

BC art. 5; I Peter 1:10-12; Isaiah 46:8-10; Proving the Authority I. The Overwhelming Evidence II. The Purpose of the Evidence

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how do we know that the Bible is true- that it is from God and thus trustworthy and reliable? BC art. 5 brings the authority of Scripture before us this morning- and as a continuation of what we saw in art. 3- we know that this book is holy, inspired and inerrant. The Bible is a unique book- unlike every other document ever written. The Bible is the only book that claims to contain future events that can be witnessed. The Bible contains predictions concerned the future. If these events happen, then the Bible has just proven its own authority- it has proven that it has indeed been written by God. Remember how an OT prophet was supposed to prove his authority? How did the people of God know whether a prophet had been sent from God or not? Well, as Jer. 28:9 says- when the word of the prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet. So if what they foretold happened, that would prove that He was God's messenger. In a similar way, if the Bible's prophecies come to pass, we can be assured that this Word has come to us from God. Today we see that the Bible's fulfilled prophecies prove the authority of God's Word.

I. The Overwhelming Evidence

In our first point, we will see that there is an overwhelming amount of prophecies that have been fulfilled. The sheer quantity proves that this book does not originate with man. Although you may find books still written today that are by self-proclaimed prophets- and if they are good students of culture they may even guess and predict an isolated event before it happens. But as every stock market broker will tell you, we cannot predict the future. An occasional correct guess about the future is in now way proof that this person is a prophet- because you have to take into account all the times that they were wrong. But John 10:35 says- Scripture cannot be broken. Not only has the Bible been proved faithful in predicting the future- it has also avoided being wrong at the same time! Always correct and never in error! The fact that Jesus states- that Scripture cannot be broken- is a bold claim. Especially when you

consider the amount of prophecy contained in the Bible. If had to guess how many predictions were in the Bible- what would you say. A few hundred perhaps? Well, about 27% of the Bible is prophecy in some form. There are around 1817 specific prophecies that have been identified. Some of them are fulfilled shortly- as when Abraham and Sarah were promised a son whom they received a year later. Others were fulfilled thousands of years later as Gen. 3 foretold the seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent- which Christ did when He resisted temptation, died for our sins and rose again. It was a long time coming- and yet never slow or in doubt. Prophecy is really pre-written history. In the word of Scripture, we are being told what will happen before it happens. Prophecies are promises of God- and since God cannot lie- each prophecy will be fulfilled. Now it must also be said, some prophecies are contingent- if you do this then the following will happen to you. If you do not- then you will not get what is promised. Some prophecies were given to specific individuals- and others to nations. For example, think of the prophecies that Daniel received. It was revealed to Daniel the timing, identity and nature of future kings and kingdoms that would rise and fall. Even Isaiah was told the name of a coming king- namely Cyrus- in Isaiah 45- which was some 100 years before Cyrus would rule. It is also true that some prophecies have multiple levels or layers of fulfillment. As we found out in Mt. 24- the foretold destruction of Jerusalem and the knocking down of the rocks of the temple have been fulfilled in 70AD. However, their remains a further and future fulfillment when Christ comes back to judge the nations and redeem His people. And although there is a varied content to these OT prophecies, there is a clear cluster of prophecies around a certain person. In fact, there are over 300 prophecies and visions that speak to the coming messiah. There are many different aspects to these Christocentric prophecies. His time and nature of His coming. His name and even His birth location is given in Micah 5. The fact that He will be born of a virgin revealed in Isaiah 7. From His exile in Egypt to his childhood in Nazareth. His lineage as the seed of Abraham and the son of David- while remaining David's Lord. His work of suffering and dying- to be raised again for our justification. Even the words He would say foretold in the

Psalms. The way to His ascension into glory and His return to judge the living and the dead. All of these aspects are found in the OT- each one being fulfilled by the Christ child! As we read in I Peter 1:11- the OT prophets searched carefully- inquiring about the person or time of Christ comes- His suffering and subsequent glories. They knew they were speaking of someone great who was coming- yet it was not revealed to them- rather it has been revealed to us!

II. The Purpose of the Evidence

Now that we have seen the sheer weight and volume of these prophecies that have been fulfilled, in our second point we consider the purpose of this fulfillment. Not only is the purpose to bring about God's desired and designed plan- not only does the fulfillment of His promises bring about the salvation of His people- today we are going to focus specifically on the purpose of this evidence as it relates to the Bible and its authority. In our art. 5, the fact that the predictions are made proves that the Bible is from God. In other words, fulfilled prophecy moves us towards trust. We are convinced that what God is telling us in His word is true- because He has already proved His truthfulness in the past as prophecies were fulfilled. Since He has kept His promises- we should not doubt that He will continue to keep His promises until every one of them have been fulfilled. Fulfilled prophecies prove that God is true and His Word trustworthy. He says as much in Isaiah 46:9- I am God and there is none other- there is no one like me who can declare the beginning from the end. I declare and determine what will be- and so it is! So let us not doubt- but be firm in our faith that God is trustworthy and His word true. The second response should be one of praise! All nations and times are in His hand! And in the past previous generations have desired to look into these prophesied events- but the time was not yet. So I Peter 1 says- they searched and inquired about the person and time- but it was revealed that they were serving us! They were not given the full revelation- the fulfillment of the prophecies about the coming Messiah and the gathering of the Church has been fulfilled in our day- in our sight! If even the angels wanted to look into these events- but could not; but we have and do! We live in truly a blessed time- a time of

great clarity and truth! The sacred things foretold have now come to be- the secret and hidden things revealed and made clear! We can now see how all these prophecies fit together in the coming, suffering, dying, rising reigning and ruling Christ! But we can take one more step, can't we. Knowing the end of the story- knowing how all these promises will be fulfilled- the fact that we know what is coming should fill us with expectation! He is coming soon- He stands at the door! Knowing that Jesus is returning soon fills us with desire- or as II Peter 3 states, knowing that the earth and heavens will dissolve in fire, what kind of people ought you to be? So we rest our prayers on His promises- as we say- Come Lord Jesus! Knowing the end of the matter helps us to live in a God pleasing and appropriate manner today! We know how the story ends, so we can be prepared for what is coming!

To conclude, Higher Criticism denies possibility of prophecy. In order to get around these inconvenient facts, they change the dates of the Biblical books so that the prophets lived after the events they foretold. Well- let God remain truthful while every man remains a liar! Today we see that the Bible's fulfilled prophecies prove the authority of God's Word. Because even the blind can see that the truth and authority of God's work is clearly proven when prophecies are fulfilled.