

Beauty

Week of February 28

Acts of wickedness and abuse of power have infected creation from the time of the Fall. And although evil seems to have the upper hand, the Lord Jesus Christ has promised that one day He will return and make all things right. There is a date set on Heaven's Calendar that no man or force of darkness can reschedule. One day the unmatched radiance of our Lord's appearing will pierce through this dark world like a million suns, and everything deserving of judgment will be struck down by the sharp sword in His mouth. Everything shifty (underhanded) and all things shakable (deceptive) will be revealed for what it is and consumed by the devouring fire of His presence (see Hebrews 13:29 and Revelation 19:15). His cleansing fire is coming.

Read Revelation 7:9-17

Any abuse of power is wrong. Whether it is rape, child abuse, sexual abuse, verbal abuse, or abusive acts directed toward entire people groups—God sees what goes on in secret and will one day judge every person.

1. Think of a time you or an immediate family member was abused by a person in a position of power or authority. How (and why) is abusive behavior so often linked to the lowly or vulnerable?

What does Jesus say about leading "one of these little ones who trusts in me into sin" according to Matthew 18:6?

The Bible says God "has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man He has appointed, and He proved to everyone who this is by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). Although we often feel powerless, Christ is powerful and holds the ultimate position of authority (Matthew 28:18). Armed with the authority of Christ, true followers-of-Christ, can take a stand against abuse of power. The Lord may not call us to charge into a situation recklessly, but more likely to seek Him in prayer and fasting first—before we make any move—for we are like sheep among wolves. He will give us discernment to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves (Matthew 10:16). The battle is His. Remember, He can take out evil with one word.

2. How is God calling you to fight against acts of abuse?

Understanding we are never to do ministry alone (Jesus sent the disciples out in pairs, Luke 10:1)—how can you more effectively partner with another person, ministry, or outreach-minded church to make a real difference? Name some practical ways in the space below:

The book of Acts tells of a time in the early church when widows were in need of food and some were being discriminated against (see Acts 6:1-7). The apostles didn't have time to teach the Word of God, plus run a food program. They selected seven men who were "well respected and full of the Spirit of wisdom" to handle the responsibility with care and integrity. Sometimes we may think our job isn't important or valuable. But when people are hungry, food distribution handled in an honorable way, is certainly an example of how godly men and women can use their influence for good.

3. Think of a time you have you seen people use their power (influence) to add value to others?

How can you use your influence (and the influence of your Life Group) to help lift the burdens of others—or as stated in the Plain Truth, for redemptive purposes, to bring "light and life"?

The enemy seeks to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10a). There are times we must fight in the power of the Holy Spirit and take back what has been stolen from us—our kids, marriages, joy, and peace. John exiled on Patmos sees a victorious Savior in the Revelation of heaven and things to come. He says, "After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb... And all the angels were standing around the throne" (vv9, 11a). What John saw is very much like the image Daniel saw in Daniel, chapter seven.

4. It is amazing how God's Word is consistent with visions and images throughout Scripture. Beside each Scripture passage below, I have noted some key similarities in what appears to be the same scene or vision. Please take time to read/study over the references. Jot down any take-aways you gain from each insight. Look for the humility of Christ, as well as the exaltation Christ. Ask yourself how Christ gives us the perfect example of good leadership. How can He help us take back what was stolen?

In what spirit are we to lead (serve) those around us?

Christ comes humbly to this world—

- Born of a virgin. Given the name Jesus (*Jeshua*). Perfect Lamb of God who takes away our sin—
- Matthew 1:20-21 – "For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit... and you are to name Him Jesus for He will save His people from their sins."

- John 1:29 – “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin for the world!”
Revelation 5:6 – “Then I saw a Lamb...”

Will return in the clouds—

- Acts 1:11 – “Men of Galilee, why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday He will return from heaven in the same way you saw Him go.”
- Daniel 7:9-14 – “I saw someone like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven.”
- Matthew 26:64 – “You have said it. And in the future you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God’s right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven.”
- Revelation 1:7 “Look! He comes with the clouds of heaven.”

His Appearance—

- Daniel 7:9a – “His clothing was as white as snow, His hair like purest wool. He sat on a fiery throne with wheels of blazing fire” (see also Ezekiel 1:26-28).
- Revelation 1:14 – “His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow. And His eyes were like flames of fire.”
- Matthew 17:1 – “Jesus’ appearance was transformed so that His face shone like the sun.”
- Revelation 1:16b – “His face was like the sun in all its brilliance.” (also Micah 4:2 “Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in His wings”)

Exalted place of honor—

- Daniel 7:10b,14 – “Millions of angels ministered to Him; many millions stood to attend Him... He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey Him. His rule is eternal—it will have end. His kingdom will never be destroyed” (see also Matthew 28:18).
- Revelation 7:9 – “After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb.”

One Year Bible Reading

Feb. 28: Leviticus 22:17-23:44, Mark 9:30-10:12, Psalm 44:1-8, Proverbs 10:19
 Feb. 29: Leviticus 24:1-25:46, Mark 10:13-31, Psalm 44:9-26, Proverbs 10:20-21
 Mar. 1: Leviticus 24:1-25:46, Mark 10:13-31, Psalm 44:9-26, Proverbs 10:20-21
 Mar. 2: Leviticus 25:47-27:13, Mark 10:32-52, Psalm 45:1-17, Proverbs 10:22
 Mar. 3: Leviticus 27:14-Numbers 1:54, Mark 11:1-26, Psalm 46:1-11, Prov. 10:23
 Mar. 4: Numbers 2:1-3:51, Mark 11:27-12:17, Psalm 47:1-9, Proverbs 10:24-25
 Mar. 5: Numbers 4:1-5:31, Mark 12:18-37, Psalm 48:1-14, Proverbs 10:26

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Text: Revelation 7:9-17

The Plain Truth:

Abuse of power brings _____ and _____;
 while redemptive use of power brings _____ and _____.