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## HE SETS UP KINGS

Daniel 2:21

I'm going to do something that I typically don't do and prefer not to do. What I really prefer to do is to go through a text and to go through a book in the bible over a period of time. The belief is that God speaks to us from his word. God sets the agenda as we work through God's word. That takes work. It takes work on your part because it's often deeper or more complex, but it's the word of God ministering to us, God setting the agenda.

Today is a topical message, which means I'm going to bring you related truths from different places in the scripture. It's not our normal practice, but sometimes it's a helpful practice, and I think this is timely and helpful. I want to begin in Daniel Chapter 2, verse 20. You can choose to turn to these passages. I'm going to try to provide them for you. I've entitled this message "He Sets up Kings" from Daniel Chapter 2, verse 21, and that's the text I want to start with, starting in verse 20.

What's happening here in this passage is: Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, has had a dream. He is troubled by his dream. He has told all of his counselors, all of the wise men in his court, "I want an interpretation for my dream, but I don't trust you to give me a proper interpretation. So, I want you to tell me the content of the dream without me telling you, and then I'll know when you give me the interpretation that the interpretation is true."

Daniel is there with his Hebrew friends. They are in Babylon. They are not in Israel. They are in what we would consider exile. Daniel is about to lose his life. They pray. They seek the Lord. God gives him the content of the dream *and* the interpretation, and this is the prayer that follows.

*Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him."*

Here is the big idea for today and the truth that guides us as we are on the eve of a national election. That truth is this: **God is in control of our election.** Isn't that great news? God is in control. God sets kings in place. God sets presidents in office.



1 Timothy 2:1-6:

*First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.*

Friends, scripture tells us to pray for our leaders, but then it gives us a context, and if you can grasp this context it will help orient your heart during election seasons and throughout. We are to pray for our leaders, but we have a goal. We believe that God wants to save people. We believe that the only way to have a relationship with God, to be saved from your sin, to be saved from eternal punishment is through a relationship with Jesus Christ. There is one mediator between God and man. There is one way to God and that is through Jesus Christ, through faith in Christ.

**So we pray for our leaders, but we pray specifically that they will lead in a way so that we have the freedom and the opportunity and the peace to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.** If I may be so bold as to say: If we are worked up about the election, are we worked up about it for the right reasons, so that the gospel of Jesus will go forth and save people? Because in the end, we may have the leaders that we want, but if we perish apart from Jesus and if we are not faithful to that calling, have we not missed it? We pray. We are to pray for our leaders.

Friends, you may believe that it's just little old you, one person. What difference is your prayer going to make? **But scripture is so clear that God answers prayer, and I am calling on you to pray, to pray for the nation and to establish the practice of praying for your leaders, even if you didn't vote for them.**

### II. We must vote.

That's right. You cannot opt out. I want to encourage you to vote. Scripture teaches us that those who fear God, those who live to honor and worship God, are to work for the blessing of the city, for the blessing of the nation. Daniel, living in Babylon, worked for the betterment of Babylon. **We are**

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**to use our influence, to use our voice, so that this nation will be blessed.** Proverbs 11:11: “By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is overthrown.”

If you are a follower of God, if you believe in Jesus Christ and his favor, his forgiveness, and his grace rest on your life and you have a relationship with Jesus Christ, you have an opportunity to bless others. You can speak that blessing. You can serve in a variety of ways, and you can vote a blessing. That’s right. You can use your influence to bring about good as you go into the voting booth. **Your prayerful, thoughtful exercise as a citizen, your voting, your thoughtful participation will exalt, will raise up this nation.**

John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court said this. Now, this may stretch you. It’s interesting. I’m using it deliberately because it provides somewhat of a contrast for us in the day we live. He says, “Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers.” Now, if you’re here and you’re not a Christian, you may be thinking, “I think that that pastor just read a statement that said Christians should vote in Christians.”

Well, I think there’s a context. I think John Jay in the early 1800’s was saying this. He was saying, “Listen, this country is dominated by a Christian influence. We have a right and a responsibility to vote. But what good is it if Christians don’t exercise that influence in terms of directing the course of this nation? We have a duty to do that. We have a responsibility, and isn’t it a great privilege to do so?”

We will put that in the context of now. I don’t know that we have, really, a dominant Christian influence. We could debate that. But whatever the genuine Church is, those genuine, authentic followers of Jesus Christ, whatever our numbers are, whatever the percentage is -- I’m not talking about taking political control, because that’s really not the point. I want to be bold and say it’s really not the point of scripture. **The point of scripture is that we are going to love you into the kingdom. We are going to serve you. But we are going to vote our conscience.**

It got really quiet. I want to hear an “Amen!” Do you really think you can vote the kingdom of God into the hearts of people? You know better, right? We want people to be saved. So, unapologetically we are going to vote. We are going to vote according to Christian values, according to what we believe will honor God. It’s our responsibility. It’s our duty. It’s our privilege.

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But let's not go to this ungodly place of "We are going to dominate you in a spirit that is opposed to the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

So, we are going to vote. We must vote. And now I'm going to tell you how to vote. I *cannot* tell you who to vote for. Not only is it probably illegal according to the IRS, it would be unwise. But I'm going to give you two criteria. If you think that behind these criteria is a veiled endorsement of a candidate, there isn't. You need to vote. You need to be informed, and you need to vote according to at least these two criteria.

### 1. The issues.

You need to search and see where candidates stand on the issues. You need to find out their position. You need to gain a confidence about where they stand on those issues.

Understand this, friends, please. We have a two party system and those two parties have become very polarized. They have a platform. They have positions, and they have entrenched themselves in those positions. Maybe there was a day when those parties, once people got elected, worked together for the good of the nation, but it seems like we are so polarized that no one on either side gives an inch.

I don't believe that you can take either platform and say every position of a given platform is Christian. Some issues are clearly Christian. I believe clearly, based on scripture, that abortion is wrong. We believe in the preservation of human life. All human life created in the image of God deserves dignity, deserves life. That is a value for us. It's a value that should be lived out not just on the issue of abortion, but all throughout our lifestyles and our life choices. We say that, and to women who are present here, I say that without implying that you don't have a right to your own body. I believe that you do have a right to your own body and I want to fight to defend that. I just believe in the hierarchy of rights, that the right to life supersedes the right to our own bodies.

I think we need to be a little bit more compassionate and intelligent and understanding when we have the conversation. Though we fight for life, I have never personally been pregnant. I've never carried a child for nine months. I know someone who has fairly well. This is my point: I don't want to belittle a woman's right to her own body. I hold that right as important and precious and valuable. I just believe the right to life is superior.

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Having said that, my point I'm trying to illustrate is this. There are issues where we can say, "Man, this is just so clear in scripture." There are many issues that are not clear in that way. You may hold them passionately. You may even in a secondary way through principles that you believe are biblical, connect them to those issues. But please have the wisdom to see these are not necessarily Christian and that Christians may disagree.

It may shock you, but Christians do not have to agree on gun control. We don't! I'm not saying it's unimportant. I'm not saying at all that there aren't implications that are vast for that. Size of government, immigration policy -- there are a number of things that connect to your faith, but you cannot say, "This is the revealed will of God."

Let's talk immigration for a minute. Friends, scripture says a lot about loving the immigrant. That doesn't dictate to you what your immigration policy has to be. There are various issues that are involved. But it does dictate to you that compassion must characterize your tone as you speak about the issue.

So, avoid "us" and "them" language. "Them" are created in the image of God. And we will speak compassionately even if you, for example, hold to a very conservative immigration policy. I am imploring you to do that. I am saying to you that immigration may be one of those issues we are not able to agree on. Let's have the wisdom to see though parties tell us there is only one right position and we will yield nothing. Let's as Christians not buy into that. Let's have the grace to disagree on secondary issues.

If you haven't figured it out, there is someone on the row where you are sitting who doesn't agree with you on the examples I just gave. Will you love them in Jesus Christ? Criteria #1 is Issues.

### **2. Character.**

Criteria #2 is Character. You must assess the character of the candidates. If you have been told that isn't important, you have been told something that violates a basic biblical, unavoidable principle. Like the law of gravity, this spiritual principle is unavoidable. A man or woman will use the power given them according to their character. It's unavoidable. You may find yourself in a situation where you are trying to assess and balance issues and character and you are going to have to pray and seek the Lord about which is more important. I believe I am accurate - this is my

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*“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*”

Do you see what he is saying? He is saying that Tuesday, when you vote, if you haven't voted already, and when the results come in and you are interacting with people, I'm going to apply that verse to say this: Prepare yourselves for that moment. **Prepare yourself to be ready to be perfectly gentle and courteous, kind towards other people, to not fall into the trap of getting ugly and bitter and resentful and to quarrel unnecessarily.**

The way you ready yourself is to consider this: Look at what I was without Jesus. Look at the mercy I've received. I want to conduct myself in this moment, flavored, defined, directed by that mercy, so that there will be something different about my life so that others can come to know the mercy of Jesus Christ. **Better to win the debate and lose the souls of others, or to be Christian in the debate and to see others come to Jesus Christ?**

I'm not suggesting that we retreat from speaking the truth in love, but simply saying here: We want to be different. I encourage you to identify where you are speaking in faith, in hope, and charitably. We've all probably done it some this season -- whining, complaining. I know I've done my share. But we are in a different place of engaging others. When we enter into conversations, we are really working to hear the other person, to acknowledge truth where it's there, even where we may not agree with where they are going with it.

You see, we don't need to be so combative. A simple illustration of that was just the obvious truth when we talked briefly about abortion. Surely you believe in a woman's right to her own body. Surely you understand the gravity of that right. No matter who you are here, you don't want someone forcing you to do with your body what you don't want to do. That's not a concession when you agree and you grapple with the weight of that value. It will only in the end give credibility to you saying, “Listen, I understand that, but you are talking about a *person*. The reason

## Special Messages - He Sets Up Kings

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I struggle is because I want you to have a right to your own body because *you* are a person. But this is a person over here that you are wanting to snuff out.”

Having said that, talking about it twice now this morning, let me say that I know many of us here have been touched by this issue. There is healing in Jesus Christ. There is. We need more conversations where we persuade people *not* to have abortions.

Listen very carefully. I want to suggest to you that all too often that conversation happens in a political sphere when it needs to take place in a personal sphere, where we are loving people into the kingdom and loving them in their crisis, helping them not to make a choice which will later be devastating. We need to be persuasive. Wow, this is a little bit of a rabbit, but it’s actually a rabbit I want to catch. So I’ll just say that we need to learn to be persuasive and also to speak healing to people who have been touched by that issue.

All of that in this last point is this: We can only be different if we prepare ourselves. If we wait till the moment and get drawn in to the emotion and the heat of the moment, we will not be ready. We will not have structured our hearts and organized our thoughts to be ready to share the gospel and for Christ to shine through us.

**So these are my challenges to us this morning: God is in control. He is directing. He is setting the seasons. He is setting a president in office this Tuesday. He will give you wisdom and insight. Seek the Lord. It frees us in his peace to pray, to vote, to show honor, and to prepare ourselves to shine the light of Jesus Christ. Amen?**