

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 29 March 2021

Greetings.

This is my 'Monday Musings' email.

As you likely know, we have now entered so-called 'Passion Week', commencing with our Lord's 'Triumphal Entry' into Jerusalem and terminating with the day of His resurrection. The attached Word document focuses attention on many of the events which took place during that week.

But, first, a question for you.

**Question:** What is it that ties together: (i) the game of chess, (ii) a little boy during the Blitz of WWII, (iii) dark patches on the backs of donkeys, (iv) three American astronauts, (v) a former US president, (vi) Billy Graham, and (vii) the biblical Absalom?

**Answer:** the attached Word document, 'The Greatest Week'. If you want to know how each of these seven link together, you will just have to read the document.



Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

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### (i) Scripture.

The people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at Him, saying, 'He saved others; let Him save Himself, if he is the Christ of God, His Chosen One!'

The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up and offering Him sour wine and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!'

There was also an inscription over him, 'This is the King of the Jews'.

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at Him, saying, 'Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!'

But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong'.

And he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom'.

And He said to him, 'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise'.

Luke 23. 35-43 (*English Standard Version*)

### (ii) Food for thought.

#### **God's abundance.**

1. God is 'abundant' in:

(i) Goodness and truth. 'The Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth' (Exod. 34. 6).

(ii) Grace. 'The riches of His grace; which He made to abound toward us' (Eph. 1. 7-8 RV; cf. 1 Tim. 1. 14).

(iii) Mercy. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again' (1 Pet. 1. 3).

2. To His people, He gives an abundance of:

(i) Satisfaction. 'They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of your house, and you shall make them drink of the river of your pleasures' (Psa. 36. 8).

(ii) Pardon. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon' (Isa. 55. 7).

(iii) Life. 'The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly' (John 10. 10).

(iv) The Holy Spirit. 'The Holy Spirit, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour' (Tit. 3. 6).

#### **Brought out and brought in – the purpose of God.**

'The wilderness is never in the purpose of God, though it is His plan to test and prove [the hearts of His people; 'you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart' (Deut. 8. 2)].

- (i) When He announced this purpose He left out all allusion to it. 'I am come down to deliver them ... and to bring them up out of that land into a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites' (Exod. 3:8.)
- (ii) When Moses proclaimed it, He said, 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out ... and I will bring you in unto the land' (Exod. 6. 6, 8).
- (iii) When Faith accepted it, it sang, 'Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance' (Exod. 15. 13, 17.)
- (iv) When Experience looked back upon it with the words, 'And He brought us out from them, that He might bring us in' (Deut. 6. 23.)
- (F. G. Patterson, 'The Red Sea and Jordan', The Christian's Friend (1880), pages 8-9.)

Note the way in which the psalmist fused together the passage of Israel through the Red Sea with their later passage through the River Jordan: 'The sea looked and fled; Jordan turned back ... What ails you, O sea, that you fled? O Jordan, that you turned back?' (Psa. 114. 3-5). And compare the words of Paul, 'In whom we have redemption ... in whom also we have obtained an inheritance' (Eph. 1. 7, 11).

### **Times to 'stand still'.**

In contrast to the oft-heard appeal, 'Don't just stand there; do something!', on two occasions God's people were told, in effect, 'Don't do anything; just stand there!'

- (i) When pursued by Pharaoh and the Egyptians in the days of Moses: 'Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you' (Exod. 14. 13-14).
- (ii) When attacked by the Moabites and their allies in the days of Jehoshaphat: 'Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you' (2 Chron. 20. 17).

### **'Jesus wept' (John 11. 35).**

John uses a different word (John 11. 33) for weeping to describe the loud wailing of Mary and the mourners than the word in verse 35, which could be translated, "Jesus burst into tears". Jesus wept, but He was not wailing in despair. In the words of Paul, believers are to grieve, but not as those who have no hope (1 Thess. 4. 13).

It's interesting, also, that, while the shortest verse in the English Bible is John 11. 35, "Jesus wept", the shortest verse in the Greek New Testament is 1 Thessalonians 5. 16, "Rejoice always!" Those verses are not contradictory! As Paul put it, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12. 15). Jesus entered into the sorrow of these sisters. As we become more like our Saviour, we should not become more stoical, but rather people who express godly emotions'. (Steven J. Cole, 'The Teacher's Tears' – accessed at ... <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-62-teacher-s-tears-john-1128-37>.)

### **'I go to prepare a place for you' (John 14. 2).**

His going meant the shadows that gathered across His pathway: Gethsemane with its tears and blood-like sweat; Calvary and its dark solitudes, when God turned His face from Christ, and "made Him to be sin for us"; and the glorious triumph over death and the forces of evil. Christ is not preparing a place for the redeemed at the present moment. His one entering into heaven as a forerunner [Heb. 6. 19-20] provides the assurance that others will follow Him where He has gone. The place is now ready ... It is the work of Christ for us that gives the believer a place in the Father's House; it is our work for Christ that decides the place we shall have in the Kingdom'. (A. Naismith and W. F. Naismith, 'God's People and God's Purpose', pages 250-253.)

### **'Higher than'.**

We know the One:

- (i) who is now 'made higher than the heavens' (Heb. 7. 26); and
- (ii) who is destined to be made 'higher than the kings of the earth' (Psa. 89. 27).

### **The Gospel.**

The Gospel is described in various ways in the New Testament. Firstly, with reference to God the Father:

1. It is "the Gospel of God" (Rom. 1. 1; 1 Thess. 2. 2); that is to say, it has its origin in, and its authority from, God.
2. It is "the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God" (1 Tim. 1. 11); this points not to its character as glorious, but rather to its subject, the scope and aim of its message being an exhibition of the majesty and the attributes of God, and His own joy in the work of salvation.
3. It is "the Gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20. 24), demonstrating the way in which He has condescended to bestow His unmerited favour upon the guilty'. (W. E. Vine, 'The Gospel of the Bible', page 12.)

**Faith, hope and love in the Epistle to the Hebrews.**

'In Hebrews 10. 22-24 there were three ['Let us'] exhortations, respectively to Faith, Hope and Love. These are elaborated in turn: chapter 11 dealing with Faith; chapter 12 with Hope; chapter 13 with Love'.

(W. H. Griffith Thomas, '*Hebrews: A Devotional Commentary*', page 140.)

**'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all' (Gal. 6. 10).**

'Do all the good you can.  
By all the means you can.  
In all the ways you can.  
In all the places you can.  
At all the times you can.  
To all the people you can.  
As long as ever you can'.

(Attributed to John Wesley; for details, see <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2016/09/24/all-good/>.)

See the attached 'Do all the good' picture.

**'Rejoice in the Lord always' (Phil. 4. 4).**

'What could they do with such a man? If they kill him, they only send him to heaven; if they let him live, he is all devoted to lead people to the Christ they would destroy [Phil. 1. 21-24].

It is more difficult to rejoice in the Lord in prosperity than in trials, for trials cast us on the Lord. There is more danger for us when there are no trials. But delight in the Lord delivers us altogether from the power of present things. We are not aware, until they are taken away, how much the most spiritual of us lean on props. I mean we lean on things around us. But if we are rejoicing in the Lord always, that strength can never be taken away [Neh. 8. 10], nor can we lose the joy of it'.

(J. N. Darby, '*The Book of Experience*', Collected Writings, Volume 27, page 205.)

**'Servants' of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

It seems that, according to the flesh, the New Testament writers James and Jude were half-brothers of the Lord Jesus (Mark 6. 3; Gal. 1. 19; Jude 1).

It seems also that the apostle John was a cousin of the Lord Jesus (cf. Matt. 27. 56; Mark 15. 40; and John 19. 25, where 'the mother of Zebedee's children' {of whom John was one, Mark 10. 35} is identified with 'Salome', our Lord's 'mother's sister').

Yet, we note that, in their writings, each of the three introduces himself, not by reference to any special earthly relationship, but, taking a proper lowly and self-effacing place, as His 'servant' ('bondman') (James 1. 1; Jude 1; Rev. 1. 1)

**'The trial of your faith' (1 Pet. 1. 7).**

'If we break something in the West ... we tend to either throw it away and consider it useless or we fix it with glue and try to cover up the cracks. In Japan, they sometimes mix gold powder with the glue, which makes a feature of the cracks. The brokenness becomes beautiful. This Japanese art of mending broken pottery is called '*kintsugi*', which means 'golden joinery'.

And I think this is what God does. He restores, redeems and makes beautiful even the most bleak, ugly and flawed situations'.

(Ruth Jackson, '*Why I'm giving up complaining for Lent*', accessed at ...

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/unbelievable/2021/02/why-im-giving-up-complaining-for-lent/>.)

[See the attached 'The Greatest Week' document.](#)

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

1. Carol Edwards was making scrambled eggs when her husband John suddenly burst into the kitchen.

'Careful!' John cried out. 'Be careful. You're cooking too many at once. Quick! Scramble them! Now! And you need more butter. What are you thinking about; they're going to stick! Careful! Now, scramble them again! Hurry up! Are you crazy? Don't forget to salt them. You know you always forget to salt them. Use the salt, I said! More of it! Carol, the salt!'

Totally baffled, Carol turned to face John, and asked, 'Whatever is wrong with you?'

'Nothing', John calmly replied, 'I just wanted to show you *what it feels like when I'm driving!*'

2. Susan James was flying back home with her seven-year-old son Max, after visiting her parents overseas. As they got off the plane, Max asked his mother, 'Mum, who is picking us up today?'

'It will be Dad', Susan replied, and he will have Scruffles with him'.

'Now, remember', 'she hastily added, '*hug Dad first, the dog second*'.

And one more 'car' smile ...

3. Daniel's mother-in-law asked him to drive her around the town so she could run a few errands. Daniel set out and, after a while, his car phone rang. It was his mother-in-law. 'You left without me', shouted the voice, 'You've been driving around for the last 20 minutes without me!'

'Phew, that's a relief', Daniel replied.

'I BEG YOUR PARDON?!' his mother-in-law screamed angrily.

'No offence meant', David responded, 'but I spent the last 20 minutes *convinced that I had gone deaf*'.

Finally, see the attached 'Driving carefully' picture.

Do all the **good** you can,  
by all the **means** you can,  
in all the **ways** you can,  
in all the **places** you can,  
at all the **times** you can,  
to all the **people** you can,  
as long as **ever** you can.

