells, and incantations, they entranced their clients, convincing them that they could keep them alive for a small fee.

19 For handfuls of barley and pieces of bread, you have profaned Me to My people, **to put to death some who should not die**, and to **keep others alive who should not live**, by your lying to My people who listen to lies."''

19 For handfuls of barley and fragments of bread, you have profaned Me to My people to put to death some who should not die and to keep others alive who should not live, by your lying to My people who listen to lies."''

19 You've profaned me among my people for a handful of barley and a morsel of bread. You're causing people to die who shouldn't have to die, and you're causing people to live who shouldn't survive, when you deceive my people who tend to listen to lies."

19 And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies?

- These false prophetesses profaned God among His people for provisions ("handfuls of barley and pieces of bread")
 - They not only accepted these provisions as payment for services, but also used them for divination, predicting whether a sick person would live or die
- "...to put to death some who should not die" - these prophetesses unlawfully took souls that were not meant to die, employing magical powers for nefarious purposes
- "...keep others alive who should not live" - they also did the opposite: they used magical cures to save people who were destined to die
- All of these were done through deceitful practices directed at God's people

(b) Judgment (13:20-23)

20 Therefore, this is what the Lord GOD says: "Behold, I am against your *magic* bands by which you capture souls there as birds, and I will tear them from your arms; and I will let them go, those souls whom you capture as birds.

20 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against your *magic* bands by which you hunt lives there as birds and I will tear them from your arms; and I will let them go, even those lives whom you hunt as birds.

20 "Therefore, this is what the Lord GOD says, "Watch out! I'm opposing your amulets with which you hunt souls as one would swat at a flying insect. I'll tear them off your arms and then deliver those people, whom you've hunted like birds.

20 Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly.

- "Therefore" - here comes God's judgment...

- God would dismantle the power of their magic wrist bands. Akin to setting birds free, He would liberate those who had been ensnared and enslaved by the prophetesses.

21 I will also tear off your veils and save My people from your hands, and they will no longer be in your hands as prey; and you will know that I am the LORD.

21 I will also tear off your veils and deliver My people from your hands, and they will no longer be in your hands to be hunted; and you will know that I am the LORD.

21 I'll also tear off your headbands and deliver my people from your grip so that they won't be under your control anymore. Then you'll know that I am the LORD.

21 Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

- He would also tear and destroy the veils for their heads, and He would shatter the power they once had over people involved with them

— The people would then be freed from the blindness that had been imposed on them by witchcraft. As a result, they would recognize that YHWH alone is God.

22 Because you disheartened the righteous with falsehood when I did not cause him pain, but *you* have encouraged the wicked not to turn from his wicked way to keep him alive,

22 Because you disheartened the righteous with falsehood when I did not cause him grief, but have encouraged the wicked not to turn from his wicked way *and* preserve his life,

22 ""Because you've dismayed the heart of the righteous—whom I never intended to dismay—with lies, and because you've encouraged the wicked so that he wouldn't abandon his evil behavior and by doing so live,

22 Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life:

- God's basis for this punishment of the prophetesses is that they disheartened (grieved) the righteous whom God did not make sad, and encouraged the wicked by providing them with false assurance.

- They had told their victims to persist in their wickedness because they would be saved alive. In other words, the false prophetesses would shield them from divine punishment.

- With these lies, the women had made the righteous sad and the wicked glad, encouraging their wickedness by falsely promising them a long life

23 therefore you women will no longer see deceitful visions or practice divination, and I will save My people from your hands. So you will know that I am the LORD."

23 therefore, you women will no longer see false visions or practice divination, and I will deliver My people out of your hand. Thus you will know that I am the LORD."

23 you'll no longer see false visions or again practice divination, because I'm going to deliver my people from your power. Then you'll know that I am the LORD.""

23 Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my people out of your hand: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

- Once the people were liberated from the spells of the false prophetesses, even these women would acknowledge YHWH as the only true God