

# Whitewash and Magic Bands

## False Prophets in the Church

**13** The word of the Lord came to me:

<sup>2</sup>“Son of man, **prophecy against the prophets of Israel**, who are prophesying, and say to those who prophesy **from their own hearts**: ‘Hear the word of the Lord!’

<sup>3</sup>Thus says the Lord God, Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!

<sup>4</sup>Your prophets have been like jackals among ruins, O Israel.

<sup>5</sup>**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.

<sup>6</sup>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.

<sup>7</sup>Have you not seen a false vision and uttered a lying divination, whenever you have said, ‘Declares the Lord,’ although I have not spoken?’

<sup>8</sup>**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.

<sup>9</sup>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.

<sup>10</sup>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**,

<sup>11</sup>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.

<sup>12</sup>And when the wall falls, will it not be said to you, ‘Where is the coating with which you smeared it?’

<sup>13</sup>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.

<sup>14</sup>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**.

<sup>15</sup>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,

<sup>16</sup>the prophets of Israel who prophesied concerning Jerusalem and saw visions of peace for her, when there was no peace, declares the Lord God.

<sup>17</sup>“And you, son of man, **set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own hearts**. Prophecy against them

<sup>18</sup>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?

<sup>19</sup>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.

<sup>20</sup>**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.

<sup>21</sup>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**.

<sup>22</sup>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,

<sup>23</sup>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**.”

(Ezekiel 13:1-23)

## Something Old, Something New

They began as voices in the wilderness of exile—men and women who stood before a broken people and spoke. But not with God’s words.

“Peace,” they said, painting over cracks in their crumbling wall. “Thus says the Lord,” they claimed, while their hearts spun visions from thin air. Magic bands on their arms and veils over their faces were tools of their deadly trade: hunting souls, disheartening the righteous, and profaning the holy for handfuls of barley and scraps of bread.

These were no outsiders. They were not pagans from distant lands. They were Israel’s own—prophets and prophetesses who had once stood in the temple courts, who knew the scrolls and ancient Scriptures, who lifted hands in prayer. Yet they turned the sanctuary into a stage, the altar into a marketplace, and the word of God into a commodity.

God saw. “I am against your whitewash,” He declared. “I will break down the wall that you have daubed with whitewash ... I will tear the magic bands from your arms ... and you shall know that I am the LORD” (Ezekiel 13:14, 21).

The storm came. The wall fell. Jerusalem burned. The people marched to Babylon in chains. And for a moment, it seemed the lie had been silenced.

But centuries later, in the courts of the new covenant, **the same voices rose again**—this time not in the streets of Jerusalem, but in the gatherings of the church. “**But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction**” (2Pet 2:1), Peter warned. “**Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world**” (1Jn 4:1), John said, following suit.

The whitewash was back. The veils were rewoven—now in subtler fabrics: a sermon that avoids the cross; a book that redefines grace; a speech that questions the resurrection, an unaccountable baseless accusation with no merit. They do not stand outside the church. They do not shout from the margins. They sit **in the pews**. They lead **small groups**. They write **best-selling devotionals**. They stand behind pulpits and internet typewriters and television studio lights.

Their target is no longer a city. It is **the Christ**, even as it was when he walked the earth. For Jesus faced them first. Not in exile, but in the heart of the covenant nation. Not in visions, but in flesh and blood. The Pharisees, the scribes, the teachers of the law, these were **false prophets in priestly robes**.

They stood in the temple and said, “**Peace in our time**,” while the nation bled under Roman rule. They proclaimed, “**We have Abraham as our father**,” while rejecting the One sent from the Father. They whitewashed the outside with their lengthened tassels, their prayers on street corners, and their tithes of mint and cumin. But on the inside their hearts were full of greed and wickedness (**Matt 23:25**).

Jesus saw the wall. He saw the paint. And He tore it down with seven woes: “**Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness**” (**23:27**).

They claimed to speak for God. But when God stood before them, they said: “**We don’t know where you’re from**” (**John 9:29**). “**Are you the Son of God?**” And when He answered, “**You say that I am**,” to which they cried, “**Blasphemy!**” (**Luke 22:70–71**).

They denied His **first coming** in the flesh: “He casts out demons by Beelzebul” (**Matt 12:24**). “This man is not from God” (**John 9:16**). They mocked any thought of a **second**: “We have no king but Caesar” (**John 19:15**).

Their words were not new. They were the same lie, freshly painted: “Peace... when there is no peace,” they said. Jesus countered, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword” (**Matt 10:34**).

John saw it. Peter saw it. Paul saw it. And they wrote to the churches: “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God... This is the spirit of the antichrist” (**1Jn 4:2–3**). “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh” (**2Jn 7**). “These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm... They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption” (**2Pet 2:17, 19**). “Having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power... evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived” (**2Tim 3:5, 13**).

They strike at the **first coming** where the **Word** became **flesh**, the **Lamb** was slain, and the **tomb** was empty. They

strike at the **second**—the **King returning**, the **Judge on the clouds**, and the **Bridegroom at the door**.

The wall is rebuilt—higher this time, smoother, more convincing. The whitewash is fresh—professionally applied, culturally sensitive, and emotionally resonant.

But the storm is coming. It isn't a local judgment on one city, not a temporary exile. **It's the final storm**. And when it breaks, **“At the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Php 2:10–11)**.

The false prophets of Ezekiel 13 have returned. They wear **new clothes**, though they are naked like the emperor. They speak with **new accents**, though their words are baby-babble. They stream on new platforms, but their message is the same: **“Peace... when there is no peace.” “Isn't Jesus just one way among many?” “God doesn't care about how you behave.” “Jesus didn't really rise in the flesh—only spiritually, symbolically...” “Our guild has sole possession of the truth. Conform or be cast out,”** as they trounce on the Christ they say they believe.

Today, we will tear off the paint. We will rip the veils. We will open the Word. And we will behold the Christ—

the Lamb who was slain, the King who is coming, the Truth who exposes every lie. [Whose voice are we listening to?](#)

## Ezekiel 13: An Overview

We resume our study of Ezekiel. [Ezekiel 13](#). It continues the [second leg](#) of a nine part journey through the book which will [center](#) on the story of Satan in Ezekiel 28. It comes as the [second part](#) of a thirteen part movement within the context of a series of oracles and judgments against Israel that [center](#) on God's call to Israel to turn, repent, and live:

**A.** Yahweh Comes to His Temple (Ezek 1-11)

**B. Oracles of Judgment (12-23)**

**C.** Jerusalem Besieged (24)

**D.** Oracles Against the Foreign Nations (25:1-28:10)

**E.** Judgment on the Fallen Cherub (28:11-19)

**D'.** Oracles Against the Foreign Nations (29-32)

**C'.** Jerusalem Falls (33)

**B'.** Oracles of Restoration (34-39)

**A'.** Yahweh Comes to His Temple (40-48)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Summary of [Jiří Moskala](#), "[Notes on the Literary Structure of the Book of Ezekiel](#)," *Andrews University* (2016): 102-110.

- A. “Know That I Am the Lord” (12:15) Symbolic Acts of Exile (12:1–28)
- B. “Lying Divination” (13:6) False Prophecy Condemned (13:1–23)**
- C. “Idols in Their Heart” (14:3) Idolatry Indicted (14:1–23)
- D. “Like a Vine” (15:2) Unfaithfulness Allegorized (15:1–8)
- E. “Played the Whore” (16:15) Adultery Allegorized (16:1–63)
- F. “Rebelled Against Him” (17:15) Rebellion Parabled (17:1–24)
- G. “Turn and Live” (18:32) Repentance Urged (18:1–32)
- F'. “Rebelled Against Me” (19:2) Leadership Lamented (19:1–14)
- E'. “Played the Whore” (23:5) Adultery Allegorized (23:1–49)
- D'. “Like a Vine” (21:10) Judgment Imaged (20:45–21:32)
- C'. “Made Your Idols” (22:3) Sins Indicted (22:1–31)
- B'. “Lying Divination” (22:28) False Prophecy Judged (22:23–31)
- A'. “Know That I Am the Lord” (24:27) Symbolic Acts of Judgment (24:1–27)

Ezekiel 13 comes to us as **the last of six** “**The word of the Lord came to me**” sayings that began in the previous chapter (12:1, 8, 17, 21, 26, 13:1). **The Word of the Lord is Christ** whom the prophet *saw* and with whom he *spoke*. This thought, that I keep repeating nearly every time we see it, will only become that much more important as we look at the chapter today.

As for what we are getting ready to look at, it can be divided into **two parallel halves** (like a two-column weave). We have **two oracles** that each use a different metaphor.

The first is directed at **false prophets** and the metaphor used is whitewash (**10-12, 14-15**)—a kind of ancient painting of walls or tombs that make them look nice. The second is directed in one of the few instances in the entire OT, at **false prophetesses**—women and the metaphor used here is magic bands on the wrists (**18, 20**).

The writing style very clearly **parallels itself**, reinforcing the disaster that awaits. Both begin with **a command** to prophesy again (**2, 17**). Both give the same **source** of falsehood (“**out of their own hearts;**” **2, 17**). Both use a **metaphor**. Both have a divine **accusation** (“**You have not gone up into the breaches,**” **5**); “**You have disheartened the righteous ... encouraged the wicked,**” **22**). Both declare **judgment** through a “tearing” (“**I will tear down... the wall... will be no more,**” **14-15**); “**I will tear... the magic bands... deliver my people,**” **20-21**). Both have the identical **purpose** (“**You shall know that I am the LORD,**” **14, 21, 23**). This, at the end of the day is always the point of God’s word: that you should know who he truly is.

Each section follows a chiastic structure centering on divine opposition that God is against them:

- A Command & Condemnation:** “Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit” (1–3)
- B Accusation:** Like jackals, they see false visions, say “declares the LORD” when He has not spoken (4–7)
- C Divine Opposition:** “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I am against you” (8–9)
- B' Accusation:** They say “Peace” and daub with whitewash; storm will expose lies (10–12)
- A' Judgment & Recognition:** “I will break down the wall... you shall know that I am the LORD” (13–16)
- A Command:** “Set your face against the daughters who prophesy out of their own hearts” (17)
- B Accusation:** Magic bands, veils, profaning God for handfuls of barley (18–19)
- C Divine Opposition:** “Behold, I am against your magic bands” (20)
- B' Judgment:** “I will tear the bands... deliver my people... you disheartened the righteous” (21–22)
- A' Outcome:** “You shall no more see false visions... you shall know that I am the LORD” (23)

As I hope you can hear from the introduction, the [NT harkens back to this chapter on multiple occasions](#), and though there are no direct quotes, there are many allusions, echoes, and conceptual parallels.

## False Prophets and the Whitewashed Walls

The first oracle begins, again, with “The Word of the Lord came to me” (Ezek 13:1). The Word then tells Ezekiel, “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!’” (2). Ezekiel’s classic designation “son of man” is used. He represents Israel as its true prophet.

The idea of “prophesy” comes up immediately and it will be significant for the rest of the chapter. In this case, it is Ezekiel who is told to prophesy. That is, God the Word tells him what to say. Now, it is important, especially given the way the NT will allude back to this chapter, to understand that “prophesy” in the Bible is much more often *forthtelling* than it is *foretelling*. Foretelling is predicting the future, and there will be some of that here. However, it is much more often simply preaching the truth. To preach is to prophesy. Therefore, it is vital that the preacher prophesy what God has said. Since God doesn’t come to people with divinely inspired words that become Holy Scripture anymore, it is imperative that preachers speak what they know is God’s word, namely the Holy Scripture, in its full context,

without cherry picking ideas that come from their own imaginations.

Sadly, this is **precisely what God now commands** Ezekiel to say. “**Thus says the Lord God (Adonai YHWH), ‘Woe to the foolish prophets *who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!*’**” (3). A “**woe**” is pronounced, reminding me very much of Jesus who pronounced a series of woes upon the false teachers of his own day. Seven woes he pronounces in **Matthew 23 (13, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29)**. Jesus condemns them for shutting the kingdom against others, making proselytes twice as unfit for heaven, swearing falsely by the temple and altar, tithing minutiae while neglecting justice and mercy, cleansing the outside of the cup while being full of greed and self-indulgence, appearing righteous outwardly while being full of hypocrisy and lawlessness, and honoring the prophets’ tombs while sharing their ancestors’ guilt in killing them. **The fifth and sixth woes** directly harken back to Ezekiel 13: the “whitewashed tombs” (27) echo the false prophets’ deceptive “whitewash” (**Ezek 13:10–15**), and the outward cleansing with inner corruption (**Matt 23:25**) mirrors their misleading “peace” that hides coming judgment. In other words, the Scribes and

Pharisees were the direct spiritual descendants of the “foolish prophets” of Ezekiel’s day while Jesus is the greater Ezekiel preaching against them.

And **what was their sin?** They **follow their own spirits yet have seen nothing (Ezek 13:3)**. **Jeremiah** spoke directly about this explaining that a true prophet of God both **hears and sees his word (Jer 23:18)**. This, he says, is standing in the divine council, before God and the heavenly host, like Isaiah in Isa 6, to be commissioned by God himself to deliver his words to his people.

Ezekiel likens what these foolish prophets do to “**jackals among ruins**” (**Ezek 13:4**). **The jackal** or fox in ANE imagery was a scavenger, a creature that thrives on destruction, digs into collapsed structures, and feeds off decay without rebuilding anything. John Mayer (1583–1664) said, “**Of all beasts the fox is the most subtle and dangerous for getting into and hurting the vineyard through any breach he finds in the hedge or wall. For this reason, false prophets among the Jews are compared with foxes.**”<sup>2</sup>

These men were **opportunists** rather than restorers, **destructive** rather than protective. “**You have not gone up**

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<sup>2</sup> **John Mayer**, *Commentary Upon All the Prophets*, in Carl L. Beckwith, Timothy George, and Scott M. Manetsch, eds., *Ezekiel, Daniel: Old Testament*, vol. 12, Reformation Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 67.

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” (Ezek 13:5). These metaphors explain that Israel was already wrecked, but instead of restoring and protecting, they further ruined the foundations of God’s people.

How? By living off the people’s desperation and offering fake visions as the nation crumbled. They explicitly lied by telling the people that God told them what to say. “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. Have you not seen a false vision and uttered a lying divination, whenever you have said, ‘Declares the Lord,’ although I have not spoken?” (6-7).

You can hear the repetition here of false visions and lying divination. They go around telling the people that they saw God and that God spoke to them. One of the great tragedies of our own day is how many people use this same language. “I saw God in a vision and he was doing such and such. Then Jesus spoke to me and said...” How do you even argue with that to call them out? Now, I don’t doubt that God might show people visions today, but they are not revelatory and must always conform to his word. So how do

you test a spirit or vision? Moses is clear. “The prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.’ And if you say in your heart, ‘How may we know the word that the Lord has not spoken?’— when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him” (Deut 18:20-22). How many times do people get to say, “Thus says the Lord,” and then they predict something on TV or from some podium, and then no one ever bothers to see if it actually came true? Yet, these liars continue to have platforms as they fleece the sheep.

But it is even worse. For we have here something about *lying divination*. The word “divination” (*qesem*) is a technical word for **occult practices** forbidden in the Torah. It is paired with falsehood and lying visions to show that their messages were self-generated spiritual counterfeits. Just prior to Moses’ discussion of false prophets, he spoke about “**one who practices divination,**” which is listed with sorcery, omens, and witchcraft (Deut 18:10). Therefore, I would speculate

that these false prophets—as many today, are actually hiding the fact that they are using occult techniques or dabbling in the “other side” without you even knowing it. That’s actually why they have a form of power that fools people.

Sometimes, we know it. Benny Hinn for example was well-known to have incorporated occult-like practices such as “slaying in the Spirit” into his rallies. His “miracles” echo stage hypnosis and other occult chicanery. Or what about the crazy Bethel Church in Redding, CA, which for example practices the notorious “grave soaking” where members lie on the graves of deceased “faith heroes” like Charles Finney or Heidi Baker to “absorb” their spiritual anointing. But sometimes we don’t know it, because people hide their true sins and crimes from the public, putting on a façade so that you will think that they are simply holy people, when the truth is much much darker.

What is the main job of a prophet? To point people to Christ and to tell the people to turn from their sin and live. Law and Gospel. It’s simple. We will see this at the center of this section of Ezekiel in ch. 18, but here’s Jeremiah’s take on it. “I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to

my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds” (Jer 23:21-22).

We come to the center of the first oracle. It’s focus is God’s divine opposition towards these foolish prophets. “Therefore thus says the Lord God...” (Ezek 13:8). In this context, these are truly frightening words. For when the Lord God speaks judgment, what can hold back his hand? “Because you have uttered falsehood and seen lying visions, therefore behold, I am against you, declares the Lord God.” That’s the first half. The second half is vs. 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.”

The immediate context of this that the prophet is predicting physical disaster and death for the lying prophets. Judgment is coming for them, and this certainly fits the tenor of the entire book thus far. However, it is interesting to notice that the ESV’s “Nor be enrolled in the register of the house of Israel” is translated by the LXX as, “Neither shall they be *written in the roll* of the house of Israel,” and the Targum renders it, “And in *the inscription for eternal life* which

is inscribed for the righteous of the House of Israel, they shall not be inscribed.”

In this way, the NT itself takes many ideas from this chapter and applies them not to physical, but to **eternal condemnation** for false teachers, making “thus says the Lord God” that much more striking in our day. “Erased from Israel’s roll” becomes “**Blotted from the Lamb’s Book**” (**Rev 3:5; 20:15**). “Exiled from the land” becomes, “**Cast into outer darkness**” (**Matt 25:30; 2Pe 2:17**). “You shall know that I am the LORD” becomes “**Every knee shall bow**” (**Php 2:10-11**) to the Lord ... Jesus. Learning to read the OT in light of the NT is the key to all good interpretation. Without it, you can get lost very quickly as you miss the forest for the Tree who is Christ.

Up next comes the accusation with its included metaphor. “**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 white-wash...**” (**Ezek 13:10**). The wall they are building is clearly not going to save them from God’s judgment. Yet, they decorate it and make it look all nice so that people will see its newness and not care about its inability to protect anyone. We know this because the whitewashed wall is paired

with their message of peace. They were telling the people that God was at peace with them. God doesn't get angry, certainly not at his people. He's **impassible**! And their relationship with him? It is **inviolable**. Therefore, no sin is ever challenged, save the sin of telling the people they must turn to Christ and live.

So God comes in judgment. “**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**” (11). A deluge or rain, great hailstones, and a stormy wind. These will be the agents of judgment. An overwhelming, unstoppable, crushing force of destruction. Babylon is coming, and with her its heavenly prince. All at God's decree and permission, to judge his people for their sins.

**The rain will wash away their prophetic rot.** The stones will crush their foolish pride. The wind will sweep away visions and lies. Their pathetic pristine wall will be no match for the torrents of God's vengeance. “**And when the wall falls, will it not be said to you, ‘Where is the coating with which you smeared it?’**” (12).

The **judgment goes on repeat**, like a record caught in its own rut. “**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” (13). Lest anyone think that it is a natural disaster or some controlled human force or even some kind of impersonal karma or judgment of the gods, the Lord God says that *he makes* the stormy wind break out. It comes from *his wrath*. The deluge comes from *his anger*. He is the source of it all; God and nothing less. For he alone is Sovereign, especially over his people, but even over the nations that come to judge them. Isaiah showed this to the Assyrian over 100 years earlier when it thought it was Almighty. “*Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it, or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it? As if a rod should wield him who lifts it, or as if a staff should lift him who is not wood!*” (Isa 10:15).

Again God says, “*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*” (14). And thus God reveals *the purpose of it all*. That they may know that he is the LORD. This is Isaiah’s prophetic *prediction*, no longer confined to the realm of preaching truth, God makes a prediction so that

when it happens, the people will be absolutely certain of the source. A prophet of God has been in their midst.

The oracle winds down in the last two verses, “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, the prophets of Israel who prophesied concerning Jerusalem and saw visions of peace for her, when there was no peace, declares the Lord God” (15-16). I wish to say a word about this divine “wrath,” because I confess that God in his essence *actually is* impassible. That is, nothing from the outside comes upon God to provoke him in his essence, causing some kind of change in it, some kind of alteration, some kind of outburst. Rather, his wrath is simply his holiness in this regard. However, it is vital to remember that this is the *Word of the Lord* that is speaking, **the Angel**, Christ in the OT. That’s the point of him being called Adonai YHWH (Lord GOD). That’s Christ! And in his capacity as the Angel, we get picture that is a type of our Savior when he was so angry at the money-changers in the temple. Holy righteous anger in the God-man perfectly reflects what God’s unchangeable nature is in its essence. God does not change. Therefore, you can expect his actions to always remain consistent when it

comes to lying prophets. There is only one hope for them or for you. But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

One more thought about the whitewash before moving on. And this is fascinating. Ezekiel seems to be using a metaphor that is more than just paint. It is *leprosy* on the wall. Leviticus 14 discusses the leprous house. When mold spreads, the priest scrapes the plaster, tears out the stones, and if the plague returns, the entire house is demolished. The same word for “plaster” (*tafal*) is used here in Ezekiel. The prophets smear the wall with leper's whitewash—covering up rot rather than curing it. What rot? Their own rot! They are the leprous rot that has infected the walls of the city and they are painting themselves with whitewash to hide their moral disease.<sup>3</sup>

## False Prophetesses and their Magic Bands

The second oracle now arrives immediately on the heels of the first. It's opening is identical, but **its recipients are inverted**. “And you, son of man, set your face against *the daughters* of your people, who prophesy out of their own

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<sup>3</sup> **Moshe Greenberg**, *Ezekiel 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 22, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 246. Thanks to Caleb Song for finding this and for the fascinating ideas.

hearts. Prophecy against them” (Ezek 13:17). Instead of male prophets, it is female prophetesses. We don’t know about many of these, but John Taylor has a good observation:

There are only a handful of passages in the Old Testament which are critical of a class of women, and this section keeps company with Isaiah 3:16–4:1; 32:9–13 and Amos 4:1–3. The only female prophets that are known to us are women like Deborah (Judg. 4:4ff.) and Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14), though Moses’ sister, Miriam, merited the title (Exod. 15:20) and Nehemiah refers to ‘the prophetess Noadiah’ among his intimidators (Neh. 6:14). While recognizing therefore that prophecy was open to women as well as to men, there do not appear to have been many such women and it is probably a mistake to think of a class or order of prophetesses. Indeed, Ezekiel’s language suggests that these were more like witches or sorceresses who practised strange magic arts (cf. 1 Sam. 28:7).<sup>4</sup>

So we have more occult imagery going on. What exactly were they doing? “And say, ‘Thus says the Lord God: Woe to the women who sew magic bands upon all wrists, and

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<sup>4</sup> John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 22, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1969), 124. Cited in Michael S. Heiser, “[Naked Bible Podcast Transcript Ep 121: Ezekiel 12-13](#),” *Naked Bible Podcast* (Oct 8, 2016), 15

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?’” (Ezek 13:18). Block explains that whatever the obscurity of these practices are a couple of things are clear. “First, they are sewing something for people’s arms ... Since some form of magical power is involved here, it seems best to associate the terminology with the noun *keset* ... meaning ‘to bind’ and the noun *kasītu*, meaning ‘binding magic’ in Akkadian.”<sup>5</sup> Binding people or powers through objects was a common practice, kind like they do with voodoo dolls. It was a way of casting a spell over a person to cause them to be in a kind of stupor, unable to see the world around them clearly. There’s possibly a metaphorical play on this with the leprosy that I’ve just mentioned with the prophets, in that some think the spell gave the recipient leprosy.<sup>6</sup> More on that in a moment. In this case, it was the leprous sickness of thinking that everything was going to be OK, that they were the good people, God wouldn’t do anything to them, so keep on practicing those magical incantations and deceiving the people.

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel Isaac Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 413. Also cited in Heiser, 15-16.

<sup>6</sup> Greenberg, *ibid.*

The second point is about **the veils**. Block again, “The meaning of (*hammispāḥôt*) is [may be] ... ‘rags’ [or] ... ‘bonnet; mantle.’ Most common is ‘veils.’ [This] interpretation ... [could come from a ] Hebrew root ... “to join or attach.” [This root is] easily associated with magical [accessories].” Heiser concludes, “Whatever the nature of both of these, they appear to have been instruments of black magic, and their wielders may justifiably be designated sorceresses, evil magicians, or witches.” Remember the witch of Endor and king Saul? They never went away. Today we might call them gypsies or tarot readers or fortune tellers or even new agers or other things. Again, curiously, their veils and bands are like leprosy’s scabs. The Hebrew for “veils” (*mispahoth*) echoes the “eruption” of leprosy in **Lev 13:2**.

What were they doing with these magical amulets? “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” (**Ezek 13:19**). Essentially, it is **the same thing as the false prophets**, just more feminine in its wiles. And for what? A handful of barley or a few pieces of bread? Times were obviously tough, as there had already been deportations to Babylon in

recent years and war was still in the air. How amazing that in such devastating times people will continue to believe lies from false prophetesses who can barely even feed themselves except through tricking you out of your own money.

**Vs. 20** brings us to an identical center as the previous oracle. “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.” Now we see that it is much worse than just ripping people off. In introducing seductive magic that people buy into, they are selling their own souls to the huntress. Their “hunting souls like birds” **spreads the disease**—numbing the conscience and dulling the pain, so Israel feels no fire, hears no warning, and marches smiling into exile. So God will tear the magic bands from their arms even as he break down the whitewashed walls of the lying prophets. It is a violent image of brutality in war from soldiers full of bloodlust and hungry for female flesh, for they are the instruments God will use.

**Vs. 21** repeats it with the veils but then adds **the only hope in our passage**. And what hope it is! “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.” The same purpose is given, that these false prophetesses may know that Adonai is the LORD. This is about Jesus their God.

But like Jesus in the NT, Christ in the OT is doing all this, amazingly, *for the sake of his own people*. He is actually bringing destruction upon the city and its prophets and prophetesses in order that the righteous might be saved at the end rather than destroyed. It is through suffering that we find salvation.

The suffering for the prophetesses will not result in that, however, unless there is true repentance. “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, therefore you shall no more see false visions nor practice divination” (22-23a). Why won’t they see these anymore? Because they will be devastated, destroyed, and dead.

But the good news is repeated, and we need to hear it today. “I will deliver my people out of your hand. And you shall know that I am the Lord” (23b). This time, knowing that he is the LORD is given as a positive message to those who have been saved. And this must be telling us about Christ.

My friends, Origen said of this passage, “If I find in Moses and the prophets the thought of Christ, I speak not according to my own heart but from the Holy Spirit” (Origen, *Homilies on Ezekiel* 2.2).<sup>7</sup> The point of this is to see Christ the Judge and Christ the Savior *in the OT*. For **all of the Scripture is about him**. He gave this message to Ezekiel face-to-face so that the lying prophets and sorcerer prophetesses might be judged for their wickedness and know that he is Lord. Yet, he gave this message so that his people might know that he saves them from their midst. Is this not why the Apostle, after giving us such a remarkable early poem about Jesus, saying, “Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross...” concludes, “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess *that*

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<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Stevenson and Michael Gluerup, *Ezekiel, Daniel*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture OT 13 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 45.

*Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (Php 2:6-11)?

Today, we face **the same kinds of troubles** as Ezekiel’s people did in his day. Jerome said, “**Whatever was said at that time to the people of Israel now applies to the church. The holy prophets are apostles and apostolic people, but the lying and raging prophets are all heretics, whose leaders invent things from their own heart; the people are led astray by them and acquiesce in the falsehoods of others**” (Jerome, *Commentary on Ezekiel* 4.13.1-3).<sup>8</sup>

Today, the leprosy spreads again. A teacher says, “**Grace means no repentance.**” That’s **whitewash over mold**. A prophetess posts, “**God told me your breakthrough is coming. Name it and claim it.**” a **veil over the scab**. Diseased leprous doctors spreading their plague through the city.

But Jesus is **the Great Physician**. He scrapes the wall. He tears the bands. He heals the numb—by His stripes we are healed. The whitewash falls. The bands are torn. The veils are ripped. And in the wreckage of every false vision, every lying divination, every soul-hunting spell—one Name stands unshaken. Jesus—the Word who spoke to Ezekiel,

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Jesus—the Lamb who was slain, Jesus—the King who is coming.

They denied Him in the first coming: “He casts out demons by Beelzebul” (Matt 12:24). “This man is not from God” (John 9:16). They mocked Him in the second: “Where is the promise of his coming?” (2Pet 3:4). But the final storm is not rain. It is revelation. The LORD is Jesus. The storm is His return. The recognition is His glory. “At the name of Jesus every knee will bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Php 2:10–11). This refers to a time we have not yet seen fully come to pass. Therefore, consider these words from the NT echoing Ezekiel for our day:

- **Matthew 7:15** – “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”
- **Matthew 24:11** – “And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.”
- **Matthew 24:24** – “For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.”
- **Acts 20:29–30** – “I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and

from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.”

- **2 Timothy 3:6-7** – “For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.”
- **2 Timothy 3:13** – “while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”
- **2 Peter 2:1** – “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.”
- **1 John 4:1** – “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”
- **Revelation 2:20-23** – “But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols... I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation... and I will strike her children dead.”
- **Revelation 16:13** – “And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs.”

- **Revelation 19:20** – “And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.”

The false prophets are erased. The whitewashed wall is shattered. The hunted souls are set free. And the Church—Christ’s bride, His people, His register—stands. Not by whitewash. Not by magic bands. Not by veils. But by the blood of the Lamb. By the Word of His testimony. By the Spirit of prophecy.

Whose voice are you listening to?

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### Ezekiel 13 → New Testament Parallels Table

Ezek 13 Section	Key Idea / Phrase	NT Parallels	Type	Explanation
vv. 1–3	“Prophesy against the prophets... who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing”	<b>Matthew 7:15</b> “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing...” <b>2 Peter 2:1</b> “False prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you...”	<b>Thematic Echo</b>  <b>Direct Allusion</b>	Jesus warns of internal deception from within Israel, just as Ezekiel condemns prophets who speak from imagination, not revelation.  Peter explicitly links OT false prophets (like those in Ezek 13) to NT false teachers—same danger, new context.
vv. 5–6	“They have seen false visions and lying divinations... they say, ‘Declares the LORD,’ when the LORD has not sent them”	<b>Jeremiah 23:16, 21</b> (cf. NT use) → <b>Matthew 24:11</b> “And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.” <b>1 John 4:1</b> “Test the spirits... many false prophets have gone out into the world”	<b>Thematic Echo</b>  <b>Conceptual Echo</b>	Jesus echoes the OT pattern (Jer + Ezek) of unauthorized speakers claiming divine authority.  John applies Ezekiel’s call to discernment: not every “prophetic” voice is from God.
vv. 10–12, 14–15	“They say ‘Peace’ when there is no peace... daub it with whitewash... I will break down the wall”	<b>1 Thessalonians 5:3</b> “When people are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ then sudden destruction will come...” <b>Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11</b> → <b>Luke 6:26</b> “Woe to you when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets”	<b>Strong Allusion</b>  <b>Echo via Jeremiah</b>	Paul’s eschatological warning mirrors Ezekiel’s false peace prophecy— <b>both predict judgment when deceivers promise security.</b>  Jesus condemns approval of false peacemakers, drawing on the same tradition as Ezekiel’s “whitewash” critique.
v. 9	“My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions... they shall not be in the council of my people”	<b>2 Peter 2:3</b> “In their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation... is not idle”	<b>Thematic Echo</b>	Exclusion from God’s people (Ezek) → condemnation and exploitation (Peter).
vv. 18–20	“You sew magic bands... make veils... hunt souls... I am against your magic bands”	<b>Acts 19:19</b> “Many who had practiced magic arts... burned their books” <b>Revelation 22:15</b> “Outside are the dogs and sorcerers...”	<b>Conceptual Echo</b>  <b>Thematic Echo</b>	Luke records mass rejection of occult practices—parallels God’s opposition to manipulative “prophetesses.”  Final exclusion of sorcerers/manipulators echoes judgment on prophetesses who “hunt souls.”
v. 22	“You have disheartened the righteous...”	<b>James 3:5–6</b> “The tongue... corrupts the whole body”	<b>Thematic Echo</b>	False words harm the righteous and embolden sin—same moral damage.

Ezek 13 Section	Key Idea / Phrase	NT Parallel	Type	Explanation
<p>and encouraged the wicked”</p> <p>vv. 14, “You shall know that I am the LORD” (x3)</p>		<p><b>Matthew 18:6</b> “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin...”</p> <p><b>Philippians 2:10–11</b> “Every knee shall bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord”</p> <p><b>John 9:39</b> “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind”</p>	<p><b>Conceptual Parallel</b></p> <p><b>Eschatological Echo</b></p> <p><b>Reversal Echo</b></p>	<p>Jesus’ warning against leading believers astray mirrors Ezekiel’s accusation.</p> <p>Ultimate recognition of YHWH (Ezek) fulfilled in universal confession of Christ as Lord.</p> <p>Jesus’ ministry exposes false sight (like whitewash/veils), fulfilling Ezekiel’s judgment theme.</p>