

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 16 June 2025.

(i) Scripture.

Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.

Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth.

In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.

And a voice came to him, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat'.

But Peter said, 'Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean'.

And a voice spoke to him again the second time, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common'.

This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there.

Acts 10. 9b-18 (*The New King James Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

Simon Peter and 'threes'.

Whether by (divine) design or not, in the recorded life of Peter, many events and incidents happened in threes. For example:

(i) He accompanied James and John on three special occasions during our Lord's public ministry—(a) to *the house of Jairus*, there to witness the raising of Jairus's daughter (Mark 5. 37-42); (b) to *the Mount of Transfiguration*, there to witness the Lord's 'glory' and 'majesty' (Luke 9. 28-36; 2 Pet. 1. 16-18); and (c) to *the inner recesses of the Garden of Gethsemane*, there to witness the Lord's prostration in prayer and His 'agony' (Mark 14. 32-42; Luke 22. 44).

(ii) When challenged by onlookers, he denied the Lord three times, alongside a 'fire of coals' beneath the palace of the high priest, at our Lord's so-called religious trial before Annas and the Sanhedrin (Mark 14. 66-72; John 18. 17-18, 25-27).

(iii) When challenged by the Lord Himself, he reaffirmed his love for Him three times, at another 'fire of coals' on the shore of the Sea of Tiberius (John 21. 1, 4, 9, 15-17).

(iv) He used the word 'never' three times when responding to the Lord's actions or words—(a) in *the Upper Room*, prior to His crucifixion: 'You shall *never* wash my feet' (John 13. 8a); (b) on *the way to Gethsemane*: 'I will *never* stumble' (Matt. 26. 33); and (c) at *the house of Simon the tanner*, 'Not so, Lord; I have *never* eaten anything common or unclean' (Acts 10. 14; interestingly, the vision of the sheet-like object from heaven appeared to Peter three times, Acts 10. 16; 11. 10).

On each of these three occasions, Peter received a necessary and personal correction from our Lord—(a) John 13. 8b-10; (b) Matt. 26. 34; (c) Acts 10. 15).

'As captain of the army of the Lord am I now come' (Josh. 5. 14).

'Before the military expedition began, Joshua, the leader of the Israelite forces, had an encounter with the commander of the army of the Lord, indicating at the outset that the battles were the Lord's and that Joshua received his marching orders from Him (Josh. 5. 13-15; cf. Exod. 3. 5).

'It should also be noted that the outcome of each military encounter was determined by the will of the Lord (Josh. 6. 2; 8. 1; 10. 8; 11. 6). The Lord had even determined the military strategies of the Canaanites to ensure their defeat (Josh. 11. 20).

'That the outcome of the military campaigns was determined by the Lord is also apparent in Israel's lone military defeat at Ai. The loss in battle was due to their transgression against the Lord (Josh. 7. 11-12).

'Before further military victories would ensue, Israel did not have to improve their military strategy; they had to deal with their sin' (Josh. 7. 24-26; cf. Josh. 8. 30-35)'.
(M. F. Rooker, *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Volume 4, page 489; article 'Conquest').

'Hear the rod and Him who has appointed it' (Micah 6. 9).

'As no man may question God's right to afflict him, nor His righteousness in afflicting him, so no man may question the reasons why He afflicts him ...

'Afflictions ... revive and recover decayed graces; they inflame that love which is cold; they quicken that faith which is decaying and they put life into those hopes which are withering and into those joys which are languishing'.

(Thomas Brooks, 'The Complete Works', Volume 1, pages 50 and 321.)

Lessons to be learnt in adversity.

'The oldest question in religion is: "Why do bad things happen to good people?"

'But there are two ways of asking this question. The first is, "Why has God done this to me?" Never ask this question, because we will never know the answer. God cares for us, but He also cares for everyone and everything. We think of now; God thinks of eternity. We could never see the universe from God's point of view. So, we will never find the answer to the question: "Why me?"

'But there is another way of asking the question. "Given that this has happened, what does God want me to learn from it?" How is He challenging me to grow? How is He calling on me to respond?" Asking it this way involves looking forward, not back.

"Why did God do this?" is the wrong question. The right one is: "How shall I live my life differently because this has happened?" That is how to deal with crisis. Wrestle with it, refusing to let it go until it blesses you [an allusion to Gen. 32. 24-26], until you emerge stronger, better or wiser than you were before'.

(J. Sacks, 'Letters to the Next Generation', page 31.)

'Accidents' and 'coincidences'.

1. 'Rowland Bingham, founder of the Sudan Interior Mission, was once seriously injured in a car accident. He was rushed to a hospital in a critical condition. The following day, when he regained consciousness, he asked the nurse what he was doing there. "Don't try to talk now, just rest", she replied, "You have been in an accident". "Accident!" Dr Bingham exclaimed, "There are no accidents in the life of a Christian".

(K. A. Sensenig, 'Cancer and the Christian Life', page 34; accessed at ... <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/christia/cancer.htm>.)

2. 'Coincidence is God's pseudonym when He wishes to remain anonymous'.

(Source unknown.)

'If the Lord permit' (1 Cor. 16. 7).

1. 'He permits man that measure of freedom of action with which He may be gladdened or saddened. But in no way does this measure of freedom modify or interfere with the movement of His purposes towards their appointed end.

'What God intends, He decrees; what God permits, He has foreseen. And thus, by a combination of foreordination and foreknowledge, His will remains sovereign, while man retains sufficient freedom to be held accountable'.

(A. C. Custance, 'The Sovereignty of Grace', page 233.)

2. 'There is an enemy busy sowing tares (Matt. 13. 25). What is corrupt, though of God's permitting, is not of His planting; He sows nothing but good seed'.

(Matthew Henry, 'Commentary on the Whole Bible', comment on Matt. 15. 13.)

3. 'He has no hand in any man's sin. God cannot go contrary to His own nature ... God in His providence permits men's sins. "He suffered all nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14. 16). God permitted their sin, which He never would, if He could not bring good out of it ... The Lord is pleased to permit it, but He has no hand in sin'.

(Thomas Watson, 'A Body of Divinity', page 122.)

'... of sin'

(i) 'The servant of sin' (John 8. 34).

(ii) 'The knowledge of sin' (Rom. 3. 20).

(iii) 'The body of sin' (Rom. 6. 6).

(iv) 'The wages of sin' (Rom. 6. 23).

(v) 'The law of sin' (Rom. 7. 23).

(vi) 'The strength of sin' (1 Cor. 15. 56).

(vii) 'The deceitfulness of sin' (Heb. 3. 13).

(viii) 'The pleasures of sin' (Heb. 11. 25).

'Almighty God', 'Jehovah', 'Father'.

'There are three great names in which God reveals Himself to man.

'Firstly, to Abraham, in Genesis 17: "I am the Almighty God [El Shaddai], walk before me and be thou perfect". It was like saying, "I am the Almighty: therefore, do thou trust in me" ...

'Secondly, when He comes to Israel, He takes another name. In Exodus, we find Him revealing Himself to them as Jehovah, the ever-existing One, going on to accomplish all His promises.

'Thirdly, to the saints now, it is as Father. They are taken into connection with the Almighty and Eternal Jehovah, in the relationship of children to a father, in the enjoyment of eternal life imparted to them ... it is not said, as in the case of the titles, Almighty and Jehovah, "Be ye perfect with" (Gen. 17. 1; Deut. 18. 13); but when the Father's name is revealed, which Christ has done, "Be ye perfect as" (Matt. 5. 48). We do not trust Him as strangers; we walk with and like Him as children'.

(J. N. Darby, 'Seven Lectures on the Prophetical Addresses to the Seven Churches', Collected Writings, Volume 5, page 265.)

'Behold my servant' (Isa. 42. 1).

'Isaiah himself is God's servant (Isa. 20. 3), and so is Hezekiah's chief steward Eliakim (Isa. 22. 20; as previously had been David, Isa. 37. 35).

'Israel collectively is God's servant (Isa. 41. 8–20) ... God's servant Israel was described in the preceding chapters as complaining (Isa. 40. 27), fearful, and dismayed (Isa. 41. 10). By the end of chapter 42, God's servant Israel is deaf, blind (Isa. 42. 18–19), and sinful (Isa. 42. 23–24).

'By contrast, the servant of the Lord neither falters nor is discouraged (Isa. 42. 4), delights in God (Isa. 42. 1), is gentle, persevering, and brings forth justice in faithfulness (Isa. 42. 3). This is an ideal Servant, one who embodies all that Israel failed to be.

'The announcement "Behold my servant" is made to Israel. The Servant is introduced to them, not only because He is an ideal to which they should aspire, but also because He is an individual who will rescue them (Isa. 53. 11)'.

(D. A. Carson, 'For the Love of God', Volume 2, comment for 10 June.)

'When Jesus had taken the vinegar, He said "It is accomplished!", and He reclined his head and committed His spirit' (John 19. 30—translation by F. F. Bruce).

'Jesus' cry "It is accomplished!" ("tetelestai", perfect passive of "teleō") confirms the Evangelist's preceding statement in verse 28 that He knew "that all things had now been accomplished" ("tetelestai").

'All scripture that was due to be accomplished in His passion had now been accomplished; the entire purpose for which the Father had sent the Son into the world was now assured of fulfilment ...

'In John 17. 4, the Son could say to the Father in anticipation, "I have fulfilled the work which you gave me to do" (where "fulfilled" represents the verb "teleioō", used also of the fulfilment of scripture in verse 28); now, no longer in anticipation but in the consummating moment of death, He declares this work to be finished.

'Elsewhere in the Gospels the same phrase as is here used of Jesus' reclining His head in death is used of reclining one's head in sleep (Matt. 8. 20; Luke 9. 28, "the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head"); the implication here may be that He voluntarily reclines His head, ready now to sleep the sleep of death.

'This is reinforced by the words "He committed His spirit" (that is, to God), for these words are John's counterpart to Luke's report that His last words were, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23. 46).

'These words from Psalm 31. 5 have for centuries formed part of the evening prayer of pious Jews, and may well have done so for Jesus.

'If, then, He was accustomed to repeat these words before going to sleep, so He repeated them now for the last time'.

(F. F. Bruce, 'The Gospel of John', page 374.)

The importance of our Lord's passion.

1. 'It is a suggestive circumstance that He should have appointed a festival to commemorate His death—the Lord's Supper—and should have appointed no similar festival to commemorate His birth'.

(T Croskery, 'Ephesians: The Pulpit Bible Commentary', page 15.)

2. 'One wishes that our reckoning of dates "AD" (anno Domini, in the year of our Lord), which starts in intention ... with Jesus's birth, had been calculated from the year of the cross, resurrection, and ascension; for that was when Jesus's lordship became the cosmic fact that it is today'.

(J. I. Packer, *'The Apostles' Creed'*, page 62.)

'To and fro'.

"And the Lord said to Satan, 'From where have you come?' Satan answered the Lord and said, 'From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it'" (Job 1. 7; cf. Job 2. 2).

'What was he doing? "Your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5. 8).

'However, I'm happy to also report that "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him" (2 Chron. 16. 9; cf. Zech. 4. 10)'.

(J. B. Nicholson Jr, *'The Plot at the Palace'*, Taste and See, Uplook Ministries, 5 June 2025.)

Psalms 46: 'moved'—'the mountains' and 'the kingdoms', but not 'the city of God'.

(i) 'Though the mountains be moved (מוט) into the midst of the sea' (Psa. 46. 2).

(ii) 'The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved (מוט)' (Psa. 46. 6).

(iii) 'The city of God ... shall not be moved (מוט): God shall help her when morning dawns' (Psa. 46. 4-5).

'The Lord will guide you continually' (Isa. 58. 11).

'While providence supports,
Let saints securely dwell;
That hand which bears all nature up
Shall guide His children well'.

(P. Doddridge, the hymn *'How gentle God's commands'*, stanza 2.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

Questions.

1. Little Rhys Evans enters Henry's barber shop and the barber whispers to his customer, 'This Welsh kid is not so bright. Watch this'.

Henry puts a £5 note on one hand and a £1 coin on the other. He then calls the boy over and asks, 'Which do you want, lad?'

Rhys takes the coin—leaving the £5 note.

'See what I mean', Henry says to his customer, 'I've done it many times. The kid never learns'.

Later, when the customer leaves, he sees Rhys coming out of the local sweet shop and calls him over. 'Tell me, son', he asks, 'why did you take the barber's £1 coin instead of his £5 note?'

Rhys pops another sweet in his mouth and replies, 'Simple, mister. *If I ever take the £5, my money for sweets will stop.*'

2. After several years hard work, Conán O'Connor managed to obtain a doctorate in psychology. Soon, he opened his own business as a Practitioner Psychologist.

Conán's big dream had always been for him to be called as an expert witness in court.

After some time, his dream finally came true and he was given his first opportunity to testify.

On his big day, he sat pompously in the witness chair, oblivious to the fact that the chair's rear legs were resting precariously near the back of the raised platform.

'Please state your name', asked the court official.

Tilting back in his chair, Conán opened his mouth to answer loudly—but, instead, found himself catapulted backward into a collection of legal exhibits and the court recording equipment.

Everyone in the court room watched in stunned silence as a mortified Conán struggled to his feet, rearranged his dishevelled hair and took his place back on the witness stand.

'Well, Dr O'Connor', continued the court official, without batting an eyelid, *'I guess we'll have to start with an easier question.'*

