

## **Naked Bible Podcast Transcript**

**Episode 121**

**Ezekiel 12-13**

**October 8, 2016**

**Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)**

**Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)**

### **Episode Summary**

The prophet Ezekiel has telegraphed the doom of Jerusalem in a series of visual re-enactment signs, visions, and prophetic oracles. Chapters 12-13 continue with more sign acts, but shifts to God's assessment of objections by the exiles as to the certainty of Jerusalem's fate. God therefore directs Ezekiel to demolish the idea that "We have heard all this doom and gloom before, but nothing ever happens."

### **Transcript**

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 121: Ezekiel 12 and 13. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you? It was a pretty incredible weekend!

**MH:** Yeah, it was a great weekend! We had our... our "Miqalat reference group" all met together. It was great. I'm really glad we did it.

**TS:** It was fun to get to meet a lot of people, and it was nice to be around like-minded people that were all on the same page and meet new friends. I really enjoyed it!

**MH:** It was good to get face-time for sure, and I personally think it was pretty productive. I mean, it was fun but it wasn't just fun. We actually got things accomplished.

**TS:** Yeah, absolutely.

**MH:** Well, we're going to do two chapters: Ezekiel 12 and 13. We're trying as quickly as possible to get to chapter 16. (laughs) That's the one with all the sexual content in it that we've alluded to before—Ezekiel being sort of infamous for very earthy language. So we're hurtling toward that, Trey... I know you can't wait to get to chapter 16!

**TS:** Well, I asked Mike if we needed some special 70's music for that episode but he shot that down, so I guess that's not going to happen.

**MH:** Yeah, that went down in flames. So if you think that was a good idea or that's ringing a bell with you, get used to disappointment. It's not going to happen. (laughing)

All right... 12 and 13 here. We're actually starting a new section. If you remember way, way, way back at the beginning of Ezekiel we talked about how the book broke down in sections. A lot of commentators will have one of those sections be 12 through 24. So here we are in chapter 12, and I want to read a little excerpt from Taylor's short Tyndale Old Testament Commentary on Ezekiel. He kind of summarizes the section here. I think it'll be a good framework for us. So he writes:

The argument of the book so far has consisted mainly of the iteration of Ezekiel's message that Jerusalem is doomed. He has demonstrated this by symbolic action, in vision and by spoken oracle. He has given adequate justification for such a fate by describing the iniquities, religious and moral, which have brought it on. Now a new series of actions and oracles attempts to deal with objections that people raise to this horrifying prospect. The section could, in today's idiom, be entitled 'Objections to Judgment', as long as it is understood that the objections are raised only to be demolished. They are the objections of those who say, 'We have heard all these threats before, but nothing has ever come of them.' Or of the false prophets who claim equal authority for oracles which promise peace and safety. Or of those who think that it is impossible for the Lord to cast away his people: they *must* be delivered, either for the sake of the righteousness of the few, or on the ground of God's covenant-mercies in time past. However, before he deals with all these varying viewpoints, the prophet has some more symbolical acts to perform.

**MH:** So that's the end of Taylor's summary. And we're going to see all those elements, really, in these two chapters—these objection scenarios and Ezekiel having to respond to them and, of course, God anticipating them, basically, and then giving Ezekiel the response. But we're also going to get some more symbolic acts mixed in here.

So when it comes to chapter 12, that breaks down into two more sign-acts—two more symbolic actions, illustrative actions that Ezekiel is going to be asked to do that are going to vividly display something. We've seen a bunch of these already but we're going to get two here. The first seven verses we're going to get the sign act described, and then we're going to get it explained in verses 8 through 16. And then the second sign act we'll pick up in verse 17.

So let's just start here right in the first verse. I'll read the first seven verses here.

---

5:00

**The word of the LORD came to me: <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see, but see not, who have ears to hear, but hear not, for they are a rebellious house. <sup>3</sup>As for you, son of man, prepare for yourself an exile’s baggage, and go into exile by day in their sight. You shall go like an exile from your place to another place in their sight. Perhaps they will understand, though they are a rebellious house. <sup>4</sup>You shall bring out your baggage by day in their sight, as baggage for exile, and you shall go out yourself at evening in their sight, as those do who must go into exile. <sup>5</sup>In their sight dig through the wall, and bring your baggage out through it. <sup>6</sup>In their sight you shall lift the baggage upon your shoulder and carry it out at dusk. You shall cover your face that you may not see the land, for I have made you a sign for the house of Israel.”**

**<sup>7</sup>And I did as I was commanded. I brought out my baggage by day, as baggage for exile, and in the evening I dug through the wall with my own hands. I brought out my baggage at dusk, carrying it on my shoulder in their sight.**

So those are the first 7 verses. The sign act is pretty self-explanatory, but there are a few things I want to say about it. In essence, during the daytime Ezekiel is supposed to gather the bare essentials—what he’s going to need, or what an exile would need for the long journey into exile. And then by night—after that stuff’s been gathered and packed away—by night he’s supposed to dig through the wall of his house to mime (or act out) a getaway, carrying his belongings with him. There are a couple things to say here. The main point is that the sign act is supposed to be performed in full view of Ezekiel’s countrymen—his fellow exiles there in Babylon—just like some of the other things he did were carried out in full view: living life, lying on the ground with his hands tied... That was chapter 4. In chapter 4 we also had eating the exiles rations, that sort of thing. He’s supposed

to be doing this so that everyone can see and hopefully get the message. I think that's generally clear, but let's just comment on a few things as we go here.

In verse 3, one of the things that might grab someone's attention is God telling Ezekiel, "I want you to do this: go like an exile from your place to another place, get the baggage..." and all that. And he says, "Perhaps they will understand, thought they are a rebellious house." And that might cause someone to ask, "Well, doesn't God know the outcome? Is this some sort of indication that God doesn't foreknow the future, or something like that? Doesn't he know the outcome?" Well he does, and we've seen up to this point in the same book—in Ezekiel—where God knows quite well how this is going to play out. He's telling Ezekiel to tell the people how this is going to play out. He does know the outcome, so that isn't the point of the language. So what might this mean? I think (and this isn't just me, this is a pretty standard way of approaching it) the wording here is meant to convey God's desire, not his uncertainty, about what will happen. God has already said a) the exile is certain, and b) there's going to be a remnant. So God knows both of those things. He's not looking for information here. Frankly, the readers know both of those things. So the wording here, perhaps they'll understand: it reflects God's desire, his heart, that he wishes people would turn around. He wishes this were the case. It's not that he doesn't know that most of them won't and only a handful will. He does know that already because he's telegraphed that through a whole series of sign acts for Ezekiel and oracles and what-not. So I don't think we need to get hung up on the language here. There is a way to look at it that's quite consistent with what Ezekiel has already said and what we've already covered.

10:00

So the sign act is not very hard to understand... the part about digging through the wall at night. It's worth commenting that the word here for wall is *qir* and not *homah*. The difference between them is *homah* is typically used, like, of a city wall or something like that. *Qir* is often used to refer to the wall of a dwelling—a smaller structure. So Ezekiel basically has to basically tunnel through the wall in his house. Typically, it's going to be made up of clay or dry bricks. I point it out because it's not a trivial task. This would have taken him a little while. It would have been something that he does, again, in full view of everyone that would have denoted desperation. "Why don't you just use the door?" "Because I'm surrounded." You create this set of circumstances where normal activity isn't going to work, normal escape isn't going to work. We have to go through the wall because we have to do exit the building where people aren't expecting us to exit the building. It just conveys this sense of urgency that the people are supposed to be watching this and thinking, "Wow, that's what's going to happen. The people back in Jerusalem are going to be in this situation where they have to do this. They have to try to get away unseen because of the threat." So that's just a point of interest. I think the sign act that he's told to do is pretty self-explanatory.

When we get into the explanation, we get a few interesting things here. In verses 8-16, we read this:

**<sup>8</sup>In the morning the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>9</sup>“Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, ‘What are you doing?’ <sup>10</sup>Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: This oracle concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel who are in it.’ <sup>11</sup>Say, ‘I am a sign for you: as I have done, so shall it be done to them. They shall go into exile, into captivity.’ <sup>12</sup>And the prince who is among them shall lift his baggage upon his shoulder at dusk, and shall go out. They shall dig through the wall to bring him out through it. He shall cover his face, that he may not see the land with his eyes. <sup>13</sup>And I will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare. And I will bring him to Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, yet he shall not see it, and he shall die there. <sup>14</sup>And I will scatter toward every wind all who are around him, his helpers and all his troops, and I will unsheathe the sword after them. <sup>15</sup>And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I disperse them among the nations and scatter them among the countries. <sup>16</sup>But I will let a few of them escape from the sword, from famine and pestilence, that they may declare all their abominations among the nations where they go, and may know that I am the LORD.”**

So that was verse 8 through 16. A few comments here. What God told him to do in the first 7 verses (get your stuff together—baggage like an exile—and in the evening dig through your wall and then escape)... Verse 8 says that it was explained to Ezekiel in the morning. So apparently Ezekiel didn't quite know what it all meant, either, at least on the surface when it was originally given to him. And the one detail that is revelatory is this focus on the prince. Now most scholars (and I would be among this group; I think this makes sense) feel that the prince is Zedekiah and that this whole description is a reference to what happened to King Zedekiah at the end of the history of Judah, at the end of Judah's existence, where Nebuchadnezzar takes the city. The "prince" language,

interestingly enough, is used by Ezekiel later on elsewhere to refer to the Davidic descendant. For instance, in Ezekiel 37:25 we read:

**<sup>25</sup>They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever.**

So Ezekiel 37 (that's the chapter where the vision of the dry bones is at), so this is perspective about the nation being resurrected, being made alive again, brought back to the land, so on and so forth. And here we have "David my servant." So again, this is Ezekiel, so it's not King David but it's a reference to the Davidic king. The Davidic descendant is called a prince. It's the same word that's used here in Ezekiel chapter 12. So it's a reference to the person's who's in David's line. And again, if you actually looked at the circumstances, this is the sort of thing that happened to Zedekiah. Taylor, I think has a nice summary of this. He says:

[Ezekiel's] actions were prophetic of what was to happen to King Zedekiah, *the prince in Jerusalem* (10). He would flee the city unceremoniously at dead of night. The phrase *he shall cover his face* (12) may refer to his being disguised, in which case Ezekiel would probably have worn some head-covering to represent it, or it may be a forward look to his being blinded by his captors at Riblah [MH: remember, Zedekiah was blinded] (referred to clearly in verse 13, *yet he shall not see it*)...

Again, specifically, the land. I'll just read the verse:

**I will bring him to Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, yet he shall not see it, and he shall die there. (Ezekiel 12:13b)**

So that very clearly is something that happened to Zedekiah. So Taylor continues:

15:00

...it may be a forward look to his being blinded by his captors at Riblah,... which could have been represented by the prophet either by a blindfold or by holding his hand over his eyes. [MH: There's a little bit of variability as to how the description that God gives Ezekiel as to what he's supposed to do at night might have been carried out or might have been supposed to signify.] The LXX follows

the former interpretation by rendering verse 12: 'he shall cover his face, so that he may not *be seen* by eye.'

So the Septuagint translator thought this was referring to a disguise, but Taylor and other commentators tend to opt for a reference to Zedekiah. I think that makes sense because of the "prince" language... because "they shall not see it" and that sort of thing seems to be speaking of the king. So this would be a prophecy. I mean, it's all a prophecy. The sign acts, of course, are prophecies. But this one gets really specific. It's not just about what's going to happen to the people in Jerusalem but specifically what's going to happen to the prince—the guy in charge at the time when all of this comes down. Another note that I think is interesting in verse 13:

**<sup>13</sup> And I will spread my net over him [God says], and he shall be taken in my snare.**

So basically, the king is going to try to get away, which historically turned out to be Zedekiah, and God says, "That ain't gonna work. I will spread my net over him. He shall be taken in my snare." And this points to the fact that the Babylonian invasion and the capture of the Davidic king is under God's control. This isn't revelatory for us as listeners here. God's the one giving all this information. But this is another passage that points to the fact that when bad things happen, you can't assume that God isn't in control. He is! It's not like badness is just happening and God is up in heaven scrambling, "Oh, what do I do? Boy, I didn't expect this! This is getting out of hand here! I've gotta get this under control!" It's always under control. This is an example of God judging apostasy, judging idolatry, judging evil. God gets to do that because he's God. The circumstances are not out of his control. He knows why he's doing it and he knows what's going to extend from it, as well. So we get this point of theology, I think, if we're reading carefully just in that little verse right there.

The second sign act in Ezekiel 12... The first one was to get the baggage together, dig through the wall of your house or hut (or whatever Ezekiel was living in—I think "house" is probably a better term) at night, make your escape, etc... Do this in front of everybody's eyes day and night. The second sign act really serves to try to illustrate the terror of the people in Jerusalem. So we read Ezekiel 12:17-20:

**<sup>17</sup> And the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>18</sup> "Son of man, eat your bread with quaking, and drink water with trembling and with anxiety. <sup>19</sup> And say to the people of the land, Thus says the**

**Lord GOD concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the land of Israel: They shall eat their bread with anxiety, and drink water in dismay. In this way her land will be stripped of all it contains, on account of the violence of all those who dwell in it. <sup>20</sup> And the inhabited cities shall be laid waste, and the land shall become a desolation; and you shall know that I am the LORD.”**

This is pretty clear. Ezekiel is told to get something to eat, something to drink, and sit there and consume it in fear... shake, quake, tremble. Do it with anxiety, like you're in a panic while you're doing it. That's to illustrate that this is what it's going to be like in Jerusalem when all this goes down. We've already had what he does eat and drink trimmed to exilic ration proportions, and we've already had in past chapters references to the land breaking out in pestilence and the water supply being cut off. This is the sort of thing that happens when a city is under siege.

20:00

Just take your mind back to siege warfare. This is the classic way of taking a city in the Ancient Near East. You go to the city with your army and you surround it. We've had all this already in previous episodes, with what's going to happen to the city. You remember when Ezekiel is supposed to sketch out the city and then array instruments of warfare around it to visually portray siege warfare. This is what's going to happen and this is what happens when a city is under siege. It's not a quick, constant battle. Typically, you surround the city, you burn the fields outside the city. You burn the crops. You cut off the water supply. If there's a water supply—a river or stream or whatever—flowing into the city, you build a dam. You stop it. You cut off the water supply in the city, so not only is there less to drink and it's going to run out, but also any washing that would have happened... They're not going to be sensitive to germ science and all that stuff, but sanitation is a huge problem. What was typically done is they would wash some things down—they did that—but they would also remove the excrement outside the city. You'd gather it and you'd remove it. You'd take it out. Well, they can't do that if the city is surrounded. Nobody waves a white flag or puts the "T" like "Time-out" here so we can carry the poop out the city. That's not happening. This is why in siege warfare that goes on for weeks and for months, disease becomes a real issue. Pestilence, rats, vermin—these become a real issue. People die and you can't dispose of their corpses. Siege warfare was an awful thing. If you're surrounded, look how limited your options are. You can either surrender, basically resort to eating the dead (cannibalism—there are passages in the Old Testament that describe that happening both in the Northern Kingdom circumstance and the Southern Kingdom...it gets really bad)... You have that going on. You can try to wait it out or something. Or you can try to fight it out—



just sort of a suicide kind of mission, that sort of thing. You break out and you either win the battle or you get what's coming to you, but it's a quick death. This was not something you'd ever want to have happen to your city. And so Ezekiel, through another sign act shows, "Here we go again. This is what it's going to be like. This is what's awaiting Jerusalem." Naturally, people are just going to be frightened out of their minds if an army surrounds their city because they understand what could be generated in terms of the hardship and the awfulness of it.

Chapter 12 wraps up with... If you remember Taylor's summary of a few minutes ago, how part of 12 and 13 is dealing with objections. So chapter 12 gets into this objection kind of scenario, this objection thinking. So it wraps up with divine correction of popular thinking or false prophecy that the people had been hearing, to basically try to deny or rebut or refute or ignore what Ezekiel has been saying. Basically it addresses contrarian preaching. But it's not all just sort of imagining or seeing what's happening back in Jerusalem. Some of it, as we're going to see, is right on Ezekiel's doorstep, with the people with him in exile. So it's not just the people back in Jerusalem who are saying, "This is never going to happen. We're God's chosen," all this kind of stuff. We've had that up to this point in Ezekiel, where the emphasis has been in previous episodes (previous chapters) this kind of mentality, this inviolability of Zion. If you remember we talked about that in earlier episode, that this is God's home, God's house. He's not going to let it be destroyed. "We're his people. We're his family. We're his seed. He's not going to destroy us. We've had exile, but it's over. Too bad for the people that got taken away, but we're still here. We'll be okay." We're dealing with some of that again, but as we're going to see, Ezekiel has some of it right at his own doorstep. So in verse 21 here in chapter 12, this is how the chapter ends. It says:

25:00

**<sup>21</sup> And the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>22</sup> "Son of man, what is this proverb that you have about the land of Israel, saying, 'The days grow long, and every vision comes to nothing'? <sup>23</sup> Tell them therefore, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: I will put an end to this proverb, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel.' But say to them, The days are near, and the fulfillment of every vision. <sup>24</sup> For there shall be no more any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel. <sup>25</sup> For I am the LORD; I will speak the word that I will speak, and it will be performed. It will no longer be**

**delayed, but in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and perform it, declares the Lord GOD.”**

**<sup>26</sup> And the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>27</sup> “Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, ‘The vision that he sees is for many days from now, and he prophesies of times far off.’ <sup>28</sup> Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: None of my words will be delayed any longer, but the word that I speak will be performed, declares the Lord GOD.”**

So that's the end of the chapter, verses 21 through 28. It's very transparent, what's going on here. In fact, it's kind of preparatory to what's going to happen in chapter 13. So we might as well just go into that. We can take the end of chapter 12 here with what we see in chapter 13 as we discuss the next sort of topic item in these two chapters, because they blend together. So chapter 13, right after we read that, we read this:

**The word of the LORD came to me: <sup>2</sup> “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!’ <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?”**

That's the first 7 verses of chapter 13. So thematically it's the same thing. God is sort of going off on the people that say... A proverbial saying means that the people (and of course Ezekiel had been hearing this over and over and over again) are saying, "The days grow long and the vision comes to nothing. Nothing's gonna happen. There shall be no more false..." and this sort of thing. They had just heard this over and over again. Ezekiel would go out and say something or do something and it's just like, "Ah, it's not going to happen... just not going to happen," or, "Thus says the Lord." In other words, "We'll tell you what's going to happen. God is speaking to us. We'll tell you what's going to happen." And God more or less says, "Enough of that. You're talking about how it hasn't happened. It's going to happen in your days. Basically, in your time frame. The very people who are hearing this now, you can be sure that this is what's going to take place—not just in your lifetime, but imminently. So enough of this buffoonery, trying to say, 'We really know what's going to happen and Ezekiel doesn't.'"

Look what he says in 13: These proverbs, these prophecies that are contradictory to what Ezekiel is communicating are "from their own hearts, from their own minds." Verse 3: "they follow their own spirit." In other words, what they're telling the people, contrary to what Ezekiel is saying, has a private origin. It comes from them, it doesn't come from God. This is characterized as foolish: "Thus says the Lord God: Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit."

The word "foolish" here is *nabal*. We're used to thinking of that from the story of Nabal and Abigail and David. *Nabal* refers to more than just stupidity. The fool, *ha nabal*, isn't just stupid. It refers to sort of a spiritual and moral dullness or insensitivity. The fool was inclined to blasphemy. The fool would deny either that there was a God (like in Psalm 14:1) or that God is going to act or have any interest in this: "There might be a God but he's just sort of asleep or doesn't do anything." This is the fool. He's arrogant, full of himself, spiritually inept. Going further than that: spiritually stubborn or recalcitrant. He doesn't want to hear the words of Ezekiel or any of God's prophets, but is more interested in the words that come out of his own mouth. That is the fool. So God says, "This is what you're dealing with." And these fools "have seen nothing" (verse 3).

30:00

This takes me back (and maybe *Unseen Realm* readers) to the chapter in *Unseen Realm* about standing in the Council. The test of a true prophet was: Have you had a direct encounter with Yahweh? And then, of course, the evidence of that is what you say actually comes to pass. You have the track record to prove this, that sort of thing. This reference to "you have seen nothing" really refers to, "They haven't seen me. They haven't encountered me. I haven't come to them. I haven't brought them into my Council. I haven't called them." It's interesting that the text still calls them "prophets." Prophesying is basically preaching. I've made this comment before. We have a misconception of prophecy because of all the End-times interest and hubbub, really the End-times

obsession. We tend to think that prophecy in the Old Testament (or anywhere in the Bible) refers to predicting the future. Very rarely it did that. It certainly does do that, but that's the minority. Most of the time it's a preacher. It's someone who is supposedly speaking for God, that sort of thing. So what he's saying is, "Okay, you're out there running around... these guys are running around claiming to speak for God and speaking as though they do speak for God, but they have seen nothing. I have not called them." And as proof of that you get verse 4, this phrase about, "Your prophets have been like jackals among the ruins." You know, they haven't gone up into the breaches to build a wall for the house of Israel. That's an idiomatic way, in the case of the Hebrew Bible, of saying that these people who claim to be prophets (claim to be speaking for the God of Israel) have no real concern for the people among whom they live. They're digging around, burrowing around the foundations, like little foxes or jackals, trying to hide themselves. Trying to get security for their own butts. They're not taking risks for the people. They're not telling the people what they need to hear. If they had done that 5, 10, 15 years ago—whatever it was—that they needed to repent, that the reason that this was happening and had happened (the first couple waves of exile) was because of their idolatry. They're not doing that. Instead they're preaching false security and looking to protect themselves. They're looking for a place to hide instead of fulfilling their moral responsibility of telling people the hard truth. In the past you needed to repent; perhaps God will relent. In the present you need to repent because maybe you'll be spared and be part of the remnant. They're not saying any of that. They are just being false. They're telling people things that aren't true, and it's just self-interest. That is not what a prophet of God does. So that's why these thoughts are mixed here. We have this concatenation of thoughts in these phrases.

In verse 7, what they say is referred to as "lying divination." The word here for divination is *miqsam*. If any of you have read my paper on the Old Testament response to pagan divination, where I discuss a lot of these terms, I'll just quote a little bit from that. *Miqsam* is really a term that kind of casts a broad net for different practices that were prohibited in the Old Testament context. It refers to an attempt to illicit information from a deity (just generally) or from some supernatural source through reading something like entrails or the liver or whatever—different Ancient Near Eastern stuff they would do. Or interpreting natural events, natural resources, as meaning something. It's very broad. One of the more common practices that would fall under *miqsam* divination would be casting lots, that sort of thing. We're not told specifically which one of those things that these false prophets were doing, but God is aware, and basically he just says here through Ezekiel, "They've seen false visions. I don't care what they claim to have seen. It's bogus. And they've given lying divinations. They've done this that and the other thing and claimed that it means this or that." And God is saying, "Enough of this. This is a lie. All this is a lie. These are not my prophets. They have seen *nothing* at all."

35:00

Now when we get beyond verse 7 in Ezekiel 13, we get to verses 8 through 16. We sort of get a general denunciation of all of this. It's a bit of repetition here, but in chapter 13 verses 8 through 16, we just basically get a diatribe from God denouncing the practice of preaching false security—of trying to encourage people who need to repent of their idolatry... I'll read you a little bit of it because Ezekiel uses the metaphor of the wall and whitewashing the wall. Verse 8:

**<sup>8</sup>Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Because you have uttered falsehood and seen lying visions...**

That's an interesting phrase. He doesn't deny they had a vision. He just said it was a lie. So again, it's either something self-willed... When I read stuff like this I think of a lot of the nonsense that goes on today either within the Church or outside the Church in pagan religions or New Age kind of stuff, where people have experiences and they can be self-induced or induced from another intelligence, another supernatural intelligence. So yeah, they had an experience, but it's a lie. So God says:

**"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.**

Well, if they're not going to enter the land, that tells you right away they're not going to be in the remnant because the remnant is going to be brought back. Ezekiel has talked about that, too in little places here and there. Why? Verse 10:

**<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!**

Basically, they're encouraging people to do this or that to protect themselves, but it's all a mirage. None of it is going to matter, is basically the point of the idioms that we see here. So we get verses 8 through 16 are just one sort of slap in the face after another toward these false prophets. And then we get to verse 17 where there's something interesting. God says to Ezekiel in chapter 13, verse 17:

**<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."**

Basically, you're not going to see any more because you're going to be dead. You're not part of the remnant. You are going to perish. This section (17-23, and that's the rest of chapter 13) is interesting because it's one of the handful of passages in the Old Testament that focus on female prophets (prophetesses). Taylor says (just a little statement he has here):

40:00

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.

In other words, unlike the men who had schools of prophets, it probably wasn't the case with the women. But you do have women prophetesses. This is not something that's going to be revelatory in our context, but this is one of the few places where you get this. In this case, while those other references (at least some of them... some were positive, but there were a couple negative ones like the one in Nehemiah) this one is really negative. If you read (and we did) from verses 18 onward, you get the feeling that we're not dealing with normal female prophets, but something that would get filed in the drawer of witchcraft because of the way it's described: "sew magic bands upon the wrists; make veils for the heads of persons of every stature." It's very clear that they're entrapping the righteous. They're doing something to deceive the righteous into buying the message or maybe staying in the city or whatever. They don't need to repent if God's calling them righteous; these are the good people. But they're being convinced not to do practical things that could result in saving their own lives. But the reverse is true: the wicked are the ones that are being benefited here in some way. We don't really know... You have the reference to handfuls of barley, pieces of bread, so on and so forth. Maybe they're doing this for payment or they're taking stuff from the righteous and then the wicked are benefiting from it—we don't know the exact circumstances here. But it isn't good. It's calling evil good and good evil, essentially. Now Block has a quotation that I think is worth reading that sheds a little bit of light on this. It's not completely clear by any means, but he has a few interesting things to say here. He says:

It's impossible to arrive at a clear understanding of the women's methods because of the obscurity of the expressions used. Nevertheless, two specific activities appear to be involved. First, they are sewing something for people's arms. The terminology here (*kēsātôt*) and (*kēsātôt*) appears only here and in verse 20. Its meaning is uncertain. One's first impulse is to associate the term with the verb (*kāsâ*), which means "to cover,"

although the LXX translates the language here as (*προσκεφάλαια*), which is the word for "pillows," and that goes in a completely different direction. Since some form of magical power is involved here, it seems best to associate the terminology with the noun (*keset*), and that is built off the Akkadian verb (*kasû*) which means "to bind" and the noun (*kasîtu*), which is "binding magic" in Akkadian. The reference being to magical bands worn on the wrists or arms by the women. However, some argue that these bands were also put on the wrists of their victims so these women could maintain control over them by some means of sympathetic magic [MH: or cursing, or hexing, that sort of thing]. Second, the meaning of (*hammispāhôt*) is equally uncertain [MH: again, this reference to the coverings here over the heads] and renderings vary. Greenberg translates it, "rags." [Another source] translates it "bonnet; mantle," etc. Most common is "veils" [MH: and he lists a bunch of English translations that opt for that]. The last interpretation is based upon an alleged association with Akkadian (*sapāhu*) "to loosen or scatter," however, the derivation of (*mispāhôt*) may be much nearer home in the Hebrew root (*sph*), which means "to join or attach." Not only does this root suggest a better parallel with the bands around the wrists, it is also more easily associated with magical appurtenances, specifically amulets tied to a string and worn like a phylactery on the forehead, or more likely brought over the head and worn around the neck. [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.

45:00 Whatever they're doing here, it could either be something they do to themselves, or they're doing it to the people that they're convincing that they need to listen to them or else something bad is going to happen to them (cursing or hexing). The terminology isn't common, and it has uncertain relationships back to Akkadian. But as Block's quote demonstrates, you can make a reasonable case here for certain practices that are known (especially the binding of the phylacteries, or binding something around your head, or pulling it over your head like a necklace and wearing it around your neck and your shoulders in the form of an amulet or talisman or something like that). Whatever it is, the effect of it was to deceive, to call good evil and evil good... to deceive the righteous. And because of that, some of these righteous are going to lose their lives, and whatever they're doing is somehow benefiting the wicked. Again, it's not good. It's one of the few sections in the Old Testament where some very specific female individuals who claim to be tapping into the other side (divine revelation)—where they're actually discussed here. And it's very plain in verses 19-23 that God says, "I'm against you."

So the bottom line here for Ezekiel 12 and 13 in our episode for today is that the people of Jerusalem were not being told the truth. As we transition later in the next episode in chapters 14 and 15, we're going to see that it's not just the people in Jerusalem, it's the people that are among the exiles right there with Ezekiel. They're the ones also trying to sort of cover their own butts in some cases, and obscure the truth of what's going to happen, what's going on. But the people, again, are not being told the truth. They're being deceived. And they're



not going to escape. Though the city's preachers (those people doing this) are Israelites (in other words, they're elect), what they're saying is false, and God isn't in it.

Personally, I think just by way of something worth thinking about... You take a chapter like this and I think it's good fodder for what we see happening today under the name of Christianity, under the name of Jesus, under the name of the Gospel. There are lots of things—we could make a grocery list of them here on the podcast—that people who name the name of Christ or say that they have some position, ministry, or some spiritual authority in the Lord's work... they are doing or saying things that are just flat-out lies. Both of these chapters indicate that, "Well, that isn't the first time!" I think what we need to learn from it is that just because people link what they're saying and doing to the Gospel, to Jesus, does not mean that it is the Gospel or that Jesus is in it. It's very clear here from the Old Testament that people were doing that with the name of the God of Israel, and God says, "They have seen nothing. I have not called them. These are lies, and I'm going to put a stop to it. Don't listen to them."

So I think this is something that's pretty valuable for us. I've met people—good people, people who really want to do the right thing—and they'll say, "So and so said this and they're a preacher. I think I should listen to them," or, "They wouldn't lie to me or deceive me! They're speaking for the Lord. They're sincere. Their heart is in it." Yeah, well I'm willing to bet that the people back here in Jerusalem were serious—maybe not in the way you'd want them to be. Maybe they're serious about getting something out of it. Maybe they're serious about saving their own hides. I think there are a lot of people today—again, we could make the grocery list here—that are doing what they're doing in the name of Christ for personal benefit: building an audience, getting money... This doesn't take a whole lot of imagination. But the point is we have two chapters here where there is biblical precedent not only for that sin (and that's what it is, this is sin), but there's also biblical precedent for people being deceived by it, and we ought to take the lesson. We ought to take heed to what we're reading here in these two chapters in Ezekiel.

**TS:** Yeah, Mike, just like Ezekiel 13:21 says, "Your veils also I will tear off." That's what we're doing here at the Naked Bible Podcast is taking off veils.

50:00

**MH:** Yep, that is the effort. Without going into too many metaphors, that's a good one. If I'm tracking with you, what I'm thinking that what we really do here is we want to expose things that aren't true (that's the tearing off the veil) and we want to direct people's attention to things that are true. I don't want you to sit here and listen to the podcast and think, "Oh, Mike said it, so that's the end of the story." We want to get you into the text and give you the bread crumb trail showing how you can trace these thoughts in the text, good sources to read... We're not trying to do anything here that requires us to make stuff up and get people to follow us blindly. That is just not the point.

**TS:** Absolutely. We're not adding to or subtracting. It is what it is.

**MH:** We want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

**TS:** There you go. All right, Mike. Another good episode. We appreciate it. Next week we're back into a couple more chapters of Ezekiel, correct?

**MH:** Yep, 14 and 15.

**TS:** Okay. Again, I just want to give a shout-out to everybody that I met this weekend. I appreciate each and every one of y'all. And everybody listening out there, I appreciate y'all. And I just want to thank you for listening to the Naked Bible podcast. God bless.