

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 31 July 2023

Greetings,

This past Friday (28 July) marked the anniversary of a critical event in the build-up to one of the deadliest global conflicts in history.

Using the assassination of the Austrian archduke, Francis Ferdinand, as a pretext to present Serbia with an unacceptable ultimatum, Austria-Hungary declared war on 28 July 1914, sparking World War I (WW1). That war resulted in an estimated nine million soldiers being killed plus another twenty-three million wounded.

The Anglo-Zanzibar War (fought between the United Kingdom and the Zanzibar Sultanate) towards the end of the 19th century represents the other extreme in the history of warfare. The conflict lasted less than 45 minutes (on 27 August 1896) and scored as the shortest war in history.

Whether we think of the four-year WW1 or of the 45 minutes Anglo-Zanzibar War or, indeed, of any other war, in all likelihood, our minds leap to the words of our Lord Jesus: 'You will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet' (Matt 24. 6).

But there is one ongoing war which towers over all other wars. Concerning *that* war, F. F. Bruce once wrote:

'Several years ago, a European scholar, Oscar Cullmann, compared ... the work of Christ to the progress of a great war—in this case, the war between good and evil. In a great war, there is often one battle which decides the outcome of the war. After this decisive battle has been fought and won, there is little doubt which side will be victorious, but no one can say how long the war will yet go on. D-day, the day of the decisive battle, is past, but V-day, the day of the victory celebrations, lies in the future ...

'If the decisive battle determined the outcome of the war, it could be said that those forces whose defeat was then sealed were in principle defeated when the decisive battle was fought. Thus, while Paul speaks of death as the last enemy which is to be abolished ('καταργέω', 1 Cor. 15. 26), we read that Christ has already 'abolished' ('καταργέω') death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel' (2 Tim. 1. 10).

(F. F. Bruce, 'Jesus: Past, Present & Future: The Work of Christ', page 65. Those readers with memories like elephants may recall that this quotation appeared previously in the 'Musings' for 12 September 2022.)

Concerning our Lord's cry, 'It is finished' (John 19. 30), it has been well said (by Marshall Segal) that, *in another sense*, 'He was finishing the war that began before the first baby was born, and closing the foreword to His forever kingdom'.

I leave the last word with David: 'The Lord is my light and my Saviour; whom shall I fear? ... Though an army should set itself in array against me, my heart shall not be afraid: though war should break out against me, in this am I confident' (Psa. 27. 1, 3; Greek Old Testament).

### Advance notice

I apologise in advance but, on account of continuing pressing family issues, I think it wise that I make no attempt to issue any Musings next Monday.

God willing, the Monday Musings will, therefore, next appear in your Inbox on Monday, 14th August.

Meanwhile, I set out below today's main Musings.

Happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

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**(i) Scripture.**

Lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness'.

Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12. 7-10 (*The New King James Version*)

**(ii) Food for thought.**

***Bookkeeping.***

'A rhyme which has been written in many a man's book—

"If thou art borrowed by a friend,  
Right welcome shall he be  
To read, to study, not to lend,  
But to return to me.  
Not that imparted knowledge doth  
Diminish learning's store,  
But books I find when once they're lent,  
Return to me no more".

[Author uncertain; possibly Abraham Gall, 1741.]

'Sir Walter Scott used to say that his friends might be very indifferent accountants, but he was sure they were good "book-keepers"'.

(C. H. Spurgeon, '*Lectures to my Students: Second Series*', 1889, pages 288-289.)

***'By grace you have been saved ... this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God' (Eph. 2. 8).***

'Since we have not been saved by our good works, we cannot be lost by our bad works. Grace means salvation completely apart from any merit or works on our part. Grace means that God does it all for Jesus' sake! Our salvation is the gift of God'.

(Warren W. Wiersbe, '*Be Rich (Ephesians)*', page 45.)

***Scripture makes it clear that nobody can:***

(i) ***Fool*** God. (a) *Ask the wife of Jeroboam II*: 'Ahijah [the prophet] could not see, for his eyes were dim because of his age. And the Lord said to Ahijah, "Behold, the wife of Jeroboam is coming to inquire of you ...". When she came, she pretended to be another woman. But when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, he said, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why do you pretend to be another?"' (1 Kings 14. 4-6), or (b) *Ask Ananias and Sapphira*: 'a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and, with his wife's knowledge, he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? ... You have not lied to men but to God"' (Acts 5. 1-4).

(ii) ***Flee*** from God. *Ask Jonah*: 'Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord ... but the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea ... I said, "I am cast out from before your eyes ... I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple"' (Jonah 1. 3-4; 2. 4, 7; cf. Psa. 139. 7-12).

(iii) ***Fight*** God—and win. *Ask Gamaliel*: 'a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel stood up and said, "... if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it, lest perhaps you be found even to fight against God"' (Acts 5. 34, 39; cf. Isa. 45. 9; 1 Cor. 10. 22).

***'The leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your seed forever' (2 Kings 5. 27).***

'For the garments Gehazi got of Naaman by a lie, he had another given of the Lord ...

'He was clothed with a leprosy; a garment not to hide his shame but to discover it to all the world—a garment more lasting than the two changes of suits he had from the Syrian (2 Kings 5. 22-23). For

this garment lasted him all his life; neither was it then worn out, but to be put on by his children after him.

(William Gurnall, 'The Christian in Complete Armour', page 610.)

### **'Although ... yet'**

I suppose it would be true to say that the prophet Habakkuk started his prophecy/burden in the deep valley ('O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear?' Hab. 1. 2) but ended on the mountaintop ('I will joy in the God of my salvation', Hab. 3. 18).

We know that the apostle Paul was familiar with Habakkuk's prophecy (Compare Acts 13. 41 with Hab. 1. 5; Rom. 1. 17 and Gal. 3. 11 with Hab. 2. 4).

I have often wondered whether Paul ever pondered the closing section of the prophecy ('Although the fig tree shall not blossom ... yet I will rejoice in the Lord', Hab. 3. 17-18) and realised just how apt a description this contrast provides of not a few of his own experiences. For example, I imagine the apostle saying:

(i) 'Although I have been beaten with rods and am in an inner prison, with my feet fastened in the stocks, yet I will pray and sing hymns to God' (see Acts 16. 22-25);

(ii) 'Although I am in the midst of a violent sea storm aboard a doomed vessel, headed for trial before Emperor Nero (see Acts 25. 11-12; 27. 14, 22), yet I believe God' that both I and all with me on board the vessel will be saved (see Acts 27. 24-25, 31);

(iii) 'Although I am afflicted, perplexed, persecuted and cast down, yet I am not crushed, not driven to despair, not forsaken and not destroyed' (see 2 Cor. 4. 8-9);

(iv) 'Although I am as having nothing, yet I am possessing all things' (see 2 Cor. 6. 10);

(v) 'Although I have been given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, yet, with the Lord's grace and power, I will glory in my weaknesses' (see 2 Cor. 12. 7-9).

Though never a blossom the fig-tree shall wear,  
Though the vines in their season are blasted and bare,  
Though the olive-tree only be labour in vain,  
And no meat shall be found in the field or the plain,  
Though the last of the flocks be cut off from the fold  
And there be not a herd in the stalls to behold,  
Yet, the prophet declares, I'll rejoice in the Lord;  
Yet the God of Salvation can pleasure afford;  
Yet my strength in Jehovah my Lord I shall find,  
And I'll leap on the mountains of truth like the hind.

*In the day of adversity, never forget  
Habakkuk's "Though" and Habakkuk's "Yet".*

(I. Y. Ewan, 'The Caravanserai', page 184.)

### **Mountains in the Gospel according to Matthew.**

'The Lord had His own mountain strategies:

(i) the mount of His presentation, when He declared His kingdom (Matt 5-7);

(ii) the mount of His glorification, when He displayed His future majesty (Matt. 17);

(iii) the mount of His proclamation, when He described the end of the age (Matt. 24); and

(iv) the mount of His crucifixion, where He defeated all our foes (Matt .27)'.  
(J. B. Nicholson Jr, 'Tola and Jair' Taste and See, Uplook Ministries, 19 July 2023.)

### **'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Eph. 1. 3).**

'All through the life of Christ, He never calls God "God". We never find Him do so in the gospels until the cross. It would not have been walking in the power of the relationship which was always unhindered.

'When on the cross, which was expiation, He does not say, "Father", until, all being over, He was commending His spirit to Him (Luke 23. 46), but "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27. 46) ... Never was there a moment of the Father's more perfect delight in Him (John 10. 17); but if God was dealing according to His nature and being, it must be against sin, and therefore all was against Him, for He was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5. 21) ...

'Christ, risen out of death, and having entered ... into the unclouded joy of God His Father's countenance, when He had perfectly glorified Him, says to Mary Magdalene, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, 'I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'" (John 20. 17). All that is connected with these names of "God" and "Father" flow out to us'.

(J. N. Darby, 'Psalm 69', Collected Writings, Volume 17, page 331.)

### **'The Son of man'.**

'Repeatedly the Lord spoke of Himself as the Son of man, but only on three occasions, and those all in reference to His glorified state, did His people use the expression of Him (Acts 7. 50; Rev. 1. 13; 14. 14).'

(H. C. Hewlett, '*The Glories of our Lord*', page 53.)

### **'Jesus is Lord' (Rom. 10. 9; 1 Cor. 12. 3).**

'Several epithets applied to our Lord Jesus Christ enable us to trace chronologically His story from His first advent to His return in glory.

(i) He is "the second man. . . the Lord from heaven" (1 Cor. 15. 47) ...

(ii) He is "Lord even of the sabbath day" (Matt. 12 .8) ...

(iii) On the cross, despised and rejected, He is "the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2. 8) ...

(iv) He is "Lord both of the dead and living" (Rom. 14. 9). Here His resurrection is in view ...

(v) Now seated at the right hand of God, our exalted Saviour is "the Lord of the harvest" (Luke 10. 2)

...

(vi) He is, and will remain all the time His people need Him, "the Lord of Sabaoth", encouraging the revived remnant and strengthening His afflicted saints (Rom. 9. 29; James 5. 4).

(vii) He will come again to the world that rejected Him ... 'Lord of Lords' (Rev. 19. 16).

(A. Naismith, '*The Lord*', Treasury of Bible Doctrine, PSP, pages 143-144.)

### **Jesus: the Teacher.**

'One of the dominant ways by which His disciples referred to Jesus was as "the Teacher".

'After Jesus and Martha finished their quiet exchange in John 11, Martha, we are told, "went back [to her house] and called her sister Mary aside. 'The Teacher is here', she said, 'and is asking for you'" (John 11. 28).

'Jesus himself ratifies the appropriateness of the designation when He instructs His disciples how to prepare for the Passover: "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: "My appointed time is near""' (Matt. 26. 18). Or again, in John's gospel, Jesus tells His disciples, "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord', and rightly so, for that is what I am" (John 13. 13).

'In Matthew's Gospel, the apostle provides five large teaching blocks, the first of which is the Sermon on the Mount, which begins with the comment, "His disciples came to Him, and He began to teach them" (Matt. 5. 1-2), and ends with the observation that "the crowds were amazed at His teaching, because He taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law" (Matt. 7. 28-29).

'Mark's Gospel reports much less teaching, but the evangelist has a predilection for referring to Jesus as the Teacher.

'Certainly, *the canonical gospels depict Jesus's teaching in a variety of modes*: lecturing, mentoring those closest to Him, coining one-liners, interacting with opponents, illustrating some element of His teaching with parables or symbol-laden miracles, or unpacking grace, faith, obedience and more'.

(D. A. Carson, '*A Biblical Theology of Education*', Evangelical Review of Theology, 47:3, page 202.)

### **The 'place which the Lord your God shall choose' (Deut. 12. 5, 11; 16. 2; 26. 2).**

'The signification of the expression ... does not refer to a single place alone.

'Its purpose is to forbid the Israelites to offer sacrifices wherever they may please; only in a place approved by a priest or prophet in the name of the Lord shall the service be permitted. This place may be Jerusalem, or another place or places—even more than one at a time—provided they are authorized in the name of the Lord by a person qualified to do so.

'Only after the qualified persons had ordained that from that time onward the Temple at Jerusalem alone would be the chosen place for worship (possibly this declaration was actually made in the days of Josiah), was sacrificial service in other places deemed to be forbidden.

'Proof that the verse refers to various places we find in the express statement in Deuteronomy itself [Deut. 27. 4-7] concerning the building of a sanctuary and the offering of sacrifices on Mount Ebal immediately after the conquest of the Land'.

(U. Cassuto, '*Jerusalem in the Pentateuch*', Biblical and oriental Studies: Volume 1, page 77.)

### **'All things come from you, and of your own have we given you ... all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own' (1 Chron. 29. 14, 16).**

'Every faculty you have, your power of thinking or of moving your limbs from moment to moment, is given you by God. If you devoted every moment of your whole life exclusively to His service you could not give Him anything that was not in a sense His own already.

'So that when we talk of a man doing anything for God or giving anything to God, I will tell you what it is really like. It is like a small child going to its father and saying, "Daddy, give me sixpence to buy you a birthday present"'.  
(C. S. Lewis, '*Mere Christianity*', page 143.)

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

1. Young Ben fell for Jill the first time he saw her. He plucked up the courage to ask her out for dinner at a high-class chain restaurant.

Before they entered the restaurant, he suggested that they should 'go Dutch'—each paying for his/her own meal. All went well until the meal end, when the waitress presented them with the bill for their two meals.

At that point, Jill dutifully produced half the total out of her purse ... and Ben pulled out a 'Buy One, Get One Free' coupon from his wallet.

Surprise, surprise, *there was no second date!*

2. Charlie's memory was getting worse and worse. Eventually, it got so bad that, at times, he couldn't remember even his own name.

Charlie found this particularly embarrassing *when he was talking to himself.*