

Ezekiel 13:17-23 Commentary

PREVIOUS

Michelangelo's Ezekiel on the Sistine Chapel

NEXT

Click chart to enlarge

Click chart to enlarge
 Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission
[Click Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

CHRONOLOGY OF EZEKIEL'S PROPHECIES

PROPHECY OF JUDGMENT The LORD is not there		PROPHECY OF RESTORATION The LORD is There		
FATE OF JUDAH Before the Siege		FOES OF JUDAH During the Siege		FUTURE OF JUDAH After the Siege
593-588 BC		587-586		586-571
7 YEARS OF PROPHECYING HORROR & NO HOPE			15 YEARS OF PROPHECYING HOPE	
Ezekiel 1:1-3:27 Ezekiel Sees the Glory & Receives the Call	Ezekiel 4:1-24:27 Judgments Against Judah	Ezekiel 25:1-32:32 Judgments Against the Gloating Nations	Ezekiel 33:1-39:29 Restoration of Israel to the LORD	Ezekiel 40:1-48:35 Visions of the Temple Jehovah Shammah

Outline of the Book of Ezekiel from Dr John MacArthur - The book can be largely divided into sections about condemnation/retribution and then consolation/restoration. A more detailed look divides the book into 4 sections. First, are prophecies on the ruin of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 1:1–24:27). Second, are prophecies of retribution on nearby nations (Ezekiel 25:1–32:32), with a glimpse at God's future restoration of Israel (Ezekiel 28:25,26). Thirdly, there is a transition chapter (Ezekiel 33:1-33) which gives instruction concerning a last call for Israel to repent. Finally, the fourth division includes rich expectations involving God's future restoration of Israel (Ezekiel 34:1–48:35). ([Reference](#))

I. Prophecies of Jerusalem's Ruin (Ezekiel 1:1–24:27)

A. Preparation and Commission of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:1–3:27)

1. Divine appearance to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:1–28)
2. Divine assignment to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:1–3:27)

B. Proclamation of Jerusalem's Condemnation (Ezekiel 4:1–24:27)

1. Signs of coming judgment (Ezekiel 4:1–5:4)
2. Messages concerning judgment (Ezekiel 5:5–7:27)
3. Visions concerning abomination in the city and temple (Ezekiel 8:1–11:25)
4. Explanations of judgment (Ezekiel 12:1–24:27)

II. Prophecies of Retribution to the Nations (Ezekiel 25:1–32:32)

- A. Ammon (Ezekiel 25:1–7)
- B. Moab (Ezekiel 25:8–11)
- C. Edom (Ezekiel 25:12–14)
- D. Philistia (Ezekiel 25:15–17)
- E. Tyre (Ezekiel 26:1–28:19)

F. Sidon (Ezekiel 28:20–24)

Excursus: The Restoration of Israel (Ezekiel 28:25, 26)

G. Egypt (Ezekiel 29:1–32:32)

III. Provision for Israel's Repentance (Ezekiel 33:1–33)

IV. Prophecies of Israel's Restoration (Ezekiel 34:1–48:35)

A. Regathering of Israel to the Land (Ezekiel 34:1–37:28)

1. Promise of a True Shepherd (Ezekiel 34:1–31)
2. Punishment of the nations (Ezekiel 35:1–36:7)
3. Purposes of restoration (Ezekiel 36:8–38)
4. Pictures of restoration—dry bones and two sticks (Ezekiel 37:1–28)

B. Removal of Israel's Enemies from the Land (Ezekiel 38:1–39:29)

1. Invasion of Gog to plunder Israel (Ezekiel 38:1–16)
2. Intervention of God to protect Israel (Ezekiel 38:17–39:29)

C. Reinstatement of True Worship in Israel (Ezekiel 40:1–46:24)

1. New temple (Ezekiel 40:1–43:12)
2. New worship (Ezekiel 43:13–46:24)

D. Redistribution of the Land in Israel (Ezekiel 47:1–48:35)

1. Position of the river (Ezekiel 47:1–12)
2. Portions for the tribes (Ezekiel 47:13–48:35)

Ezekiel 13:17 "Now you, **son of man**, **set your face against** the **daughters** of your **people** who are **prophesying** from their own **inspiration**. **Prophesy against** them

- set thy (KJV): Eze 4:3 20:46 21:2
- the daughters (KJV): Isa 3:16-26 4:4
- prophesy (KJV): Jud 4:4 2Ki 22:14 Lu 2:36 2Pe 2:1
- out of (KJV): Eze 13:2 Rev 2:20

Now you, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people (Ezek 4:3; 20:46; 21:2) (Isa 3:16-26; 4:4) God instructs Ezekiel to put on a bold countenance and to fearlessly to denounce them (Ezek 3:8, 9; Isa 50:7). Here we note that the formula, "**your people**," of Ezekiel 3:11 ("go to the exiles, to the sons of your people, and speak to them and tell them, whether they listen or not, 'Thus says the Lord GOD'") reappears.

who are prophesying from their own inspiration (literally "heart"). **Prophesy against them** (Lk 2:36; 2Pe 2:1) (Rev 2:20) The source of their "inspiration" was their own wicked heart.

The section which follows (v17-23) throws an interesting side light on the position of women in the religious life of Israel. For good as well as for evil, their influence was stronger in Israel than in most of the pagan nations. **Miriam** was the first prophetess mentioned in (Ex 15:20) and was followed by **Deborah** (Jdg 4:4). **Huldah** was used by God along with the book of the Law to catalyze King Josiah's reformation (2Ki22:14-20; 2Chr34:22). The prophetess **Noadiah** led the opposition to Nehemiah, trying to frighten him (Neh6:14) In the New Testament we meet godly **Anna**

"a prophetess... the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with a husband seven years after her marriage, and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. And she never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers." (Lu2:36-37)

Philip "had **four virgin daughters** who were prophetesses" (Acts 21:8-9).

In (1Co11:5) we read that "every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or **prophesying**, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved."

Lastly, and sadly, the church at Thyatira tolerated "the woman **Jezebel**, who **calls herself a prophetess**, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols." (Rev2:20)

Although women are rebuked in other OT passages, this is the only OT text where false prophetesses are specifically mentioned. Jezebel is called a false prophetess in Rev. 2:20.

From the context, it appears that the "prophetesses" Ezekiel was to denounce were more like mediums, fortune tellers, witches or sorceresses.

As Barnes notes a general category (see individual exceptions above) "of prophetesses was unknown among the people of God and the existence of such a class in the last days of the kings of Judah was a fresh instance of declension into pagan usages."

Ezekiel 13:18 and **say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe to the women who sew magic bands on all wrists * and make veils for the heads of persons of every stature to hunt down lives! Will you hunt down the lives of My people, but preserve the lives of others for yourselves?"**

AMP: And say, Thus says the Lord God: Woe to the women who sew pillows to all armholes and fasten magic, protective charms to all wrists, and deceptive veils upon the heads of those of every stature to hunt and capture human lives! Will you snare the lives of My people to keep your own selves alive?

Barnes: ... "Woe to the women that" put charms on every finger-joint, that set veils upon heads of every height to ensnare souls. "Will ye" ensnare "the souls of my people," and keep your own souls alive|

K-D: And say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Woe to those who sew coverings together over all the joints of my hands, and make caps for the head of every size, to catch souls! Ye catch the souls of my people, and keep your souls alive.

NLT: This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Destruction is certain for you women who are ensnaring the souls of my people, both young and old alike. You tie magic charms on their wrists and furnish them with magic veils. Do you think you can trap others without bringing destruction on yourselves?

- Woe (KJV): Eze 13:3
- that sew (KJV): Rather, "that fasten cushions;" by which they intimated that they might indulge and repose themselves in security, for no enemy would disturb them. The apartments of the easterns are well supplied with cushions, on which they sit, lean, rest their heads, and prop up their arms. Eze 13:10,16 Jer 4:10 6:14 2Ti 4:3
- armholes (KJV): or, elbows
- hunt souls (KJV): Eze 22:25 Eph 4:14 2Pe 2:14
- will ye save (KJV): Eze 13:22

and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe to the women who sew magic bands on all wrists and make veils for the heads of persons of every stature to hunt down lives (souls) (10,16; Je4:10; 6:14; 2Ti4:3) (22:25; Ep4:14; 2Pe2:14)

Barnes notes that "Most ancient interpreters and many modern interpreters have understood the "pillows" (or charms) and "kerchiefs" (or veils), as appliances to which the sorcerers had resort in order to attract notice. The veil was a conspicuous ornament in the east - women whatever their "stature" (or, height) putting them on - and it was worn by magicians in order to seem more mysterious and awful.

Magic bands occurs in the OT only in this passage and so the exact nature of these paraphernalia as well as the significance attached to their use can no longer be established with certainty. The activities attributed to these women suggest that they were more like witches, sorcerers or fortune tellers than prophets.

This practice may have come from Babylonian magic rituals, in which magical knots and bands were bound to various parts of the body to ward off evil spirits or to heal diseases, functioning almost like "good-luck charms". The "veils" were long drapes that were placed on "their heads" and that covered the prophetesses' bodies, possibly to convey the impression of mystery. The magic bands and veils probably served to ensnare people ("souls") and these methods were especially effective in times of uncertainty and turmoil, when frauds and charlatans seem to prey on the fears of the gullible.

Will you hunt down the lives (souls) of My people, but preserve the lives of others for yourselves?

Ezekiel 13:19 "For **handfuls of barley and fragments of bread**, you have **profaned Me to My people to put to death some who**

should not **die** and to **keep others alive who** should not **live**, by your **lying** to My **people** who **listen** to **lies**."''''

- pollute (KJV): Eze 20:39 22:26
- for handfuls (KJV): 1Sa 2:16,17 Pr 28:21 Mic 3:5,11 Mal 1:10 Ro 16:18 1Pe 5:2 2Pe 2:2,3
- to slay (KJV): Eze 13:22 Pr 19:27 Ro 14:15 1Co 8:11
- to save (KJV): Jer 23:14,17

Barnes: and will ye profane my name "among my people for handfuls of barley and pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to" keep alive "the souls that should not live, by lying to my people" who listen to "a lie?"

NLT: You turn my people away from me for a few handfuls of barley or a piece of bread. By lying to my people who love to listen to lies, you kill those who should not die, and you promise life to those who should not live. **For handfuls of barley and fragments of bread, you have profaned** (defile, pollute, desecrate) **Me to My people** (Ezek 20:39; 22:26) (1Sa2:16,17; Pr28:21; Mic3:5,11; Mal1:10; Ro16:18; 1Pe5:2; 2Pe2:2, 3)

To **pollute** or **profane** is the opposite of to sanctify. It is to bring God down to the sphere of the common, the false, the unworthy

Some commentators interpret the barley and bread as used in divination while others interpret this as payment as payment for the divination. In some cultures barley was used in occult practices either as an offering to the spirits or as a means of trying to determine the future. Whatever the case, these prophetesses were employing fraudulent practices as a hoax and were making a living off the fears of others. God said they were really lying to My people. Their lies profaned Him for these prophetesses pretended to speak for Him.

Expositor's Bible Commentary adds that "Hittite practices and later Syrian rituals demonstrate that divination was carried out with barley bread either as part of the pagan sacrificial ritual or as a means of determining whether the victim would live or die. The prophetesses, therefore, profaned God by misrepresentation. Though appearing to be God's prophetesses, they polluted his name when they used occult practices.

Divination by wheat (aleuromancy) and divination by barley (alphaltomancy) are noted in pagan literature.

to put to death some who should not die and to keep others alive who should not live, by your lying to My people who listen to lies. (Ezek 13:22; Pr19:27; Ro14:15; 1Co8:11) (Je23:14,17) The results of the prophetesses' work ran counter to Israel's best interests. They killed those who should not have died and have spared those who should not live. The prophetesses should have exposed and denounced evil practices in Jerusalem (cf. 2Kings 22:13-20). Contrast the work of the true prophet as a watchman as described in (Ezek 3:16-21).

Although the brunt of this prophecy is against the false prophetesses, God notes that His people are not guiltless as they also **listen** to (**shama'**) lies. The "**shama'**" they should have remembered to hearken to was

Hear (shama'), O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart" (Deut 6:4, 5, 6)

In Jeremiah God says

Also among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: The committing of adultery and walking in falsehood; And they strengthen the hands of evildoers, So that no one has turned back from his wickedness. All of them have become to Me like Sodom, And her inhabitants like Gomorrah." (Je 23:14)

Ezekiel 13:20 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against your magic bands by which you hunt lives there as birds and I will tear them from your arms; and I will let them go, even those lives whom you hunt as birds.

Barnes: Wherefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will come upon your charms, where ye are ensnaring the souls like birds and I will tear them from your arms and will let the souls go free, even the souls which ye are ensnaring like birds.

NLT: "And so the Sovereign LORD says: I am against all your magic charms, which you use to ensnare my people like birds. I will tear them from your arms, setting my people free like birds set free from a cage.

- I am (KJV): Eze 13:8,9,15,16

- to make them fly (KJV): or, into gardens
- and will (KJV): 2Ti 3:8,9

Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against your magic bands by which you hunt lives there as birds (Ezek 13:8,9,15,16)

and I will tear them from your arms; and I will let them go, even those lives whom you hunt as birds

Keil and Delitzsch translate this as

I send away (set free) the souls, which ye have caught, as flying ones, i.e., so that they shall be able to fly away at liberty."

Ezekiel 13:21 "I will also **tear off your veils** and **deliver My people from your hands**, and they will **no longer** be in your hands to be **hunted**; and you will **know** that I am the **LORD**."

Barnes: "Your veils also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be ensnared; and ye shall know that I am the Lord."

I will also tear off your veils and deliver My people from your hands: their tricks would be exposed to the contempt of the people.

and they will no longer be in your hands to be hunted from being hunted, ensnared, and deceived by them

and you will know that I am the LORD: Remember that the majority of the occurrences of this phrase are found in Ezekiel ([click here for 45 verses](#)). God will judge their sin but He will also make sure they know Him in their judgment.

Ezekiel 13:22 "**Because you disheartened the righteous with falsehood when I did not cause him grief, but have encouraged * the wicked not to turn from his wicked way and preserve his life,**

AMP Because with lies you have made the righteous sad and disheartened, whom I have not made sad or disheartened, and because you have encouraged and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way and be saved [in that you falsely promised him life],

ICB: By your lies you caused the heart of the person who did right to be sad. I did not make him sad. You have encouraged the evil person not to stop being evil. And that would have saved his life.

K-D: Because ye grieve the heart of the righteous with lying, when I have not pained him; and strengthen the hands of the wicked, so that he does not turn from his evil way, to preserve his life.

YLT: Because of paining the heart of the righteous with falsehood, And I have not pained it, And strengthening the hands of the wicked, So as not to turn back from his evil way, To keep him alive,

- with lies (KJV): Eze 9:4 Jer 4:10 14:13-17 23:9,14 La 2:11-14
- and strengthened (KJV): Jer 23:14 27:14-17 28:16 29:32
- by promising him life (KJV): or, that I should save his life, Heb. by quickening him. Eze 13:16 Ge 3:4,5 Jer 6:14 8:11 23:17 2Pe 2:18,19

Because you disheartened (more literally "paining the heart") **the righteous with falsehood when I did not cause him grief** (to feel pain) (Ezek 9:4; Jer4:10; 14:13-17; 23:9,14; La 2:11, 12, 13, 14) Here God describes the ministry of these false prophetesses, and its effects. Assuming these women were at least to some degree practicing fortune telling, any troubled individual who received an unfavorable forecast would be subject to discouragement and despair.

but have encouraged the wicked not to turn from his wicked way (Jer23:14; 27:14-17; 28:16; 29:32) This is similar to the lamentation that the false prophets "have not exposed your iniquity so as to restore you from captivity" (La 2:24)

They had encouraged the wicked to expect a bright future, and saw no need to repent to avoid death.

and preserve his life, (Jer 23:14; 27:14, 15, 16, 17; 28:16; 29:32) (Ezek 13:16; Ge 3:4,5; Jer 6:14; 8:11; 23:17; 2Pe 2:18,19) A

more scathing denunciation could not have been uttered than this; these women strove to overturn the moral order, to encourage the rebellious, and to depress the just and godly!

Ezekiel 13:23 therefore, you women will no longer see false visions or practice divination, and I will deliver My people out of your hand. Thus you will know that I am the LORD."

- ye shall see (KJV): Eze 13:6-16 12:24 De 18:20 Mic 3:6 Zec 13:3 2Ti 3:9
- for I (KJV): Eze 13:21 34:10 Mt 24:24 Mk 13:22 1Co 11:19 Jude 1:24 Rev 12:9,11 Rev 13:5,8 15:2
- and ye (KJV): Eze 13:9,21 14:8 15:7

Therefore, you women will no longer see false visions or practice divination (Ezek 13:6-16; 12:24; Dt 18:20; Mic3:6; Zec13:3; 2 Ti 3:9) The God of truth and rectitude declared himself opposed to these seducers of His people. The symbols of their delusive arts were to be stripped from them. Their hypocrisy would be unveiled, and their lies exposed. The means by which they had ensnared men would be taken from them. Their reputation and their power would be destroyed, and their influence would come to an end.

and I will deliver My people out of your hand. (Ezek 13:21; 34:10; Mt24:24; Mk13:22; 1 Co11:19; Jude24; Rev12:9,11; Rev13:5,8; 15:2) Certainly this was true in the restoration after the 70 years in Babylon (near future fulfillment), but will be fully true in Messiah's kingdom (far future fulfillment)

Thus you will know that I am the LORD." (Ezek 13:9,21; 14:8; 15:7) When God judged the prophetesses the people would realize that these women had lied and the prophetesses would be forced to admit their sin against the LORD. Once again we note that judgment was designed to bring people to a knowledge of Jehovah.