Ezekiel 13

Whitewashed Walls:
Prophets of Peace When There Is No Peace

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."
Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

The most dangerous voice is the one that tells me what I want to hear and calls it God. These prophets painted over a cracked wall and called it safe, and the storm was already on its way. God tore down the whitewash so His people could see the truth — and He did it to rescue them.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

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00 The Text

EZEKIEL 13 (KJV), MARKED

▲ Gold God — His character & actions | Green Command / instruction | ⇄ Sky Key repeated word
⚠ Rose Sin / warning | ★ Violet Promise / blessing | ◷ Amber Time / place / contrast

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

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;

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

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

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.

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.

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?

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.

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.

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 morter:

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

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

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.

14 So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with ⇄ untempered morter, 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.

15 Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with ⇄ untempered morter, and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it;

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.

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

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?

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?

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.

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.

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:

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.

Marked in the text

- **v2** ⚠ prophesy out of their own hearts
- **v2** ▮▮ Hear ye the word of the LORD
- **v3** ⚠ Woe unto the foolish prophets
- **v3** ⚠ follow their own spirit
- **v4** ⚠ like the foxes in the deserts
- **v5** ⚠ Ye have not gone up into the gaps
- **v5** ◷ the day of the LORD
- **v6** ⚠ the LORD hath not sent them
- **v8** ▲ I am against you
- **v9** ⇄ ye shall know that I am *(every occurrence)*
- **v9** ⚠ they shall not be in the assembly of my people
- **v10** ⚠ saying, Peace; and there was no peace
- **v10** ⇄ untempered morter *(every occurrence)*
- **v12** ⚠ Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it?
- **v13** ▲ I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury
- **v14** ◷ the foundation thereof shall be discovered
- **v16** ⚠ see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace
- **v17** ▮▮ set thy face against the daughters of thy people
- **v18** ⚠ to hunt souls
- **v19** ⚠ for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread
- **v21** ★ deliver my people out of your hand
- **v22** ⚠ made the heart of the righteous sad
- **v22** ⚠ strengthened the hands of the wicked
- **v23** ★ ye shall see no more vanity

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 13:2 (KJV)

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;

Setting

Ezekiel is a priest living among the exiles in Babylon, taken there with King Jehoiachin in 597 BC. Chapter 13 has no date of its own, but it falls between the oracle dated in the sixth year of the exile (8:1, about 592 BC) and the one dated in the seventh year (20:1, about 591 BC). Zedekiah still reigns in Jerusalem, the city is still standing, and voices both in Jerusalem and among the exiles are promising that all will soon be well. In chapter 12 the people said the vision was delayed; now God turns on the prophets who fed that hope.

Structure

- vv1–7 — **prophets God did not send:** Ezekiel must speak against those "who prophesy from their own inspiration" (v2). "Woe to the foolish prophets who are following their own spirit and have seen nothing" (v3). "Your prophets have been like foxes among ruins" (v4). "You have not gone up into the breaches, nor did you build the wall around the house of Israel" (v5). They claim "The LORD declares," "when the LORD has not sent them" (v6–7).
- vv8–9 — **"I am against you":** God declares Himself their enemy (v8). "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" (v9).
- vv10–16 — **the whitewashed wall:** "they have misled My people by saying, 'Peace!' when there is no peace" (v10). When the people build a wall, the prophets "plaster it over with whitewash" (v10). Rain, hailstones and "a violent wind will break out" (v11). When it falls, "Where is the plaster with which you plastered it?" (v12). God will bring it to the ground "so that its foundation is laid bare" (v14) — prophets who "see visions of peace for her when there is no peace" (v16).
- vv17–19 — **the women who hunt souls:** "set your face against the daughters of your people" (v17), who "sew magic bands on all wrists" and make veils "to hunt down lives" (v18), profaning God "for handfuls of barley and fragments of bread" (v19).
- vv20–23 — **God tears off the charms:** "Behold, I am against your magic bands" (v20). He will rescue His people (v21), because "you disheartened the righteous with falsehood" and "encouraged the wicked not to turn from his wicked way and preserve his life" (v22). "I will deliver My people out of your hand" (v23).

Repeated words

whitewash (vv10, 11, 14, 15); wall (vv5, 10, 12, 14, 15); plaster / plastered (vv10, 11, 12, 14, 15); peace (vv10, 16); falsehood (vv6, 8, 22); false vision(s) (vv7, 9, 23); lying (vv6, 7, 9, 19); divination(s) (vv6, 7, 9, 23); hunt

(vv18, 20, 21); "I am against" (vv8, 20); their own inspiration (vv2, 17); "you will know that I am the LORD / Lord GOD" (vv9, 14, 21, 23).

Contrasts

prophets of their own inspiration (v2) ⟷ the word of the LORD (v2). "The LORD declares" (v6) ⟷ "it is not I who have spoken" (v7). Standing in the breach (v5) ⟷ foxes among ruins (v4). "Peace!" (v10) ⟷ no peace (vv10, 16). A wall that looks finished ⟷ a foundation laid bare (v14). The righteous disheartened ⟷ the wicked encouraged (v22). Hunted lives (v18) ⟷ My people delivered (v23).

Chapter theme (my words)

The most dangerous voice is the one that tells me what I want to hear and calls it God. These prophets painted over a cracked wall and called it safe, and the storm was already on its way. God tore down the whitewash so His people could see the truth — and He did it to rescue them.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 13:8 (KJV)

[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.

Prophets from their own hearts (vv1–7)

Guzik notes that most of these prophets were promising a quick deliverance from Babylon and an early return from exile. It was the same message Hananiah preached in Jerusalem (Jer 28) and Ahab and Zedekiah preached among the exiles (Jer 29:21–23). Their source, Guzik says, was not necessarily demonic; it was their own desires and hopes. Feinberg, in Guzik: "The wish was father to the thought, and they spoke accordingly." The word "foolish" (*nabal*) means more than unintelligent — it is moral and spiritual dullness. Foxes (or jackals) among ruins add nothing and feed on destruction; Trapp, in Guzik, calls them "Cowardly, crafty, cruel, greedy." A true prophet runs into the breach in the wall when the enemy attacks (compare 22:30; Ps 106:23). These men stood back. "The day of the LORD" here is the coming fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC.

Three exclusions (vv8–9)

God is "against" them. They lose their place in the council of God's people, their names in the register of Israel (compare Ezra 2:62), and their part in the return to the land. Block, in Guzik: "These three punishments strike at the heart of what it meant to be an Israelite."

The whitewashed wall (vv10–16)

The heart of their lie was "Peace!" when there was no peace (compare Jer 6:14; 8:11). Wright, in Guzik: they "never spoke of repentance." The picture is vivid: the people throw up a flimsy wall (*chayits*, used only here) and the prophets slap whitewash (*taphel*) on it so it looks solid. Feinberg, in Guzik: whitewash "is useless for strengthening insecure walls." The storm — rain, hail and wind — is God's

judgment through Babylon, and when the wall falls the builders and the plasterers fall with it. Guzik's point: a wall needs inspecting before the storm, because the storm will expose it. Wiersbe, in Guzik: "The counterfeit prophets gave the people a false hope, so God gave them no hope at all."

The women who hunt souls (vv17–19)

Israel had true prophetesses — Miriam, Deborah, Huldah — but Block, in Guzik, notes that Ezekiel won't even give these women the title. They sewed "magic bands" (*keseth*) and made "veils" (*mispachah*), apparently tools of sorcery; Vawter and Hoppe, in Guzik, admit we can only guess exactly what they were. Wright reports that Jewish women in Babylon sold charms and spells. They "hunted" lives — trapping people through fear and superstition, promising life or death for a fee of barley and bread. Guzik puts part of the blame on the listeners: "If none of God's people listened to false prophets, there would be much fewer of them."

God's rescue (vv20–23)

God tears the bands from their arms and the veils from their heads, and sets His people free like birds released from a snare. The worst effect of their lies is in v22: they crushed the righteous and comforted the wicked, so the wicked saw no reason to repent. That is the opposite of God's word (18:23, 32; 33:11). And four times the chapter says the result will be that they "know that I am the LORD" — judgment that reveals God (vv9, 14, 21, 23).

Word study (Hebrew)

- **inspiration / heart — *leb* (H3820):** the heart, mind, inner self — their message came from inside them, not from God.
- **foolish — *nabal* (H5036):** senseless, morally and spiritually dull.
- **foxes — *shual* (H7776):** fox or jackal.
- **ruins — *chorbah* (H2723):** a waste, desolate place.
- **breaches — *perets* (H6556):** a break or gap in a wall.
- **wall (v5) — *gader* (H1447):** a stone wall, fence.
- **falsehood — *shav* (H7723):** emptiness, vanity, what is worthless.
- **lying — *kazab* (H3577):** a lie, deception.
- **divination — *qesem* (H7081):** pagan fortune-telling, forbidden in Deut 18:10.
- **council — *sod* (H5475):** a circle of close counsel, intimate fellowship.
- **flimsy wall — *chayits* (H2434):** a partition wall; used only in v10.
- **whitewash — *taphel* (H8602):** plaster; as an adjective, tasteless, worthless.
- **magic bands — *keseth* (H3704):** a band or fillet; only here (vv18, 20).
- **veils — *mispachah* (H4555):** a veil or long covering; only here (vv18, 21).
- **hunt — *tsud* (H6679):** to hunt, lie in wait, ensnare.
- **disheartened — *kaah* (H3512):** to make dejected, to break someone's spirit.

Cross-references

Deut 18:9–22; 1 Kgs 22:13–28; Ps 106:23; Isa 30:10; Jer 6:14; Jer 8:11; Jer 14:13–15; Jer 23:16–32; Jer 28; Jer 29:8–9, 21–23; Lam 2:14; Ezek 22:28–30; Mic 3:5–7; Matt 7:15–27; Matt 23:27; 2 Tim 4:3–4; 1 John 4:1.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 13:17 (KJV)

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

Command to obey — "Listen to the word of the LORD" (v2)

The cure for false voices is the true word. I'll test every sermon, post, podcast and "word from the Lord" against Scripture (1 John 4:1; Acts 17:11). That's why I build Bible-study tools at all — so men can open the Book and check for themselves.

Sin to confess — whitewash

I know how to put a fresh coat of paint on a cracked wall: a smile on Sunday, a good report when someone asks how I'm doing, a quick "I'm fine." I confess the places where I've plastered over sin instead of tearing it out. And I confess the times I've told a man "Peace" when I should have told him the truth in love.

Warning to heed — "Peace!" when there is no peace

In recovery, the most dangerous voice says, "One won't hurt," "You've got this handled," "You don't need the meeting." In prison it says, "God doesn't care what you did." Those voices sound kind and they lead to the storm. A real friend — and a real prophet — goes into the breach and says the hard thing. I want to be that man for the men I disciple, and I want them to be that for me.

Promise to trust — "I will deliver My people out of your hand" (v23)

God doesn't leave His people in the snare. For the man trapped by fear, superstition, a con, or a lie he's believed for years: God tears the bands off and lets the soul go free (Ps 124:7; John 8:32).

Example to follow — the man in the breach

Ezekiel stood where the false prophets wouldn't. Like him, I'll speak what God says, not what pays — no handfuls of barley, no flattery, no telling people what they want to hear. And I'll guard the righteous from discouragement while I refuse to comfort the wicked in their sin (v22).

Worship

The LORD speaks, and His word stands when every whitewashed wall comes down. He is against the lie and for His people. He rescues the hunted. He makes Himself known even through the storm.

Prayer

Lord GOD, You alone speak truth. Strip the whitewash off my life and build me on a foundation that holds. Make me deaf to voices that flatter and quick to the voice of Your word. Give me courage to stand in the breach for the men You've given me, and free every soul caught in the snare of a lie. Amen.