

The Devil is a Loser

by Bryan Gibson

With so much figurative language in the Book of Revelation, it's helpful to imagine the proceedings as a play, with the actors clothed in very elaborate costumes. Picture on stage now a great, fiery red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. He looks menacing enough, but then you see him take his tail and sweep a third of the stars from heaven to earth. This powerful dragon is standing before a woman who is about to give birth, ready to devour the child as soon as it is born (12:3-4). You're already feeling sorry for the mother and child, because you just know this child doesn't stand a chance.

But, this was no ordinary child. The male child this woman bore was Jesus the Christ, "who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron" (12:5). That's the very thing the dragon, or the devil (12:9) was trying to prevent, but he failed, and he failed miserably. Jesus was eventually put to death; but ultimately He "was caught up to God and His throne" (12:5). Look at the declaration in v. 10: "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come..." The devil and his angels lost this spiritual battle, and they were cast out of heaven (12:7-9).

Picture this same menacing dragon, but now with "great wrath" (12:12), to the point of being "enraged" (12:17). He failed to devour Christ, so now he is going after the followers of Christ, persecuting them (12:13), or making war with them (12:17). He won't be happy unless he can destroy the church, and he certainly has powerful weapons at his disposal (12:15). But he is still no match for the faithful followers of Jesus Christ. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death" (12:11). Chalk up another loss for the devil.

In the context of the Book of Revelation, the particular agent used by Satan against the people of God was the Roman Empire, with its associated emperor worship (see the two beasts of chapter 13), and its filthy immorality (see the description of the "great harlot" in chapters 17-19). The devil knew that he only had a "short time" (12:12) to wage this war against the saints, and indeed in time the Lord did come and destroy this immoral, oppressive government (see especially chapters 15-19). The devil and his allies were no match for Christ and the "two-edged sword" coming out of his mouth (19:15, 21; 1:16). Have you ever seen a movie or play, where the hero rode in on a white horse to save the day? That is the very picture painted in 19:11-21. His people had cried out for help (6:9-11), and He came to their rescue.

The devil is a loser, plain and simple, but he does win some individual battles. During this early oppression of the saints by the Roman Empire, there were some who cowered in the face of persecution; there were some who became defiled by the immorality around them; there were some who quite simply did not persevere to the end. They let the devil win, and that's a shame, because they certainly had the resources to defeat him. Don't let Satan win the battle for your soul. Keep him on a losing streak.