

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 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. The Old and New Testaments describe Christ as a stone:
    1. Genesis 49:24 “But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel” (cf. Ps. 23; John 10).
    2. Psalm 118:22 “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner” (cf. Matthew 21:42).
    3. To the Nation of Israel, Christ Is a Stumbling Stone (Isaiah 8:13-15; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 1 Peter 2:8).
    4. To Christians, Christ Is a Sure Foundation Stone (1 Peter 2:4-7).
    5. To the Unsaved Nations, Christ Is a Grinding Stone (Matthew 21:44; Matthew 25; Revelation 19:11).
  - ii. Christ will destroy the kingdoms of this world to set up His own literal kingdom (Revelation 20).
    1. Christ, not the church, will suddenly destroy the kingdoms of this world. The church will return with Him (Revelation 19:11-14).
    2. Christ will deal violently with the wicked nations (Revelation 19:15).
    3. Our Lord’s kingdom will finally be more than a spiritual kingdom as it is now (Romans 14:17; Colossians 1:13; Revelation 11:15).
2. God rewards those who trust in His providence (2:46-49).
  - a. God used the faithful prayers of Daniel and his friends to humble the heart of the proud king (46).
    - i. When you pray in faith, God can use your prayers to soften hard hearts.
  - b. Nebuchadnezzar recognized that Daniel’s God was the God of all gods and Lord of kings (47).
    - i. When you choose to take bold steps of faith, others will see that you serve the God of gods!
  - c. God exalted Daniel and his friends to a place of great influence in the kingdom (48-49).
    - i. When you take steps of faith, God will increase your influence in the lives of those around you.
  - d. Daniel’s life was a testimony to the providence of God Who weaves all things together for our good and for His glory!

Conclusion:

1. Since you know that Christ is coming back to judge the world, what are you doing to warn those around you as Daniel warned Nebuchadnezzar?
2. Is there an area of your life in which you doubt God’s providential control?
3. Who has God placed in your life that He wants you to influence through prayer and proclamation of the truth?