

Biblical Theological Seminary  
ST762 The Apologetic Value of Fulfilled Prophecy  
Dr. Robert C. Newman

## I. Introduction

### A. Types of Fulfilled Prophecy

#### 1. The Claims of Scripture

##### a. Establishment and Purpose of Prophecy

Deut 18:9-22

alternative to pagan divination

prophet described:

to be raised up by God

like Moses

an Israelite

you must obey him

what you asked for at Sinai

he will speak God's words

false prophecy

punishable by death

detected by failed prediction

##### b. Evidential Value of Prophecy

Isa 41:21-29

challenge to idols

give evidence re/ deity

predict future

explain past

act in present

can't do anything

by contrast God calls shots

announces and calls conqueror

Isa 42:8-9

God will not give away his glory

certainly not to idols!

thus He has and will continue to predict the future as they cannot

Isa 44:24-28

Yahweh characterized:

Israel's redeemer & creator

maker of heaven & earth

His actions re/ prophecy:

makes false prophets fail

makes His prophets succeed

Sample predictions:

Jerusalem will be reinhabited

Judah will be rebuilt

Sea will be dried up

Cyrus will be command rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple

## 2. The Problem of Prediction

### a. From a scientific point of view

#### (1) Complexity

most events depend on too many features being just right

#### (2) Uncertainty

quantum uncertainty - cannot specify both position and movement of elementary particles to arbitrary levels of precision

chaos (the butterfly effect) - infinitesimal differences in initial conditions produce very large differences eventually, destroying all long-range prediction

human decisions - sometimes individual doesn't even know what he/she will do until the event

### b. From a theological point of view

#### (1) If just general oversight

how could prophecy be so detailed?

#### (2) If mere foreknowledge

how explain Rom 8:28?

or Isa 46:9-11

or Prov 16:33

### c. The Biblical picture

(1) Information comes from infinite God, who is "outside" the universe

(2) God controls history

Prov 19:21; 16:33,9,1

## 3. The Nature of Proof

See discussion in Mavrodes, *Belief in God*, where he distinguishes between valid, sound, cogent, and convincing arguments; he treats the last two categories as person-variable.

To prove something to someone, we must convince them, that is, start with something they accept and move them step-by-step to the end desired.

This will be important in designing our materials apologetically to be convincing to a particular audience.

#### 4. Various Subject Areas of Prophecy

##### a. Messianic

Luke 24:25-27

Jesus explains M prophecy to two on road to Emmaus.

John 5:39

These (OT) Scriptures testify about me.

##### b. Jewish

Deut 29:19-29

Even Gentiles will ask why these disasters have happened.

Ezk 28:25-26

Israel will realize when they are regathered from exile.

##### c. Gentile

Jer 28:8-9

Prophets prophesying against the nations and kingdoms.

Ezk 29:6

Egypt's disaster as predicted will show who is God.

##### d. In Process

Matt 24:23-27,32-34

Signs will precede Jesus' return.

#### 5. Various Methods of Presentation (by Scripture)

##### a. Straight-Forward Literal

Gen 15:13-16

Abraham's descendants will be enslaved 400 years.

1 Kings 13:2-5

Josiah will burn the bones of priests right here.

Hos 3:4-5

Israel will lack these six features for many days.

##### b. Literal w/ Unexpected Twist

Jdg 4:8-9

Sisera will be defeated by a woman (but not the one expected).

Jer 22:30

The Messianic line is cursed (but still he will come).

##### c. Parabolic

Dan 2:31ff

Statue represents coming empires.

Ezk 37:15ff

Rejoined sticks represent rejoined Israelite kingdoms.  
Jer 19:1-2,10-11  
Smashed jar pictures smashed nation.

d. Typological

Hos 11:1 (as cited in Matt 2:15)

Son is both Israel and God's true Israel, the Messiah.

Allusions to Levitical typology in:

John 1:29

God's lamb is a human person, the Messiah.

2 Cor 5:21

Jesus as sin offering

Heb 9:1-10

Tabernacle structure and how God will be approached

6. Various Time Relationships

a. Ancestor stands for descendant

Gen 49:1ff

Jacob's sons stand for the tribes to arise from them.

Hos 3:5

David stands for his son, the Messiah.

b. Distant events juxtaposed

Luke 4:17-21 (citing Isa 61:1-2)

Jesus stops reading after "year of Lord's favor" but before "the day of vengeance of our God."

Dan 11:2-3

Jump from fourth Persian king to Alexander

Matt 25:31ff

Jesus' coming and last judgment?

c. Short range to verify longer range

1 Kings 13:2-5

Altar splits, arm paralyzed to verify Josiah prophecy.

2 Kings 20:5-6,8-11

Shadow reverses to verify 15-year extension of life.

Dan 2, 7, 9, 11 - sequence then jump

4 kingdoms, 70 weeks, Antiochus => Antichrist

Luke 21:20ff

Prediction re/ AD 70 destruction => eschatological destruction?

d. Explicit chronological indicators

Dan 9:24ff

70 'weeks' = 70 sabbatical cycles?

Matt 24:15,21,29,32-34 (use of #6a, above?)

When, then, immediately after, budding tree => summer

## B. Works on Fulfilled Prophecy

1. Fritz Ridenour, ed. *Who Says God Created....* Glendale, CA: G/L Publications, 1967 (pb, 186 pp). A popular presentation of Christian evidences, including a discussion of fulfilled prophecies regarding four ancient cities, the Jews and the Messiah.
  - a. Babylon (Isa 13:19-21; Jer 25:12-14)
  - b. Tyre (Ezk 26:3-14,19)
  - c. Edom (Isa 34:5-12; Amos 1:11-12; Ezk 25:14)
  - d. Nineveh (Nah 1:1-8; 2:3-6; 3:7; Zeph 2:13-15)
  - e. Messiah (Gen 3:15; Mic 5:2; Zech 9:9; Isa 50:6; 53:12; Ps 22:18; 34:20; 16:10)
  - f. Israel (Deut 28:64-68; Isa 43:5-6; Jer 29:14; Isa 61:4; Ezk 36:34-35)
  
2. Peter W. Stoner and Robert C. Newman. *Science Speaks*. 4th ed. Chicago: Moody, 1976 (pb, 128 pp). A popular work on evidences, with chapters on science and fulfilled prophecies.
  - a. Tyre (Ezk 26:3-5,7,12,14,16)
  - b. Samaria (Mic 1:6)
  - c. Gaza & Ashkelon (Zeph 2:4,6; Amos 1:8; Jer 47:5)
  - d. Jericho (Josh 6:26)
  - e. Golden Gate (Ezk 44:1-3)
  - f. Zion plowed (Mic 3:12)
  - g. Jerusalem enlarged (Jer 31:38-40)
  - h. Palestine (Lev 26:31-33; Ezk 36:33-35)
  - i. Moab & Ammon (Ezk 25:3-4,9-10; Jer 48:47; 49:6)
  - j. Edom (Jer 49:16-18)
  - k. Babylon (Isa 13:19-21; Jer 51:26,43)
  - l. Sidon (Ezk 28:20-23)
  - m. Capernaum & Bethsaida (Lk 10:13,15)
  - n. Highway from Egypt to Assyria (Isa 19:23-25)
  - o. Egypt (Ezk 29:12-15; 30:13)
  - p. Messiah's birthplace (Mic 5:2)
  - q. Messiah's forerunner (Mal 3:1)
  - r. Messiah's entrance (Zech 9:9)
  - s. Messiah's wounds (Zech 13:6)
  - t. Messiah's betrayal money (Zech 11:12-13)
  - u. Messiah's reaction to oppression (Isa 53:7)
  - v. Messiah's piercing (Ps 22:16)
  
3. Josh McDowell. *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade/Here's Life, 1972 (pb, 387 pp). A nice sourcebook of materials on

historical evidence for Christianity, with two chapters on fulfilled prophecy:

- a. Chapter 9: The Messianic Prophecies (pp 147-184)  
with bibliography
- b. Chapter 11: [Other] Prophecy (pp 277-335)  
with bibliography

4. Fred John Meldau. *Messiah in Both Testaments*. Denver: Christian Victory Publishing Co., 1956 (pb, 96 pp). An extensive treatment of Messianic prophecies, including a good section on the paradoxical aspects which make faked fulfillment of the messianic prophecy complex untenable.

- a. The Credentials of the Messiah  
12 topics re/ descent, birth, time of coming
- b. Life and Ministry of the Messiah  
holiness, miracles, sacrifice
- c. Paradoxes concerning Christ  
13 topics
- d. Suffering, Death and Resurrection of Christ

5. Bernard Ramm. *Protestant Christian Evidences*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1953 (pb, 252 pp). Textbook on Xn evidences, with a chapter on fulfilled prophecy which uses examples from the minor prophets only.

- a. Hosea (1:4-5; 1:7; 1:11; 3:4)
- b. Joel (2:28-32; 3:6-8)
- c. Amos (1:3-5; 6-8; 9-10; 13-15; 2:1-3; 4-5; 3:12-15; 5:27)
- d. Obadiah
- e. Micah (1:6; 3:12; 4:10; 5:2)
- f. Nahum
- g. Zechariah (1:12-21; 2:4; 7; 10-11; 3:8; 9; 6:8; 9-15; 9:9; 11:1-14; 12:10; 13:7-9)
- h. Malachi (1:2-5; 3:1; 4:5)

6. John Urquhart. *The Wonders of Prophecy*. Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, n.d. (pb, 241 pp). A classic work on fulfilled prophecies, originally written about 1900 and in print until recently. Tries to select prophecies that liberals cannot easily redate.
  - a. Tyre (Ezk 26)
  - b. Sidon (Ezk 28:20-23)
  - c. Egypt (Ezk 29-30; Isa 19)
  - d. Edom (Ezk 35:3-7)
  - e. Philistia (Ezk 25; Jer 47; Zeph 2; Zech 9)
  - f. Judea (Lev 26; Deut 29; Isa 6; Amos 3, 5; Mic 1, 3; Matt 11)
  - g. Babylon (Isa 13; Jer 25, 50, 51)
  - h. World History (Dan 2)
  - i. Messianic (many passages)
  - j. Jewish History (many passages)
  
7. Frederick A. Aston. *The Challenge of the Ages*. Scarsdale, NY: Research Press, 1963. (pb, 24 pp). A translation, commentary and discussion of the fulfillment of Isa 52:13-53:12 by a Russian of Jewish background who did graduate studies on OT here in the US. Responds to liberal arguments. Reprinted in edited form as chapter 11 in Newman, *The Evidence of Prophecy*, below.
  
8. J. Barton Payne. *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*. New York: Harper and Row, 1973 (hb, xxiv + 754 pp). Divides all 8,352 predictive verses in the Bible into 1,817 predictions, and tries to suggest when each was or will be fulfilled. Contains bibliography, tables, indices and the following four summaries:
  - a. Biblical Predictions in Order of Fulfillment (pp 631-59)
  - b. Prophecies concerning Foreign Nations more prominent in Scripture (pp 660-64)
  - c. Prophecies with personal reference to Christ (pp 665-70); 2nd coming prophecies starred (\*)
  - d. Biblical Types (pp 671-72)
  
9. Robert C. Newman, ed. *The Evidence of Prophecy: Fulfilled Prediction as a Testimony to the Truth of Christianity*. Hatfield, PA: IBRI, 1988 (pb, 147 pp). 12 chapters by various authors (several are BTS grads) on various examples of fulfilled prophecy regarding the nations, Israel and the Messiah:
  - a. Biblical Prophecy and Pagan Oracles  
Calvin E. Stowe
  - b. The Destruction of Tyre  
Robert W. Manweiler
  - c. Alexander's Conquest of Palestine  
Perry G. Phillips

- d. The Fall of Nineveh  
Elaine A. Phillips
  - e. The Dispersion and Oppression of the Jews  
Samuel H. Kellogg
  - f. Hosea's Prophetic History of the Jews  
John A. Bloom
  - g. The Return of the Jews  
Eugenie Johnston
  - h. The Person of the Messiah  
Robert C. Newman
  - i. The Time of the Messiah  
Robert C. Newman
  - j. The Work of the Messiah  
Frederick A. Aston
10. John W. Montgomery, ed. *Evidence for Faith: Deciding the God Question*. Dallas: Probe/Word, 1991 (pb, 366 pp). 22 chapters on evidences for Christianity, of which 3 are on fulfilled prophecy.
- a. Truth via Prophecy  
John A. Bloom
  - b. Israel's History Written in Advance  
Robert C. Newman
  - c. The Testimony of Messianic Prophecy  
Robert C. Newman
11. Kenny Barfield. *The Prophet Motive: Examining the Reliability of the Biblical Prophets*. Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1995 (pb, 340 pp). 26 chapters on introductory matters and numerous specific prophecies.
- a. Introduction to Prophecy (chs 1-5)
  - b. Oracles against the World Powers (chs 6-8)
  - c. Oracles against Israel's Neighbors (chs 9-12)
  - d. Announcing the Coming Messiah (chs 13-15)
  - e. Oracles against Israel (chs 16-17)
  - f. Blasting the Competition (chs 18-20)
  - g. Answering Objections to Prophecy (chs 21-25)
  - h. Summary (ch 26)



## C. Liberal Responses to Fulfilled Prophecy

### 1. Liberal Models of Reality

#### a. Quite varied:

##### (1) Atheism

non-religious liberals  
Marxists  
Secular Humanists

##### (2) Old Liberalism

pantheistic

##### (3) Neo-Orthodoxy

transcendental

#### b. But agree on non-occurrence of miraculous so no actual prediction beyond human foresight

### 2. Liberal Attitudes toward the Bible

#### a. Inspiration

varies with model of reality as to whether they think God "inspired" the writers or not

#### b. Result

Bible not a miraculous book, it is product of humans groping for God, or (finding Him) unable to express the reality they have experienced

#### c. Unity

many authors, many theologies, so no real unity

#### d. Prophecy

proclamation, not prediction  
forthtelling, not foretelling (Oxtoby, 106)

### 3. Devices Used to Avoid Fulfilled Prophecy

#### a. Prophecy written after event "predicted"

*vaticinium ex eventu*

Daniel, 2nd Isaiah (Pfeiffer, 765)

Other Examples (Oxtoby, 78)

b. Prophecy written before event, but

- (1) Fulfillment invented  
Psalm 22 in Gospels (Schonfield, 87)
- (2) Fulfillment intentional  
Triumphal entry  
Other events in Jesus' ministry (Schonfield)  
Ahijah (Oxtoby, 77)
- (3) Fulfillment foreseeable  
Jeremiah (Oxtoby, 77)
- (4) Fulfillment coincidental  
Golden Gate?
- (5) Fulfillment questionable  
Isa 7:14  
Psalm 16 (Schonfield, 58-59)

D. Making Apologetic Use of Fulfilled Prophecy

1. Consider your Audience

- a. What kind of background do they have?
- b. What sort of presuppositions do they hold?

2. Choose your Prophecy

- a. Is the fulfillment *demonstrably* after the prediction?
- b. Is the prediction only typological?
- c. Is the fulfillment only the application of a general principle?
- d. Is the interpretation of the prophecy seriously questionable?
- e. Can intentional fulfillment be ruled out?
- f. Is the fulfillment sufficiently complex or unusual so as to forbid its being naturally foreseen?

3. Exegete your Prophecy

- a. Use the original languages if you possibly can!
- b. Check for significant textual variants.
- c. Consider alternative translations and interpretations that might be suggested by an unbeliever.

4. Examine its Fulfillment

- a. What historical sources are available?
- b. Can they reasonably be charged as conspiring with the Biblical writers?

- c. Are there any complications?
- d. Have you subjected the prophecy and fulfillment to the questioning an unbeliever would give them?

5. Write up your Presentation

- a. Again, consider the audience.
- b. Try to "short-circuit" objections, rather than dragging them all out to distract your audience.
- c. You don't need to *show* all your work, just *do* it!
- d. Try to make your presentation interesting.

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**Note:** After this course was offered the first time, a number of the best papers were collected, edited and added to some existing papers to produce the book *Evidence of Prophecy* noted as item B9 on pages 7-8, above. Other examples have been included in Montgomery, *Evidence for Faith* (item B10, page 8) and in Geivett and Habermas *In Defense of Miracles*. A number of examples have been worked up into PowerPoint talks that are posted on the IBRI website ([www.ibri.org](http://www.ibri.org)), as are the two papers "Public Theology and Scientific Method" (*Philosophia Christi*[2002] 4:45-48) and "Public Theology and Prophecy Data" (*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 46/1 [March 2003]: 79-100).