

Putting Politics in Its Place: Israel (Week 3)

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 Israel (Part 1)—looking specifically at the reigns of Manasseh and Josiah (2 Kings 21-23). There are some major differences between politics in ancient Israel and politics in the U.S., but there's still plenty of lessons to draw out. In particular, we're looking at how political leaders at their worst and at their best point us to Jesus.

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. **If you had to leave your house immediately due to an incoming disaster and you could only take one thing with you, what would it be and why?**
- Isaac opened his sermon with the question: *Who is a political leader throughout history that you think was mostly good and who is one that you think was mostly bad?* **How would you answer that question and what criteria are you using to decide whether they're good or bad?**
- (For a bit of background on the rise of Israel's kings, you can read **1 Samuel 8:1-21** if you think you'll have time.)
- This week we looked at the story of a bad king (Manasseh) and a good king (Josiah). Let's start by looking at the reign of Manasseh. **Can someone read 2 Kings 21:1-18?** Then, let's consider some of the following questions together:
 - **What are some of the things that made Manasseh a bad ruler in the eyes of the Lord?**
 - Obviously, the requirements of our rulers aren't the same as Israel, **but what might some of the things Manasseh did back then look like in our own cultural moment?**
 - In 2 Kings 21:10-15, it says that Manasseh's led the whole nation into sin. **What's the connection between the behaviors of leaders and the behavior of the societies under their leadership—then and now?**
 - On Sunday, Isaac Eames said that bad kings remind us of how badly we need King Jesus. **How can poor leaders make us long for king Jesus?**
- Now, let's look at the reign of Josiah, Manasseh's grandson—a good king. **Can someone read 2 Kings 22:1-23:28?** (It's a long section.) Then, let's consider some questions together:
 - **What are some of the things that made Josiah a good ruler in the eyes of the Lord?**
 - **What might be some equivalents to those good things in our own cultural moment?**
 - On Sunday, Isaac Eames said that good kings make us crave King Jesus—like an appetizer of what's to come. **How are good kings like an appetizer for the coming kingship of Jesus?**
- As we mentioned earlier, we're not the same as ancient Israel. **Can we hold our rulers to the same standards as the kings in ancient Israel?** Yes, no, sometimes, maybe—and **why?**
- **Why is it so easy for Christians to look at the *same* ruler in our own cultural moment and come to radically *different* conclusions about whether they are good or bad?**
- **What are some reasons why we put so much hope in our political leaders?**
- In the weeks leading up and after the election, **what does it look like to put our hope in King Jesus—no matter who wins the election?**

- **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. Pray that the Lord shows us where we're putting too much hope in political leaders and that he helps become a community where it's obvious that our hope is in Jesus rather than our political leaders.