

Revelation

*Part Thirty-Eight
He Was Given a Mouth
(Revelation 13:5-10)*

With Study Questions

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And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. ⁶ Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. ⁸ All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. ⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear. ¹⁰ He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints (Revelation 13:5-10).

Introduction

We have all heard the adage, *the pen is mightier than the sword*. That might have been true in 1839, when the phrase was coined, but I am not sure it carries the same impact today, where reading has fallen on hard times. It would appear a more timeless truth is found in the words of James regarding, not the pen, but the tongue:

Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell (James 3:5, 6).

The “**beast**,” who we understand to be the Roman Empire or, more specifically, its current Caesar, is seeking to subdue the unqualified and unconditional allegiance of the souls of those people under their care. This beast is not satisfied to be a minister of God, which is his appropriate post

(Romans 13:4). The beast must supplant the true God in order to satiate his quest for power. We should not think this is unique to first century Rome.

It was not in the first, but the 19th century that we saw yet another beastly exertion of a political/economic system which lingers to this very day. In a speech given in 1953 at the Washington State Parent Teachers Association, the 1150 guests heard the following:

In a declared war against morals, ethics, and spiritual values among the people, Marx and his associates resolved to completely eliminate the worship of the Almighty among men. Heinrich Heine declared: "Our hearts are filled with compassion for it is...Jehovah Himself who is making ready to die." And Nietzsche, so successful in the atheistic campaign, said: let the "death of God" be boldly proclaimed. Ludwig Feuerbach announced that: "The turning point of history will be the moment man becomes aware that the only God of man is man himself."¹

Of course, this philosophy (which was a result of German religious higher critics and their tacit dismissal of biblical Christianity) got legs in the twentieth century, spurring on a bloodbath that no set of criminals or gangsters could ever hope to equal.

Why was this speech given at a PTA meeting? Perhaps the answer is found in the words of J. Gresham Machen, the brilliant theologian and founder of our denomination, who just thirty years earlier (1922) said:

When one considers what the public schools of America in many places already are – their materialism, their discouragement of any sustained intellectual effort, their encouragement of the dangerous pseudo-scientific fads of experimental psychology – one can only be appalled by the thought of a commonwealth in which there is no escape from such a soul-killing system.²

¹ W. Cleon Skousen, *The Naked Communist*. P. 290.

² J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, (Wm. B. Eerdmans) p. 13.

Let us be resolved to embrace the overwhelmingly common message found in Scripture, that the church (Christians) are in a battle for the souls of men and women. Let us be reminded that the weapons of this warfare include things like righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, the Spirit, the word of God, prayer, love, truth, and the casting down of self-inflated and carnal arguments. It is this battle that that the first century church is being warned of.

And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. ⁶ Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. (Revelation 13:5, 6).

A Blasphemous Mouth

The secular podium would become a pulpit (the more religious aspect of this battle is found in the second beast in the latter half of the chapter). The beast would speak “**great things**” (which does not mean ‘good things’) that would include “**blasphemies**” (reviling and denigrating slander against God) Please understand the order of events.

Whether it’s first century Rome, current day China, or the trends of the west, the Christian faith will be allowed, only to the extent that it knows its place. Christians can gather and pray, and worship unmolested by the surrounding world. But the moment the Chinese pastors began to preach that there is to be a King above all kings, they found little tolerance in their environment.

It was the “**are you a king?**” questions that came to the fore in the crucifixion of Christ (John 18:37). Today’s Christian should expect no less of a conflict if we are willing to declare, “**you say rightly that [He is] a king.**” He is “**King of kings**” (1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 17:14; 19:16; Acts 17:7).

The specific issue that the early church was soon to deal with would last forty-two months. History teaches us that the Neronic persecution of Christians last forty-two months, from AD 64 to June of AD 68 at the death of Nero. We are not given the prophetic insight to know how long certain persecutions or difficulties might last for us. But that is not to say that we are not called to follow the same faithfulness John calls his readers to have in the first century. Please remember, this portion of Scripture reaches its climax with the words,

**Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints
(Revelation 13:10 NASB).**

Let us not underestimate the difficulty for these first century Christians, as well as our brothers and sisters in Christ this very day. They are surrounded by, and bombarded with, great swelling words of darkness. Let us be aware, but not discouraged, but such activity.

Just this past couple of weeks I was sent a video of graduation speech from an ostensibly Christian university where the speaker (a female athlete) was given an honorary doctorate then proceeded to very aggressively teach the graduates that the perspicuously biblical doctrines regarding marriage and the protection of innocent life are misguided.³

I also viewed a popular news commentator hurling profanities against God in her tirade for abortion. She spoke of how strongly she feels and repeatedly made it clear that she doesn't care what you believe or what your Bible says. Of course, she assumes that we care what she believes. Although she never conveys the source of her beliefs.

I don't wish to labor this, since I am mainly concerned here that we grasp our environment (to the extent that it mirrors the environment of those first century churches), but it is of note that she was adamant about supporting our rights to exercise our religion. Yet laced throughout her speech was clear message that religion can be exercised provided it remain cloistered within its own institutional walls. She would have little tolerance for Christian who, in obedience to Christ, proclaims His wisdom from the "housetops" (Matthew 10:27), or, as John the Baptist, call out a political leader for their unlawful or immoral behavior (Matthew 14:5). There were hundreds of comments. Every single one in support of her.

Heroic Inactivity?

We should also be aware that there are massive movements within the church that would happily accommodate her (and many like her) demand that Christians remain in their hovels. Pastors, who I would agree with on a great many things, have fallen into this trap of isolationism and

³ Abby Wambach, LMU graduation speech

commitment to cultural irrelevance. Just this week, in a periodical written for Reformed pastors and elders, were these words:

The only drama in this story (speaking here of a book he might write) would be the heroic resistance of pastors and congregations who refused to mobilize their churches for domestic and international crusades for righteousness.⁴

So, inactivity in terms of seeking to ameliorate the world in which we live, is now viewed as heroic. This seems a far cry from the call of the New Covenant where **“all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him (Christ)” (Daniel 7:14)**. I am not arguing here that the church, as an institution, should be a political arm of government. But I am arguing that Christians, in their obedience and service to Christ, should be a globally transforming entity.

But be warned. It is in our efforts to be just that, that we will become the objects of blasphemy. The attack is upon **“God,” “His tabernacle,”** and those who **“dwell in heaven.”** Paul taught that our true citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20), so this may be referring to that. Either way, the attack is all-out in terms of the truth.

But here it might be added, that if we have a keen sense of our true citizenship in heaven, the blasphemies of this world, (which are designed to either quell our behavior or motivate us to join the darkness), will have little success. May our hearts be strengthened in this as we observe what God has granted us to endure.

It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. ⁸ All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:7, 8).

Contra Mundum

There are times when it is evident that the kingdom of God advances. Acts records how thousands were converted, and history has given ample

⁴Richard Gamble reviewing a book by David VanDrunen, *Ordained Servant*, Volume 30, 2021., P. 93 (

evidence of God's promise to Abraham (that his descendants be as numerous as the stars-Genesis 15:5) being fulfilled. Yet there are also times when the church appears to have been overcome. No doubt, during this three and a half years of Neronian persecution, that church would feel as if it had lost.

That the beast would have authority over "**every tribe, tongue, and nation**" would have meant, to the reader, the entire world (which at that time meant the Roman Empire). If you lived outside of Rome, you were thought not to live in the world at all. Paul, in his writing to Rome, indicates as much.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world (Romans 1:8).

Clearly, the faith of the Christians in Rome wasn't be spoken of by the Pre-classic Mayans of first century South America. We need to be careful not to read our Bibles anachronistically (applying all of today's meanings to the first century).

The church would fall into a period of great trial. It would appear as if the whole world would be against them. To be faithful would mean being faithful *contra mundum* (against the world). But in this feeling of being a minority, let the eyes of our hearts dart to who was actually engaged in this massive satanic worship service. It is those...

...whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

We move from the difficulty of a three-and-a-half-year period of persecution to that which is "**from the foundation of the world.**" There is a bit of debate as to what the "**foundation of the world**" modifies. Is it Christ slain or the writing of the names? Both positions I think to be acceptable, if by Christ slain, we mean the Father's determination to slay His own Son, which makes it as solid as if already done.

The ministerial point here is, I think, that in our battles with our earthly surroundings, we must always keep in mind the eternality of our citizenship in heaven. We do this not as an escape of our current worldly citizenship, but as a source of strength in our current citizenship. Not to

mention the goal of transforming the world. After all, the prayer is, **“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).**

If anyone has an ear, let him hear. ¹⁰ He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints (Revelation 13:9, 10).

Perseverance

As we have seen numerous times, the reader is called to have a listening ear. The message here, the message of all of Scripture, is not designed for our musings, but that we might be doers of the word (James 1:25). The world engages in its own type of warfare. It is a warfare that includes leading others into captivity and the brutal overtaking of the vulnerable. Like the kingdoms referenced earlier (and in Daniel), they took power and they lost power.

But there is a kingdom built upon love, grace, mercy and blood and power of Christ. That kingdom and only that kingdom is the **“one that shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:14)**. It is faith in that King and in His kingdom, that we are called to persevere.

Questions for Study

1. Define and evaluate religious, economic, social and political systems and climates. How were the events surrounding the first century church similar to other events in history and even today (pages 2, 3)?
2. What are the weapons we are to use in the battle with darkness (pages 3, 4)?
3. Why would authority figures blaspheme the name of God (page 4)?
4. How are Christians to respond to the lost world by which they are surrounded (pages 4, 5)?
5. Where is the Christian's true citizenship and what should that produce in our lives (page 6)?
6. Who is worshiping the devil and how do you know it does not include you (pages 6, 7)?
7. According to verse 10, what is John highlighting in this passage (page 8)?