

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 6 January 2025

Greetings.

Many parts of the UK enjoyed (or endured) either flurries or falls of snow during the past two days. I am reminded—not only of the words of Elihu, 'to the snow He says, "Fall on the earth" (Job 37. 6)—but also of how scripture uses the expression 'as snow' to describe:

(i) *The garments of divine Persons.*

(a) 'The Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow' (Dan 7. 9).

(b) 'His garments became glistening, exceeding white as snow' (Mark 9. 3).

[Compare what John says of the 'One like a son of man' in his Patmos vision, 'His head and hair were ... white as snow' (Rev. 1. 14).]

(ii) *Leprosy.*

(a) *Moses* (as evidence of his divinely-appointed mission): 'he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow' (Exod. 4. 6).

(b) *Miriam* (in judgment on her opposition to Moses's marriage and authority): 'behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow' (Num. 12.10).

(c) *Gehazi* (in judgment on his covetousness): he went out ... as leprous as snow' (2 Kings 5. 27).

(iii) *Cleansing from sins.*

'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow' (Isa. 1. 18).

[Compare, (a) 'these are they who come out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb' (Rev. 7. 14) and (b) 'Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates' (Rev. 22. 14).]

As you know, this is the first Monday 'Musings' of 2025. The recent change of year brought home to me that *men find predicting the future to be enormously difficult.*

I recall how that, 25 years ago, many (including not a few experts) predicted that the so-called 'millennium bug' ('Y2K' to its friends) would cause computers to fail catastrophically as the clock ticked over into the year 2000, bringing chaos to financial markets, hospitals, air travel, military equipment, traffic lights etc.

But, as one newspaper reported on 2 January 2000, 'The much-hyped Y2K disaster fizzled out like a damp firework'!

How thankful you and I should be that *biblical prophecy* comes to us backed by the authority of Him who says, 'The former things I declared of old; they went out from my mouth, and I announced them ... and they came to pass' (Isa. 48. 3).

I set out below two sections today:

**1.** The main 'Musings' document for this week. (You will see that the change of year prompted me to begin the 'Food for Thought' quotations today by reproducing a sobering section from an earlier 'Musings' document entitled, '*The Judgment Seat of Christ*'.)

**2.** A short note which I wrote last week for distribution in my home assembly.

Finally, here is a Bible quiz question to stimulate your grey cells at the start of 2025:

*'I was not of royal blood. Yet, following my death when well over 100 years of age, my body was laid to rest among the sepulchres of the kings of Judah. Who am I?'*

(You will find a clue to the person's identity in the attached main 'Musings' document. God willing, that identity will be revealed in next week's email.)

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

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## SECTION 1

### (i) Scripture.

We know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

So, we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

Therefore, we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

2 Corinthians 5. 1-10 (*The New King James Version*)

### (ii) Food for thought.

#### ***The judgment seat of Christ.***

The judgment seat is a place where we shall all both 'give' ('each of us shall *give* account of himself to God', Rom. 14. 12) and 'receive' ('that each one may *receive* the things done in the body', 2 Cor. 5. 10).

2 Corinthians 5 focuses on that which the believer is to 'receive', or, better, to 'receive back' (the word carrying the thought of repayment and recompense); namely, to 'receive back' the things which he has practised 'in' (better, 'through') the body.

And here lies one motivating force behind the Christian's goal of securing the Lord's approval, whether in the body or out of it: 'We make it our aim ('we make it a point of honour', 'we are ambitious', that is), whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive back the things done through the body'.

All the veneer will then be stripped off and we will face the Righteous Judge (2 Tim. 4. 8), with no opportunity to don any disguise or mask, such as is all too easy for us to do in this present world.

Towards the close of his earlier extant epistle to the church of God at Corinth, the apostle had applied the truth of the judgment seat to the service of others: 'My beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord' (1 Cor. 15. 58).

But, here, he applies the truth of the judgment seat to his own service. In context, he is now speaking of his own body, which has been the subject, not only of the earlier verses of chapter 5 but also of most of chapter 4. In brief:

(i) The apostle has spoken of his present body – frail, mortal and decaying (2 Cor. 4. 7-16).

(ii) He has spoken of his resurrection body – a 'house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens', in contrast with his present 'earthly ... tent' (2 Cor. 4. 17-5. 5).

(iii) He has spoken of the possibility of his being disembodied – of the interval between death and the Lord's coming, when he would have no body, occupying neither 'tent' nor 'house' (2 Cor. 5. 6-8).

(iv) But now he says that, although it is true that:

(a) his present body is frail, mortal and decaying,

(b) he would much prefer to have his resurrection body, and

(c) he would even prefer to have no body at all (because he would then be 'at home with the Lord') ...

... yet he certainly does not despise or belittle his body. This because he knows that what he performs through his body while in this world carries with it far-reaching and lasting consequences: 'That each

one may *receive back the things done through the body*, according to what he has done, whether good or bad' (2 Cor. 5. 10).

It is important to note that the word translated 'bad' does not denote that which is morally evil and wicked but rather that which is 'worthless' and 'paltry'. That is, Paul is speaking of receiving back 'the things done through the body ... whether good or "good-for-nothing"', with the 'loss' of reward which the latter inevitably involves.

And that very word 'loss' in connection with the judgment seat propels you and me, of course, into his solemn and thought-provoking words in 1 Cor. 3. 15: 'If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss'. 'Solemn and thought-provoking words' indeed.

*(The above notes are reproduced from pages 7 and 8 of the document, 'The Judgment Seat of Christ', which was attached in three parts to the Monday Musings of 16, 23 and 30 May 2022 and which can be accessed in full—together with extensive footnotes—at <https://voicesforchrist.org/writings/238>.)*

### ***The incarnation: 'staggering to the intellect'.***

'Here's our problem ... We assume, of course, He would come. The gospel begins to amaze us when we learn who it is who has come. It's staggering to the intellect. Indeed, I think one can say, if your intellect has never been staggered by the reality of the incarnation, you don't know what incarnation means ...

'It means that *the eternal, infinite, divine One, worshipped by cherubim and seraphim, Creator of all things, sustainer of all things, infinite in His being, wisdom, power, majesty, glory, who at a word could dissolve the world that had sinned against Him* was willing to come into this world and assume our flesh in order to become our Saviour. It's overwhelming.

'That's the great thing about the gospel, isn't it? It's never done overwhelming you—wave upon wave upon wave of worship and adoration that God the Son should come for the likes of me ... it's the One who is without parallel in infinite majesty who has done this'.

(S. Ferguson, 'Why the God-Man?', accessed at <https://www.ligonier.org/posts/why-god-man>.)

### ***'Great is the mystery' (1 Tim. 3. 16).***

(i) 'How can Jesus be true wisdom (Luke 2. 40; Col. 2. 3) and grow in wisdom (Luke 2. 52) at the same time?

(ii) 'How can Jesus be the giver and sustainer of life (John 6. 33; Acts 3. 15; Heb. 1. 3) and yet die?

(iii) 'How can Jesus be the omnipresent Son and yet be present in one place at a time like any other man (John 11. 15)?

(iv) 'How can someone be both divine and human and retain the full properties of deity and humanity?

'This mystery is beyond our ability to explain or comprehend!'

(R. Brunansky, 'The Miracle and Mystery of the Incarnation', accessed at <https://thecripplegate.com/the-miracle-and-mystery-of-the-incarnation/>.)

### ***The mind 'which was in Christ Jesus' (Phil. 2. 5).***

*'He might have built a palace at a word,  
Who sometimes had not where to lay His head:  
Time was, and He who nourished crowds with bread,  
Would not one meal unto Himself afford:*

*'Twelve legions girded with angelic sword  
Were at His beck, the scorned and buffeted:  
He healed another's scratch, His own side bled.  
Side, feet, and hands, with cruel piercings gored.*

*'Oh wonderful the wonders left undone!  
And scarce less wonderful than those He wrought;  
Oh self-restraint, passing all human thought,  
**To have all power, and be as having none;***

*'Oh self-denying Love, which felt alone  
For needs of others, never for its own'.*

(R. C. Trench, 'Sabbation, Honor Neale, and other Poems', 1837, Sonnet XV, page 172.)

***'The city lies foursquare ... its length and width and height are equal' (Rev. 21. 16).***

'The cube is symbolic: there is only one cube in the Old Testament, and that is the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle/temple, where only the priest could enter once a year, bearing blood for his own sins and for the sins of the people. Now the entire city is the Most Holy Place: in the consummation, all of God's people are perennially in the unshielded splendour of His glorious presence'.

(D. A. Carson, 'For the Love of God', Volume 1, meditation dated 30 December.).

**Seven cases of divine pleasure.**

(i) 'It pleased the Lord to bruise Him' (Isa. 53. 10).

(ii) 'It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell' (Col. 1. 19).

(iii) 'It pleased God ...to save them that believe' (1 Cor. 1. 21).

(iv) 'It pleased God ...to reveal His Son in me' (Gal. 1. 15-16).

(v) 'It pleased the Lord to make you His people' (1 Sam. 12. 22).

(vi) 'God set the members every one of them in the body, as it pleased Him' (1 Cor. 12. 18).

(vii) 'God giveth it a body as it pleased Him' (1 Cor. 15. 38).

**Not so fishy after all (Judg. 16. 23; 1 Sam. 5. 2-7; 1 Chron. 10. 10).**

'It used to be common to see the Philistine god 'Dagon' portrayed in the form of a fish. This reflected the analysis of well-meaning interpreters that 'dāg' meant fish, while 'ōn' was a typical ending.

'Further discoveries have clarified that the West Semitic deity 'Dagon', adopted by the Philistines, was a grain deity. We cannot expect that reducing a word to its constituent parts will give reliable guidance to establishing meaning'. [Compare the English words, 'under stand' and 'butter fly'.]

(W. A. VanGemeren, 'New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis', Volume 1, page 163.)

**'Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross' (Col. 2. 14).**

**1.** 'The verb used for "blotted out" is the technical term for "washing out" the writing from a papyrus sheet. So complete was the forgiveness which Christ by His work secured, that it completely cancelled the old bond, that had hitherto been valid against us, for it bore our signature ...

'Christ not merely "blotted out" but "washed out" the "bond written in ordinances that was against us", so that it was as if it had never been'.

(G. Milligan, 'Here and There among the Papyri', page 5; 'The New Testament Documents', page 16.)

**2.** 'The word for "handwriting" ... literally means an autograph; but its technical meaning—a meaning which everyone would understand—was a note of hand signed by a debtor acknowledging his indebtedness. It was almost exactly what we call an I.O.U. ...

'In the New Testament we find the picture of the Gentiles as having, not the written law of God which the Jews had, but the unwritten law in their hearts and the voice of conscience speaking within (Rom. 2. 14-15). Men were in debt to God because of their sins and they knew it. There was a self-confessed indictment against them, a charge-list which, as it were, they themselves had signed and admitted as accurate ...

'Ancient ink had no acid in it; it lay on the surface of the paper and did not, as modern ink usually does, bite into it. Sometimes a scribe, to save paper, used papyrus or vellum that had already been written upon. When he did that, he took a sponge and wiped the writing out. Because it was only on the surface of the paper, the ink could be wiped out as if it had never been. God, in his amazing mercy, banished the record of our sins so completely that ... not a trace remained'.

(W. Barclay, 'The Letters to Philipians, Colossians, Thessalonians: The Daily Study Bible', pages 170-171).

**3.** Ponder the third stanza of Horatio Spafford's hymn, 'It is well with my soul':

'My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!—  
My sin, not in part but the whole,  
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

(An account of the writing of the hymn—together with a reproduction of the original four verses of the hymn, written by Mr Spafford himself—formed the first part of the document attached to the 'Monday Musings' of 10 August 2020, which document can be accessed at <https://voicesforchrist.org/writings/126>.)

**'Some have made shipwreck of their faith' (1 Tim. 1. 19).**

1. Paul, who knew well what it was to be shipwrecked **for his faith** (Acts 27. 13-44; 2 Cor 11. 25), warns Timothy of those who (refusing to maintain a clear conscience) made shipwreck **of their faith** (1 Tim 1. 19).

2. 'Paul was shipwrecked thrice, and yet still saved. Though the rocks and the sands, the heights and the shallows, the prosperity and the adversity of this world, do diversely threaten me, though mine own leaks endanger me, yet, O God, let me never put myself aboard with Hymenaeus, nor make shipwreck of ... a good conscience'.

(John Donne, 'Devotions upon Emergent Occasions', page 159.)

**'We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies' (Rom. 8. 23).**

'Redemption has a double use in the New Testament. In one series of passages, it refers to the Cross, where the price was paid, as in 'we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses' (Eph. 1. 7); in the other it refers to the coming of the Lord when He will take possession of that which He purchased'.

(C. F Hogg and W. E. Vine, 'Touching the Coming of the Lord', page 52.)

**A clue to this week's Bible quiz question.**

'I lived during the reign of a king of Judah who was not buried among the sepulchres of other kings of Judah'.

**(iii) Go on, smile.**

Paddy had just been hired as a young lawyer at a law firm in Dublin and was waiting for the opportunity to prove himself. Although he didn't have much work, he was careful never to leave the office before 10pm.

One evening, as he was walking down a corridor, he saw Mr Rowan O'Connor, the firm's senior partner, standing by a 'classified document' shredder, with a sheet of paper in his hand.

'Do you know how to work this thing?' Mr O'Connor asked Paddy. 'My secretary's gone home and I can't figure out how to do it'.

'Sure thing, sir', Paddy replied helpfully, 'myself will do it for you'. Leaning over to the machine, he took the sheet of paper from the senior partner, and fed it into the shredder gradually.

'I'm very grateful, young man', said Mr O'Connor, 'I just need one copy'.

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## SECTION 2

I was surprised to learn recently that the Cambridge University Press (the oldest publishing house in the world) declared 'The Cambridge Dictionary Word of the Year 2024' to be the word 'manifest'. Apparently, last year, the word was searched almost 130,000 times on the online Cambridge Dictionary website [1].

Far more important to you and me is the fact that the word 'manifest' is certainly a big word in our New Testament. The Greek verb normally translated 'manifest' means 'to uncover, to lay bare, to reveal' [2] and occurs almost 50 times.

Focusing only on those occurrences which refer directly to our Lord Jesus, the following eleven texts provide us with plenty of soul-sustaining and Christ-exalting spiritual food for us to feed on at the outset of 2025.

### HIS INCARNATION AND ITS PURPOSE

**(i)** 'Great is the mystery of godliness: He (God) was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit ...' (1 Tim. 3. 16; cf. 1 John 1. 2).

**(ii)** 'He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for you' (1 Pet. 1. 20).

**(iii)** 'You know that He was manifested to take away our sins' (1 John 3. 5).

**(iv)** 'For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil' (1 John 3. 8).

**(v)** 'Once at the end of the ages, He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself' (Heb. 9. 26).

**(vi)** 'His (God's) own purpose and grace ... which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel' (2 Tim. 1. 9-10).

#### **HIS RESURRECTION**

**(vii and viii)** 'After this Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias ... This was now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples after He was risen from the dead' (John 21. 1, 14).

#### **HIS PRESENCE WITH US**

**(ix)** 'He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him' (John 14. 21).

#### **HIS FUTURE COMING**

**(x)** 'When He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is' (1 John 3. 2).

**(xi)** 'When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall you also be manifested with Him in glory' (Col. 3. 4).

With an eye to the example of Mary of old (Luke 2. 19, 51), let us treasure these things and ponder them in our hearts.

#### **NOTES**

**[1]** Source: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/editorial/word-of-the-year>. The present popularity of the word is largely due, no doubt, to its modern use of describing methods of focusing the mind on something desired—in the belief that doing so will increase the likelihood that the thing desired will become a reality.

**[2]** W. E. Vine, 'Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words', article 'Manifest. B. 1'.