

EZEKIEL

Chapter 13

False Prophets Condemned

The word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel, who are prophesying, and say to those who prophesy from their own hearts: ‘Hear the word of the LORD!’ 3 Thus says the Lord GOD, Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! 4 Your prophets have been like jackals among ruins, O Israel. 5 You have not gone up into the breaches, or built up a wall for the house of Israel, that it might stand in battle in the day of the LORD. 6 They have seen false visions and lying divinations. They say, ‘Declares the LORD,’ when the LORD has not sent them, and yet they expect him to fulfill their word. 7 Have you not seen a false vision and uttered a lying divination, whenever you have said, ‘Declares the LORD,’ although I have not spoken?” 8 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: “Because you have uttered falsehood and seen lying visions, therefore behold, I am against you, declares the Lord GOD. 9 My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and who give lying divinations. They shall not /be in the council of my people, nor be enrolled in the register of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord GOD. 10 Precisely because they have misled my people, saying, ‘Peace,’ when there is no peace, and because, when the people build a wall, these prophets smear it with whitewash, 11 say to those who smear it with whitewash that it shall fall! There will be a deluge of rain, and you, O great hailstones, will fall, and a stormy wind break out. 12 And when the wall falls, will it not be said to you, ‘Where is the coating with which you smeared it?’ 13 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I will make a stormy wind break out in my wrath, and there shall be a deluge of rain in my anger, and great hailstones in wrath to make a full end. 14 And I will break down the wall that you have smeared with whitewash, and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation will be laid bare. When it falls, you shall perish in the midst of it, and you shall know that I am the LORD. 15 Thus will I spend my wrath upon the wall and upon those who have smeared it with whitewash, and I will say to you, The wall is no more, nor those who smeared it, 16 the prophets of Israel who prophesied concerning Jerusalem and saw visions of peace for her, when there was no peace, declares the Lord GOD. 17 “And you, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own hearts. Prophesy against them 18 and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Woe to the women who sew magic bands upon all wrists, and make veils for the heads of persons of every stature, in the hunt for souls! Will you hunt down souls belonging to my people and keep your own souls alive? 19 You have profaned me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, putting to death souls who should not die and keeping alive souls who should not live, by your lying to my people, who listen to lies. 20 “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against your magic bands with which you hunt the souls like birds, and I will tear them from your arms, and I will let the souls whom you hunt go free, the souls like birds. 21 Your veils also I will tear off and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand as prey, and you shall know that I am the LORD. 22 Because you have disheartened the righteous falsely, although I have not grieved him, and you have encouraged the wicked, that he should not turn from his evil way to save his life, 23 therefore you shall no more see false visions nor practice divination. I will deliver my people out of your hand. And you shall know that I am the LORD.”

Ch 13 Denunciation of false prophets and prophetesses. (TLSB)

In chapter 12 Yahweh had answered the people's deluded views about prophecy. Now in this chapter Yahweh turns to the false prophets and prophetesses themselves who are misleading the people. The chapter contains two oracles: the first addresses male false prophets and the second is directed to female practitioners.

The transition from the first to the second oracle is facilitated by the repetition of the signatory formula, "says the Lord Yahweh" (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אָמַר), at the start and conclusion of the penalty announced to the false prophets (13:8, 16). Each of the four announcements of judgment includes the word "therefore" (לְכֵן, [twice], 13, 20, 23). (CC)

13:2 *out of their own imagination.* Cf. Jer 23:21–22. (CSB)

prophecy from their own hearts. Of their own devising, bereft of divine revelation. They may have been charlatans or actually believed they were recipients of divine revelation. (TLSB)

Hear the word of the LORD! Remedy to falsehood. The problem is the same today. There are many claimants to God's truth. Our sure judge of what is true is the Scriptures. Obviously, not all Scripture had been written in Ezekiel's day, but they had "Moses and the Prophets" (Lk 16:29, 31) (TLSB)

13:3 *foolish.* Often (esp in Proverbs) contrasted with wise, which in the Bible means confessing the true faith (cf Pr 1:7; 1Co 1–2). (TLSB)

follow their own spirit. Synonymous with "hearts" in the previous verse. Their "spirituality" was not of the Holy Spirit. (TLSB)

have seen nothing. No revelation from God was received. (CSB)

Corresponds to the frequent use of "vision" for prophecy; not necessarily implying use of the eyes. (TLSB)

13:4 *jackals.* Animals that travel in packs and feed on dead flesh—a powerfully negative image (see Ps 63:10; La 5:18). (CSB)

Commonly inhabited ruins and made a lot of noise without saying anything. They tend to act furtively at night, not in broad daylight. (TLSB)

The association of jackals with ruins is frequent in the Bible, and the Israelites were probably acquainted with the reality underlying the metaphor. No explanation of the picture is offered, but to the original audience, it must have evoked a vivid picture of these scavengers who not only frequented ruins, but often enlarged the breaches or undermined the walls as they dug their own lairs. "Israel, a religio-moral ruin, teems with jackal-prophets who batten on the decay, and by telling the people what they want to hear, hasten the end." (CC)

13:5 *You have not gone up.* The function of true prophets is described (cf. 22:30; Ps 106:23). (CSB)

breaches. Place in the city walls that attackers had weakened or opened. If defenders did not assemble there, the enemy would soon come pouring in. They could repair the breach by patching it or building a new wall. (TLSB)

13:6 *false visions*. Whether the false prophets had actual visions is unknown, but they claimed to have received revelations from God when in reality their messages only proclaimed what their hearers wanted to hear (see Isa 30:10; Jer 23:9–17; 2Ti 4:3). (CSB)

Parallel terms; “divinations” nearly always implies some pagan procedure that is supposed to reveal God’s will. (TLSB)

Declares the LORD. False prophets might use the same citation formula as the true prophets. God’s Word is not validated by any subjective human “faith.” Use of the externally correct words or rituals does not magically produce validation either. (TLSB)

13:7 Rhetorical question implying a positive answer. Ezekiel accuses them of deception, however much they may have deluded themselves. (TLSB)

By rephrasing 13:6 as a rhetorical question and switching to the second person (“Have you not ... ?”), Ezekiel challenges his competitors to confront the truth question themselves. Precisely how they were to do this is not specified, but events would soon determine who was divinely inspired and who was deluded. (CC)

13:8 *Therefore*. Signals the transition from indictment to verdict (cf vv 13, 20). If the Lord is against them, there is not the slightest chance that their “prophecies” will be fulfilled. (TLSB)

I am against you. See 5:8 and note – (A short and effective phrase of judgment used often by Ezekiel (see 13:8; 21:3; 26:3; 28:22; 29:3, 10; 30:22; 34:10; 35:3; 38:3; 39:1; see also Jer 23:30–32; 50:31; 51:25; Na 2:13; 3:5). (CSB)

13:9 *My hand*. Implies divine power deployed against false prophets. (TLSB)

not ... nor ... nor. Three parallel negative results of God’s hand against the false prophets are specified. (TLSB)

the council of My people. The communion of the elect on earth, who are supposed to represent God’s heavenly council of advisers. Cf Jer 23:18, 22. (The phrase “My people” will appear six more times in this chapter.) God has not abandoned His covenantal promises to His people, but they have spurned His gracious offer. (TLSB)

register. Scripture sometimes speaks of a heavenly list of the faithful, corresponding to an (inevitably imperfect) earthly list of the true Church (e.g., Rv 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27). (TLSB)

enter the land of Israel. Applies immediately to a return to the homeland, but, ultimately, to the homeland above. (TLSB)

know that I am the Lord GOD. By their very exclusion, they will have to admit that He is the Lord God. (TLSB)

13:10 *“Peace,” when there is no peace*. False prophets further the people’s vain hopes that Jerusalem would not fall and they could soon return home. Cf Jer 23:13–40. (TLSB)

when the people build a wall. Metaphor referring to their expressions of false hope. (TLSB)

smear it with whitewash. Annual maintenance for preserving a mud brick building. The false prophets cover over their fallacies with a thin veneer, which conceals the wall's fatal cracks. (TLSB)

13:11 *deluge of rain.* The violent thunderstorm of God's judgment (imagery frequently used in the OT) was about to sweep them away (see, e.g., Ps 18:7–15; 77:17–18; 83:15; Isa 28:17; 30:30; Jer 23:19; 30:23). (CSB)

God will expose the weakness of that wall by a great storm. The hailstones are personified, and God is pictured as addressing them directly. God controls the elements. (TLSB)

13:12 Rhetorical question implies the result of the storm described in vv 13–16. (TLSB)

13:13–15 Description of the storm's utter destruction of the flimsy wall and those who had covered it superficially. (TLSB)

13:16 The false prophets had said that the city was safe and the exile would be short. They were undoubtedly very popular, since this was what the people wanted to hear, but God's coming storm would demolish everything. (TLSB)

13:17 *daughters ... who prophesy.* False prophetesses who are denounced for giving their own opinions. Ezekiel's language here is virtually identical to that used of their male counterparts in vv 2–3. (TLSB)

13:18 *magic bands.* Exactly what the women were doing is not known, but that it was some kind of black magic or voodoo is clear. The Bible consistently avoids explicit description of occult practices. (CSB)

Might signify the supposed binding power of the spell or incantation. (TLSB)

veils. Hbr unclear. Objects used as head coverings of some sort. (TLSB)

souls! Or, "lives." (TLSB)

Will you ... keep your own souls alive? Rhetorical question implies a negative answer. When the judgment comes, their lives would not be spared any more than their victims had been. (TLSB)

13:19 *profaned Me.* By their magic, the women had denied God's holiness and treated Him as some occult power they could manipulate. (TLSB)

for handfuls of barley. Involvement in religious matters of any kind for mere gain is consistently condemned in the Bible (see, e.g., Jer 6:13; 8:10; Mic 3:5, 11; Ac 8:9–24; Tit 1:11). For the proper attitude and motivation see 2Co 11:7; 2Th 3:8; 1Ti 3:3. (CSB)

May have been part of the magical ritual. More likely, the pittance of payment the women received. (TLSB)

putting to death souls...should not live. The women had used their evil powers to unjust ends, involving even matters of life and death. (CSB)

Supposed effects of the spells. (TLSB)

souls who should not die. Israelites whom the magicians had seduced into sin. (TLSB)

souls who should not live. Magicians and their accomplices. (TLSB)

13:20 *hunt the souls like birds*. Depicts the casual, almost sport-like, nature of the attempts to ensnare people with their bands. (TLSB)

13:21 *veils*. God will deliver His people from the spell of the false prophetesses, as He had from the bands. (TLSB)

13:22 *disheartened the righteous falsely*. Result of their magic has been demoralization of the believers, who know that salvation comes only through the true God. (TLSB)

encouraged the wicked. Magicians have emboldened the wicked in their apostasy. (TLSB)

not turn. Lacking repentance, they forfeit their lives. (TLSB)

13:23 When Jerusalem falls, the magicians will fall with it. (TLSB)

Ch 13 All religions do not lead to the same place. There is only one true Gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Christ; anyone who preaches or practices otherwise is condemned. By repeating phrases such as “My people,” the Lord expresses His offer of salvation to all who believe. • “Lord, keep us steadfast in Your Word; Curb those who by deceit or sword Would wrest the kingdom from Your Son And bring to naught all He has done.” Amen. (*LSB 655:1*) (TLSB)