

## Revelation Bible Study #33

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### Revelation 13:5-10

**5** And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. **6** It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. **7** Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, **8** and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. **9** If anyone has an ear, let him hear:

**10** If anyone is to be taken captive,  
to captivity he goes;  
if anyone is to be slain with the sword,  
with the sword must he be slain.

Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

### **Introduction**

The beast which rises from the sea has been identified, not as a single empire or people but the World – that is, collective humanity seeking divinity, the Christian's second enemy.<sup>1</sup> If it *were* a single entity like the Roman Empire (as historicists say) or a future persecutory kingdom (as futurists insist), then the entire sense of the text is changed, as well as how one would interpret it. For instance, we have identified the “forty-two months” as a catch-all term for the Church era, from Pentecost to the Second Advent. The historicist who thinks the beast is Rome must go into granular detail about how 1260 days is actually 1260 years or torture the number to make it terminate at the Edict of Milan or something similar. The futurist must look for whatever the most powerful “enemy” country is in the world and speculate on whether the groundwork is being laid for some new entity to arise. The preterist must demonstrate how this relates to his own reading of the Jewish war's timeline and whether Nero was truly returned in some fashion.

The typological view is not required to jump through these hoops. The Christian is blessed to know that *all* generations of believers will face persecution from the world,<sup>2</sup> because this means that he knows what to *expect*. The earthly life of a believer ought not have many surprises regarding the state of the world, the state of the Church, and the movements of history; this passage bolsters that blessing.

### **Vs.5-6**

**5** And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. **6** It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven.

The beast has a blasphemous “mouth” which is connected to the authority granted to it. This is to say, the authorities which persecute Christians will not do so without a stated reason. When the Romans put Christians to death, it was on the basis that Christians denied the divinity of Caesar and

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<sup>1</sup> The three enemies are the devil, the world, and the flesh.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Timothy 3:12

would not offer incense to his image. Believers were also denounced as “cannibals” for the dogma of the Real Presence in the Eucharist, and as debauched for holding “Agape feasts” (characterized by Roman polemicists as orgies).

This is not relegated to Rome only. When Jewish persecution of and violence against Christians occurs – even today<sup>3</sup> – it is from the notion that Christians are idolaters for worshiping Jesus. Muslim attacks on Christians are predicated on the idea that Christians are polytheists, having an essential misunderstanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. Atheistic persecution against believers relies on whatever ideology the atheists in question adhere to, since man's nature does not tolerate a vacuum of beliefs; for instance, the communist Soviet Union held that Christianity is a “bourgeois” kind of opiate used against impoverished workers, hence their establishment of the “league of militant atheists.”<sup>4</sup> Every institutionalized persecution against the Church – and every other persecution of us, frankly – has a *reason* stated, and those reasons are all slanderous, predicated on false assumptions about the faith. This is not surprising, because the devil who gave the blasphemous mouth to the beast is the father of lies.<sup>5</sup>

## Vs.7-8

7 Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, 8 and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

The world as enemy of the Church is truly something which spans the entirety of the earth. All nations, states, races and cultures will be affected by its “makeover” by the devil. It is for this reason that Christians have been attacked, killed, driven into hiding, imprisoned, and robbed in every place wherein missionaries begin to proclaim the Gospel. Yet the word “conquer,” translated from νικάω,<sup>67</sup> may be too strong of a translation given the context of the chapter. In the modern sense, to “conquer” something is to win total control over it; this has not happened to the saints. We must recall that the woman who represents the Church is placed in a *wilderness* for the same period that the beast has authority, meaning that she is still being nourished during these difficult times despite the troubles being inflicted upon her. Since both periods end at the point of Christ's Return, this passage is *not* contradicting Christ's promise that the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church,<sup>8</sup> or His promise to be with His disciples forever.<sup>9</sup> It would be more appropriate to say that the Church is *subdued*, or that an apparent victory<sup>10</sup> is gained by the world in persecuting Christians to the point of going into hiding.

The eighth verse may appear, at first blush, to verify a Calvinistic understanding of predestination. After all, whoever's name is not written in the book of life is found worshiping the beast itself. This worship is *unwitting*, as many of them believe they are worshiping ancestral deities or “allah” or the Jewish facsimile of the true God, or in the case of atheists and agnostics they believe they aren't worshiping anything at all. Nonetheless, they *are* worshiping, whether they like the thought of it or not. The elect, however, do not; being in humanity's most starkly contrasted minority, Christians are the only ones going “against the crowd.” However, this is not a sign that their predestination is

3 <https://www.12news.com/article/news/crime/pastor-william-bill-schonemann-murder-suspect-adam-sheafe-admits-crime-jailhouse-interview-new-river-arizona-operation-first-commandment-coconino/75-d81b56a8-f327-4aa8-b755-dfa3f75cc42c>

4 <https://history-maps.com/story/History-of-the-Soviet-Union/event/League-of-Militant-Atheists>

5 John 8:44

6 Transliterated “Nikao,” Strong's #3528

7 <https://biblehub.com/greek/3528.htm>

8 Matthew 16:18

9 Matthew 28:20

10 Νικάω has a connotation of victory.

unconditional – that is, being chosen for no discernible reason as calvinism proclaims. They are *believers*, and their having been written in the book of life is predicated on this very fact; since Christians are justified by faith alone and not by election, their elect status is determined in light of faith (*intuitu fidei*) which God foresaw before time began. As this broaches a topic with a marvelous amount of depth and breadth, this is all we shall say concerning it for the time being. For the moment, suffice it to say that the book of life is Christ Himself.

## Vs.9-10

9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear:

10 If anyone is to be taken captive,  
to captivity he goes;  
if anyone is to be slain with the sword,  
with the sword must he be slain.

Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

The phrase “if anyone has an ear, let him hear” is intended here to command the reader's attention. The pronouncement which follows is clear, concise, and completely free of any figure of speech which would require special interpretations. Without mincing any words, St. John informs us that there will be captivities and executions – namely for believers. His tone suggests a “so be it” attitude which he (and *we*) must have. Here, St. John hearkens back to the admonition of Christ that believers “count the cost” when deciding to follow Him.<sup>11</sup>

To our great relief, we must recognize that this text is not promising that this *will* happen to *every* Christian. Violent persecution was sporadic in the first few centuries of the Church, and in her catacomb years she was often subject to times of peace. In the Ottoman Empire, there were periods in which Christians were permitted to live in peace, so long as they paid a special tax to the government for being Christians. Nevertheless, every believer must be prepared for such a time that arrests and martyrdoms may occur once more.

The call for endurance is repeated in Revelation 14:12, after the reader is promised an end point to the persecutions and to witness punishment against the enemies of God. The Christian is exhorted to *trust* that God has a plan with everything that is happening, and that His permitting the attacks on the Church serve a greater purpose. We are to trust that He will make things right beyond the point of our satisfaction just as He did the martyrs under the altar in Heaven.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Luke 14:25-33

<sup>12</sup> Revelation 6:9-11