

Ezekiel 13B

- Let's return to chapter 13 of Ezekiel, where the Lord is preparing to deal judgment against the false teachers deceiving Israel
 - And we're also moving through a series of eight excuses that Israel has offered for not repenting and heeding the word of the prophet
 - Last time we had just reached the third excuse
 - The excuse was a little hidden in the text in v10
 - Let's reread that verse and move forward a few more

Ezek. 13:10 "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;

Ezek. 13:11 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.

Ezek. 13:12 "Behold, when the wall has fallen, will you not be asked, 'Where is the plaster with which you plastered it?'"

- The third excuse as you may remember, the prophets were declaring that the future of Jerusalem would be one of peace
 - When in reality, what was coming for that city was not peace at all
 - Instead, the city would see the fulfillment of all disasters the Lord has been promising through the true prophets
 - And the people believed this report
- So the third excuse was claiming that Ezekiel had been superseded by other prophets
 - Ezekiel has been predicting woe, but now other prophets are predicting peace
 - So they preferred to think God revised His prediction, issued an update, and so things will be ok after all
 - Ezekiel's warnings were just a false alarm

- Faced with the choice of believing a negative report vs. a positive prophecy, the people chose the positive
 - They chose this path even though it would have been clear that the false prophets had a track record of error
 - While the prophecies of Ezekiel and Jeremiah in Jerusalem were coming true routinely
 - It was willful ignorance, selective attention, an excuse for rebellion
- So in the second half of v.10 the Lord described the work of the false teachers to be like plastering over a wall with whitewash
 - In this metaphor the wall represents Ezekiel's prophecies concerning what will happen to the defenses of Jerusalem
 - The said the wall would fall because it protected a corrupt rebellious people
 - But false prophets lied to make the people feel better telling them the walls would not fall
 - The Lord compared that to workman trying to plaster over a crumbling wall
 - Whitewashing the truth, making the future look better than was actually true
 - But underneath that those whitewashed lies, the truth remains the unchanged
 - The wall is still crumbling and destined to fall
 - This is the classic modus operandi of every false prophet
 - They always start with something God has already said or done but then they cover it over with a coat of lies
 - They whitewash it, so to speak, so that it's unrecognizable to a true student of scripture
 - They entice the ignorant or immature with their ear tickling words
 - We'll only be prepared to spot those lies if we're students of the truth in God's word

- So because these false teachers were giving opportunity for Israel to make their excuse, the Lord responds to their whitewashing
 - In v.11 the Lord tells Ezekiel to tell the false prophets that claim good things are coming that their prophecies will fail
 - Using the metaphor of a whitewashed wall, the Lord says that wall will fail
 - I like to imagine this metaphor literally
 - As if someone constructed a sheetrock wall to protect the city of Israel
 - And then the invading army just punches a hole right through it and it crumbles before them
 - The Lord uses images of flooding rain, hailstones and a violent wind to represent those invaders
 - Those natural forces would wreck havoc on a whitewashed wall
 - People of that day who had experienced such storms in the past knew exactly what would happen
 - The storm would erode the soil around base of the wall, dissolving the whitewash coating and blowing over the exposed stones
 - All of these things picture the coming destruction of the city by Nebuchadnezzar's army when they returned for the third time
 - You can see the extent of the destruction when you see what was required to rebuild the wall in Nehemiah's account
 - He reports that the walls were completely gone with only the foundation stones remaining and the city gates were burned with fire
 - That's how thoroughly the Lord blows them down so to speak
- In v.12 the Lord says the people will be asking the false prophets at that time where did the plaster go?
 - Again, the Lord is using the metaphor to represent the lies of the false prophets

- They said the walls would stand, the city would be preserved, the enemy would not conquer the city
- So when that proves false, the people will be asking them, “What happened to you prophecies? Why aren’t they coming true?”
- Where is that plaster you promised?
- Haven’t we seen this response ourselves? Haven’t we seen the astonished reactions of those deceived by false teachers when their lies fail them?
 - For example, the false prophet William Miller that started the Seventh Day Adventist religion predicted Christ’s Second Coming in 1843
 - When it failed to come to pass, his followers were left asking where is the whitewash?
- Charles Russell founded the Jehovah’s Witnesses religion claiming the Kingdom of God would come to earth in 1914
 - When that failed to come to pass, his followers asked where was the whitewash and broke away to form a new movement
 - Then their leader Joseph Rutherford claimed in 1920 announcement that the Hebrew patriarchs (such as Abraham and Isaac) would be resurrected in 1925, marking the beginning of Christ's thousand-year earthly Kingdom
 - Disappointed by his unfulfilled predictions, tens of thousands of defections occurred during the first half of Rutherford's tenure, leading to the formation of several new organizations
- More recently we’ve had Harold Camping predict the rapture, Ronald Weinland predict Jesus’ return
 - Just two months ago David Meade claimed our planet would collide with Nibiru, a nonexistent planet, leading to Armageddon
 - The lady who claimed Niburi exists says she receives messages from extraterrestrials from the Zeta Reticuli star system through an implant in her brain
- Throughout history, false prophets come and go, speaking against scripture, spreading lies, whitewashing over the truth
 - And when those lies fail, the people always say what happened?

- They are astonished that these predictions failed to come to pass
- Yet they go looking for the next false prophet to fill the void created by the former
- The Lord delights to tear down these false voices, to expose their tricks and ridiculous predictions
 - Consider what He says next to Israel

Ezek. 13:13 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.

Ezek. 13:14 “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.

- The Lord is at work tearing down false things to ensure that His truth stands unchallenged
 - In the case of Jerusalem, the more the false prophets said the walls would stand, the more determined the Lord was to know them down
 - He did as He promised
 - He brought the walls down to their foundations
 - And more than that, He promises He will consume the false prophets within the city
- The only solution to this nonsense is for God’s children to stand on the sure and solid rock of God’s word
 - We need to know what God says in His word, and if we do, we won’t care what the pretenders tell us
 - If you trust in the revealed word and you won’t be disappointed by the lies
 - That’s what Israel failed to do
 - They had Ezekiel and Jeremiah speaking the truth, but they gave those men little attention
 - They preferred what they heard from the false prophets

- We too have all we need to know about the things these false prophets claim
 - We know the Bible says the resurrection of the Church (i.e., the Rapture) is coming one day
 - But we also know that the Bible says believers won't know that day in advance
 - So anytime someone predicts that date, we know right away they are bound to be wrong...and they don't know they're Bible
- The Bible says the Lord will return one day, and His return will bring an age to this end leading to a Kingdom on earth
 - But the Bible also says His return happens as part of larger sequence of things that haven't even begun yet
 - And Armageddon does not involve a fake planet or alien implants
 - So again, when ridiculous prophecies come along, we reject them without a moment's thought...
 - Not because we are cynical or deny every prophecy, but because we already have true prophecy
- This is the main reason why the Bible calls upon Christians to study prophecy eagerly
 - It's our insurance policy against being captivated by nonsense
 - If you believe in Christ and look forward to new things to come one day, then you also give attention to what the Bible teaches concerning those things
 - If you ignore prophecy in the Bible, you're likely to be tripped up sooner or later
 - False prophets take that truth and whitewash it to make it more exciting for ignorant ears
- The Lord call us to listen to His voice, as Jesus declared, because the sheep know the Master's voice and follow the Good Shepherd
 - And to protect us, He delights to tear down and silence the false voices around us

- As a new one comes to the foreground, the Lord exposes their lies soon enough
- For example, look what the Lord did to those false voices in Israel

Ezek. 13:15 “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,

Ezek. 13:16 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.

Ezek. 13:17 “Now you, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people who are prophesying from their own inspiration. Prophecy against them

Ezek. 13:18 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?

Ezek. 13:19 “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.””

- Following the attack on the city, the wall and many of the inhabitants of the city were destroyed, as we know
 - And among those killed were the false prophets that had misled the city
 - The Lord says in v.15 He will bring His wrath on the wall and on those who lied to the people
 - The ones in v.16 who gave visions of peace when there would be no peace
 - God’s wrath is that righteous anger directed against the sinful rebellion of the people and the sinful deceit of the false prophets
 - The Lord says He spent His wrath on these ungodly, and that gives us a good word picture for how sin works
 - As the ungodly do what they do, they are storing up wrath with a holy and just God
 - No sin goes uncouncted, no offense will escape repayment
 - Sometimes the Lord spends some of that stored wrath against His enemies while still in this life
 - In other cases, He forgoes judgment here, but in all cases He brings justice in eternity

- Understanding how God's wrath works only serves to increase our appreciation for the grace we've received in Christ
 - Each of us has some story we could tell about the course of our lives before we came to know Christ
 - In many ways we were storing up wrath with God, engaged in various sins without regard for a coming judgment
 - Imagine all that wrath piling up...and then imagine the Lord placing it all on His own sinless Son for you and me
 - He spent His wrath on Christ instead of you and men for no reason except His love and mercy
 - The more you appreciate your sin, the more amazing grace becomes
- Then in vs.17 the Lord moves to a specific condemnation of the female false prophets who were operating in the city as well
 - God did on occasion raise of women prophetesses in Israel, though they were far more rare
 - Nevertheless, they did exist and so did false prophetesses
 - And the Lord condemns these false prophets in an unique way
 - In fact, there is no greater condemnation of false female prophets in all the Bible
 - Like the men, these women were making things up and passing them off as if from God
 - In what the Lord says these women did, it's apparently they were working in cultic ways, using black magic to influence people
 - We know this because of the practices the Lord mentions here
 - In v.18 we're told the women were sewing cloth bands on their wrists and making full-length veils for themselves or those they prophesied over
 - These articles of clothing were intended to inspire awe and wonder in people
 - And they were part of the sorcery and witchcraft trade

- Veils of this kind were usually associated with casting spells, which is an appeal to demonic forces
- So the Lord's disgust with the female false prophets comes from their association with satanic powers
 - Apparently, the female false prophets operating in the city were particularly connected to the demonic realm
 - Perhaps more so than their male counterparts
 - And so they were doing particular damage among the people
- These witches practices their divination for as little payment as a handful of grain, which makes their crimes all the more detestable
 - Because of their lies, evil people were allowed to live while innocent people died
 - We don't know exactly what they were doing
 - But we can the same imagine satanic practices we see in places today
 - Innocent dying like human sacrifice while evil was promoted in celebrating depravity of whatever kind
 - All this for a meal of barley...it's like someone committing mass murder for a bag of potato chips
 - Notice at the end of v.19 the Lord refers again to their prophecies as lies
 - Remember, these witches were likely working with demonic power
 - Which means they probably had the ability to display supernatural signs and wonders
 - And yet what they said turned out to be lies in the end
 - That reminds us that even though someone has supernatural power or can produce wonders doesn't guarantee they speak truth
 - They could be (and usually are) using power of an evil source
 - Ultimately, we need to test the fruit of what they teach
 - And if the fruit of what they teach is bad, then the tree is bad too

- If what they say contradicts scripture, if it promotes sinfulness and excites the flesh, if it does not glorify God or promote holiness...
- Then it's not of God and we have nothing to do with it
- And so then the Lord pronounces His judgment on these sorcerers

Ezek. 13:20 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.

Ezek. 13:21 "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.

Ezek. 13:22 "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,

Ezek. 13:23 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."

- The Lord says He will break these magic bands off their arms, and in so doing free those held captive by their lies and divination
 - And He will tear off their veils by which they controlled the people and hunted down those that opposed them
 - Apparently, these women were very dangerous and held great demonic powers over the people
 - But they weren't more powerful than the Lord
 - And when the time came, the Lord stripped them of their power over the people
 - These women did far more than lie to the people
 - The Lord says in v.22 they disheartened the righteous
 - As those who loved the Lord and His word saw the power these women had and how they controlled the people, it must have been so discouraging
 - The righteous must have felt like David when he cried in the Psalms

Psa. 35:11 Malicious witnesses rise up;
They ask me of things that I do not know.

Psa. 35:12 They repay me evil for good,
To the bereavement of my soul.

Psa. 35:13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth;
I humbled my soul with fasting,
And my prayer kept returning to my bosom.

Psa. 35:14 I went about as though it were my friend or brother;
I bowed down mourning, as one who sorrows for a mother.

Psa. 35:15 But at my stumbling they rejoiced and gathered themselves together;
The smiters whom I did not know gathered together against me,
They slandered me without ceasing.

Psa. 35:16 Like godless jesters at a feast,
They gnashed at me with their teeth.

Psa. 35:17 Lord, how long will You look on?
Rescue my soul from their ravages,
My only life from the lions.

- For reasons God knows, the enemy and his people may get the upper time for a while
 - And during these times we are bound to be discouraged
 - And we wonder why the Lord doesn't simply win the battle for us
 - The issue is simply timing
- The Lord has won the day in Christ, Satan's defeat is already assured
 - But like Jerusalem in this day, the Lord waits to reveal that victory on earth
 - It's already been won in the heavenly and it's secure in our hearts, for He Who is in us is greater than he who is in the world
 - But we wait for the Lord to bring that victory to every corner of the Earth according to His timing
- The evil of this world can't dishearten you if you maintain eyes for eternity

- As long as you understand the promises of scripture and appreciate the sense of God's timing in these things, then you can look past a momentary defeat
 - The enemy gains around on a day here or there
 - But he isn't holding the territory
 - And when the day comes, the Lord will break his strongholds
 - He can do that in your life in breaking habits, vices, weaknesses
 - And He will do that in all Creation in a day to come
- Secondly, these women gave encouragement to the ungodly to sin with impunity
 - They encouraged evil and gave it protection from justice
 - They celebrated depravity and the occult
 - And in that way, they turned the wicked away from repentance, from any sense of guilt or the need to turn
 - And in that way, these women ensured the death of these ungodly
 - The same things are happening today as evil people, under the influence of demonic forces, are pushing our culture to become increasingly evil
 - Sin is celebrated and as depravity is encouraged
 - The wicked feel less and less reason to repent or turn away
 - When the culture embraces and even celebrates your sin, you have no reason to turn
 - But they're just leading many to death, both here and in eternity
- This situations are not the end, they are just a stop along the way to the end
 - Just as it was in Jerusalem, the Lord will step in one day to strip the enemy and his people of power and rescue His people
 - Here again, knowing your Bible is key

- If you understand how God works through evil in the world,, then you can remain patient, even as we await His victory in a day to come
- You won't fall under the spell of the demonic voices that are around us bringing discouragement
- You can echo David's words as he finishes Psalm 35

**Psa. 35:26 Let those be ashamed and humiliated altogether who rejoice at my distress;
Let those be clothed with shame and dishonor who magnify themselves over me.**

**Psa. 35:27 Let them shout for joy and rejoice, who favor my vindication;
And let them say continually, "The Lord be magnified,
Who delights in the prosperity of His servant."**

**Psa. 35:28 And my tongue shall declare Your righteousness
And Your praise all day long.**

- As we like to say, "I've read the end of the book, and Jesus wins."
 - And as true as that is, don't forget the middle of the book too
 - God is always winning, but sometimes it doesn't look that way
 - Nevertheless, because we've read the whole book, we can see everything in proper perspective
 - We can see that evil has a purpose in God's economy at least for a time
 - And we can appreciate we stand apart from this evil so we may be useful to the Lord in rescuing others out of it
 - The Lord eventually broke the walls of the city and destroyed the false voices among His people
 - But the voices that were saved were those who heeded the counsel of the righteous in the city
 - That's where we need to see ourselves in this story...we're in a city with crumbling walls and a date with God's wrath
 - But we have already escaped that wrath and we're still here to tell others they can escape it too
 - Let's share the truth we know to save more from the lies