

## Village Guide

**Current Series:** The Dragon and the Sea #4

**Texts:** Revelation 13.16-18; chapter 17; 18.4

**Core Value Focus:** Peacemaking, Transformation

### Big Ideas from the Message:

- We started by reading Revelation 17.
- Revelation is Uncivil: it exposes the lies of empire and calls for the full allegiance to Jesus.
- The last book of the Bible is...
  - A Revelation
  - *of* Jesus
  - *to* John
  - *for* the church
  - *against* the Empire
  - *during* the 1<sup>st</sup> Century
- Revelation invites followers of Jesus into a life of worship, into an uncivil view of empire, and into patterns of witness to the Slaughtered Lamb.
- Worshipping the Dragon and the Beasts
  - Dragon = the satan; Sea Beast = military/political machine of Rome; Earth Beast = promotes the imperial cult (Revelation 13)
- 666
  - We read Revelation 13.16-18
  - The Greek spelling, "Nerōn Kaisar", transliterates into Hebrew as נרון קסר or "nrvn qsr". Adding the corresponding values yields 666
  - Clearly, (as clear as one can be with a book like Revelation), 666 points back to the legacy of Nero.
- Emperor Domitian = A Second Nero
- Babylon / Woman / Prostitute / City = Rome and Roma (the goddess of Rome)
  - We know it is Rome because of intertextual cues, such as the 7 hills mentioned in 17.9, which is ancient literature always was a way to refer to Rome.
  - To use "Babylon" reminds Jewish Christians that this exile under an empire is no different than the exile of the past. Fidelity to the way of Christ is central to thriving (even if this means dying) in the midst of empire.
  - "[These sorts of prostitutes] have no need to sell themselves, but who have discovered it's a quick way to make quite a lot of money, and that if you play your cards right you can maintain a high social status, with fancy clothes, glittering jewels and the finest pearls." (NT Wright, Rev for Everyone, 150)
- Question to Ask, then and Now: Is Compromise an Option?
  - "Should we or can we go to pagan temples to do our banking or purchase meat? Should we acknowledge the sovereignty of the emperor when asked to do so at a public event in the precincts of his temple, or at another of the many events in his honor?" (Michael Gorman, Reading Revelation Responsibly, 31-32)
- Babylon holds captive our imaginations, then & now.
- "Come out of her my people, so that you don't take part in her sins and don't receive any of her plagues." (Rev. 18.4 CEB)
- Follow Jesus.
  - Give allegiance to the author of love.
  - Be part of the world God is creating.

### 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: *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.*

<i>Conceptual</i>	<i>Practical Implications</i>	<i>Spiritual Formation</i>
Scripture	Regular Life	Transformation
<p>Take time to read Revelation 17 out loud. Close your eyes if it helps you imagine the scene.</p> <p>What is your first impression upon hearing this text read out loud? What questions does it raise for you? How does the quotation from NT Wright bring some clarity?</p> <p>Now re-read Revelation 18.4. What does this sexual metaphor seek to convey to readers about life in the empire, then and now? What sort of compromises can you imagine first century Christians making? Subtle? Overt?</p>	<p>When we talk about resisting the lure of empire, one way people sometimes react is that it must be an 'all or nothing' proposition. In other words, some are tempted to be isolated from culture. Others, moving in the opposite direction, tend to adopt the dominate cultural values to an extent that makes it hard to tell how Jesus makes us different. Perhaps, one side is black and white, while the other is a bit blurry. What are ways of resisting the values of empire (that conflict with Jesus) while not going to either of these extremes?</p> <p>Have you ever stood out because of your Christian values and practices? In other words, have you ever felt like an 'outsider' because you follow Jesus? Tell us about it.</p> <p>On Sunday, Kurt talked about civil religion, both in the first century and in American history. He mentioned that July Fourth might be something to think about in light of Jesus, the Slaughtered Lamb. How does this US holiday subvert our values as Jesus followers? What are some good things that could be 'common ground' for us to celebrate with our neighbors, while holding fast to our distinctives? What about the flag salute? Ok... this should be fun ☺</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>Where do you see the lure of empire in your life, on a day to day basis? Can you imagine bringing Jesus into conversation about whatever comes to mind? What might he say?</p> <p>How does reading Revelation as though it is about the future, rather than the first century, give us a slightly different picture of God? What sort of God are you starting to see emerge as we read Revelation with its first century audience in mind?</p> <p>Kurt ended with a challenge to "Follow Jesus [and to] give allegiance to the author of love [to] be part of the world God is creating." What is something this group can be part of that gives a glimpse into the sort of world God dreams of? As we move toward Easter, how might we reflect upon and offer hope?</p>

(Space for your own questions or notes)

## 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?