

Ephesians 1:11 tells us that God works "all things after the counsel of his own will." Today we'll learn how God is ordering the course of human history to its final conclusion in Christ!

1. God shows His providence in giving the most central piece of prophecy through a pagan king's dream (2:1-6).
 - a. God chose to begin this critical prophetic revelation by giving Nebuchadnezzar a terrifying dream (1).
 - i. It is fitting that God would choose to initiate this prophecy concerning His providential working in the affairs of men by giving a dream to this pagan king.
 - ii. We will learn in a moment why Nebuchadnezzar's dream was so troubling.
 - b. God providentially set up a test to determine the true powers of his wise men (2-6).
 - i. Nebuchadnezzar did not know the meaning of his dream (3).
 - ii. Nebuchadnezzar did not trust his wise men, so he devised a brilliant test – make known the dream and the interpretation (4-6).
 1. If he told the wise men the dream, they could easily make up a story.
 2. Telling the king the dream and the interpretation would prove their truth and power, or their falsehood and impotence.
 - iii. For some reason, Nebuchadnezzar did not trust his wise men who claimed to be in touch with deities.
 1. The magicians used books of magic to tell the future through incantations.
 2. The astrologers claimed to be in touch with the spirit world.
 3. The sorcerers used various "magical" drugs and potions to induce trances and visions.
 4. The Chaldeans were scholars of the ancient world who claimed to be the intellectual and spiritual elite.
 - iv. The elite scholars of our present-day share many of the same defects of these Chaldean scholars:
 1. They both share a pantheistic view of nature. They worship the creation, not the Creator.
 2. They both share an optimistic view of man. They believe that man is basically good.
 3. They both share a complete ignorance of God's ordering of history by a wise and all-powerful providential hand culminating in Christ's consummation of all things.
 4. They both operate without any permanent system of values.
2. God uses the king's dream to demonstrate that only God is the Source of truth (2:7-28).
 - a. The wise men were exposed as frauds and condemned to death (7-12).
 - i. The king refused to tell them the dream, because he knew that they would stall for time (8) and prepare a false interpretation (9).
 - ii. The wise men had to admit that what the king was asking was beyond the power of mankind (9-11).
 - iii. It is impossible to understand the mind and will of God apart from His revealed Word (Ps. 19:7-14).
 - b. Daniel prays and becomes the oracle of Divine revelation (13-28).
 - i. God gave Daniel favor with Arioch, the captain of the king's guard (13-16).
 - ii. Daniel sought the company of his three friends in prayer (17-19).
 1. They prayed that God would give them the interpretation and spare their lives.
 2. God answered the prayer by revealing the secret to Daniel in a night vision.
 - iii. Daniel praises God for answering their prayer (20-23). He lists the reasons to praise God:
 1. Wisdom and might are God's (James 1:5-6).
 2. God controls historical events
 3. God removes and sets up kings.
 4. God is the source of all wisdom and knowledge.
 5. God is light and reveals that which would be completely unknown without His revelation.
 6. God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (cf. Hebrews 11:6).
 - iv. Daniel gives all the glory to God (24-28a).

3. God reveals His providence over the kingdoms of mankind culminating in Christ's kingdom (2:28-45).
 - a. The dream was foretelling future events.
 - i. "the latter days" (28; cf. Genesis 49:1; Jeremiah 48:47)
 - ii. "what should come to pass hereafter" and "what shall come to pass" (29)
 - b. The Head of Gold – King Nebuchadnezzar (36-38)
 - i. Other OT prophets used also used gold as a symbol of Babylon (Isaiah 14:4).
 - ii. Nebuchadnezzar ruled the known world in that day.
 - c. The Breast and Arms of Silver – Medo-Persia (39; cf. 32)
 - i. History and the Bible both agree that the kingdom which succeeded Babylon was that of Medo-Persia (2 Chronicles 36:20-23; Daniel 5:28, 31).
 - ii. Darius was subject to the law of the Medes and Persians. This duality is pictured by the two arms.
 - d. The Belly and Thighs of Brass – The Greeks (39)
 - i. Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great conquered the Medes and the Persians (Daniel 8:20-21).
 - ii. These events would occur after the Old Testament revelation was concluded.
 - e. The Legs of Iron and Feet of Iron and Clay – The Roman Empire and Its Remnants (40-43)
 - i. Rome and the great civil, legal, and religious system which accompanied Rome are represented by this part of the image.
 - ii. This fourth empire which did not exist during Daniel's time is given the most detailed description in this prophecy.
 - iii. This empire and the world system it introduced seems to prevail until Jesus comes again to set up His kingdom.
 1. Rome was strong as iron (40).
 2. Rome "broke in pieces" all other nations and their institutions (40).
 3. Rome subdued all things; it was impossible to escape the reach of Rome.
 - iv. The two legs may symbolize the division of the Roman empire (Rome and Constantinople).
 - v. There is a real sense in which all of western civilization is a continuation of the Roman world and continues to subdue and break in pieces.
 - vi. The west continues to be Roman. Our literature, much of our law, and even popular religion are borrowed from Rome.
 - vii. This Western form of things continues to subdue the world, to break apart social customs and institutions and then reform them according to Western patterns.
 - viii. The ten toes may represent a final form of the Gentile dominion over the earth under 10 allied kings in the times of the Antichrist (Daniel 7:24; Revelation 17:12).
 - f. Four principles concerning these four empires throughout the centuries:
 - i. There is a continuous succession of world dominions down to the coming of Messiah's kingdom. This is known as "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24).
 - ii. There is a progressive division of sovereignty throughout the ages. The absolute sovereignty of Nebuchadnezzar is progressively divided until at the end it is divided between 10 kings.
 - iii. There is a progressive deterioration in authority from kingdom to kingdom.
 1. Nebuchadnezzar was an absolute monarch.
 2. Darius was subject to the laws of the Medes and Persians.
 3. The Greek kings did not rule based on dynasty but upon their personal gifts for leadership.
 4. The Roman Empire introduced republicanism, and since then has emerged the democratic form of government in which sovereignty has been shared with everyone.
 - iv. There is a progressive improvement in the strength and hardness of the materials.
 1. Each metal is harder than the preceding metal indicating each empire had a stronger form of government.
 2. Clay in its hardened state can cut iron, but it is very brittle.
 - g. The Stone Which Consumes All Kingdoms and Becomes a Great Mountain – The Messianic Kingdom (44-45)
 - i.
4. God rewards those who trust in His providence (2:46-49).