

The Coming Christ Comforts Changing Christians
Sermon on Daniel 7:13-14
Saint Mark's, Watertown, WI
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Introduction: Change in Government Is Disconcerting

God promised Mary on our behalf: *You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.* Amen.

Dear fellow Christians—who live in changing times:

It happens for only two months, no more than every four years, and lately only every eight: We are sort of between presidents. And it's not really comfortable, is it? First of all, if there is a crisis – whether inside our borders or outside – who is going to handle it? Secondly, that new fellow we elected, and this would be true no matter whom we elected—that new fellow we elected: will he demonstrate the character and competence to serve as our president?

Theme: The Coming Christ Comforts Changing Christians ...

The questions are a little disconcerting, aren't they? But they're nothing the Prophet Daniel didn't understand. Daniel would end up living under three whole different governments in his lifetime. He grew up in Judah—speaking Hebrew, by the way. As a young man, they moved him to Babylon, a thousand miles away; there he had to speak Aramaic, the language in which God's Word to us today is written. And later, as an old man, the Medes and Persians would take over, and Daniel would serve them.

But God gave Daniel a vision: less to comfort him, and more to comfort us. In God's Word today: THE COMING CHRIST COMFORTS CHANGING CHRISTIANS, first of all, WITH HIS IDENTITY AS GOD AND MAN, and then in second place, WITH HIS WORK AS EVERLASTING KING.

Part One: ...With His Identity as God and Man

As God's Word to us today opens up, it's about five hundred fifty-three BC. Daniel is in Babylonia. And God gives Daniel a vision. In it God makes clear: not only would Daniel live under three different governments, another couple of governments would follow those. In the vision, Daniel sees a lion; that represents the Babylonian government under which he was living. Then, he sees a bear; that represents the government of the Medes and the Persians, under which he would also serve. Then, Daniel sees a leopard, which represents the government of Greece, to follow. Then, he sees a terrifying and powerful beast; that represents the government of Rome.

Now, Daniel found this all very disturbing, and rightly so. The lion doesn't last long. The bear is unbalanced. The leopard has four heads and gets split four ways. And the other beast is just downright scary. In fact, Daniel finds out later that this government will specifically attack the Christians. Alarm must have filled Daniel's heart. "Will believers survive at all in the future? Will anyone really survive? If governments are already bad and are looking to get worse, will anyone be left to worship the true Lord?" Was there any relief from this scary picture?

Yes! In God's Word to us today, Daniel reports: *In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.*

One like a son of man – “Son of Man”: that was Jesus' favorite designation for himself. And this is a prophecy of Jesus. He was a son of man, born of the virgin Mary, human one hundred percent, as human as you and I are. It's been that way for two thousand eight years or so now, and it will always be that way.

But Jesus is more! *He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.* Now, no one can just stride into the living room of the everlasting God. No one can simply march into God's presence whenever he wants. No one can do that—except God himself, God the Son, Jesus Christ. He is not only totally human, he is also one hundred percent God, as much God as the Father and the Spirit. It's been that way from eternity, and it will be that way to eternity.

That, my friends, is the identity of the baby born in Bethlehem, whose birthday we celebrate so soon!

Now, when a new president ... makes the scene, we're filled with questions. Does he have the character to lead us? Have his life's experiences qualified him to face any crisis? Can we trust him?

But those are not issues for us with Jesus! Does Jesus have the character to lead us? Yes!—He is God and man. Have Jesus' life's experiences qualified him to face any crisis? Yes!—He is God and man. Can we trust Jesus? Yes!—He is God and man.

See, Jesus makes for us the perfect Savior. He is man: to live and to die and to live again for us. And he is God: to make all of that count for an entire world full of sinners. No matter how many of our leaders – governmental or otherwise – rise and fall, Christ has the character for us to rely on him always.

Part Two: ...With His Work as Everlasting King

Still, as long as we live in this world, we are at the whims of our earthly governments, right? – Well, yes and no, but mostly no. You see, we also live under a different kingdom.

Daniel says so. He writes of Christ: *He was given authority, glory and sovereign power.* Jesus is ruling us, actually even now. *All peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him.* That's true today of us English-speaking Americans in the USA—so long as we are Christians, trusting in Jesus. *His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.* There are no term limits for Jesus. He doesn't face “lame duck status” every four years or every eight years. Consequently, you and I face no change of government—ever.

That, my friends, is the work of the baby born in Bethlehem, whose birthday we celebrate so soon!

See, when there's a new president..., we're filled with questions. Will he be competent enough to do the work? Can he protect us from terrorists? Can he protect us from crime? Will the president's contribution to the economy help it or help ruin it?

Again, those are not issues for us with Jesus! This everlasting King is competent enough for all his work; he's almighty, after all! He can protect us from terrorists; he has already crushed that terrorist Satan underfoot. This everlasting King can protect us from crime; he has already forgiven all our crimes. And he really can – compassionately! – manage every aspect of our lives; Jesus will always be there to rule us.

See, Jesus makes for us the perfect Savior. Eternally he rules his church. He'll never die (again!). He'll never get sick. He'll never take a vacation. He'll never need sleep. No matter how many of our leaders – governmental or otherwise – disappoint us, Christ has the competence for us to rely on him always.

Conclusion: Change in Government Doesn't Bother Us

So, tonight America is sort of between presidents. And it's disconcerting, isn't it? You never really know whether a guy will be of good character and sufficient competence. And we certainly don't know what the next years will hold....

When Herbert Hoover was inaugurated in nineteen twenty-nine, no one knew the Great Depression was on the horizon. When John F. Kennedy was inaugurated in nineteen sixty-one, no one knew he'd tragically die during the third calendar year of his presidency. When George W. Bush was inaugurated eight years ago, no one knew that nine-eleven would happen.

So, what if the next four years bring a second Great Depression? Well, the Coming Christ Comforts Changing Christians! He will feed you. He will clothe you. He will shelter you—also eternally.

What if the next four years bring serious crime to our streets? Well, the Coming Christ Comforts Changing Christians! He is completely capable of protecting us. And either he will do so completely, or he'll use a little harm to draw us near to him.

And what if the next four years bring a terrorist attack? The Coming Christ Comforts Changing Christians! Either he will protect our loved ones, or he will draw his loved ones more greatly to trust in him.

In conclusion, it makes us want to worship the coming Christ—as God's Word to us today suggests. If we don't know what evils each day may bring, then we'd better begin every day listening to Jesus by reading his Word—and asking him in prayer to benefit us. If we don't know what wickedness each week may bring, then we'd better begin every week listening to Jesus by hearing his Word—and asking him in prayer to protect us. And then, under any circumstances, we can expect the eternal blessings of our everlasting King. Amen.

God promised Mary on our behalf: *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.... For nothing is impossible with God.* Amen.