



Prophetic Reasons

Small Group Work Sheet
January 23, 2011

Part 1 - Ice Breaker

- What are the most bizarre tabloid claims you read at the Wal-Mart checkout line?
- Why do you think people continue to read the tabloids?

Part 2 - Sermon Review

- Was the prediction of Cyrus, King of Persia, a new prophecy to you? How do you imagine scholars try to explain this amazing prediction away?
- What affect did the prophecies about Judah's exile and subsequent release from Babylon have upon the ancient Israelites, especially when they were given and fulfilled with such with such a high level of precision? What affect does God want those ancient prophecies to have on us?
- Ezekiel's prophecies about the destruction of Tyre had a two stage fulfillment. Are there other prophecies you can think of where God didn't completely fulfill them at *one time*? Why do you think God might choose to fulfill a prophecy in more than one stage?
- Of the prophecies about Christ from the Old Testament, which ones do you find most convincing?
- Some Old Testament prophecies about Christ were not apparent until the life of Christ was held next to them. Of the given prophecies, which ones did you feel have the vaguest link? Why?
- The Old Testament prophecies of Christ do not appear significant individually, it is the *cumulative weight* of over 300 of them in one person that provides irrefutable evidence for Jesus as the Messiah. How would you explain the *cumulative weight argument* to a friend in a visual way they would understand?
- How was your faith in the Bible altered after today's



study?

Part 3 - Digging Deeper... *Daniel, seeing the future like reading a newspaper.*

Daniel is a remarkable prophet who foresaw the major kingdoms that would arise in the Near East. He predicted the Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman Empires in such detail that even honest skeptics must admit that he received his visions from God.

In his first vision, he saw a statue of a man. The head was gold and represented the nation of Babylon; the breast and arms were silver, representing Medo-Persia; its belly and thighs were bronze, representing Greece; and finally its legs were of iron, representing Rome.

Daniel not only told King Nebuchadnezzar what he dreamt, but he interpreted it for him.

You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold. Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these. Daniel 2:37–40 (ESV)

If there is any doubt as to the kingdoms predicted, they are actually identified in Daniel 8. The kingdom which would follow Babylon is named Medo-Persia; then follows Greece; and, of course, Rome.

What is most startling, Daniel gives vivid details of the rise of Alexander the Great and the fact that after his death, his kingdom would be divided among four rulers.

Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and do as he wills. And as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor according to the authority with which he ruled, for his kingdom shall be plucked up and go to others besides these. Daniel 11:3–4 (ESV)

Some 200 years after Daniel wrote, Alexander the Great, who had no heirs, arose; and after his death, his kingdom was divided among his four generals. As the plot thickens, Daniel continues to write as if he had a front row seat.

Daniel wrote about the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes and that he would pollute the temple. This took place when Antiochus Epiphanes sacrificed a pig on the altar in Jerusalem to desecrate the temple. Despite his persecutions and apparent victories, he ended in humiliation, just as Daniel predicted.

It is estimated there are 135 prophecies in Daniel 11:1-35, all of which were literally fulfilled! Near the end of the chapter, Daniel turns his attention to a future ruler, most probably the Anti-christ who is yet to come. Antiochus foreshadowed this man.

“And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done. Daniel 11:36 (ESV)

Only God could know all these details! Only God could have Daniel write prophecy as if it were history!