



Aim of lesson

To show that because prophecies made in the Bible have already come true we can trust the ones that are still to happen.

Bible background

Isaiah 46:10

Preparation required

You will need to read through the notes and decide what you are going to emphasize. The prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar's image may be very well known to the class so you won't have to spend so much time on the details. If it is a shared class, you may need to check with other teachers what was taught previously.

Outline of lesson

Who prophesies?

The student's will have learnt in the previous lessons that a prophet is one who speaks on behalf of another. In most Biblical cases this person is God. We are now going to look at what we normally think of in relation to prophets - some of the things they said about the future. It is important to say that the prophets only knew what to say because they had been told by God, so it is God who knows the future.

Although God is the one who can see the end from the beginning, he uses other people to speak for him.

Get the class to look at the two verses at the beginning of this lesson in the students' books so that they can see that God knows what he will do, he is sure in his purposes and wants to tell us about it.

You could ask the students whether they know anyone apart from God who can predict the future. Even those who profess to be able to, never come up with anything specific or anything that couldn't be a coincidence or likely to happen anyway.

Why?

Ask the class why they think God wants us to know what he has planned. Help them to see that prophecy is one way of teaching us to trust him. It also helps us to be prepared for the future.

Some things prophesied long ago have already happened, some have a dual fulfilment and have happened once or in part but still have to happen again (fully). Because we can see that things have happened as the Bible said they would we can trust that the ones that are still in the future will happen just as they are foretold.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream

This has been chosen because it is explained by Daniel. Many prophecies we have to work out for ourselves and some we can't be too sure about what they mean, yet. The image prophecy also affects us as well as the people of Daniel's time.

Remind the class about Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Daniel makes sure Nebuchadnezzar knows that 'it is God who reveals mysteries' (Daniel 2:28, 36-45)

The students can identify the metals on the picture in the students' books, what we are told of the interpretation and what we have been able to work out from history. The history, especially of the Greeks will be dealt with in greater detail in lesson 28.

Gold	Nebuchadnezzar; the kingdom of Babylon
Silver	An inferior kingdom - the Medo-Persia empire
Bronze	a third kingdom - the Greeks
Iron	a strong kingdom - Rome. The Romans made great use of iron, and the empire split into Eastern and Western halves, like the two legs.
Iron and clay	a mixture of strong and weak kingdoms (not representing any one kingdom in particular, but the multitude of strong and weak powers that make up our world.

The stone cut out of the mountain

But the image wasn't all that Nebuchadnezzar dreamt about. The fact that the stone was cut out 'without hands' meant that it would be sent by God - Jesus did not have a human father. God's kingdom will fill the whole world and will last forever (verse 44)

So all the things that Nebuchadnezzar dreamt have happened except the part about the stone. But Daniel emphasised 'God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and the interpretation sure.' (Daniel 2:45)

Discuss how the coming stone must be Jesus and that one reason the dream was given to Nebuchadnezzar was for us to read today.

Prophecies about Jesus' second coming

In lesson 7 the class will have thought about Jesus in the Old Testament. Remind them that what they learnt is all prophecy of one kind or another and that some of the things happened when Jesus came the first time and some are yet to be.

Ask the students if they can think where they could find prophecies in the New Testament that tell us about Jesus second coming. They may remember some of these verses:

Acts 1:11	Jesus will come back the same way he went
Matthew 24:36-42	No one knows when. It will be like before the flood.
Matthew 25:31-40	The sheep and goats - those who have responded to the gospel will inherit the kingdom.
Mark 13:26	He will come in the clouds.
Luke 21:11	Earthquakes, famines and great signs.
Luke 21:20	Jerusalem surrounded by armies
1 Thessalonians 4:16	A shout and a trumpet blast. The dead in Christ will be raised.
2 Thessalonians 1:7	There will be mighty angels.
Revelation 1:7	Everyone will see him.

The Olivet prophecy

Turn now to what is known as 'The Olivet Prophecy'. Do the young people know where to find it or how it got its name? The chapters are Matthew 24-25, Mark 13 and Luke 21, and we can see from Matthew 24:3 that Jesus and his disciples were sitting on the mount of Olives, having been talking about the temple being destroyed.

The prophecy is particularly interesting because much of it it has two fulfilments - AD 70 and in the future. In AD 70 Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans and the Jews were scattered to live in other countries - many were sold as slaves. Jesus was able to tell the Jews of his time what was going to happen in about 40 years. Ask the students what they think their reaction would have been when it was actually happening and they remembered Jesus telling them about it? But he was also telling Bible readers down the ages what to look out for—that he was going to come back, and that there were going to be difficult times in the world when he did.

Read through Luke 21 with your class and note the pronouns. Up to v20, Jesus speaks of 'you', and it seems that this early section of the book applied to the situation in AD70. Vespasian was a successful military commander. He had participated in the invasion of Britain in AD 43, and led the Roman army which subjugated Judaea during the Jewish rebellion of 66. While Vespasian was preparing to besiege the city of Jerusalem, the emperor Nero committed suicide, and after a year of chaos Vespasian was declared emperor by the Roman Senate in AD 69. Vespasian's son Titus was left in charge of ending the rebellion, and he destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70 - the Arch of Titus in Rome commemorates this. There was a terrible slaughter, and in all it is estimated that over a million Jews died; but there will have been those in Jerusalem who heeded Jesus' words in Luke 21:21 and escaped the destruction.

However, not everything in this prophecy applies to AD 70. From v23 onwards Jesus refers to people as 'they', and the events lead up to his return (v27). So these words give us an indication of what the world will be like in the days before he comes back.

Luke 21:28 is a key verse. We are told these things so that when they begin to happen we need not be afraid because the Lord will take care of us, so we can be comforted when there are signs of distress in the world.

Tyre

The students may not know about Ezekiel's prophecy against Tyre - it is not covered in the CSSU Senior lessons. So they may be very interested to learn of all the detail in it. You may be able to find out more yourself, to add to the material in their notes.

Relevance to our Lives

Probably the most important prophecy (the one that affects us the most) is that one day Jesus will come back to the earth to set up God's kingdom. Jesus tells us that 'no man knows the day or the hour' when he will return, not even him—so we just have to be ready for these happenings all the time.

The fact that there are so many prophecies about Jesus in the Bible, far more than we can look at in one lesson, shows us that he should be the focus of our lives and we can look forward to his return without fear.

Extension activities

The young people may like to start a scrap book keeping information in the news that relates to Bible prophecies.