

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 8 May 2023

Greetings.

This coming Lord's Day will mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the issue of '*The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel*' on 14 May 1948.<sup>1</sup>

The establishment of a Jewish state represented the restoration to the people of Israel of their homeland. The second paragraph of the Declaration states, 'After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it'.

I note:

(i) that, when speaking to Solomon of that which Israel's Declaration designates 'their land', the Lord describes it as '*my land* that I have given you',<sup>2</sup> and

(ii) that scripture repeatedly states that the land was 'given' by the Lord to Abraham and to his descendants for *an inheritance*.<sup>3</sup>

With these facts as background, I reproduce below an extract from my notes on part of the opening doxology of Peter's first epistle: 'begotten us again to ... *an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and unfading*'.<sup>4</sup>

But, to prove that I am not doing this as an excuse to avoid effort, I also set out (further) below this week's 'Musings'—and these are 'fresh from the oven'!

Happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

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### **'An inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and unfading', 1 Peter 1. 4.**

The word 'inheritance' was very rich in associations for anyone as familiar with the Old Testament, as Peter's readers undoubtedly were.

Throughout the Old Testament, the 'inheritance' given to God's people is almost exclusively said to be '*the land*' (the so-called 'Promised Land') ... the land which, in part at least, had once belonged to the nations of Canaan.

Moses refers no less than seven times in the Book of Deuteronomy alone to '*the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance*'.<sup>5</sup> And, much later, King Solomon prays to God concerning '*your land, which you have given to your people as an inheritance*'.<sup>6</sup>

There can be little doubt, therefore, that the very mention of an 'inheritance' would have directed the minds of Peter's readers to the 'inheritance' once given to (and long enjoyed by) the nation of Israel.<sup>7</sup>

But, as Peter makes clear, the inheritance now enjoyed by Christians (whether of Jewish or Gentile descent) is very different, not least because their 'inheritance' is 'reserved' ('laid up', 'stored up') in heaven,<sup>8</sup> far beyond (a) the reach of increasing pressure from the Roman state, (b) the reach of imprisonment, (c) the reach of wild beasts in the arena, or, indeed, (d) the reach of any earthly trial or suffering.<sup>9</sup>

There was no danger that their 'adversary the devil'<sup>10</sup> could ever rob them of this *heavenly* paradise,<sup>11</sup> as once he had robbed the first man and woman of their *earthly* paradise.<sup>12</sup> Thank God, the heavenly 'inheritance' of the Christian is far outside his reach and range!

In his second epistle, Peter writes both of people and of things which are 'reserved'.<sup>13</sup> *There*, in each case, these are 'reserved' for God's judgement, whether :

- (a) the angels who sinned,<sup>14</sup>
- (b) unrighteous men,<sup>15</sup>
- (c) ungodly false teachers,<sup>16</sup> or
- (d) the existing heavens and earth.<sup>17</sup>

But here he speaks of 'an inheritance ... reserved', and 'reserved', he says, 'in heaven' for his readers.

But this inheritance is distinguished from that once enjoyed by the nation of Israel, not only (i) in that it, unlike Israel's, is *heavenly* in its character, but also (ii) because, unlike Israel's, it is '*incorruptible and undefiled and unfading*'.

And every word Peter uses is loaded. For Israel's inheritance (the 'Promised Land') soon proved itself to be none of those things.

Israel's earthly inheritance was certainly not '*incorruptible*'. One of the meanings of the word translated 'corrupt'<sup>18</sup> in the Greek Old Testament is that of 'laying waste' and of 'ravaging' a land. This is the word used, for instance, (a) of David's army-commander Joab when it is said that he 'led out the army and ravaged the country of the Ammonites',<sup>19</sup> and (b) of the inhabited world being 'laid waste', being 'devastated', by God's judgement.<sup>20</sup>

In secular Greek also, the word was used to describe an area which had been ravaged by an invading army.<sup>21</sup> And many times Israel's land-inheritance had experienced just this form of 'corruption', being trampled, successively, by the invading armies of the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, and, more recently, the Romans.<sup>22</sup>

But, if Israel's 'Promised Land' had not proved 'incorruptible', neither had it long remained '*undefiled*'.

Before ever Israel conquered and possessed the land, the Lord had told them that the land had already been defiled by the immorality and idolatry of the Canaanites.<sup>23</sup> And the last three books of Moses sounded loud warnings to the nation against *their* 'defiling' that which, ultimately, was God's land.<sup>24</sup>

And yet, in spite of the Lord's repeated warnings, Israel did defile the land by their idolatry, bloodshed, and sexual vices. The Lord had to reproach them, for example, through the prophet Jeremiah, 'I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. But when you came in, you *defiled my land*',<sup>25</sup> adding later, 'they have *defiled my land* with their dead, detestable idols'.<sup>26</sup>

But the land of Canaan was not only ravaged ('corrupted') by foreign invaders, and polluted ('defiled') by its own inhabitants. Many times, the beauty of the land '*faded*' away,<sup>27</sup> (a) blasted, blighted and defaced by warfare and pestilence, and (b) parched by drought, usually as the expression of divine chastisement on account of Israel's own sins.<sup>28</sup>

You and I do well to praise God, therefore, that the 'inheritance ... reserved in heaven' for us is '*incorruptible, undefiled and unfading*'.<sup>29</sup> For our inheritance stands totally secure:<sup>30</sup> (i) *untouched by death*, (ii) *unstained by sin*, and (iii) *unaffected by time*.

Wonderfully, our inheritance (i) cannot be *devastated*, (ii) cannot be *contaminated*, and (iii) cannot be *terminated*.<sup>31</sup>

### 1 Peter 1. 3-4

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who ... has begotten us again to ... an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and unfading, reserved in heaven for you'.

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**(i) Scripture.**

Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there. And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews'.

Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left.

And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross'.

Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, "I am the Son of God"'.

Matthew 27. 36-43 (*The New King James Version*)

**(ii) Food for thought.**

**Three 'double descriptions' of the Lord Jesus.**

(i) 'Apostle and high priest' (Heb. 3. 1).

(ii) 'Author and finisher' (Heb. 12. 2).

(iii) 'Shepherd and overseer' (1 Pet. 2. 25).

**Jesus mocked at His crucifixion (Matt. 27. 36-44).**

'The mockery by an awful irony reveals more than the mocker thinks, for Jesus is indeed: (i) King of the Jews (Matt. 27. 37), (ii) the new meeting place with God (Matt. 27. 40), (iii) the Saviour of men (Matt. 27. 42), (iv) the King of Israel (Matt. 27. 42), and the Son of God (Matt. 27. 43)'.

(D. A. Carson, '*Matthew: Expositor's Bible Commentary*', on Matt. 27. 32-44.)

**'It is finished' (John 19. 30); 'who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross' (Heb. 12. 2).**

'That is always a solemn crisis, in a man's history, when he has completed some great undertaking.

'A great historian [Edward Gibbon] has left a memorable record of the evening when his pen traced the last line of a gigantic work ['The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire'].

'The architect or builder must feel a proud sensation when the last stone of some mighty edifice is laid; or, in our dockyards, when the last ring of ten thousand hammers is heard, and some proud naval triumph floats majestically on the waters.

'The patriot who has worked resolutely and bravely for his country's weal, must experience an elevating satisfaction when he sees his days of patient toil, and his nights of anxious watching, crowned with success, despotism dethroned, and liberty triumphant.

'And what, if we can use the comparison, must have been the feelings of the adorable Son of God, at that moment, when the burden of His tremendous work was at an end—redemption completed, the victory won—the moment arrived, to which He had looked forward from all eternity ...

'If there be joy among the angels even over "one sinner that repenteth", what must now have been the joy of the Lord of angels, when He had in view the millions on millions, who in all coming ages, would exult in that cross as their chiefest glory?'

(D. R. Macduff, '*Mountains of Scripture*', pages 286-287.)

**The eternal sonship of the Lord Jesus.**

'We see from, 'The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world' (1 John 4. 14), that He who was already the Son became the Saviour, so that there is no room for doubt that the pre-existent Lord was already the Son'.

(F. Büchsel, '*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*', Ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, Volume 4, page 741, note 16.)

**'Jesus said to her, Give me to drink' ... 'The water that I shall give shall be ... a well of water', John 4. 7, 14.**

**1. Who it was that asked.**

'He first asks her for a drink - a drink of cold water! - considered the very poorest and meanest gift which this world contains. See how the Lord humbled Himself!

'Among the Jews it was considered the depth of degradation even to hold any communion or converse with the Samaritans; to be beholden to them for a favour would not be tolerated by them. But here we have the Lord of glory asking for a drink of water from one of the worst in the city of the Samaritans! ...

'She might have some possible hope that He was coming [John 4. 25]; but how could she expect to see Him so full of humility and love as to become a suitor for a drink of cold water?'

(J. N. Darby, *'The Woman of Samaria'*, Collected writings, Volume 12, pages 3 and 8.)

## **2. For what He asked and what He gave.**

He asked for only a 'drink' from her but He gave a 'well' (a 'fountain', a 'spring') to her.

'I do not give a simple "drink of water", but I cause a spring, a perennial fountain, a river of Divine pleasure to issue and flow from that inward satisfaction which follows a reception of my gifts; and it is so abundant that it is enough for everlasting needs'.

(H. R. Reynolds, *'The Gospel of John'*, The Pulpit Commentary, Volume 17, page 165.)

## **'This day' in the Gospel according to Luke.**

(i) 'Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord' (Luke 2. 11).

(ii) 'He began to say to them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears' (Luke 4. 21).

(iii) 'Jesus said to him, This day is salvation come to this house' (Luke 19. 9).

## **To earth and to heaven.**

'He who brought Godhood to earth has taken manhood into heaven'.

(David E. West, *'The Majesty of His Ascension'*, Glory of the Son, Assembly Testimony Magazine.)

## **The promises of God.**

1. 'His promises are cheques to be cashed, not mere mottoes to hang on the wall'.

(Vance Havner, *'The Vance Havner Quotebook'*, page 178.)

2. 'The CIM continued to be challenged by a tightness of funds during that period, but Hudson's faith never wavered. In April 1874 he told Jennie, "The balance in hand yesterday was sixty-seven cents! The Lord reigns: herein is our joy and confidence." To another missionary he stated, when the balance had sunk even lower, "We have twenty-five cents and all the promises of God!"

(Vance Christie, *'Hudson Taylor: Gospel Pioneer to China'*, 2011, page 180.)

## **Longsuffering.**

'Chrysostom defined 'longsuffering' (*makrothumia*) as the spirit which could take revenge if it liked, but utterly refuses to do so. Lightfoot explained it as the spirit which will never retaliate. Now this is the very opposite of Greek virtue. The great Greek virtue was 'greatness of soul' (*megalopsuchia*), which Aristotle defined as the refusal to tolerate any insult or injury. To the Greek, the big man was the man who went all out for vengeance. To the Christian, the big man is the man who, even when he can, refuses to do so'.

(William Barclay, *'New Testament Words'*, page 197.)

## **'I have planted, Apollos watered ... neither is he that plants anything, neither he that waters ... he that plants and he that waters are one' (1 Cor. 3. 6-8).**

'The argument is as follows: "Paul and Apollos are nothing: therefore, you ought not to make them lords over you (verse 7). Again, Paul and Apollos are one thing: therefore, they ought not to be the occasion of dissension among you (verse 8)"

(J. B. Lightfoot, *'Notes on Epistles of St. Paul'*, page 188.)

## **The hardening of the heart of Pharaoh.**

'The Pharaoh of the Exodus stands on the page of Scripture as an example of (i) arrogance and (ii) obstinacy.

(i) 'His arrogant pride is revealed by his first and last recorded words: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice ...?" (Exod. 5. 2) and "I will pursue, I will overtake ... I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them" (Exod. 15. 9).

(ii) 'His obstinacy is expressed by his continual refusal to bow to either the word or power of God, repeatedly hardening his heart ... Prior to the first plague, "Pharaoh's heart was hardened ... and he hearkened not to them" (Exod. 7. 13, literal translation). It was the first of nine occasions when we are told that Pharaoh hardened his heart, seven of which occurred before the first time we read that God hardened his heart (Exod. 9. 12).

'It is important to note that God is not said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart until after the sixth plague; that is, until over half the plagues were over.

'The Lord simply confirmed and ratified Pharaoh's self-chosen course of rebellion. That God might subsequently reveal His power and the greatness of His name, He chose not to destroy Pharaoh when he first rejected His demands but to bear with him in long-suffering, giving him repeated opportunities to submit.

*'Pharaoh had only himself to blame* for the death of the firstborn of Egypt and his own eventual overthrow in the Red Sea (Psa. 136. 15)'.  
(*'The Pharaoh of the Exodus'*, Day by Day with Bible Characters, Precious Seed Publications, page 73.)

***'You took joyfully the spoiling of your possessions, knowing in yourselves that you have a better and an enduring possession'* (Heb. 10. 34).**

The Rev. John Newton one day called to visit a family that had suffered the loss of all they possessed by fire. He found the pious mistress, and saluted her with:

"I give you joy, madam."

Surprised, and ready to be offended, she exclaimed:

"What! Joy that all my property is consumed?"

"O no," he answered, "but joy that *you have so much property that fire cannot touch*".

(D. L. Moody, *'Heaven'*, 1884, page 92.)

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

#### **1. Seeing red.**

Two elderly ladies, Sylvia and Muriel, were very good friends.

One Tuesday, they decided to have a treat and to go for lunch to a restaurant some distance away.

Driving a large automatic car in which they could barely see over the dashboard, they were well on their way to the restaurant when they came to a road junction. The traffic light facing them showed a definite red but, without even slowing down, they drove straight through. Muriel, sitting in the passenger seat, thought to herself, 'Oh dear, I am sure we just went through a red light'. Biting her tongue, she said nothing.

But, after a few minutes, they came to another junction and, once more, the light was red. Yet, again, they drove on through. Muriel was now seriously worried but she decided to take no notice and to hope that there would be no more junctions before they arrived.

Sadly for Muriel, they soon came to a third junction ... and, yes, sure enough, they went straight through.

Unable to ignore it any longer, she turned to her friend and said loudly, 'Sylvia, didn't you realise that we have run through three red lights in a row? You could have killed us both'.

With a shocked look, Sylvia replied, 'What? *You mean that I am driving?*'

#### **2. Three 'literal' quotations. (The mind boggles!)**

(i) 'Two mafia bosses escaped from a courthouse *literally from under the noses* of their guards',  
(BBC Radio 4.)

(ii) 'In the regiments of the United States Colored Troops, to which he had *literally given birth*, there was no doubt Lincoln sat at the head of the table',

(William C. Davis, 'Lincoln's Men', page 226.)

(iii) '[Farmers are] *literally tearing their hair out* trying to make a living'.

(Edward Leigh talking to Edward Stourton, Today, BBC Radio 4, 18 October 2006.)

(The three quotations are literally (!) copied from Steven Appleby's book, *'Literally laugh your head off'*, pages 17, 33 and 119.)

## Notes to 'An inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and unfading', 1 Peter 1. 4.

<sup>1</sup> A copy of an English translation of the text of the Declaration (with at least one typo) can be accessed at <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/general/declaration-of-establishment-state-of-israel>.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chron. 7. 20.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Gen. 15. 7; Exod. 23. 30; Lev. 20. 24; Deut. 31. 7; Psa. 105. 11.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Pet. 1. 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Deut. 4. 21; 15. 4; 19. 10; 21. 23; 24. 4; 25. 19; 26. 1; cf. Num. 34. 2; Deut. 4. 38.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Kings 8. 36.

<sup>7</sup> 'Peter's teaching about the nature of their new inheritance invites a comparison of the new "land" in which they hold inheritance (their share in the kingdom of God) with the land rights of their birth. This comparison might have been especially meaningful to Christians displaced from their homeland (in the Diaspora). Jewish Christians remembered that the land of the old covenant had been ravished, defiled, and defaced successively by the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Ptolemies, Seleucids, and Romans and that the Jews lived in the Diaspora away from the benefits of their inheritance', Karen H. Jopes, '*1 Peter: Baker Exegetical Commentary*', comment on 1 Pet. 1. 4.

<sup>8</sup> 'Heaven is the safe-deposit box where God is guarding our inheritance for us', Kenneth Wuest, '*1 Peter in the Greek New Testament*', comment on 1 Pet. 1. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. 'the hope laid up for you in heaven', Col. 1. 5.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Pet. 5. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Rev. 2. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Gen. 2. 8-10; 3. 23-24 (where the Greek Old Testament uses the Greek word 'paradise' when translating the Hebrew word for 'garden').

<sup>13</sup> The Greek verb is *τηρέω* in each case, the same as in 1 Pet. 1. 4.

<sup>14</sup> 2 Pet. 2. 4.

<sup>15</sup> 2 Pet. 2. 9.

<sup>16</sup> 2 Pet. 2. 17; cf. v. 1.

<sup>17</sup> 2 Pet. 3. 7.

<sup>18</sup> The Greek word is *φθείρω*.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Chron. 20. 1.

<sup>20</sup> 'The earth shall be completely laid waste, and the earth shall be utterly spoiled ... the earth mourns, and the inhabited world is laid waste', Isa. 24. 3-4 (Greek Old Testament).

<sup>21</sup> 'He had probably chiefly in mind the ravaging of a land by a hostile army, for which *φθείρω* is good Greek (e.g. Plut. Per. 34; Demet. 33)', F. J. A. Hort, '*The First Epistle of St Peter 1. 1 – 2. 17*', page 36.

<sup>22</sup> See the quotation in note 7 above.

The land of Israel was ravaged by foreign armies on several occasions, some of the more notable include:

(i) Assyrian invasion in 701 BC: The Assyrian king, Sennacherib, invaded the Kingdom of Judah and laid siege to Jerusalem, although the city was spared from destruction.

(ii) Babylonian invasion in 586 BC: The Babylonians, led by King Nebuchadnezzar II, conquered Judah, destroyed the First Temple in Jerusalem, and deported much of the population to Babylon.

(iii) Greek conquest in the 4th century BC: The Greek general Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire, including the land of Israel, and brought Hellenistic culture to the area.

(iv) Roman conquest in the 1st century BC: The Roman Republic, led by Pompey the Great, conquered the land of Israel and incorporated it into the Roman Empire.

<sup>23</sup> Lev. 18. 25, 27.

<sup>24</sup> Lev. 18. 28; Num. 35. 33-34; Deut. 21. 23.

<sup>25</sup> Jer. 2. 7. Compare: (i) 'They poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was *defiled* with blood', Psa. 106. 38; (ii) 'You have defiled the land with your vile prostitution'. Jer. 3. 2; (iii) 'Because she took her prostitution lightly, she *defiled* the land, committing adultery with stone and tree', Jer. 3. 9; (iv) 'Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their own land, they *defiled* it by their ways and their deeds ... so I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed in the land, for the idols with which they had *defiled* it', Ezek. 36. 17-18.

<sup>26</sup> Jer. 16. 18.

<sup>27</sup> The verb form of the word that Peter uses (without its prefix) is found in the Greek translation of Job 15. 30 and 24. 24 to describe the withering of flowers and herbs. Compare James 1. 11, where the verb form is used of the rich man, in parallel to the fading grass and its flower.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, (i) 'Why is the land ruined and laid waste like a wilderness, so that no one passes through? ... Because they have forsaken my law', Jer. 9. 12; (ii) 'How long will the land mourn and the grass of every field wither? For the evil of those who dwell in it', Jer. 12. 4; (iii) 'The land is full of adulterers; because of the curse the land mourns, and the pastures of the wilderness are dried up', Jer. 23. 10.

<sup>29</sup> There is no risk of us being 'disinherited'! Contrast God's threat to '*disinherit*' the nation, Num. 14. 12, a threat which was headed off by Moses's intercession, Num. 14. 13-20.

<sup>30</sup> 'The "inheritance" of the ... Christian is thus shown to be far superior to the earthly inheritance of the people of Israel in the land of Canaan. That earthly land was not '*kept*' for them, but was *taken from* them in the exile, and later by Roman occupation', Wayne Grudem, '*1 Peter: Tyndale New Testament Commentary*', comment on 1 Pet. 1. 4.

<sup>31</sup> This extract is slightly updated from the notes on '1 Peter 1. 3-12', which were attached to the Monday Musings for 31 August 2020.