

RCC in the Word
Week of December 10
Revelation 12

Second Corinthians 2:11 reminds us, “that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.” It is a sobering reminder, one which we too often neglect, that all people have a supernatural enemy who aims to ruin our lives, through the use of pleasure and pain and everything in between. His aims for each of us is different, but his desire is the same, to keep us from worshipping the Lord God. We see in our readings this week that the Bible calls this enemy, “the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.” Elsewhere in Scripture, he is described as “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31) and “the god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4). He is our “adversary [who] prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

To help us all resist this enemy (1 Peter 5:9, James 4:7), give him no opportunity to decide us (Ephesians 4:27), and stand against his schemes (Ephesians 6:11), I thought it would be helpful to remind us all of the kind of enemy that we face. We find such a description in Revelation 12. In this chapter, we find at least five characteristics of Satan:

1) He falsely claims sovereignty - verse 3. The seven diadems on the heads of the dragon represent the devil’s false claims of sovereign authority. This is in direct opposition to the true King of kings and Lord of lords who also wears many diadems (Rev 19:12). Compare the contrasts between the description of Satan in chapter 12 and the Lord in chapter 19. This contrast is intentional and highlights the fact that Satan is a liar with no sovereign power in comparison to the Lord who is truth and the sovereign king over all.

2) He persecutes the forces of God - verse 4. The image of the dragon’s tail sweeping away a third of the stars and casting them to the earth is taken from Daniel 8:10, which describes an end time enemy persecuting the forces of God. Whether the stars represent angels or saints, or both, the attack of dragon shows that he opposes those faithful to God. His aim is to attack and afflict.

3) He opposes God’s plan - verse 4. This refers to all the devil’s efforts to tempt Christ during his ministry and to kill him, from his birth until the end of his ministry (for example: Herod’s massacre of the infants and Luke 4:28–30). At the cross it appeared that the devil had finally succeeded, but the resurrection snatched Jesus from the power of death wielded by the serpent. We see then in verse 5 that his attempts to destroy Jesus failed.

4) He is a warrior, verses 7-17. In many of these verses we see that Satan was and is aligned against the people of God. We see that he fought against angels, he fought against our brothers of old, he fought against Christ, he has fought

against the church, and he fights against us. He ceaselessly attempts to make war with God's people.

5) He is defeated, verses 10-12. Michael and the angels defeated Satan in heaven (verses 7-9), but the decisive redemptive-historical victory was accomplished in the resurrection of Christ. In verse 11, we see that Christ's victory is the basis for our conquering over our enemy. However contrary it may seem to our experiences and what we see around the world, Satan really is a defeated enemy. And this shows one of the main themes of Revelation, that the suffering of Christians is not a sign of Satan's victory, but of the saints' victory over Satan because of their belief in the triumph of the cross. All believers, past, present and future, "have overcome him [the devil] because of the blood of the Lamb." The death of Jesus is the ultimate basis for our ability to "overcome."

As we learn who our enemy is, what his desire is for us, and his actions intended for us, we can more successfully stand against him. And because of Christ, we can indeed stand against him! James reminds us to "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you!" (James 4:7). We do that by what John has taught us in Revelation 12, "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony." We embrace the victory of Christ by the shedding of his blood at the cross and his resurrection. We speak the truth of God in faith. We do not fear death, for death has been defeated. And in the end, we will triumph and rejoice for eternity in the presence of God!!

-Written by Nathan Renfro