

God Will Judge the False Prophets and Prophetesses

We are studying the third cycle of prophecies in the book of Ezekiel. It began in chapter 12 and extends through chapter 19. Chapter 12 contained a detailed prophecy about judgment upon Zedekiah, the king in Jerusalem. We discovered that Flavius Josephus confirmed the prophecy was fulfilled.

Our study is from Ezekiel 13. It is about judgment upon the false prophets and false priestesses in Israel, whether they were in Jerusalem or among the exiles. Dr. Charles Feinberg states that chapter is one of the most important chapters in the Old Testament about false prophets and priestesses.¹ We are going to discover several important characteristics of false prophets and prophetesses

in this study. We will learn how God deals with them. The chapter can be divided into two major sections. The first is about the false prophets. The second is about the false prophetesses. In both sections, Yahweh describes their guilt and then their punishment.

GUILT OF FALSE PROPHETS. Verses 1-7 is the first section and it is about the guilt of the false prophets. In the opening three verses Yahweh commanded the prophet Ezekiel to speak to the false prophets.

Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Son of man,

prophecy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy from their own inspiration, 'Listen to the word of the LORD! Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe to the foolish prophets who are following their own spirit and have seen nothing." Ezekiel 13:1-3 (NASB)

In verse 2 Yahweh gives us an interesting definition of a false prophet. He says he is one who prophesies "from their own inspiration." Normally, we think of a false prophet or a false teacher as one who distorts what Yahweh has spoken or what the Bible teaches. While that is true, Yahweh says, their root problem is that they make up the prophecies. The Hebrew word

for "inspiration" is *libba*. It refers to the "heart" or the "inner self." It reminds me of Robert Schueller, who once was the pastor of the Crystal Cathedral in Southern California. He was asked one day how he got his ideas for messages. From where did he get



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his inspiration? He said that he got his ideas for his sermons by sitting in a garden the church had built for him. He also claimed that Jesus died on a cross to give us a positive self-image. That is demonic deception. Jesus did not die on the cross to help us feel good about ourselves. He died to forgive the sins of those who believed Jesus was God and is our Savior. Robert Schueller was a false teacher. He was like the false prophets in the time of Jeremiah, Habbakuk, Daniel, and Ezekiel. His ser-

¹ Charles Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel*. Moody Press., 1969. p. 73.

mons were created from his inner self while sitting in a garden and not by the Holy Spirit from the Word of God.

Then in verse 3, Yahweh emphasized the point by saying, “they are following their own spirit and have seen nothing.” In Jeremiah 14:14, Yahweh said this to the prophet Jeremiah about false prophets,

Then the LORD said to me, “The prophets are prophesying falsehood in My name. I have neither sent them nor commanded them nor spoken to them; they are prophesying to you a false vision, divination, futility and the deception of their own minds.”
Jeremiah 14:14 (NASB)

The false prophets were very convincing. Most likely the people loved hearing their positive visions and prophecies. It made them feel good. But Yahweh said they were “following their own spirit and have seen nothing.”

In our study of 2 Peter 2:12, we discovered that false teachers operate by instinct and do not really understand spiritual truth. It says,

But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge . . .
2 Peter 2:12a (NASB)

Then 2 Peter 2:13 says they enjoy deceiving people. Verses 17-19 add that they are like springs without water. That is, they are spiritually empty but they put on a great show. They are great actors.

These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.
2 Peter 2:17-19 (NASB)

Verse 19 says they promise freedom. They do not really care about biblical truth but obtaining the approval of men.

Today, there are many false prophets, such as Ken Cope-

land, Kenneth Hagin, Joel Osteen, Creflo Dollar, and Benny Hinn to name a few. They believe they are prophets of God. On one occasion, Benny Hinn announced that the Holy Spirit had given him new revelation or knowledge. Then he told the audience that God was nine persons. God the Father was body, soul, and spirit. Jesus Christ was body, soul, and spirit. The Holy Spirit was body, soul, and spirit. But that was heresy. That was from his own ideas and not from the Holy Spirit. But the crowd listening to him cheered.

Before we continue to Ezekiel 13:4, it is important to add that prophets cannot exist today. The reason is that the Old Testament prophesied the Messiah was coming and He came over 2,000 years ago. He is Jesus Christ. He commissioned twelve apostles who would speak for Him after He returned to heaven. They wrote the New Testament. So, everyone was looking for Him, and He told us His apostles would speak for Him. So, we listened to Christ and His apostles. But they did not tell us to look for or listen to anyone after they were gone. In fact, the apostle Jude tells us to fight for the faith that was once for all handed down to the saints in Jude 3. In Jude 17, he said that we are to remember the words of the apostles. Notice they did not tell us to look for someone after them such as a prophet. So, anyone who claims to be a prophet today is not a prophet of God. They are simply false prophets speaking from their own inspiration. False prophets are guilty of lying.

Now back to Ezekiel 13. In verse 4 Yahweh says,

“O Israel, your prophets have been like foxes among ruins.”
Ezekiel 13:4 (NASB)

Yahweh spoke to the Israelites. He told them their prophets were like foxes among the ruins. That is, they were false prophets who caused ruin. Every false prophet is like a fox or a jackal. The Hebrew word can mean “fox” or “jackal.” They destroy the crops, poultry, and other small animals a farmer is raising. False prophets may be dynamic speakers but they are not spiritual leaders. As 2 Peter 2:17 said, they are like empty springs. They have no spiritual life. So false prophets spiritually destroy people.

In Ezekiel 13:5, Yahweh continues the illustration,

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. Ezekiel 13:5 (NASB)

Since the context is spiritual in nature, we need to understand this verse in a spiritual sense. That is, the false prophets did not rebuke the people for their sins or call them to repentance. In Lamentations 2:14 we are told the false prophets were foolish for they did not expose the people's iniquity. They did not build up the spiritual wall of Israel.

Verses 6-7 describe the spiritually bankrupt condition of the false prophets,

"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. 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?'" Ezekiel 13:6-7 (NASB)

This is truly unbelievable. Yahweh said at the end of verse 6 that the false prophets hope their lies will come true. So, Yahweh rebuked them and reveals their phony prophecies would not come true.

So Yahweh described the guilt of these foolish prophets. They deceive! Part of their deception is that after lying they urge their audiences to, "Listen to the word of the Lord." That sounds so spiritual and holy. But they are liars because Yahweh never spoke to them. The result is they destroy people who are in great spiritual need.

PUNISHMENT OF FALSE PROPHETS. Our next section is verses 8-16. It describes their punishment. Verses 8-9 say,

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. 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." Ezekiel 13:8-9 (NASB)

Therefore, Yahweh said to the false prophets, "I am against you." Consequently, He would do three things to them. First, they would not be allowed to be part of the council overseeing the people. Second, they will not be listed as a citizen in Israel. Third, they will not be allowed to re-enter the land of Israel. In summary, they were rejected as leaders in Israel. They would not be able to return to their friends and family. That was Yahweh's punishment for false teachers because they claim Yahweh said something when He did not speak, and twisted what He did say.

So Yahweh said,

"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; 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. Ezekiel 13:10-11 (NASB)

Now in verse 10 Yahweh identified the specific lie of these false prophets. They said the people could achieve peace when peace was not possible. This reminds us of Ezekiel 11:3 when the leaders in Jerusalem told the people they should not build their houses for the city was like metal or steel that would protect them from the Babylonian army.

So, the people were building the wall because their political leaders told them they would achieve peace against the Babylonian army. Then the false prophets reinforced the deception of the wicked leaders with their own lies. The false prophets' lies are called whitewash. Too many times religious leaders support political leaders. False Christians are influenced by demonic forces to distort the Word of God in order to please political leaders. This helps us identify which ones are biblically inaccurate. When Yahweh said He would send a torrential rain, the hailstones may refer to the Babylonian army. So, either the weather or the army would come like a violent wind and destroy their physical wall and their deceptive lie.

Next, Yahweh said that when the wall is destroyed, the people would start asking, "Where is the plaster?"

"Behold, when the wall has fallen, will you not be asked, 'Where

is the plaster with which you plastered it?” 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. Ezekiel 13:12-13 (NASB)

Notice that they did not understand why the prophecies were not fulfilled. Today, there are many disillusioned people because of false prophecies made about people. Prophecies such as receiving a tenfold blessings for money donated to a ministry and prophecies for healing occur all the time in Bible studies and in sermons. Imagine all of the people who are disillusioned. Then Yahweh repeats part of verse 11. Notice that once again Yahweh said He would defeat them. He will use the weather or the Babylonian army against them.

In verses 14-16, Yahweh announced the utter defeat that was coming!

“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. 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, 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.” Ezekiel 13:14-16 (NASB)

After Yahweh has destroyed the city and had thousands of people die, then those who were left would know “that I am the Lord.” They would know Yahweh had spoken through Ezekiel. The lying prophets would die too!

GUILT OF FALSE PROPHETESSES. Now Yahweh spoke to the false women prophets. In verses 17-19, He announced their guilt.

“Now you, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people who are prophesying from their own inspiration. Prophecy against them 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? 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.”’ Ezekiel 13:17-19 (NASB)

Yahweh told Ezekiel to speak to the false women prophets. Notice again that Yahweh said they also prophesy from their own inspiration. The visions they saw and the words they spoke were not from the Holy Spirit. 1 Timothy 4:1-2 teaches that false prophets and prophetesses are deceived by evil spirits. Consequently, their teachings are lies. So how can we identify a false teacher? We must seriously know the Bible and listen closely. The only way a believer can know a false teacher is to diligently study the Scriptures.

Verse 18 reveals that the false prophetesses sewed magic bands on their wrists and put some type of veil on their victims. This refers to some form of sorcery. We must remember that any type of involvement with sorcery or demons is forbidden in Leviticus 19:26. It is forbidden for our protection. It appears these women used occult arts in an attempt to ensnare and hurt God’s followers. Some people think that the barley and fragments of bread were used in their occult rituals. But it seems likely that these were payments for the purpose of putting to death the righteous and not the wicked. These false prophetesses were guilty of making false prophecies and engaging in occult practices, probably to convince people they spoke for Yahweh.

PUNISHMENT OF FALSE PROPHETESSES. The last section is verses 20-23. Verses 20-21 announce Yahweh’s punishment for the false prophetesses, just as He did for the false prophets.

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. 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.” Ezekiel 13:20-21(NASB)

It is important that we notice Yahweh did not say these false women prophets were successful in hunting down the lives of

people. He only said they tried to hunt down lives with their occult arts. Only Yahweh Himself can cause or allow a person to die. Now because of their wicked practices and evil plans, Yahweh said He would tear off their veils and deliver His own people from them. Unfortunately, historical data is not available to help us understand the references to the occult arts. Therefore, this is a difficult passage.

Verses 22-23 conclude the chapter.

“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, 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.” Ezekiel 13:22-23 (NASB)

Notice two things in this passage. First, notice that Yahweh does not want the righteous to be disheartened or sad. Nor does He want the wicked to continue doing evil. Second, Yahweh cares about those who follow Him. Therefore, Yahweh promised to punish the false prophets. This would occur when the Babylonian army destroyed them, the city, and the temple.

CONCLUSION. Why did Yahweh announce judgment on the wicked leaders in Ezekiel 12 and the male and female prophets? First, they were wicked people. Second, the false male and female prophets changed and distorted what Yahweh had said. The inspiration for their messages came from within themselves and not from the Lord.

So, we have learned that God does not like what He has said to be distorted. Distorting Scripture is more than a mistake. God takes it personally. Throughout chapters 12 and 13 Yahweh has revealed that He does not want His Word twisted and mutilated. Why? First, the only way we can know what He has spoken is that we teach Scripture accurately. Second, the only way we know He exists is that we ignore our desires and teach what He has said accurately. Third, that gives us direction. Then we know the truth. Fourth, when we accurately teach what He has written, it will bring people to Him. Yahweh wants us to know, “I am the LORD.” So, He will punish every false prophet and false teacher. He will also punish believers who do not carefully and accurately teach His