
Into Thy Word Bible Study in Revelation

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Revelation 13:5-10: “The Beast is Worshiped”

General idea: The beast demands worship from and declares war upon the faithful as people continue to worship this beast, uncaring and un-convicted of the Real, Holy God. As this beast blasphemes God, he is waging intense war on the believers, counterfeiting our Lord and deceiving multitudes of people. In this, he is persecuting them and turning what is good to be evil and what is evil to be as good, twisting, manipulating and misleading; however, those who follow are still responsible for the choices they make. Thus, their names are not on His Lamb's Book of Life. We should all take heed of what God says; those who follow evil will have what is coming to them, but there is still opportunity for repentance, to know and Worship the One True God, and endure in faith for Him.

For a limited time, it seems that God allows this beast to do as he pleases, slandering, causing havoc, and waging war against the faithful. People worship this beast, callous and uncaring of the Real, Holy God. We do not know why; all we can do is trust and be prepared, which is John's message to us: *stand firm in faith and do not be carried away with trivialities or by intense persecution.*

Vs. 5-10, Contexts: This passage is about our allegiance; whom do we trust and on what hope do we place our life. Will it be good or evil? Will our faith be in Christ or will we allow ourselves to be misled, seeking the desires of the flesh rather than faith and our Lord Jesus Christ?

The book of life, or Lamb's Book of Life, is a powerful and important theme for what we trust and have hope for, especially for those under persecution and oppression. It is basically a *divine ledger* that is first mentioned in Exodus 32:32-33 (Psalm 69:28; Dan. 12:1; Mal. 3:16; Rev. 17:8). It is a register of all the citizens in the Kingdom of Heaven, the register of the elect who will escape God's wrath (Rev. 21:27). Those whose names are not in the book of Life are cast into hell (Rev. 20:15). Our names were written in the book before the foundations of the world (Rev. 17:8), and when one comes to faith in Christ, he or she is among those who were purchased by the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 3:5; 5:9). Remember, God is outside of time and space, so we have to stretch our minds a bit. It was written long before we were born, and it is “sealed” when our faith become real and impacting. Some say it is erased when we are called but never respond, while others say it was never written if one never comes to faith. The Armenians see it as God looking through the corridors of time and making His decision. The Reformed position is that God elects us for His purpose, but does not damn us (double predestination); we damn ourselves as “our choice becomes His preordained degree.” (St. Augustine). The Bible teaches both, but the emphasis is on God's sovereignty as clearly spelled out in Romans—it is to His purpose. If

it were just about what we would do, then the work of salvation would be based on what we have done and not on what Christ has done; the work of Christ would then be pointless (a pure Armenian position.) The Book of Life was also a symbol of comfort and security for the early Christians who were being persecuted; they could look to their promise and reward and remember that this life is temporary and only a training ground for what is to come. We need to understand that God has a guarantee for us and this life is only a shadow where we learn character and maturity; we are not made for this world, but for the one to come. We are to learn and grow through all that is given to us and make the most of our lives, but our true home and reward is still to come (Rev. 17:8; 20:12 –27). To have one's name erased from this book would seem a loss of our citizenship in Heaven due to renouncing of faith or an unpardonable sin. We get this from our English readings of the passage (Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; Phil. 4:3); however, it is more to the indication that the name was never present. "Erased" was a metaphor in the Hebrew language and culture meaning it never happened, whereas in our language, it means it was once there and now it is gone. It is a basic misunderstanding of Greek into English, but Greek scholars are still in debate over this trivial and minor area.

Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Was given:* This calls attention to the best as being subordinate to Satan, and Satan is subordinate to God; God is still in control (Greek is passive)!
- *Forty-two (42) months:* A metaphor for a limited time of unrestrained impiety, evil, and/or oppressions. This is symbolic, referring to grace, that He is still there and sets His limits of what persecution will take place, by His grace. *See Revelation 11:1-6 study for more info* (Dan. 7:25; 9:27; 12:7-12; Rev. 11-13).
- *Proud words and blasphemies:* This too is a contrast, as Satan is proud and Christ is the Servant leader; Satan blasphemes while Christ edifies and praises God (Heb. 2:12).
- *Exercise his authority'* God allows, but establishes limits for His purpose that we do not fully know, pointing to Daniel 7:21-22 and the antichrist-like figure or representation, meaning *opposing Christ*. It is perhaps a reference to perhaps Nero and/or Domitian who greatly persecuted the early Christians, actually setting them on fire to light their gardens at night.
- *Blaspheme God:* refers to pride and the proud mouth. Also an image of Antiochus Epiphanes, 215–163 BC, who was a Greek ruler and a madman who greatly oppressed the Jews, tried to wipe them out, partly destroyed Jerusalem, and mocked God while demanding that he be worshiped. Most Jewish scholars believe this is who Daniel was warning about (Dan. 7:8-25; 11:36; 1 Macc. 1:24; 41-43).

- *Make war against the saints:* The contrasting images of war and peace; on one side, Satan as a warrior leader who brings war; on the other side, the great, divine warrior Christ, who brings peace, both battling it out. The war is the persecution of those who refuse to worship what is false or evil. The good news here is that despite the persecutions, Christians of faith have victory as the prayers of the faithful that reach heaven are used to finally defeat evil and the beast (Ex. 15:3-11; Is. 59:16-18; 63:1-6; Dan. 7:1-8; Hab. 3:3-15; Zech. 9:13-16; 14:1-5; Rev. 12:17; 19:11-21).
- *Every tribe... all inhabitants:* The contrast is to pledge our allegiance to Christ by His sacrifice, or to Satan by his deception. (See Revelation 5: 8-14 study). When we are in Christ, we are part of a greater Kingdom than one Satan can mimic or link us to.
- *Will worship the beast:* The emphasis is the intimidation and persuasion to worship what is false, and people responding out of ignorance or desire. Neither is an excuse.
- *The Book of Life:* This is basically the heavenly roster of the saints who have been found by Christ as faithful, who received their election, and who persevered. All ancient cities had rosters of those who lived there, and those added and expelled, like a census. Like a city roster, *the Book of Life* contains the names of all the people who are currently living. When a person dies, if he or she has claimed Jesus as Lord, has received his or her election, has let it become rooted in him or her, and has been faithful and obedient remains in this book. All others are blotted out. This also refers to predestination. Once our names are in His book and we are saved by His grace, we are secure in our faith and have eternal security (Ex. 32:32-33; Psalm 69:28; Dan. 12:1; Rom. 9:19-21; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:1-6; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12-15; 21:19, 27).
- *Was slain/Lamb slain:* Satan's attempt to mock the character and work of the Lamb who died to purchase the sins of those whom God has chosen. Satan can try to mimic but he can't reproduce Christ's work or take our salvation away (Is 53:7; John 1:29, 36; Rev. 1:18; 2:8; 17:8).
- *He who has an ear, let him hear:* This is perhaps a warning to the seven churches that God means what He says (Ezek. 33:30-32; James 1: 21-27; 2 Pet. 1: 3-11)! This also means that God fulfills His promises. Do you take His Word seriously, learning and applying it? If not, why not?
- *Go into captivity:* A warning to the barbarians, Romans, and other persecuting powers that invaded the Jews and threatened the Christians. This is also an image of judgment, and a warning against rebellion and the consequences for our own bad actions and decisions (Jer. 15:2; 43:11; Rev. 14:11-12).

- *If anyone is to be killed with the sword:* Here, the beast forces worship, whereas a Christian worships God out of gratitude for who He is and what He has done. If the faithful do not comply, the beast kills them, as this has taken place countless times on countless occasions. The comfort we have is that our martyrdom does not mean the end; it means victory for us and Christ (Rev. 6:9-11; 19:11-21).
- *Patient endurance and faithfulness:* This is the call to remain faithful and keep our trust in Christ no matter what comes our way in sufferings or the temptations of Satan. We are to focus on His Way, even in persecution and stress. This theme is prominent in Revelation (Matt. 26:51-54; 2 Cor. 10:4; 1 Pet. 2:19-24; Rev. 1:9; 2:2-3, 13, 19; 3:10; 6:11; 13:10; 14:12; 16:15; 18:4; 20:4; 22:7, 11, 14).

Thoughts and Applications:

We also see this beast fight against God and the righteous people of the faith. Yet for some reason, God lets him continue. This may seem strange; why would God allow evil? But, we have to understand that there is a greater eternal purpose that we do not always see (Heb. 11:35-40). This beast is a fake and a forger, taking what is hideous and convincing us that it is attractive. We must see through the ways of evil and its many imitations and implications, and not be deceived. Satan will fall and every knee will bow; so, whatever we follow, if it is not Christ, it is not only temporary but it is deadly to us as well (Phil. 2:10).

The point John makes is that God wants us prepared so that our eyes are opened to how Satan and evil work and his repetitive patterns so we do not fall for them. Spiritual warfare tends to be more of a battle of our will than its metaphysical dilemmas. The bottom line is that God is still in control, even in persecutions and oppressions! Our call is that no matter what comes to us, we are not to be surprised; rather, we are to be prepared by faith.

The question is, *are you attracted to what is fake and deceiving ignoring who and what Christ is?* You may not worship the beast, but what is first in your life? Is it righteousness, seeking faith and maturity, growing in character? Or, do you want what is convenient, what looks good, what is satisfying and appealing, and what is trendy, regardless of whether or not it is good for others around you? This applies to how we run our churches; do we do so to please our people, or do we do it to please Christ? Do you capitulate to gossip and seek to please who gives the most money, or do you seek His precepts and instruct your people about His Way, regardless of what they may feel, and, of course, always acting in love?

Remember, this beast wants people to be terrorized into submission; in contrast, Christ offers grace and forgiveness, with love as His motivator!

The Four Prevailing Views

The Preterist view: They see this passage as the cause and effect of Emperor Worship, which was prevalent with most of the Roman Emperors. If you did not worship the Emperor, you lost your land and often, your life too. The Jews and Christians were the only groups who refused this practice and that is why they were singled out for persecution. Worship also meant allegiance and loyalty, which was not the problem; it was when they said they were god, or a god, that caused dissention (John 19:15; Rom. 12:1-2). Thus, the antichrist figure was also predominate through Roman history as opposing Christ, His people, and waging war—all things that took place then and continues to do so in various means today. Thus, this passage is about Nero and the other Roman persecutions against the Early Church. *Given power* is seen as God's sovereignty, and *make war* as the devil's ways and attacks on the believers as well as Nero's attacks and persecutions to the faithful. *Forty-two (42) months* was seen as short time for God's judgments and/or a literal time of attack on Jerusalem. It is interesting to note that Nero's attack and siege on Jerusalem actually lasted 42 months—November 64AD to June 68AD.

The Futurist view: They see this passage as the second half of the Great Tribulation as expressed by this phrase, *42 months*. Most see this as a Europe possessed by Satan, who leads a revived Roman Empire (This is exactly what Hitler and Mussolini did and why this view saw him as the antichrist at that time), who creates peace in the holy land, and becomes a world ruler until Christ returns and defeats him. (As thrilling and exciting, and could possibly be probable, as self fulfilling, it is not found either in this passage or from the rest of Scripture.) *Blaspheme* is seen as Daniel's "pompous words" and self-exulting words of the antichrist (2 Thess 2:4). *Let him hear* is seen as a warning to the seven churches and/or to us today. *Captivity* is usually seen as Satan being defeated by Christ. *Endurance* is seen as a call to the Church to be patient; God is in control and will win.

The Idealist view: They see this passage as the command and control of evil governments who seek to subjugate and subvert their people, such as Nazi Germany and Communism. Governments have the right to expect loyalty, but not to seek what belongs to God alone (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-14). This is also about the influence of Satan as an ageless principle that evil's influence and power are not absolute or unconditional like God' love and grace are. *Forty-two (42) months* is seen as the siege of Nero against Jerusalem. *Authority* is seen as the persecutions to the faithful over the centuries, and *captivity* to some is being caught up in evil while others see this as the fate of the beast.

The Historicist view: They see this passage as symbols and procedures of evil. *Blaspheme* is seen as one making him or her self equal with God or deceitfully convincing others that he or she is God. Usually in this camp, the Catholic Church and its papacy are the targets of being evil, because of the tribulations

and persecutions of the faithful over the centuries, with very specific charges for most medieval popes. *Forty-two (42) months* is the span of 1260 years seen in chapter 11, with the time period of conflict being between the faithful and the apostate, medieval Catholic Church.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive Bible Study](#)):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. Why do you suppose Christians are attracted to charismatic leaders with little substance rather than leaders who disciple and convict?
2. Would people in your church rather have a good, charismatic pastor who makes them feel happy and motivates but does not teach well, or a pastor who is a great teacher and convicts and challenges people but has a less than desirable personality? Who would Christ rather have leading your church? Why?
3. How would you contrast this beast with Christ's offers of grace, forgiveness, and love? How does being terrorized help motivate people to submit to something they normally would not do?
4. Why do you suppose some Christian groups use this passage to worry and terrorize Christians? Does God want us to worry?
5. Why does the beast demand our worship? What are the causes and motivations for humans to do this? Why do this beast/ Satan / evil people declare war upon the faithful?
6. What are the causes and motivations for a person who claims Christ as Lord to worship this beast? How would he or she rationalize it? Could he or she do it with sincere motivations or would he or she be uncaring and un-convicted of the Real, Holy God?

7. What are the causes and motivations for the beast to blaspheme God? How and why would he think he could get away with it?
8. Can you give an example of someone turning what is good into evil? How do such people rationalize evil as good? How and why do people buy into the twisting, manipulating, and misleading agendas? Do you feel that those who follow evil, even though they were duped or tricked, are still responsible for their choice? Why?
9. Can you give an example of counterfeit praise? If someone who is evil takes praise that is meant for God and twists it, what would it look like? What about misplaced motives in some of our worship leaders who seek entertainment and praise for themselves and not honor for God; are they *antichrist*-like?
10. Why do you suppose that God allows this beast (or evil in general) to do as he pleases, slandering and causing havoc as he wages war against the faithful? (This was Job's lament.)
11. Whom do you trust and upon what do you place your life? Is it good or evil? Is your faith in Christ, or will you allow yourself to be misled, seeking the desires of the flesh and not faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? What can you do about it?
12. What are some examples of people being attracted to the conniving and scheming of evil or bad agendas and pride and not to the centrality of Christ? What can you and your church do to make sure motives and agendas are as Christ centered as possible?