

Putting Politics in Its Place: Babylon (Week 5)

Discussion Guide



You can use this discussion guide on your own, with your family, or with your discipleship community (virtually or in-person). To watch or listen to this week's sermon, visit bellevuechristian.church/sermons, subscribe to the Bellevue Christian Church podcast on your preferred provider, or watch our weekly service at youtube.com/bellevuechristian.

Introduction

We're in an 8-week series called *Putting Politics in its Place* that will take us all the way to week of the election. In a time where it feels like politics has forgotten its place, we want to be a church where we put politics back in its place. And, we believe that the best way to do that is by exploring political life in specific places throughout the Bible—places like Eden, Egypt, Israel, Babylon, Rome, & New Jerusalem.

This week we're exploring the political implications of life in Babylon—specifically looking at the story of Radshach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel 3:1-30. In particular, we'll be thinking about how to spot a political idol when it's not ninety-feet tall and made of gold.

Since political conversations tend to be particularly volatile in our cultural moment, we want to go over a few guidelines every single week that can shape we talk with one another:

1. **Seek to understand before you're understood.** This means that we're practicing active listening, not just thinking about how we'll respond. Before you counter what someone is saying, try your best to repeat back what the person is saying—to *their satisfaction* ("Yes, that's exactly what I'm saying").
2. **Hold the Bible tightly and your political opinions loosely.** Instead of trying to forcefit the Bible into our preconceived political opinions, we want to approach the Bible with humility that says, "God, I give you permission to reshape any of my opinions in light of your Word." If we're not careful, it's easy to let our political opinions shape how we read the Bible—instead of the other way around. This also means we want to keep our discussion centered around the text we're actually studying.
3. **Love the person even when you don't love their idea.** And, just because someone doesn't love your idea doesn't mean they don't love you. In the end, Jesus says that people will know we are his followers not by "the uniformity of our political opinions" but by our "love for one another" (Jn. 13:35).

Questions

It's okay if you don't get through all the questions. These questions are nothing more than a launching point for moving toward everyday life like Jesus. Feel free to add additional questions of your own.

- One of the best ways to break political polarization is getting to know people who hold different views than you—so every week we'll have a get-to-know-each-other-better question. **What's the weirdest food you've ever eaten?**
- This week we're in Babylon—where God's people lived as exiles. **What makes the Jewish exiles in Babylon a good parallel for the church in America?**
- Before getting into our main story about political idolatry in Daniel 3, let's read through **Daniel 1:1-7** to get some context. **Can someone read it for us?**
 - Nebuchadnezzar spent three years training Radshach, Meshach, and Abednego in the "language and literature of the Babylonians." **What was the point of this?**
 - **How are we being formed by "the language and literature" of our own cultural moment?**
- This week we're talking about *idols*, especially political idols. **How would you define an idol?**
- Let's read through the whole story of Daniel 3:1-30. **Can someone read it for us?** As you listen, note some things that stand out to you from the text—especially things that might have political implications for us now.
 - **What are some things that stood out to you from the text?**
 - **What are some of the gods/idols we're prone to worship in our own cultural moment?**
 - Worship doesn't always look like bowing down. **What are some ways that we might worship some of these gods?**
- Political idolatry is looking to a political platform, party, or candidate to give you whatever gods you worship: security, justice, wealth, etc. Pastor Austin shared three marks that can help you spot political idolatry—even when it's not ninety-feet tall and made of gold.
 - **1) Political idols promote loyalty.** How have you seen this? What's the problem with uncritical loyalty to something?
 - **2) Political idols punish critique.** While we don't normally throw people in a blazing furnace for critiquing their preferred political party or platform, what are some ways that we "punish" people now?
 - **3) Political idols promise salvation.** How is each political platform promising salvation from some real or perceived evil in the world?
- It's easy to see political idolatry in other people, but **how have you seen political idolatry show up in your own heart?**
- There's one final mark to help you spot a political idol: *4) Political idols perish.* In fact, every empire (and its corresponding political idols) have an expiration date—except one. That's what we see in verses like Daniel 4:3, where Nebuchadnezzar says about God's kingdom, "His

kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.” **How is God’s unending kingdom *good news* in a cultural moment of political idols that pass away?**

- **What was your biggest takeaway from the sermon or discussion this week?**

Prayer

Spend some time responding to this week’s discussion in prayer—especially for this political season. If you’ve noticed some political idolatry in your own heart, take some time to repent of that in prayer.