

EZEKIEL

Hard to Heart

"Black Magic Women"

13:17-23

Some time ago I was called upon by LPD as their Chaplain to give aid to a young woman and her baby. Her story was fascinating.

While still a young teen-ager she had been given in marriage to a man through an arrangement made by both sets of parents. The family she married into turned out to be more oppressive than anyone would have thought. After the wedding they cut all ties with her family and disappeared. Years passed. She had never once been left alone by her husband or a member of his family. She desperately wanted to get away from them and back to her own family.

On this particular evening, because she had been ill, they all felt comfortable leaving her and the baby while they went to the Palace. She seized the opportunity to escape, calling the police to see if they could arrange transportation to Southern California. We did.

While interviewing her she told me she, her family, and her husband's family, were all gypsies. Now before you laugh, let me tell you that gypsies *do* exist. Technically they are descended from the Romani people that arrived in Europe in migrations from northern India around the 14th century, now also living in North America and Australia. Many gypsy groups have preserved elements of their traditional culture, including an itinerant existence and the Romani language.

"Travellers" is a wider term for groups of people with a nomadic lifestyle, traditionally including but not restricted to the Romani. The Irish Travellers and Scottish Travellers are often included under the term gypsies. In Central and Western Europe, the Yeniche are known as gypsies although they are not considered part of the Romani people.

Similarly, the Indigenous Norwegian Travellers are unrelated to the Romani.

In India the Banjara are sometimes dubbed gypsies. Various ethnic groups in South East Asia are known as Sea Gypsies.

The girl I was dealing with was from a family of gypsies but they were what she described as "good" gypsies as opposed to the "bad" gypsies that had fooled her parents into letting her be wed to her husband.

I asked her how they supported themselves. Odd jobs, mostly. But then she told me that she would often tell fortunes by reading palms. She admitted it was all hokum but said she was pretty good at it. According to one article I read,

Gypsies have long made their living as fortune-tellers. The first law against them in England, in 1530, condemns their 'greate subtyll and crafty meanes' of deceiving people through palmistry; in 1620 John Melton noted in his *Astrologaster* how 'figure-casters' (i.e. drawers of horoscopes) 'would appear in the villages in the likeness of Gypsies... and that they might be thought to come of the issue of that sun-burnt generation, they with herbs and plants... (would) discolour their faces, and then for bread, beere, bacon, cheese, but especially for money, would undertake to tell poore maid-servants their fortunes'.¹

Our passage in Ezekiel reminded me of my encounter with that young gypsy fortune-teller. We encounter a group of women who are false prophetesses. While Israel was plagued with false prophets who spoke openly and publicly, a network of false prophetesses was at work behind the scenes in private. While the prophets employed the more traditional

¹ <http://www.answers.com/topic/gypsy>

method of saying that they spoke for the Lord, these ladies were more involved in the occult, magic, divination, and sorcery.

Ezekiel 13:17 "Likewise, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own heart; prophesy against them,

Women held a higher place in Israel than among other nations. While there were no priestesses, the nation had known the prophetic ministries of Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah.

- Miriam was the sister of Moses and Aaron. She's called a prophetess in Exodus 15:20. She led the Song of Triumph after the Israelites escaped safely through the Red Sea.
- Deborah served Israel as a Judge in the time of the Judges.
- Huldah is also called a prophetess. She was consulted regarding the "book of the law" discovered by the high priest Hilkiah (2Kings 22:14-20; 2Chronicles 34:22-28).

Ladies, and men for that matter, we need to learn to think in terms of roles. Men and women are equal in God's eyes in terms of spirituality. We see in the New Testament that women served in the church, that they prayed publicly and that they could prophesy if so gifted.

But in some ways you are limited - not spiritually, but in terms of your proper role. For example, women can teach other women and children, but are not to have authority over men. Thus you cannot justify biblically that a woman can be an elder or a pastor.

It's not a matter of spirituality but of order God has established in His church and for the home. If we learn to think in terms of roles and of God's proper order we will stay on track.

Ezekiel 13:18 and say, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Woe to the women who sew magic charms on their sleeves and make veils for the heads of people of every height to hunt souls! Will you hunt the souls of My people, and keep yourselves alive?"

Think of a “charm” as sort of the opposite of a “curse.” These were some type of objects believed to be ‘charmed’ and thus have magical powers.

They made “veils” that were customized “for the heads of people of every height.” This sounds like a type of veil attached to a long garment. You’ve seen this depicted in film as some sorceress comes on the scene with a long, flowing garment draped all around her head and face and body.

Think of this as a sort of uniform that identified these women to the general public.

God considered their activity the hunting “of souls.” Hunting is something that usually works out better for the hunter than it does the hunted!

Magic charms, ouija boards, tarot cards, tea leaves, reading palms. It can seem harmless or like a parlor game. Even the TV psychic hotlines have an asterisk now telling you it is for entertainment purposes.

So, is it harmful? Yeah, it is. At best, you’re repeatedly warned in God’s Word to avoid these things. At worst, they can become gateways to the occult.

There **is** a supernatural realm inhabited by demons who are trying to deceive and destroy. While those in the occult teach that you can learn to control powerful spiritual forces, it is really demons who are drawing you away from the Lord.

I’m told by historians that the early church used to have as part of the baptismal formula "I renounce all the works of the Devil" and that those becoming Christians were required to destroy any idols or charms or magic books that they owned. In Acts nineteen those who had been dabbling with the occult came forward and burned their books.

But people say, “I went and had my fortune told, and everything the lady said was spot-on!”

Shouldn't surprise you! Demons are super-intelligent beings who know your past and I can see them predicting future events with some accuracy.

Here is all you need to know. It's from Deuteronomy thirteen.

Deuteronomy 13:1 "If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder,

Deuteronomy 13:2 and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods' - which you have not known - 'and let us serve them,'

Deuteronomy 13:3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Deuteronomy 13:4 You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.

Deuteronomy 13:5 But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.

Their practices were not mere distractions or entertainments. They were seductions away from the living God. Back in the mid-80's Dave Hunt wrote, *The Seduction of Christianity*. Great book; Christian classic. But as important as its content, the title is a warning that you are always being hunted by someone or something to distract you from God's truth, get you to embrace a lie, and fall into spiritual adultery.

Let me say it again: You are being hunted. By sinister supernatural hunters whose traps and weaponry mimic that of your Lord.

People ask, "Can I go see this movie?" or "Can I participate in that practice?" The answers to those kinds of questions are in First Corinthians, in the passages regarding Christian liberty. We spent a few weeks going over the issues and answers.

I'd add to those principles this insight from Ezekiel. You might think it is OK, or even be entertained by it. It might be a liberty for you. But you

might be being hunted by sinister forces. In fact, you are their prey, and the best way to avoid being seduced is to not walk into the trap.

God asked the sorceresses, “Will you hunt the souls of My people, and keep yourselves alive?” It was His way of telling them they would soon become the prey.

Ezekiel 13:19 And will you profane Me among My people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, killing people who should not die, and keeping people alive who should not live, by your lying to My people who listen to lies?”

The payment they received was “barley” and “bread.” It wasn’t costly, and in a way that was bad, because it made their seduction more accessible.

I think we ought to make sin as inaccessible as possible - especially for our children. The easier it is to sin, the more I can deceive myself that I simply fell into it. If I have to pursue it, then I’m more likely to hear and heed the warnings of God’s Spirit within me.

Their sorcery had the effect of “killing people who should not die, and keeping people alive who should not live.” In other words, they had no real insight into the future of these people. They could give no solid predictions.

The people “[listened] to lies” seems to indicate that they knew they were being lied to but listened to the “lying” anyway. The sorceresses weren’t the only ones at fault. Their clients kept them in business.

A while back there was a big blow-up about a fortune teller wanting to establish her business. We should do all we can to block occult businesses, adult bookstores, and the like.

The best way to block them is to eliminate their clientele! Preach the Gospel, get people saved, and (hopefully) they won’t have any business.

Ezekiel 13:20 'Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I am against your magic charms by which you hunt souls there like birds. I will tear them from your arms, and let the souls go, the souls you hunt like birds.

Ezekiel 13:21 I will also tear off your veils and deliver My people out of your hand, and they shall no longer be as prey in your hand. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.

In context, the sorceresses would be wiped-out when the Babylonian army invaded.

Reading about God's passion to deliver His people from the occult made me thankful for the men He has raised-up over the years to give direct apologetic to cults and the occult. It's not an easy ministry. When we had Dave Hunt here to give a talk, I'll never forget an interviewer from the Christian radio station asking him, "So Dave, how does it feel to be the most hated man in Christianity?"

A lot of Christian bookstores wouldn't sell his books. "Too divisive," they said. Thank you, Lord, for such godly men.

Ezekiel 13:22 "Because with lies you have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and you have strengthened the hands of the wicked, so that he does not turn from his wicked way to save his life.

Are you "sad?" I am. God hasn't made me sad. The world, and its lies, have made me sad. Instead of promoting biblical morality, biblical ethics, the world promotes its lies. "Sex before and without marriage is good," it lies. "There is no absolute truth," it lies, "so in every situation the end justifies the means."

Wicked hands are strengthened in the sense that evil is spoken so well of that people see no need to repent and be saved!

Ezekiel 13:23 Therefore you shall no longer envision futility nor practice divination; for I will deliver My people out of your hand, and you shall know that I am the Lord." ' ' "

The deliverance would require the severe mercy of the seventy-year Babylonian captivity. Still, the Jews would be free from these sorceresses.

God always delivers you. It's just that sometimes the process can be more severe because of how deeply involved you were in backsliding.

There is a real effort underway to muddle the message of Bible prophecy. Critics of the Bible are talking openly about the rapture, the antichrist, the Tribulation, Armageddon, and the Second Coming. But they put these Bible prophecies alongside other ancient predictions, e.g., Nostrodamus, the Mayan's, and the Hopi's.

Far worse, though, is when believers willfully adopt occult practices but give them Christian names.

Let's be careful out there! We are being hunted. It need not frighten us, but it ought to heighten our awareness.

