

Ezekiel 13:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word.

Analysis

They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. Ezekiel condemns false prophets claiming divine authority without divine commission. The Hebrew *chazu-shav* (חָזוּ שָׁוָעַת, "they have seen vanity") means they envisioned emptiness, worthlessness, deception. *Shav* often describes idolatry or false oaths—things without substance or truth. "Lying divination" (*qesem-kazav*, קְסֵם-קָזָב) combines divination (prohibited practice, Deuteronomy 18:10) with falsehood, emphasizing deliberate deception.

"Saying, The LORD saith" (neum-Yahweh, נָאָמֵן-יְהֹוָה) was the prophetic formula authenticating messages from God. These false prophets appropriated divine authority without divine calling—spiritual fraud of the highest order. "The LORD hath not sent them" (va-Yahweh lo shelecham, וְאַתָּה לֹא שָׁלַחַם) explicitly denies their commission; God neither authorized nor endorsed their message.

"They have made others to hope" (vayichalu, וַיַּחֲלֹל) describes inducing expectation that God would confirm their false prophecies. This is particularly heinous—giving false hope to desperate people, claiming divine sanction for lies. False prophets promised peace when judgment approached (v. 10), sedating people spiritually when repentance was needed. Jesus warned of false prophets in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15). Paul warned of those preaching different gospels (Galatians 1:8-9). Testing prophetic claims against Scripture remains crucial (1 John 4:1).

Historical Context

Ezekiel prophesied during Babylonian exile (593-571 BC) among Judean captives deported in 597 BC. He was both priest and prophet, called to ministry in Babylon while Jerusalem still stood. False prophets in Jerusalem promised quick return from exile, contradicting Jeremiah's prophecy of 70 years captivity. These false prophets told people what they wanted to hear—God would soon restore them without need for repentance.

Ancient Near Eastern cultures employed various divination practices: examining animal entrails (hepatoscopy), casting lots, consulting spirits, interpreting dreams, astrology. Israel's Law strictly forbade such practices (Leviticus 19:26, Deuteronomy 18:9-14), commanding people to heed only true prophets whose predictions came true and whose teaching aligned with Torah. False prophets borrowed pagan divination while claiming Yahweh's authority—syncretism that corrupted Israel's faith.

Ezekiel 13 targets both male false prophets and female practitioners of magic and divination. The false prophets' message of false peace before Jerusalem's destruction in 586 BC made them guilty of spiritual manslaughter—lulling people into complacency when they desperately needed to repent. After Jerusalem's fall vindicated Jeremiah and Ezekiel, survivors learned the bitter cost of preferring comforting lies over hard truth. This pattern recurs throughout church history whenever ministers prioritize popularity over faithfulness to God's Word.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How can we distinguish true from false prophetic claims in contemporary Christianity?
2. Why do people prefer comforting lies over uncomfortable truth about sin and judgment?
3. What responsibility do religious leaders bear for falsely claiming divine authority?
4. How does the prevalence of false teaching underscore the importance of biblical literacy?
5. What parallels exist between ancient false prophets and modern prosperity gospel teachers?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּרֶא בְּשָׂרֶם שְׁוֹא וְבָשָׂר בְּאַמְרִים נָאָם הָיָה
They have seen vanity divination and lying saying saith The LORD
H2372 H7723 H7081 H3577 H559 H5002 H3068

וְיִתְּחַלֵּל אֲלֵיכֶם וְיִהְיֶה הַמְּלֵאָה
The LORD hath not sent them and they have made others to hope
H3068 H3808 H7971 H3176

לֹאמֶר מִתְּבָרֵךְ
that they would confirm the word
H6965 H1697

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 29:8 (References Lord): For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed.

Jeremiah 28:15 (References Lord): Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie.

Ezekiel 22:28 (References Lord): And her prophets have daubed them with untempered morter, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken.

Jeremiah 37:19 (Parallel theme): Where are now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land?

Ezekiel 21:29 (Parallel theme): Whiles they see vanity unto thee, whiles they divine a lie unto thee, to bring thee upon the necks of them that are slain, of the wicked, whose day is come, when their iniquity shall have an end.

Jeremiah 14:14 (References Lord): Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

Zechariah 10:2 (Parallel theme): For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd.

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