

THE KING OF KINGS

DANIEL 7

OUR KING CONCLUDES HISTORY



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Spiritual power is not through political power. Political power will never give us spiritual power. Therefore, what happens if we put our hope in political power more than spiritual power? We will end up disappointed or we'll end up deceived.

I've been in the 'disappointed' camp quite a few times in my life. Both in the UK and in the US, I've put my trust in a political party or political leader as my hope for transforming our society and nation. But it never turns out as promised. It's always disappointing.

I've also known people end up in the deceived camp. Despite multiple failed predictions of political salvation, they continue to believe that this time it's different. They are deceived so much they think everyone else is deceived.

Either way, whether it's disappointment or deception, we lose spiritual power by trusting in political power. So, **how can we view political power so we increase spiritual power?** In Daniel 7, God gives us two lenses which helps us find spiritual power.

BACKGROUND

Apocalyptic Books: 'Apocalypse' means 'revelation.' Apocalyptic literature involves a divine revelation of the future that no human could ever figure out alone. It usually came through dreams and visions full of sensational symbols and was written to encourage people living in tough times (e.g. Isaiah 24-27, Joel, Zechariah 9-14, Matthew 24, Revelation). Its main themes are: (1) Evil will grow worse; (2) God will look after his people; (3) Evil will be defeated.

The Lead: One of the first lessons that journalists learn is how to write their whole story in the first sentence. It's called 'the lead' because it leads the story. But it also sums up the whole story. The idea is that if people only had time to read the first sentence, they would be able to get the gist of the story. The rest of the details follow in descending order of importance.

In Hebrew literature, the lead is often in the middle of the passage. In chapter seven, the lead is: **'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'** (17-18). That's the story in a nutshell and the rest is the details. So, let's keep the lead in front of us at all times.

Four cycles: One of the biggest mistakes in understanding apocalyptic literature is to view it as sequential rather than cyclical. There are three clear sections in chapter seven, but they do not follow in sequence, one after another (1-14, 17-18, 19-22, 23-26). Rather, each section contains the whole of world history, with each section looking at it from a different perspective or with a different emphasis.



What's the first lens God gives us?



1. POLITICAL POWER IS NOT OUR HOPE (1-8, 19-25)

The Good of Government

As this passage is critical of governments, let's remind ourselves of some biblical caveats and cautions from Romans 13:1-7, lest we overreact.

- **Government is better than no government:** Government is a divine mercy and is better than no government at all.
- **Politics can be our Christian calling:** Moses, Joseph, David, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, etc all had political callings and served God in them.
- **Politicians are to be respected and remunerated:** They are God's ministers and should be honored as such and paid for their service (Rom. 13).

The Evil of Government

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 (2-3).

The sea is often a symbol of chaos and rebellion against God (Ps. 89:9; 93:3-4). This stormy threatening tempest of spiritual hostility is being continually churned up by the four winds of heaven, a description for continuous worldwide changes under God's direction.

These changes result in four beasts emerging out of the sea, four kings which correspond to the four empires in chapter two. Whereas chapter two focused most on the *succession* of different empires (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome), this chapter warns about their united *hostility*. None of the governments are portrayed as lambs or doves. Instead, we see a lion, an eagle, a bear, and a leopard, and the focus is on their savage teeth and their thrusting horns (4-8).

Daniel zooms in on the fourth beast as especially ferocious and as especially productive of more ferocity (7-8, 19-21, 23-25). The fourth beast has ten horns, perhaps indicating the multiplying of political powers after the Roman Empire. Then an eleventh horn appears that displaces all the others (8, 24). Power is concentrated in one individual at the end of time, a powerful figure who will especially target God and his people (19-21, 23-25; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). Every human kingdom is hostile to God and his people to some degree, but this last one will be unprecedented.



CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

Pray for politicians but don't expect too much. Paul sets realistic expectations in 1 Timothy 2:1-3. Being left alone to live godly lives is about the best we can hope for. One of the devil's greatest deceptions is duping Christians into an obsession with politics. It's another form of media-led worldliness.

Focus more on evangelism than elections. Paul's prayer for government is ultimately about winning souls not winning elections (1 Tim. 2:4-6). For every political conversation with people have a prayer conversation with God. The more we talk about Christ and the less we talk of Trump and Biden the better off everyone will be.

See behind all earthly powers. We're about to see that Christ is above all earthly powers, but never forget that the devil is behind all earthly powers. We see his hostility in their hostility. Let's get Christ's protection from the ultimate climactic exposure and exhibition of this at the end of time. If we wait until the end of time, we'll have run out of time.

WE NEED SAVING FROM POLITICS
NOT BY POLITICS



That was a dark lens.
Any brighter lens I can use?



2. CHRIST'S POWER IS OUR HOPE (9-18, 26-27)

If the first lens stops us looking to human power as our hope, the second one shows us exactly where we should be looking. What do we see?

We see the ultimate power

As God turns Daniel heavenwards, he opens the curtains to reveal multiple empty thrones and one occupied throne (9). All human leaders have disappeared and their thrones now serve THE throne.

Who is on this throne? The Ancient of Days. While in our culture we might think 'old and frail' when we hear this title, in Eastern culture, it mean 'grand and wise.' The emphasis is dignity not senility. That's backed up by the expanded description of him and his throne (9-10). The little kingdoms have their day, but our God is the Ancient of Days. He was there long before the beasts and he'll be there long after.

We see a transfer of power

Daniel sees a time when all human power and hell power will be ended **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** (11-12). Their domination is over, and their total destruction is certain, but they are permitted to continue with some influence longer than we might expect.

So who gets the power these beasts used to have? **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 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"** (13-14).

Jesus claimed this title of 'Son of Man' as his own. In fact, it was his favorite title, the one he used the most. He saw himself in this chapter, a unique combination of humanity and deity, and these specific verses comforted him in the midst of his suffering (Mark 14:62).

These verses in Daniel were fulfilled either when Jesus died and his soul went to get his heavenly reward from his Father, or when he ascended to heaven with his body and soul (Matt. 28:18-20). Title to all power was given to Christ in his human nature and he's waiting for the right time to take complete possession of what is already his (26-27).



We see a sharing of power

Just as the Son of Man was rewarded for suffering under evil power, so the sons and daughters of men will be rewarded for their suffering under evil power. This promise of shared power between God and his people is repeated three times:

The saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever (18).

This horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom (21-22).

And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him (25-27).

CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

Don't settle for political power. You are aiming too low. Compare limited and temporary political power with this promised and permanent spiritual power. Whatever power and influence people promise you, they cannot compete with this (Matt. 19:28; Rev. 3:21). You're going to be more powerful than any President.

Seek first the Kingdom of God. Look at it first, most, and last. Seek it first, most, and last. Prayers are the best petitions. Seeing the weakness of human power will increase your experience of God's power.

Change the nation by changing hearts. If you want to influence our nation for eternal good, you won't do it by changing laws and votes but by changing hearts. The more we look to human power, the less we are looking to Christ's power.

Revive us Again (Phil Wickham)

God of grace, God of salvation	Hear our cry, Heal our land
We are desperate on our knees	Oh God, we pray for revival
You can save this generation	What You've done before
Let revival be released	You can do again
	Oh God, we pray for revival

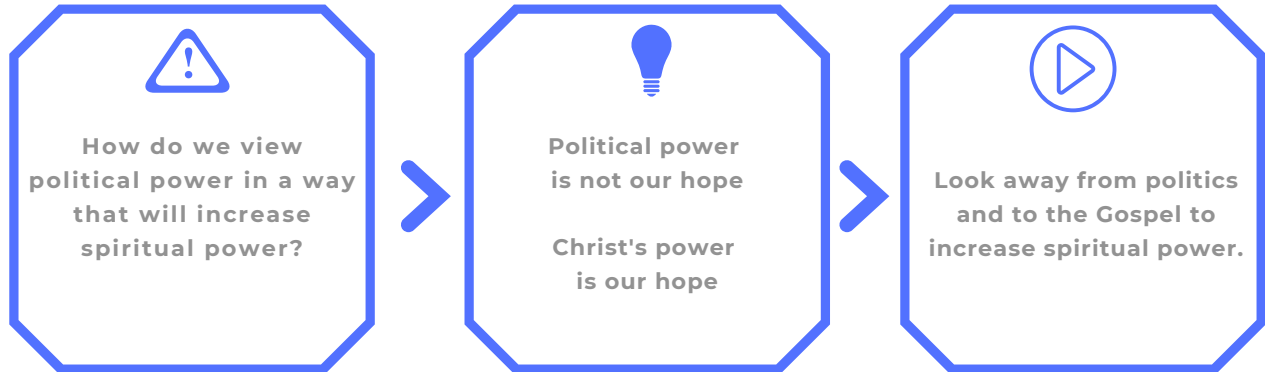
THOUGH THE NATIONS RAGE, KINGDOMS RISE AND FALL
THERE IS STILL ONE KING REIGNING OVER ALL



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CONCLUSION



PRAYER: Ancient of Days and Son of Man, fix our eyes on your Gospel alone as our personal, national, and international hope. Amen

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When it comes to politics is your temptation on the disappointed or the deluded side?
2. In what ways have you mistakenly put your faith in politics?
3. What do you pray most for our nation?
4. How can we re-focus our church and families on mission and evangelism rather than politics and elections?
5. How will this chapter change the way you consume the news?
6. What does it mean for the saints to share Christ's power in heaven?

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