

Putting Politics in Its Place: New Jerusalem (Week 8)

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 New Jerusalem—specifically looking at what political implications of John's vision of the last day of Babylon and the first day of New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation.

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 is a movie you could rewatch over and over again? What do you like about it?**
- This week we talked about the two ends of the spectrum when it comes to reading Revelation. There are those who tend over-read Revelation (looking for how everything in Revelation symbolizes something in our cultural moment) and those who under-read Revelation (thinking that Revelation has very little to say to our cultural moment). **Which end of the spectrum do you lean toward?**
- Revelation is meant to help us see through the conflicting political visions of our time. Instead of looking at the entirety of Revelation, we looked at two aspects of that vision (like two lenses in a pair of glasses): 1) The last day of Babylon, 2) The first day of New Jerusalem. Let's start with the last day of Babylon, which symbolizes every empire—including Rome and the United States. **Can someone read Revelation 18:1-24?** As you listen, take note of some things you hear.
 - **What are some things that stood out to you about the last day of Babylon?**
 - **What are some ways that seeing the last day of Babylon helps us see more clearly in our cultural moment—especially when it comes to politics?**
- Now, let's look at the first day of New Jerusalem. **Can some read Revelation 21:1-22:4?** As you listen, take note of some things you hear.
 - **What are some things that stood out to you about the first day of New Jerusalem?**
 - **What are some ways that seeing the first day of New Jerusalem helps us see more clearly in our cultural moment—especially when it comes to politics?**
- In Rev. 21:5, John says, "He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.'" **How does the fact that Jesus is (and will be) sitting on the throne put politics in its place? What are some reasons why we're so prone to forget that fact (or act like it's not true)?**
- We've been having political conversations for eight weeks. **How has this experience made you better at navigating political conversations, especially with people who think differently?**
- Think back through all the places we explored in this series: Eden (image of God and ideologies), Egypt (confrontation and collaboration), Israel / Kings (craving for King Jesus), Israel / Prophets (church with a prophetic edge), Babylon (political idolatry), Rome / Jesus (religion and politics), Rome / Paul (job descriptions of political authorities + Christian citizens), and New Jerusalem.
 - **What was your favorite sermon of the series? Why?**
 - **What were your biggest takeaways from the series as a whole?**

Prayer

Spend some time responding to this week's discussion in prayer—especially for the election and its aftermath. Pray that we as the church would submit to the results of the election and embody hope, no matter who wins.