BC 3; Jeremiah 28:1-9; II Peter 1:16-21; The Authority of God’s Word I. Identifying False Prophet II. The Mark of True Prophecy III. Responding to this Prophecy

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how do you know if the Bible is true and trustworthy? Finding a reliable guide is very important. From time to time you hear of a horror story where an unsuspecting couple is driving in their car while they blindly follow their GPS. For some reason, the GPS leads them down a logging road, into a swamp or off a broken bridge, and the couple suffers great loss. Knowing who you can trust is vital. We must ask ourselves the question- is the guide we are following a reliable one? Well, today we are going to consider the Word of God as our Guide. As the Psalmist says, Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light upon my path. But is the Bible a trustworthy guide? Does it have the insight to lead me in the correct path? How do I know that the Bible is true and has the authority that I should listen to? So today we consider this theme: Jesus Christ inspires His chosen vessels to carry His message.

**I. Identifying False Prophet**

In our first point, we are going to make a distinction between true and false prophets. Back to our illustration, how do we know if the GPS is leading us rightly? Well, the primary way we can tell if the GPS is leading us down the correct path is if we arrive at the destination! In a certain sense, the GPS on our phones is only trustworthy if it bring us where we want to go! In a similar way, we can tell the difference between true and false prophets based on where they bring us! Our reading from II Peter 1:16 references men who speak myths. Cleverly devised schemes that were based on human wisdom and reasoning. These false prophets do not speak the truth and their message does not lead to liberty. Rather, their words are spoken on their own authority and lead to bondage. The fact is, there are many so called wise men of our age that speak their own will and desires- putting into word what they want or think- speaking on their own authority- promising freedom but delivering only slavery. Blind guides would be called- false prophets. They put their own words in the mouth of God instead of speaking God’s own word. We read of one example in Jeremiah 28- a false prophet named Hananiah. Hananiah was a contemporary of Jeremiah- but their messages were very different. Hananiah spoke of peace and prosperity. The yoke of Babylon will be broken soon- what has been taken away will be restored. Now this was what the people wanted to hear, but the problem is, this was not what God had promised. He prophesied peace when there was no peace! He promised restoration without the need for repentance! He was lightly healing wounds without dealing with the problem of sin. In other words, Hananiah told the people what they wanted to hear! And as you know, people will often pay you very well if you tell them what they want to hear! This is an early version of the “Prosperity Gospel.” God has a wonderful plan for your life. Name it and claim it! This is the same thing found in II Tim. 4:3- people will have itching ears and they will find teachers to suit their own passions. They will find prophets to tell them exactly what they want to hear. There is always a danger connected to popularity- but this is particularly dangerous for those in positions of authority. To tell people what they want to hear instead of the truth! Preachers are not immune to this! Hard truths and the rebuking of sins does not sell books- so the offense of the gospel is downplayed. False prophets- blind guides. This is the consequence of men speaking on their own authority and according to their own will. But this is not the message of God! Later on in Jeremiah 28 the LORD says this to Hananiah- I have not sent you! You are speaking lies and you have made the people trust a lie! Behold, I will remove you from the face of the earth for you have uttered rebellion. And in that same year, the false prophet Hanniah died. God does not take kindly to those who pretend to speak for the LORD- who act as if they were speaking the truth when in fact they are speaking lies. So the Word of God was not sent or delivered by the will of man.

**II. The Mark of True Prophecy**

No, the true word was sent and delivered by the will of God! The mark of true prophecy is that is has the authority of God- being sent from God! As the prophets of old began by proclaiming, thus saith the LORD! As our children will remember from II Tim. 3, all Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. The central mark of true prophecy is that it comes from God and has the authority of God. As we read in II Peter 1:21, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. The holy prophets of old and the apostles did not speak on their own authority, but on the authority of God. They were heralds- they spoke for the king, they spoke on the authority of the king, and they spoke the message of the king! II Peter 1 says that they were moved or carried along by the Spirit. The Spirit drove them- filling their sails with His holy wind! They were on fire- being enflamed by the Holy Spirit. Like a trumpet filled with the breath of God. The Spirit led them to say and write exactly what God wanted them to say and write. This is the concept of verbal inspiration. They were not free to alter or adjust the words- since these words were the words of God! Jeremiah 20 compares this to a fire in his bones- He has to speak- he could not contain it! So the first mark of a true prophet is that it has the authority of God- being sent from God! The second mark of a true prophet is that his words are true and come to be! True prophecy can be verified as factual when the events foretold come to pass- just as it was said! This mark is found in Jeremiah 28:9- when the words of that prophet come to pass, then it will be known that the LORD has truly sent the prophet. When you are reading in the NT, and you come across the words- just as it was said. Or these things happened in order to fulfill the words of the prophet; you are in fact finding direct proof that the prophet who spoke those words was sent from God! It is fascinating to see how many prophecies were uttered hundreds of years in advance- from the rise and fall of kingdoms to the time and place of the Savior’s birth. These fulfilled events prove that God has in fact sent the prophet. You must then be sure to believe his word- since God had spoken through him! The fulfillment of prophecy is a mark of authenticity. As Jesus said in Mattthew 5, I came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. Another mark of true prophecy is that it is based on factual events. A true prophet reveals the truth about the past as well. This eyewitness testimony can be trusted because the writer is not recording debatable events but actual history that can be verified. Not myths- but what really happened. Peter references this in 1:18- we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven. We were with him on the holy mountain. Peter is reminding his readers that the identity of Jesus as the One who fulfills the promises is a fact. Peter saw the vision and heard the voice of the Father! Peter’s testimony is reliable- as others also witnessed it! He had first-hand knowledge concerning the person, work and glory of the Son! This idea is raised again in I John 4- anyone who acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ and has been sent from God has the Spirit dwelling within them. So by the Spirit, the truth is declared! So lets get back to our question- how do we know that the Bible is true and reliable? These 66 books were written by various men over a few thousand years. From different times, places and occupations. How do we know that these words are the ones that God wants us to know and read? The answer is found in the work of the Holy Spirit! The Spirit led these men to write what they did- and the Spirit preserves these words for us even today. The verbal inspiration of the Word is a divine work- therefore these books of the Bible carry the authority of God Himself! Truly this is the Word of God! As Heb. 1 affirms, God speaks to us by way of His Son in these last days. Therefore, God uses His chosen vessels like the prophets and apostles to carry His message to His people.

**III. Responding to this Prophecy**

Now that we understand the authority of God’s Word- that we can trust it as true prophecy- what remains is our response to this inspired word of God. The first and perhaps the most basic response is simply this- receive God’s Word as it is. Listen to these words from I Thes. 2:31- we thank God for this, that when you received the Word of God you accepted it not as the word of men but as it really is, the Word of God! The first response to receiving God’s word is to recognize it as it really is- God’s word! In this way, God’s people are to acknowledge the authority of God’s Word. When God speak, His people are to listen! They humble themselves under God’s almighty Word. Added to this recognition of authority is obedience. We read of this in our reading from II Peter 1:21- we have the prophetic word which you will do well to pay attention to. It is in your best interest to pay attention to God’s word. Take heed- bring this word to bear- drive this message home! Be devoted to this Word! When the King speaks, His citizens listen! Remember what we read back in article 3- because of His special care for us and our salvation! Ignore God’s word to your own peril! God has spoken to us because He cares- He reveals the way of salvation in His word! This is good news that you do well to pay attention to!

As we close, we confess that although the Bible was written by men; its origin, authority, and reliability rests entirely on God. All Scripture is God-breathed- meaning that we must embrace every word as the very Word of God. Not just the Law that was written by the finger of God- not just the red lettered words spoken by Jesus. No- every word is inspired by God! Not one will pass away- every single one will be fulfilled. Jesus Christ inspires His chosen vessels to carry His message. When and where God speaks, He speaks with authority! Not one word is wasted- what we need to know for our care and salvation is here contained! Praise God for His written Word!