

Village Guide

Current Series: The Dragon and the Sea #2

Texts: Revelation 12.10-12 and 12.18—13.1-4

Core Value Focus: Peacemaking, Transformation

Big Ideas from the Message:

- Revelation and Resistance
 - We resist evil and empire, not as conservatives or progressives, but as people committed to witnessing to Jesus Christ.
- The last book of the Bible is...
 - A Revelation *of* Jesus
 - to* John
 - for* the church
 - against* the Empire
 - during* the 1st Century
- “Revelation highlights the way worship, with its reliance on symbol, expresses and shapes allegiance. The last book of the bible is not a catalog of predictions about events that would take place two thousand years later. Rather, it is a projector that casts archetypal images of good and evil onto a cosmic screen. These images first of all speak to realities of the author's era. But Revelation also serves as a primer on how good and evil interact in every generation.” J. Nelson Kraybill, *Apocalypse and Allegiance*, 15
- Revelation is Theopoetic (“worship”) – It is a counter-liturgy that resists conforming our imaginations to the ways of the empire, then and now.
- Revelation is theopolitical (“uncivil”) – It speaks against any civil religion that uses the gods (or God) as a prop.
- Revelation has a pastoral-prophetic tone (“witness”) – It calls to put the focus on Jesus.
- It is a letter to real churches, a prophecy speaking mostly into 1st century concerns, and is in the genre of apocalyptic literature.
- As an example, 2 Esdras 11.1-6, 36-46¹ was read.
- “With apocalyptic imagery appropriated from the ‘four kingdoms’ scheme from Daniel’s visions (cf. Dan. 7:2-8:23), [this text in 4 Ezra] describes the rise of an eagle ‘beast’ bent on ruthless conquest and oppression of the entire world. A succession of dynasties and rulers are hinted at in the form of ‘heads’ and ‘wings’ that appear and disappear on the body of the eagle. What seems clear is that the ‘eagle’s’ reign of terror reflects the author’s present and impending future. Ultimately, a lionlike figure (11:37-46) representative of messianic justice (12:32-34) appears to pronounce both doom for the empire and vindication for the faithful.” Ronald Herms, *Early Jewish Literature: An Anthology*, Vol. 2, p. 390
- John’s revelation of Jesus steps into a specific storyline and genre: apocalyptic resistance literature.
- Revelation 13.1-4 was read: Dragon = the satan, Sea Beast = military power of Roman emperors, Earth Beast = promotes the imperial cult
- Revelation 12.10-12
- How is Jesus inviting you to resist the demonic forces of Empire, with him?

CONNECT (5 min)

- Question chosen for group discussion or someone pre-invited to share their story. (Optional)

HEAR (5 min)

- Spend some time in your group sharing what you recall from Sunday’s message. Give a loose theme or subject of the sermon to jumpstart everyone’s thoughts and recollections. (Example:

¹ Passage 1: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Esdras+11.1-6&version=CEB> Passage 2: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Esdras+11.36-46&version=CEB>

On Sunday, Kurt (or another speaker) started/continued our series. Who was there on Sunday? Can you recap the content for us? What struck you, and what questions did it leave you with?)

TALK (20 min)

*Note: This format is intentionally less linear in an effort to generate discussion. It is not meant to be followed left-to-right, nor do all the questions need to be asked. As a facilitator, stewarding good discussion means modeling **true listening**, which also means a conversation without an agenda. Use your discernment to see what your group needs to talk about.*

Conceptual	Practical Implications	Spiritual Formation
Scripture	Regular Life	Transformation
<p>Have you ever tried to read the book of Revelation? All the way through? Parts of it? What was that like?</p> <p>If you haven't already, read the two passages from Sunday. What stands out to you? How does framing this as apocalyptic literature help us to understand the point of passages like this?</p> <p>Revelation is a book of worship, incivility, and witness. Talk about your understand of how each of those words relates to Revelation. Discuss how they might be useful for framing discussions about this book of the Bible while keeping us cautious about over-literalizing imagery or pushing its contents too far into the future.</p>	<p>How might misreading Revelation as a magic ball predicting future events lead to real-world harm? Do you know of any stories of this sort, whether physical violence was involved or some other sorts of interpersonal/emotional damage? What would it look like to engage lovingly in discussions with someone who holds these stories as truth? Are there relational examples either past or present that you are wanting to share?</p> <p>In regular life, most of us rarely think about the invisible realm of reality (at least as the Bible assumes it). John of Patmos assumes that the Roman Empire is empowered by the Satan and demonic forces: just as all empires are. What does thinking about our life with Jesus as partially concerned with resisting invisible (and visible) forces of evil offer us when it comes to wrestling with the real-world issues we face? Relationships? Politics? Other areas?</p> <p>The phrase "they have conquered by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony" (Rev. 12.11) gets used by Christians in various ways to describe various things. Testimony is a word that also means "witness". Why is giving witness to Jesus in our approaches to resisting evil so important to the author of Revelation? How does this differ from the latest political trends?</p>	<p><i>Take a few minutes of silence to think of what your current experience of life these past couple weeks have been like. (Give a few minutes for reflection before asking the question).</i></p> <p>How do you sense that the forces of metaphorical "empire" shaped your last week? Is there something that God might invite you to resist?</p> <p>All of us are affected by living in an empire in modern day. Of course, it is the marginalized persons who feel the wrath of empire more often than its so-called "blessings". How might Jesus invite you (and this Village) to subvert one default way of living that is more informed by our culture than the way of Jesus?</p> <p>One thing that will likely come up in this series is that "empire" is something internal as well as external. Sometimes our imagination for God's good world is coopted because of the culture around us. What is one practice that you might consider that could give space for processing with Jesus, the interior spaces of your soul that might get coopted or shamed by "empire"?</p>
<p>(Space for your own questions or notes)</p>		

LIVE (20 min)

- How might this conversation impact you this next week? What are you taking with you?
- How might we pray for each other based on this conversation and other highs/lows in life?