

I. Introduction

A. New series: "Biblically Navigating Culture and Politics"

1. In Philippians 3:20, Paul says that our "citizenship is in Heaven."
2. In the most important ways, Jesus' people are citizens living in a foreign land.
3. The culture and customs are different, the laws are different, the politics are different, and the definitions of good and evil are different.

B. Story: Visiting a foreign country, your cultural differences become very clear:

1. Trip to Europe:
 - a. Paris: as soon as you spoke English, demeanor would change
 - b. Germany: medieval town with a wall you could walk in. Sister and I goofing around. My mom was so nervous: "Things are different here. We don't know what's ok and what's not—don't get arrested!"
2. When you're in a foreign nation, you become keenly aware of the differences from your own and you have to learn to navigate that country, honoring the ways and customs as much as you can, but not in a way that would forsake or dishonor your own.
3. As disciples of Jesus, we are citizens of a different Kingdom than the one we currently live in.
 - a. This does not mean that we ignore or retreat from the land we're in. On the contrary. We're in this place for a reason. We have a mission and so instead of retreating we engage it. The question is HOW do we engage?
 - b. How do the laws and commands and values of our homeland, Jesus' Kingdom, inform our engagement in this land God has placed us in? How do we engage our culture? How do we engage the political landscape of the country God has placed us in?

C. So why are we talking about this now? Why not in October and November when election season and cultural tension is at a full boil?

1. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to know the times, be wise and **respond**, rather than **react** to the circumstances around us.
 - a. So we're talking about this NOW in June/July so that we can process our response as slow-cookers, not microwaves. So that when the craziness of October/November comes, we can be reasonable, respectful, wise and peaceful, bringing the peace of Jesus into environments we influence.
 - b. As Christians, our emotions and mental health should not be riding the roller coaster of politics and culture. We know the future. We know the King. Why would we let ourselves get sucked into the frenzy of a world that Jesus Himself warned us long ago would "have many troubles"?
2. So we're going to talk about these things now, so we can process slowly, make our decisions and be wise when the world goes crazy.

3. So where should we start? I say we start with the ending! Look at the future to guide us today.
- II. God gives us a glimpse of the future so that we know how to invest our loyalty in the present. Let's let the prophet Daniel chapter 7 fast forward us to the very ending to get a glimpse of what is to come so that we can wisely navigate what currently is.
- A. Daniel was an Israelite captive in Babylon—living in the belly of an evil empire. He's given a prophetic dream that predicts four different kingdoms or empires that will rule in the world. I'm going jump back and forth a bit in the chapter to sew together the vision and its interpretation so we can clearly see what it's all about:
- In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter. Daniel declared, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings [Babylonian Empire]. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it. And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear [Medo-Persian Empire]. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.' After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back [Greco-Roman]. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. (Daniel 7:1-6)*
1. These first three beasts are history to us but this fourth beast is still future, or possibly even current and growing into its future culmination. This beast seems to correlate well with the beast that John warns of in Revelation:
After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things. (Revelation 13:7-8)
 2. Later, in Daniel's dream, he asked someone standing next to him to explain what he's seeing. Look at Daniel 7:17 for the explanation:
These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever. (Jump to v.23)
Thus he said: "As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time." (Daniel 7:23-25)

- B. How extensive will this fourth beast's rule be? Revelation 13:7 indicates that it will be "given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation."
1. This is worldwide dominion. The indication seems to be that every nation that currently is or will be will, in one way or another capitulate to this final beastly kingdom. Including our own, the United States of America.
 2. So that's the bad news. But what's the good news? Where do we put our hope and full loyalty? Let's go back to Daniel 7:9
As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His clothing was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool; His throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came out from before Him; a thousand thousands served Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. (Daniel 7:9-12)
 3. Here's what we see: The fourth beast, which we know will rule the whole world and every government in it, will be utterly destroyed. God Himself, the Ancient of Days, will put a final end to the dominion of all the kingdoms and governments of the world and HE HIMSELF will rule. But there's more to this vision!
I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of Heaven there came one like a son of man, and He came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him [the son of man] was given dominion and glory and a Kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His Kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:11-14)
- C. Who is this cloud rider? Who is this Son of Man, this King Who sits at the right hand of God and will be given a Kingdom ON THIS EARTH that will last forever?
1. Bear with me in one more jump out of this text to Matthew 26:64. This is the trial of Jesus, right before He will be crucified. He's being interrogated by the spiritual leaders of the Jews and they are trying to indict Him on charges of blasphemy—saying He is the Son of God.
And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of Heaven." (Matthew 26:63-64)
 2. Jesus says, "Do you want to know who I am? You've asked if I'm the Son of God and yes, I certainly am. But let me fill you in a bit more on my identity. All of you priests and scribes have read the book of Daniel... you know it well. I AM the Son of God which also means I am the cloud rider—the Son of Man in Daniel's prophecy Who will be given all dominion and a Kingdom that lasts forever. I, Jesus of Nazareth am the cloud-riding, great Son of Man King Who will defeat the evil kingdom and rule forever!"

III. Conclusion

- A. So how does this victorious future guide us right now?
 - 1. Back to the Future 2: Marty McFly, from 1985 travels to 2015...buys sports almanac because if he knows how those sports events will end ahead of time, he can do some calculated "investing" (betting!) and get rich.
 - 3. If I know who the winner will be THEN, I can invest in them NOW.
- B. How many times have you looked back at your life and said, "If only I knew then what I know now"?
 - 1. Most of life we have to discover along the way.
 - 2. But there are some very important big picture realities God has let us know ahead of time so that we CAN know now what we WILL experience THEN.
 - 3. And what we know is that every earthly kingdom, as relatively good or bad as it is, will bow to the evil one but then be overcome by King Jesus.
- C. So, does all of this mean that I hand in my US passport and renounce my American citizenship? Or if you live in another country, you hand in your passport and renounce your citizenship to that nation?
 - 1. No, not at all. Just like Daniel did, we live and give and bless the culture we're in, working and praying and giving of ourselves for its good and especially for the good of our actual neighbors. Daniel did this in the wicked, idolatrous Babylonian empire!
 - 2. So no, we don't renounce, dismiss, or curse the place God has planted us. Quite the opposite!
 - 3. But we also don't put our hope in it, or deify it, or give it our unconditional loyalty. All of the kingdoms and governments of this world are fading. So let me speak to your mind, heart, and actions on how we ought to live in light of this:

IV. Application

- A. Mind: Fast, pray, and study Scripture to sculpt your convictions regarding cultural issues and elections.
 - 1. Make Spirit-led decisions now and be at peace and be a peaceMAKER when the rest of the world goes crazy.
 - 2. And perhaps to guard your mind, consider fasting from news/social media, etc when things start to hit their fever pitch. It's really easy to get swept up in the panic, so maybe limit your exposure to the voices telling you to panic?
- B. Heart: limit (without dismissing) the impact that this fading kingdom has on your heart, mind, hopes, and emotions.
 - 1. We don't want to pretend that the cultural shifts and political direction of our current world governments are unimportant.
 - a. That's actually not true. A lot of damage is done when our cultures and governments move farther away from the commands of God. A lot of people are misguided, and a lot of people are hurt.
 - b. God cares about people and so, to a reasonable degree, we should be caring about and seeking to restrain the evil that the enemy is devising in our world.
 - 2. But please remember: The biblical description of what a government CAN do is limited. The main function of government is to suppress evil (Romans 13:3-5) but it

CANNOT bring about the righteousness of God. Government is limited in its scope so make sure that your expectations for it are ALSO limited.

3. If what happens in cultural shifts or elections concerns you, that's totally ok, but if it grabs hold of your thoughts and emotions, consider that perhaps your loyalty to Jesus' final Kingdom may need more of your heart and loyalty than it currently has.
 4. Structure your loves, hopes, and loyalties with the end in mind: Jesus, conquering the evil empires of this world and sitting enthroned forever.
- C. Actions: Don't let the messaging of this world dilute your obedience to the Kingdom you're from. Obey Jesus in word, deed, and posture.
1. It's not enough to just KNOW the way of Jesus. We must walk the way of Jesus. Letting the truth of His Word dwell in our hearts, obeying His commands, and also walking in the GRACE in which He walked.
 2. This is not something we can do by sheer will power. We need to be in His presence daily, seeking, in word, deed, and posture to be like Jesus.

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