

Israel's False Prophets Judged

Ezekiel 13

Ezekiel 13:1-16: *"And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² 'Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, '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 O Israel, your prophets are like foxes in the deserts. ⁵ You have not gone up into the gaps to build a wall for the house of Israel to stand in battle on the day of the Lord. ⁶ They have envisioned futility and false divination, saying, 'Thus says the Lord!' But the Lord has not sent them; yet they hope that the word may be confirmed. ⁷ Have you not seen a futile vision, and have you not spoken false divination? You say, 'The Lord says,' but I have not spoken."*

⁸ Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Because you have spoken nonsense and envisioned lies, therefore I am indeed against you," says the Lord God. ⁹ "My hand will be against the prophets who envision futility and who divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of My people, nor be written in the record of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord God. ¹⁰ "Because, indeed, because they have seduced My people, saying, 'Peace!' when there is no peace—and one builds a wall, and they plaster it with whitewash [un-tempered mortar] — ¹¹ say to those who plaster it with whitewash, that it will fall. There will be flooding rain, and you, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall tear it down. ¹² Surely, when the wall has fallen, will it not be said to you, 'Where is the mortar with which you plastered it?'"

¹³ Therefore thus says the Lord God: "I will cause a stormy wind to break forth in My fury; and there shall be a flooding rain in My anger, and great hailstones in fury to consume it. ¹⁴ So I will break down the wall you have plastered with whitewash, and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation will be uncovered; it will fall, and you shall be consumed in the midst of it. Then you shall know that I am the Lord. ¹⁵ "Thus will I accomplish My wrath on the wall and on those who have plastered it with whitewash; and I will say to you, 'The wall is no more, nor those who plastered it, ¹⁶ that is, the prophets of Israel who prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and who see visions of peace for her when there is no peace,'" says the Lord God."

Background Notes

In chapter 13 Ezekiel spoke out against the false prophets (both male and female) of Israel. It appears that these false prophets were practicing their deception and divination in Babylon as well as in Jerusalem. Remember, at this point in Ezekiel's ministry Jerusalem had not yet fallen to the Babylonians, and the Temple was still standing, but Ezekiel and other Jewish captives were already living in Babylon. The false prophets were deceiving the people into thinking that peace was right around the corner, and that Jerusalem and the Temple would not be destroyed - but they were wrong!

They were lying, because the Lord had never given them that message. Rather, the Lord declared that there would be *no peace* (v16). In fact, the Day of the Lord was coming (v5).

The subject of the “Day of the Lord” is a major topic in Old Testament prophecy. The Day of the Lord could be defined as any time the Lord intervenes in the affairs of nations. In Old Testament prophecy the Day of the Lord usually referred to the eschatological (or future) Day of the Lord – a time that is still future even to our time, when the Lord will return to this earth in judgment and sets up His worldwide kingdom.

However, there is also an historical aspect to the Day of the Lord, when God judged various nations in history. These judgments included the defeat of God’s people Israel by the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires. That historical aspect of the Day of the Lord is what was in view in this chapter, when God said to the false prophets, *“You have not gone up into the gaps to build a wall for the house of Israel to stand in battle on the day of the Lord”* (v5). The Day of the Lord here occurred when the Babylonians overran and conquered Jerusalem, and destroyed the Temple.

Doctrinal Points

1. God is against false prophets who practice deception in the midst of His people.

There were two categories of false prophets in ancient Israel. First, there were the false prophets of the foreign gods, like the prophets of Baal. Remember how Elijah confronted the false prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18)? Second, there were the false prophets who claimed that they were true prophets of the Lord. They claimed that they had seen visions from the Lord, and that the Lord inspired their prophecies - but they were lying. They were deceiving the people.

It was the second type of false prophet that was Ezekiel denounced in chapter 13. These false prophets were practicing their deception right in the midst of God’s people Israel, both in Babylon (where Ezekiel was located) and in Jerusalem (where the prophet Jeremiah was located). The basic message of the false prophets in both places was “Don’t worry; peace is coming. God will never let Jerusalem and the great Temple of the Lord be conquered and destroyed.”

But this message was false. It was not a message from the Lord. Listen to what the prophet Jeremiah said: *“From the prophet even to the priest everyone deals falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace!’ when there is no peace”* (Jeremiah 8:10-11).

And the prophet Ezekiel said: *“Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Because you have spoken nonsense and envisioned lies, therefore I am indeed against you,” says the Lord God. “My hand will be against the prophets who envision futility and who divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of My people, nor be written in the record of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord God. “Because, indeed, because they have*

seduced My people, saying, 'Peace!' when there is no peace—and one builds a wall, and they plaster it with untempered mortar” (v8-10).

What's the idea with the wall and plaster mentioned in verse 10? The wall represented the moral and spiritual defenses of the nation, which should have been based on God's Word. The responsibility of the prophets was to shore up and strengthen the walls, and stand in the gaps of the wall. But the false prophets had failed in their responsibility. *“You have not gone up into the gaps to build a wall for the house of Israel to stand in battle on the day of the Lord” (v5).*

Instead of repairing the wall, these false prophets had whitewashed the wall with plaster. Sin was covered over. The wall appeared to be in better condition than it really was. But these futile cosmetic efforts would not prevent divine judgment. Israel was corrupt, with no moral strength or defense, and her whitewashed walls would fall under the flood of God's judgment when the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem. God is against false prophets who practice deception in the midst of His people. God was going to judge the false prophets, and they would have no future in Israel.

What was true in Ezekiel's day is just as true today. Listen to the words of 2 Peter 2:1-3: *“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.”*

Think of the false prophets today, who preach what people want to hear and not what God's Word teaches. For example, some false teachers preach that physical health and material prosperity is God's will for everyone - as long as they have enough faith to merit prosperity. It sounds good - but it's *false!* The Bible doesn't guarantee physical health and material prosperity if you have enough faith. The Bible does not teach such false doctrine. God is against false prophets who practice deception in the midst of His people.

2. God is against false prophets who practice divination in the midst of His people.

Ezekiel 1:17-23 - *“Likewise, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own heart; prophesy against them, ¹⁸ and say, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Woe to the women who sew magic charms on their sleeves and make veils for the heads of people of every height to hunt souls! Will you hunt the souls of My people, and keep yourselves alive? ¹⁹ And will you profane Me among My people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, killing people who should not die, and keeping people alive 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 charms by which you hunt souls there like birds. I will tear them from your arms, and let the souls go, the souls you hunt like birds. ²¹ I will also tear off your veils and deliver My people out of your hand, and they shall no longer be as prey in your hand. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.

²² *“Because with lies you have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and you have strengthened the hands of the wicked, so that he does not turn from his wicked way to save his life.²³ Therefore you shall no longer envision futility nor practice divination; for I will deliver My people out of your hand, and you shall know that I am the Lord.”*”

Both male and female false prophets were active in the midst of the people of Israel. The women were practicing sorcery and divination. Perhaps some of them had learned these magical arts in Babylon. Using occult objects and occult powers, these evil women were putting curses on innocent people for a small price, and even delaying the death of the wicked for a fee (v18-19)! This Scripture certainly indicates that occult power is real. It is supernatural power, but the power is not from God. It is demonic; it is satanic.

God allowed these evil and demonic practices to go on in Israel because the people had turned away from following the Lord and were listening to lies. When a nation turns its back on God, it will reap what it has sown. God will allow the terrible fallout of unbelief to take its toll, and “innocent” people suffer as well. Consider the sad condition of our own nation and all the evil being practiced in the midst of this so-called “Christian land.” In many of the cults and false teachings today you will find false prophets and false prophetesses - and some are even involved in occult practices. As God brought down the false prophets of Ezekiel’s day, so He will judge them today. God is against false prophets who practice divination in the midst of His people.

Practical Application

Watch out for foxes among the ruins.

In verse 4 Ezekiel likened the false prophets to foxes in the desert, or foxes among the ruins. Just as foxes or jackals slink around in the midst of ruins, so false prophets are able to find places to hide and stalk their prey within the ruined condition of God’s people. When God’s people turn away from the truth and turn away from following God’s Word, it isn’t long before a church or ministry falls into ruins, and the false prophets move in.

What is the condition of the spiritual and moral walls of your church or ministry – or your own life - right now? Think about it? Are the walls crumbling? Are they in ruins? Watch out for foxes sneaking in among the ruins.