

"Look Out, It's Reigning"

[based on Ezekiel 34:11-16]

We have all looked into the Book of Revelation. To no one's surprise, light is again a central theme and a very real presence in the Throne Room of God.

It is from that Throne Room that the Heavenly Father sent His Son to be born to a Jewish virgin named Mary, and to come to earth as the **Messiah of Israel, the Light of the World, the Morning Star** and the **Saviour of the world**. Our Lord God wants the world to embrace Jesus as its King. Jesus came as a King to the Israelites, but was rejected by them.

We who follow Jesus know for certain, that He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. However, this earth is not yet under His Reign. Our world still worships other gods and gives them a place above that of Jesus. Even our Jewish cousins continue to reject Jesus as God and King.

It was for this reason that our Heavenly Father put a plan in motion that was thought of before the creation of the world. You see, Heaven itself had become a victim to sin when the most beautiful and powerful Angel decided to rebel against God and to seek God's Throne for himself. That angel was Lucifer or Satan as we have come to know him.

In the Book of Revelation, we read about a war that took place in Heaven, in which Satan was cast out...

This from **Revelation 12:7-9** "Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him."

Wow, did **he** come tumbling down!...

A few years ago, a multiple gold medal winner from the Summer Olympics was arrested for drunk driving. When I heard the news, I wondered why someone with a stellar sports career and million-dollar endorsements would jeopardize all that, for a little late-night partying?

The answer is **compromise!** When the athlete compromised his strict training rules by drinking alcohol, one thing led to the another, jeopardizing everything he had worked so hard to attain. Although we may not have a stellar sports career that promises to bring millions into our bank accounts, we Christians do have an awesome future ahead of us.

We have all heard of the 'Crown of Life' that awaits us in heaven. Jesus tells us more about this crown in his letter to the people of Thyatira. He says that this crown comes with real authority. Unfortunately, the Christians in Thyatira had jeopardized their opportunity to live with Christ in His kingdom. Some had done this through compromise with sin, while others tolerated unremorseful sinners.

Jesus doesn't want that to happen to us. He wants us to learn how to safeguard our high placement with him. First, let us think of the impressive people we have heard of in our life-times, who have taken their lives seriously, knowing that their souls were at risk.

Let's think of our late Queen, Elizabeth II. She was taught from a very early age, by loving parents, that DUTY was the cornerstone of her future life, and that she was accountable to every one of her 'subjects,' in The British Isles and to the Commonwealth of nations which still have the Sovereign as head of state, including Canada.

This pious woman never compromised her duty, either to God, or to those whom she served. Not only was she a devout Christian who believed that her responsibilities to God, detailed in her coronation ceremony, were not just a suggestion. Would that the rest of us could be so devoted...

What compromises have we made with sin? Perhaps we have compromised through the company that we keep - people that are not good influences on us. Do we excuse this by saying, "If we don't hang out with them, we won't have any friends at all"?

Have we given in to our pet sins, thinking that they aren't as "dangerous" as some other sins? That's probably what Judas thought when he started pilfering money from the disciples' treasury, yet look where it led. His love for money grew and grew until Judas thought nothing of betraying his Saviour for a measly sum.

Friends, don't compromise with sin. Repeated compromise leads to shameless decisions, and shameless decision-making leads to judgment...

Thyatira, a city located on a little inland near the Aegean Sea, was famous for its textile industry. It was here they extracted a famous purple dye from a plant that grew in the area and used it to make expensive clothing.

You may remember that Lydia, one of the first converts at Philippi, was from Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The textile industry, like many other industries, was arranged into guilds. The purpose of these guilds was to provide mutual support for business owners.

To build a common bond between its members, these guilds encouraged, even demanded, participation in pagan worship rituals. These rituals were often nothing more than raucous sex-parties meant to honour local idols.

You would think it obvious to any Christian, that to participate in such activities was sinful. But there was one member of the church in Thyatira that not only thought it was okay, she encouraged participation.

Jesus called that woman Jezebel, and said of her: "...she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols" (Rev. 2:20b). Jezebel probably wasn't the woman's real name. Jesus called her this because it would remind the members of the church of the Jezebel in the Old Testament. That Jezebel had married King Ahab of Israel and succeeded in turning most of the country against the worship of the true God.

How was it that a member of the new church would think that engaging in worship of pagan idols through sexual immorality was acceptable? It probably all started with a compromise. If Jezebel herself was a textile owner or worker, she may have thought that she needed to participate in the guild's activities to fit in. She may have thought that if she didn't do this, she would lose all of her business contacts. She may have even made herself believe that once the guild members got to know her, she could tell them about the true God.

Jesus' words must have made the Christians at Thyatira squirm. It makes me squirm!! His blazing eyes see all that we do and fail to do, and no one can stop his bronze feet from carrying out his judgment against our sin.

Who can stand before him? Well, the one who sees our sin is also the one who absorbed it on the cross. That's why Jesus says to hold on to him. Hold on to him so that God's anger at your sin passes through you and is transferred to Jesus.

Those who hold on to Jesus will receive the morning star (Rev. 2:28). That's what Jesus says at the end of the text. We're not really sure what he means by that, but it seems to be a reference to Jesus himself, because at the end of Revelation he calls himself the "bright Morning Star" (Rev. 22:16).

This we do know... All those who hold on to Jesus in faith, will see him in all of his glory and will thrive under his monarchy, come Judgment Day. We won't just be sitting on the sidelines watching Jesus do his thing; we will be given positions of authority!

In this world, sin is all around us. Don't let the liar, Lucifer, get into your minds. He is an accomplished manipulator who will try to make you do things that are wrongful in Jesus' teaching. Without realizing it, he will addle your brain, telling you, "Yes, that's OK... What you have been told is a lie... Follow me and all will be well...I have a much better deal for you...I can give you riches beyond your imagination... Trust me!...

Sounds like a scam to me, don't you think? Look how Satan's offered temptations worked out for Eve and Adam?

You know, I never ruminate on this subject of sin, that I don't think of the old TV commercial where a man has an angel on one shoulder and a devil on the other.

I am of the belief that we actually know, at the time, which road is the right one to take.

A quick prayer in times of temptation, will always yield results. God is never too busy or too preoccupied to answer our cry for help and strengthen our resolve. We just need to be *willing* to put him first in our hearts.

Let's tip-toe into the realm of Christmas music, one week early:

THOU DIDST LEAVE THY THRONE AND THY KINGLY CROWN WHEN THOU
CAMEST TO EARTH FOR ME.

BUT IN BETHLEHEM'S HOME THERE WAS FOUND NO ROOM FOR THY HOLY
NATIVITY.

O COME TO MY HEART, LORD JESUS, THERE IS ROOM IN MY HEART FOR
THEE!