

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 19 January 2026.

Greetings,

As last week, there are **three items** for today:

(i) The answer to last week's simple [Bible quiz question](#).

**Q. Who was the first king in Israel?**

**A. Abimelech.**

(a) The relevant Bible references: 'All the men of Shechem ... made Abimelech king', Judges 9. 6; 'you have made Abimelech king', Judges 9. 16, 18.

(b) Last Monday's 'Musings' said, 'Hint: consider the wording of the question carefully!'

This 'hint' was to alert you that the person in question was 'the first king in Israel' and not 'the first king of Israel' or 'the first king over all Israel'. Abimelech is described as 'king over the men of Shechem', Judges 9. 18; Judges 9. 2 and 7 with 16.

(c) The four clues in last week's 'Musings':

(1) 'Not a son of Kish!' This was to tell you that the answer was not 'Saul'; 'there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish ... and he had a son, whose name was Saul', 1 Samuel 9. 1-2.

(2) 'A "thorny" character!' This was a reference to Abimelech being depicted as a 'bramble' or 'thornbush' in Jotham's parable, Judges 9. 14-15.

(3) 'An upper millstone really spoiled his day!' This pointed to the occasion when a certain woman threw down an upper millstone from the roof of the tower of Thebez onto Abimelech's head and crushed his skull, Judges 9. 51-53.

(4) 'He once had as many brothers as there were palm trees in Elim'. This linked together the following Bible references: (i) 'Abimelech ... killed his brothers the sons of Jerubbaal, seventy men', Judges 9. 5 (cf. Judges 9. 18, 24. 56) and (ii) 'they came to Elim, where there were ... seventy palm trees', Exodus 15. 27.

I excluded, of course, the references to God Himself as king; e.g., Deuteronomy 33. 5; Judges 8. 23; 1 Samuel 8. 7; 12. 12.

As a point of interest, Abimelech's very 'name' contained the Hebrew word for 'king'—'Melech' or 'Melekh' (מֶלֶךְ). It is possible, I suppose, that 'Abimelech' was a title rather than a name; in the heading of Psalm 34, this 'name/title' is applied to the king of Gath, elsewhere known by his personal name, 'Achish' (1 Samuel 27. 2-3 etc).

(ii) I set out below [today's 'Musings'](#). Happy reading.

(iii) **ADVANCE NOTICE.** There will be [no 'Musings' for the next three weeks](#) on account of my visiting, God willing, my daughter, Susanna, and her family in South Africa. In the Lord's will, the next 'Musings' will appear in your Inbox on Monday, 16 February.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

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### (i) Scripture.

When they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

Then said Jesus, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do'. And they parted His raiment, and cast lots.

And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided Him, saying, 'He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He be Christ, the chosen of God'. And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar, and saying, 'If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself'.

And a superscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, 'This is the

King of the Jews’.

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, ‘If thou be Christ, save thyself and us’.

But the other answering rebuked him, saying, ‘Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss’.

And he said unto Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom’.

And Jesus said unto him, ‘Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise’.

Luke 23. 33-43 (King James Version)

## (ii) Food for thought.

### **Paul’s five Christ-centred desires expressed in his epistle to the Philippians.**

(i) to be found in Christ, Phil. 3. 9;

(ii) to know Christ, Phil. 3. 10;

(iii) to live for Christ, Phil. 1. 21;

(iv) to magnify Christ, Phil. 1. 20; and

(v) to be with Christ, Phil. 1. 23.

### **‘He Himself has suffered, being tempted’ (Heb. 2. 18).**

‘Though He did not, and could not, cease to be what He ever had been as the Son of the living God, yet He became as truly man; and the very perfection and purity of His manhood made Him feel all the more keenly the assaults of the foe.

‘The tree that bends not to the storm feels most of its fury, and the waves dash with far more violence against the rock that moves not an inch, than against the boat that is carried by their force.

‘So the perfect resistance of the blessed Lord, and the fact that He never yielded for an instant, caused Him to feel all the more keenly the awfulness of the temptations presented to Him ...

‘Therefore, while on the one hand we dare not dishonour Him by thinking for a moment of the possibility of His falling, let us be careful that we do not, on the other hand, detract from the glory of His victory by throwing any shadow of unreality around the narrative of the temptation. It is not from any *sham* fight that lasting honour is won, nor is it from any *semblance* of a conflict that the blessed Lord reaps the glory of defeating the foe’.

(W. H. Bennett, ‘The Lord’s Temptation by Satan’, The Golden Lamp, Volume X, 1887, page 17.)

### **The care and provision of God.**

(i) In the past: ‘hitherto has the Lord helped us’ (1 Sam. 7. 12); ‘You have lacked nothing’ (Deut. 2. 7).

(ii) In the present: ‘the Lord is my shepherd’ (Psa. 23. 1); ‘I have all and abound’ (Phil. 4. 18).

(iii) In the future: ‘you will lack nothing’ (Deut. 8. 9); ‘no good will He withhold’ (Psa. 84. 11).

### **‘And that He was buried’ (1 Cor. 15. 4).**

‘Each of the four burial narratives make specific reference to “the body of Jesus” (Matt. 27. 58; Mark 15. 43; Luke 23. 52; John 19. 38, 40).

‘His body had been assigned a humiliating grave with criminals but, in God’s providence, the intervention of the “rich man”, Joseph of Arimathaea, secured for it an honourable burial in his own tomb (Isa. 53. 9; Matt. 27. 57).

‘The record of Jesus’ life on earth began with two women in joyful expectation (Luke 1. 39-56); it closed with two women in sorrowful devotion (Mark 15. 46-47). When it began, He was “wrapped” in swaddling clothes and “laid” in a manger (Luke 2. 7); when it ended, He was “wrapped” in linen and “laid” in a sepulchre (Luke 23. 53).

‘How important was the rock-tomb of Joseph! Had Jesus’ body been buried by God and His sepulchre remained unknown to any mortal (as was that of Moses, Deut. 34. 6) or had His body been flung into some mass grave, it would have been impossible to point to the empty tomb for evidence of the resurrection.

‘But, because the tomb’s location had been carefully noted by the women (Luke 23. 55), there was no possibility of confusion (Luke 24. 1-3) and, because it was a tomb “wherein never man before was

laid" (Luke 23. 53), there was no possibility of contamination or of a secondary miracle—such as when a dead body “touched” the bones of Elisha (2 Kings 13. 21)’.

(‘*Day by Day: Moments with the Master*’, Precious Seed Publications, page 370—reproduced with kind permission.)

**‘Your labour is not in vain in the Lord’ (1 Cor. 15. 58).**

‘The hope of heaven is the most powerful force for producing virtue; it is a fountain of joyful endeavour; it is the cornerstone of cheerful holiness.

‘Those who have this hope in them go about their work with vigour, for the joy of the Lord is their strength.

‘They fight hard against temptation, for the hope of the next world repels the fiery darts of the adversary.

‘They can work without immediate reward, for they anticipate a reward in the world to come’.

(C. H. Spurgeon, ‘*Morning and Evening: revised and updated by Alistair Begg*’, 2003, page 300.)

**The Judgement Seat of Christ/God—when?**

‘Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have his praise of God’ (1 Cor. 4. 5).

‘When the Chief Shepherd shall be manifested, you shall receive the crown of glory that fades not away’ (1 Pet. 5. 4).

‘The manifestation of Christ for the removal of His saints from the earth is shown to be the preliminary to His review of their earthly service when they stand before His Judgment Seat’.

(C. F. Hogg and W. E. Vine, ‘*Touching the Coming of the Lord*’, page 66.)

**‘Judge not, that you be not judged’ (Matt. 7. 1).**

‘We should not be too hasty in understanding Matt. 7. 1 to mean that all judgment is intrinsically evil ...

‘After all, Matt. 7. 6 demands that we make judgments about who are “dogs” and “pigs”, and the paragraphs at the end of the chapter warn against false prophets and tell us how we are to discern who is true and who is false—who is truly a follower of Jesus and who is not.

Moreover, not only does this chapter speak of a terrible judgment no less final than the flood (Matt. 7. 13, 19, 23), but there are many other passages in the New Testament that are equally uncompromising.

But we must not only expose false interpretations of Matt. 7. 1; we must also understand what it does teach.

‘The verb, “to judge”, has a wide range of meanings, and the context (Matt. 7. 1–5) is decisive in giving it its colour in this passage.

‘People who pursue righteousness (Matt. 6. 33) are easily prone to self-righteousness, arrogance, condescension toward others, an ugly “holier-than-thou” (Isa. 65. 5) stance, hypocrisy.

‘Not all are like that, of course, but the sin of “judgmentalism” is common enough. Jesus won’t have it’.

(D. A. Carson, ‘*For the Love of God*’, Volume 1, comment for 7 January.)

**Two parables told to King David.**

‘There was a world-wide difference between the purpose of the parable of Nathan (2 Sam. 12. 1–4) and that of the wise woman of Tekoah (2 Sam. 14. 4–7).

‘Nathan’s parable was designed to rouse the king’s conscience as against his feelings; the woman of Tekoah’s, as prompted by Joab, to rouse his feelings as against his conscience’.

(W. G. Blaikie, ‘*The Second Book of Samuel: The Expositor’s Bible*’, page 208.)

**‘I will put my hook in your nose and my bridle on your lips’ (2 Kings 19. 28).**

‘The Lord has had enough of Sennacherib’s rage and arrogance and so tells him that He is preparing his exile—from Judah: “I shall put my hook in your nose and my bridle (muzzle?) on your lips, and I shall bring you back by the way you came”.

‘Here’s a touch of irony, for the Assyrians knew much about putting hooks in noses and similar “treatments”.

‘Tiglath-pileser I (1115–1076 BC) boasted, “I attached to their noses ropes (and) took them to my city” (A. K. Grayson, ‘*Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC*, 1991, page 34).

'Assurbanipal (669–633 BC) "pierced the lips" of Elamite captives and hauled them off to Assyria (T. Fish, 'Letters from the War Front in Ancient Mesopotamia', Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Volume 26, Number 2)'.  
(D. R. Davis, '2 Kings', pages 286-287.)

**'You are not willing to come to me' (John 5. 40).**

'Man, being a morally free agent, has a mind and will of his own and, within certain limits, God allows him to exercise and even carry out his will.

'God is able to, and often does, curb man when his waywardness reaches certain limits but this does not do away with the fact that man is a morally responsible agent. God does not coerce, much less compel, man to bend his will to God's.

'God may bring influences to bear, calculated to turn man's mind and will in a certain direction but never to the extent of over-riding man's power and right of choice. On the other hand, when man has deliberately set himself in opposition to God's will, He may righteously fulfil His purposes by hardening the heart or darkening the mind which refused to respond to God's overtures.

'But this we must maintain, that man has a will and God allows its exercise. Man's decisions are not the inevitable outcome of a combination of circumstances—they depend finally upon the man's free-will ...

'Christ's complaint was not that men **could not** come to Him, but that they **would not** (John 5. 40; cf. Matt. 23. 37)'.  
(J. H. Large, 'The Faith: A Symposium of Bible Doctrine', 1952, page 142.)

**Seven significant references to 'this man'.**

- (i) 'Truly this man was the Son of God' (Mark 15. 39).
- (ii) 'This man receives sinners' (Luke 15. 2).
- (iii) 'I find no fault in this man' (Luke 23. 4).
- (iv) 'Never man spoke like this man' (John 7. 46).
- (v) 'This man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses' (Heb. 3. 3).
- (vi) 'This man ... has an unchangeable priesthood' (Heb. 7. 24).
- (vii) 'This man ... sat down on the right hand of God' (Heb. 10. 12).

**'By grace you are saved' (Eph. 2. 5, 8).**

'Love that goes upward is **worship**; love that goes outward is **affection**; love that stoops is **grace**.

'We were not lovely or lovable. God commends His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, for the ungodly ...

'If any individual thinks that he should go to heaven by natural right, he has never understood either the holiness of God or the sinfulness of sin'.

(D. G. Barnhouse, 'Man's Ruin', 'Expositions of Bible Doctrines', Volume 1, page 72.)

**'Giving thanks to the Father, who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light' (Col. 1. 12).**

'Progress is insisted on continuously ... but you never find it mixed up with being meet. Progress is mixed up with experience and divine government: meetness with Christ's work and our being with Him.

'There is the constant government of God with respect to our walk. He looks for progress in it; but here, where it is a question of reconciling us to Himself, there is no progress. There is no progress in the value of Christ's blood-shedding ...

'There must be daily progress in our walk; but, as to our meetness, it is the work of God ... The poor thief on the cross goes straight to paradise, made in one moment a fit companion for Jesus throughout eternity.

(J. N. Darby, 'Reconciliation', Collected Writings, Volume 27, pages 271-272.)

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

The following two 'Irish smiles' are reproduced from 'Musings' of almost six years ago.

**1.** When out walking one day, two Irishmen who were 'a sandwich short of a picnic' noticed a couple of English lads loitering on a bridge. Suddenly, the one lad dropped over the wall of the bridge, supported by the other lad holding his ankles.

After five minutes, the lad hanging over the bridge shouted loudly, 'Quick, pull me up'.

When his friend pulled him up, in his hands he was holding a 10lb salmon.

The one Irishman said to the other, 'We'll sure have t' have a go at that'.

Later, they came to another bridge.

The one Irishman dropped over the wall, with the other gripping his ankles.

After only three minutes, the Irishman hanging over the bridge shouted loudly, 'Quick, Paddy, pull me up'.

'Have you got a big 'un?' Paddy shouted out.

'Nope', the other shouted back,

*'there's a train coming!'*

**2.** Paddy walked his dog through the village every day.

One day, Paddy was seen on his walk without his dog.

'Now, where's your dog today, Paddy?' his friend Mick enquired.

'Sure now', Paddy replied, 'I had to have him put down'.

'Was he mad?' asked Mick.

'Well', Paddy replied, 'to be shure,

*he wasn't best pleased about it'.*