

Greetings.

There are two components today ... set out below.

The one consists of the normal 'Musings' and the other ('The Lord's set face') consists of notes of a short Christ-centred meditation which I gave recently at my home assembly.

Happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

1. Malcolm's Monday Musings : 6 November 2023

(i) Scripture.

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endures forever ...

The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? ...

It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man ...

The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.

I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord ...

The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This was the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.

This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it ...

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! ...

You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, I will exalt you.

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endures forever.

Psalm 118. 1, 6, 8, 16-17, 22-24, 26, 28-29 (*The New King James Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'Reformation Day' and Luther's 'beloved psalm'.

Tuesday past, 31 October, was 'Reformation Day'.

Each year, 'Reformation Day' marks the anniversary of the date in 1517:

(i) on which (according to Philip Melancthon, writing some thirty years later) Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the West Door of the All Saints' Church in Wittenberg, Germany;

(ii) on which Luther sent his Theses to Albert of Brandenburg, the Archbishop of Mainz (we can confidently say, therefore, that the Ninety-five Theses were 'mailed' even if we cannot be certain that they were 'nailed');

(iii) which is generally identified as the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, sending a shockwave through the whole of Christendom.

Today, I fast forward the story to 1530. At that time, Luther was under the Imperial Ban (stripped of all his rights and declared legally dead) imposed by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, and subject to arrest as an outlaw if captured.

During the period from April to October, Luther was given refuge in the fortress of Coburg. Whilst there, he dedicated his translation and exposition of Psalm 118 to his patron, Abbot Frederick of Nuremberg.

In the preface to his commentary, he wrote:

While I should like to show my gratitude to you for your love and favour to me, I am, by earthly standards, a beggar. Besides, even if I had much, there is nothing special I could do for you in your position.

And so I turned to my wealth, which I treasure so much, and took up *my beloved psalm* [Psalm 118], putting down on paper the thoughts which came to me ... These thoughts of mine I decided to send you as a gift. I have nothing better ...

This is *my own beloved psalm*. Although the entire Psalter and all of Holy Scripture are dear to me as my only comfort and source of life, *I fell in love with this psalm especially*.

Therefore, I call it my own. When emperors and kings, the wise and the learned, and even saints could not aid me, this Psalm proved a friend and helped me out of many great troubles ...

But lest anyone, knowing that this psalm belongs to the whole world, raise his eyebrow at my claim that this psalm is mine, may he be assured that no one is being robbed. After all, Christ is mine, and yet He belongs to all believers.

I will not be jealous but will gladly share what is mine. *Would to God all the world would claim this psalm for its own, as I do!* ... May Christ our Lord help us by His Spirit to love and honour His holy Word with all our hearts'.

(Translated by George Beto in 'Luther's Works: Volume 14', pages 45-46).

Confident that, in spite of his many powerful enemies, he was safe until his work on earth was done, Luther adopted verse 17 of Psalm 118 ('I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord') as

'a kind of motto ... He had written the text on the wall of his study at the Coburg fortress in 1530'.

(James L. Brauer, 'Luther's Hymn Melodies', page 15.)

Today, let *us* each respond afresh to *the appeal which both opens and closes Luther's 'beloved psalm'*:

'Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endures forever' (Psalm 118. 1, 29).

(A slightly amended version of the note which introduced the 'Monday Musings' of 1 November 2021.)

'It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man' (Psa. 118. 8).

'It is better in all ways, for ...

'(i) First of all, it is wiser: God is infinitely more able to help, and more likely to help, than man, and therefore prudence suggests that we put our confidence in Him above all others.

'(ii) It is also morally better to do so, for it is the duty of the creature to trust in the Creator. God has a claim upon his creatures: faith, He deserves to be trusted; and to place our reliance upon another rather than upon Himself, is a direct insult to his faithfulness.

'(iii) It is better in the sense of safer, since we can never be sure of our ground if we rely upon mortal man, but we are always secure in the hands of our God. It is better in its effect upon ourselves: to trust in man tends to make us mean, crouching, dependent; but confidence in God elevates, produces a sacred quiet of spirit, and sanctifies the soul.

'(iv) It is, moreover, much better to trust in God, as far as the result is concerned; for in many cases the human object of our trust fails from want of ability, from want of generosity, from want of affection, or from want of memory; but the Lord, so far from failing, does for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think. This verse is written out of the experience of many who have, first of all, found the broken reeds of the creature break under them, and have afterwards joyfully found the Lord to be a solid pillar sustaining all their weight.

(C. H. Spurgeon, 'The Treasury of David', comment on Psa. 118. 8.)

Seven Christ-centred 'Beholds' in Isaiah's prophecy.

Isaiah constantly encourages us to fix our gaze upon the Lord Jesus:

(i) 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel' (Isa. 7. 14).

(ii) 'Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone' (Isa. 28. 16).

(iii) 'Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness' (Isa. 32. 1).

(iv) 'Behold, your God will come ... then the eyes of the blind shall be opened' (Isa. 35. 4-5).

(v) 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights' (Isa. 42. 1).

(vi) 'Behold, my servant shall deal wisely' (Isa. 52. 13).

(vii) 'Behold, your salvation comes ... His reward is with Him' (Isa. 62. 11).

Nine testimonies to the personal righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

Nine New Testament witnesses bear testimony to the personal righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ:

(i) Pilate's wife ... 'that righteous man' (Matt. 27. 19).

(ii) Pilate himself ... 'this righteous man' (Matt. 27. 24).

(iii) The centurion at the cross ... 'a righteous man' (Luke 23. 47).

(iv) The apostle Peter ... 'the holy and righteous One' (Acts 3. 14); 'Christ ... suffered for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous' (1 Pet. 3. 18).

(v) Stephen ... 'the righteous One' (Acts 7. 52).

(vi) Ananias of Damascus ... 'that righteous One' (Acts 22. 14).

(vii) The apostle Paul ... 'the righteous judge' (2 Tim. 4. 8).

(viii) The writer to the Hebrews ... 'of the Son, He says, '... you have loved righteousness' (Heb. 1. 8-9).

(ix) The apostle John ... 'Jesus Christ the righteous' (1 John 2. 1).

The Lord Jesus: six contrasts between (a) the slanders and insults of men, and (b) who He was and what He did.

(i) They referred to Him as a glutton and drunkard (Matt. 11. 19), who at times hungered and thirsted for us (Matt. 4. 2; John 19. 28).

(ii) They attributed collusion with Beelzebub to Him (Matt. 10. 25; 12. 24), who had come to undo the works of the devil and who performed His miracles in the power of the Spirit of God (Matt. 12. 28; 1 John 3. 5).

(iii) They sniggered at Him, with obvious innuendo, 'We were not born of fornication' (John 8. 41), who was 'that holy thing', born of a virgin (Luke 1. 34-35).

(iv) They sneered at Him, 'You are a Samaritan' (John 8. 48), who was of the royal house of Israel (Luke 2. 4).

(v) They scoffed at Him, 'You have a demon' (John 7. 20), who cast out unclean spirits with indisputable authority (Mark 1. 27).

(vi) They branded Him as a 'deceiver' (Matt. 27. 63), who was everything He claimed to be and the very 'truth' itself (John 8. 14, 25; 14. 6).

Jerusalem: our Lord's goal.

'Christ unfolds that the purpose of His first advent was His atoning death at Calvary. This may be fully apprehended if we connect, what Luke alone brings out, the references to Jerusalem:

(i) "His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9. 31).

(ii) "Steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9. 51).

(iii) "His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9. 53).

(iv) "Teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem" (Luke 13. 22).

(v) "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem" (Luke 13. 33).

(vi) "It came to pass as He went to Jerusalem" (Luke 17. 11).

(vii) "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem" (Luke 18. 31).

(viii) "He was nigh to Jerusalem" (Luke 19. 11).

(ix) "He went before, ascending up to Jerusalem" (Luke 19. 28).

'There are no less than thirty-two verses which refer to Jerusalem in Luke's Gospel, and nearly all of those mentioned, from the transfiguration scene to the accomplishment of His sacrificial atonement on Calvary, have their focus-point in His death'.

(F. E. Marsh, 'One Thousand New Bible Readings', page 72, number 155.)

God, the gainer.

In 'the work of the cross ... God has not merely received back what was lost, but He is an actual gainer. He has gained more by redemption than ever He lost by the fall. He reaps a richer harvest of glory, honour, and praise, in the fields of redemption, than ever He could have reaped from those of creation.

"The sons of God" could raise a loftier song of praise around the empty tomb of Jesus than ever they raised in view of the Creator's accomplished work (Job 38. 4-7). The wrong has not only been perfectly atoned for, but an eternal advantage has been gained by the work of the cross. This is a stupendous truth. God is a gainer by the work of Calvary'.

(C. H. Mackintosh, 'Notes on the Book of Leviticus', page 138.)

'They assigned His grave with wicked men, but He was with a rich man in His death' (Isa. 53. 9).

'Under Roman law, the bodies of executed criminals were normally handed over to their next of kin, but not so in the case of those crucified for sedition. They were left to the vultures, the culminating indignity and shame ...

'The Jews never refused to bury any executed criminal, but instead of allowing the bodies of such sinners to be placed in family tombs, where they might desecrate those already buried, they provided a burial site for criminals just outside the city. Doubtless the request of the authorities that the bodies be taken down (John 19. 31) assumed that they be buried in this common grave.

'As a member of the Sanhedrin, however, Joseph used his rank to gain access to Pilate, and thus stood out from his fellow councillors (John 19. 38). Joseph would have known that, if Jesus' brothers were present in Jerusalem, they would not have dared to approach Pilate even if they wanted to, and in any case they would have been refused. Joseph's act ... was doubly courageous since the charge under which Jesus had been executed was sedition.

'That Pilate acceded to the request probably reflects the governor's conviction that Jesus was not really guilty, and may have been a final snub against the Jewish authorities'.

(D. A. Carson, 'The Gospel according to John', page 629.)

Moses, the intercessor.

'The Lord Himself regarded Moses as one of the greatest men of intercessory prayer ever (Jer. 15. 1)

...

'Many times during Israel's wilderness wandering, Moses appeared before God as their great intercessor. The time immediately following their idolatrous worship of the calf was one such occasion.

'No greater tribute could be paid to the power of Moses' prayer than that, before ever Moses pleaded with God for them, God first pleaded with him against them; "let me alone ... that I may consume

them” (Exod. 32. 10). The Lord knew well the holy violence with which His servant’s requests would assail Him! And He was right.

‘For, following Moses’ impassioned appeal (i) to His redeeming act, (ii) to His great name, and (iii) to His solemn oath, “the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people” (Exod. 32. 14). “He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath” (Psa. 106. 23). But for Moses’ selfless intercession and God’s merciful forbearance, the nation would have been destroyed ...

‘Lord, make me an effective intercessor’.

(*Day by Day with Bible Characters (Precious Seed Publications)*, page 66.)

‘Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin’ (John 8. 34).

‘Even if a good man is enslaved, he is free, whereas an evil man even if he rules is a slave—and a slave not to one man, but what is more oppressive, to as many masters as he has vices. The comment of divine scripture on these vices is: “A man is a slave to whatever masters him”.

(Augustine of Hippo, ‘*The City of God: Books III and IV; translated by P. G. Walsh*’, Book IV, Paragraph V, page 115.)

Sin and the Christian’s desires.

‘There are three things which the true Christian desires with respect to sin: Justification, that it may not condemn; sanctification, that it may not reign; and glorification, that it may not be’.

(Attributed to Richard Cecil, 1748-1810.)

‘Forgiving one another’ (Eph. 4. 32).

‘Even our relationships with those who are closest to us are clouded now and then, if only by petty grievances.

‘True peace with others requires effort. Sometimes it demands the readiness to yield; at others, the willingness to be frank. Today we may need humility to remain silent; tomorrow, courage to confront or speak out. One thing remains constant, however: if we seek peace in our relationships, we must be willing to forgive over and over ...

‘Forgiving has nothing to do with being fair, or with excusing wrongdoing; in fact, it may mean pardoning someone for something inexcusable. When we excuse someone, we brush his mistake aside. When we forgive someone, there may be good reason to hold onto our hurt, but we let go of it anyway. We refuse to seek revenge. Our forgiveness may not always be accepted, yet the act of reaching out our hand in reconciliation saves us from anger and indignation ...

‘We may have a hard time forgiving. Especially if our resentment has grown over a long period, it will take time and effort to root out. And whether the hurt is real or imagined, it will eat away at us as long as we nurse it.

‘Not that we should swallow our hurts. To the contrary, people who push their grievances down into their subconscious in an attempt to forget them only cripple themselves. Before we can forgive a hurt, we must be able to name it. Sometimes it may not be possible (or helpful, even if it is possible) to confront the person we are struggling to forgive, and then the best solution is to share our pain with someone else we trust. Once we have done this, we must let go’.

(J. C. Arnold, ‘*Seeking Peace*’, pages 113-114, 117.)

‘If you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses’ (Matt. 6. 15).

‘He that cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself; for every man has need to be forgiven’.

(Attributed variously to Thomas Fuller, to George Herbert and to Lord Edward Herbert of Cherbury.)

A filled heart (1).

A heart filled with:

(i) Sequels: ‘the backslider in heart will be filled with the fruit of his ways’ (Prov. 14. 14).

(ii) Sorrow: ‘because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart’ (John 16. 6).

(iii) Sin: ‘why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit’ (Acts 5. 3).

A filled heart (2).

‘The fact is, your hearts are too big for the world, it cannot fill them; they are too little for Christ, for He fills heaven; yet will He fill you to overflowing’.

(J. N. Darby, ‘*A word on Cleaving to the Lord*’, Collected Writings, Volume 34, page 396.)

Creation and redemption.

'Great was the work of creation, but greater was the work of redemption ...

'Great power was seen in bringing us out of nothing, but greater power in helping us when we were worse than nothing.

'It cost more to redeem than to create us.

'In creation it was but speaking a word (Psa. 148. 5); in redeeming there was shedding of blood (1 Pet. 1. 18-19).

'Creation was the work of God's fingers (Psa. 8. 3); redemption was the work of His arm (Luke 1. 51).

'In creation, God gave us ourselves; in redemption, He gave us Himself.

'By creation, we have life in Adam; by redemption, we have life in Christ'.

(Thomas Watson, 'The Ten Commandments', page 96; cf. Bernard of Clairvaux, 'On the Love of God', pages 51-52.)

'Midst the Darkness, Storm, and Sorrow'.

'Midst the darkness, storm and sorrow,
One bright gleam I see;
Well I know the blessed morrow
Christ will come for me.

'Midst the light, and peace, and glory
Of the Father's home,
Christ for me is watching, waiting,
Waiting till I come.

Long the blessed Guide has led me
By the desert road;
Now I see the golden towers,
City of my God.

There, amidst the love and glory,
He is waiting yet;
On His hands a name is graven
He can ne'er forget.

There, amidst the songs of Heaven,
Sweeter to His ear,
Is the footfall in the desert,
Ever drawing near.

There, made ready are the mansions.

Radiant, still and fair;

But the bride the Father gave Him

Yet is wanting there.

*Who is this who comes to meet me
On the desert way,
As the Morning Star foretelling
God's unclouded day?*

*He it is who came to win me
On the cross of shame;
In His glory well I know Him
Evermore the same.*

O the blessed joy of meeting,
All the desert past!
Oh the wondrous words of greeting
He shall speak at last!

He and I together entering

Those fair courts above—

He and I together sharing

All the Father's love.

Where no shade nor stain can enter,
Nor the gold be dim,
In that holiness unsullied,
I shall walk with Him.

Meet companion there for Jesus,
From Him, for Him, made—
Glory of God's grace forever

There in me displayed.
He who in His hour of sorrow
Bore the curse alone;
I who through the lonely desert
Trode where he had gone;
He and I, in that bright glory.
One deep joy shall share—
Mine, to be for ever with Him;
His, that I am there.

(Gerhard Tersteegen, 'Midst the Darkness, Storm, and Sorrow'. English translation by Mrs E. F. S. Bevan.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

1. Stuart was a truck driver. One day, when driving his heavy goods vehicle down a country road, he spotted a sign which read, 'Low bridge ahead'. But, before Stuart knew it, the bridge was immediately in front of him and 'Wham!'—his truck was well and truly wedged under the bridge. Cars were soon backed up for miles in both directions.

Finally, a police car arrived. The driver got out, walked officiously around to Stuart, put his hands on his hips, and snickered, 'So, you got yourself stuck then?'

'Not at all, officer', Stuart replied meekly, '*I was delivering this bridge and ran out of fuel*'.

2. Big Dan was a really huge, muscular man with a bad stutter. One day, he entered a large department store, walked up quickly to the Enquiry counter and asked, 'T-t-t-tell m-m-me ... wh-wh-wh-where's the m-m-men's t-t-t-toilet?'

Nigel, the clerk behind the counter, just looked at Dan and said nothing.

Raising his voice a little, Big Dan repeated his question: 'Wh-wh-wh-where's the m-m-men's t-t-t-toilet?'

But, again, Nigel didn't answer him.

Big Dan asked several times more, each time booming ever more loudly: "W-w-w-where's the m-m-men's t-t-t-toilet?"

Nigel just stood there, seemingly ignoring him.

Finally, Big Dan stormed off to find a store assistant.

The customer who had been waiting in line behind Dan asked Nigel, 'Why wouldn't you answer that man's simple question?'

Looking the customer straight in the eye, Nigel answered, '*D-d-d-do you th-th-th-think I w-w-w-wanted to get a p-p-punch in m-m-my n-n-n-nose?*'



2. 'The Lord's set face'.

I have two short readings. The first comes from the third of the four so-called¹ 'Servant Songs of Isaiah'² ... from Isaiah 50, verses 5-7 ... words spoken prophetically by our Lord Jesus:

I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters,³ and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.⁴ For the Lord God will help me; therefore, shall I not be confounded:⁵ therefore I have *set my face like a flint*.⁶

My second reading comes (no prizes) from the historic fulfilment ... from Luke 9, verse. 51:

'It came to pass, when the days drew near for Him (the Lord Jesus) to be taken up, that He *steadfastly set His face* to go to Jerusalem'.

'When the days drew near',⁷ we read, 'for Him to be *taken up*', which I understand to be a reference to our Lord's ascension.⁸ This expression translates the same word as that used by *Mark* in the closing section of his Gospel, 'after the Lord had spoken to them, He was *taken up* into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God',⁹ and by *Luke himself* in the opening of the book of Acts, 'The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all which Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day when He was *taken up*',¹⁰ when, as the apostle Paul expresses it in his first letter to Timothy, using the same word, our Lord was '*taken up* in glory'.¹¹

And our Lord knew that, although *the final goal* of His present journey (namely, His ascension) was glorious in the extreme, *the road to that goal* would lead Him inescapably to Jerusalem, where, not glory, but indescribable sorrow and suffering awaited Him. For, as He explained just a little later to the Pharisees, given Jerusalem's centuries long reputation for killing God's prophets, there was the proper—indeed, the only—place for Him to die.¹²

At the time of which Luke writes, the ascension lay all of six months away. And a great deal would happen during those six months—not least, two very eventful visits by our Lord to Jerusalem (one for the Feast of *Tabernacles*, and one for the Feast of *Dedication*)— all *before* His final entry to Jerusalem for the Feast of *Passover*, when He would suffer and die.¹³ But Luke draws particular attention to *this* critical moment in our Lord's ministry, when (i) He was about to leave Galilee for the last time—to return there only after His resurrection¹⁴—and when (ii), in one sense at least, He commenced His steady march to Jerusalem, suffering and death.¹⁵

Make no mistake, the man with the determined face was under no illusion about what awaited Him at Jerusalem. And yet, for Him, as for any would-be disciple, in His own words later in our chapter,¹⁶ once having put His hand to the plough, there was no looking back—there was no turning aside!

As He makes clear prophetically in our quotation from Isaiah 50, not for one moment did He either *rebel inwardly* or *retreat outwardly* from the path which God had mapped out for Him.¹⁷ His 'set' face expressed His firm resolve to pursue His way to Jerusalem ... whatever the cost.¹⁸

I have many times enjoyed contrasting the sequel to the words of our text with the sequel to very similar words used of one of the kings of Syria of Old Testament days. I refer to the occasion of which we read that 'Hazeal set his face to go up to Jerusalem'—to go up to Jerusalem for battle (to wage war), that is.¹⁹

And, in the event, Hazeal's relatively small army defeated the much larger army of Judah.²⁰ But, following the king of Judah's humiliating defeat, to safeguard the city of Jerusalem, he²¹ sent the gold treasures of the Temple and of his own palace to Hazeal, and, with these, he successfully purchased the withdrawal of the Syrian troops'.²²

In the language of Scripture, 'Then Hazeal went away from Jerusalem'.²³ And so it was that the king of Syria, who had 'set his face to go up to Jerusalem', never actually reached there.

But nothing—simply nothing—could dissuade or divert²⁴ the One infinitely greater than any number of earthly monarchs from pacing His way unflinchingly to Jerusalem,²⁵ where He knew He was to endure the very worst that man or devil could inflict on Him, and where, worse by far, the Lord God Himself would lay on Him the iniquity of us all.²⁶

And what was it that Jerusalem then held in store for His face? Our first reading tells us.

Speaking of His face which was 'set as a flint', the Servant of the Lord says, 'I hid not my face from shame and spitting', when the face *set with firm resolve* would be *stained with filthy spittle*. And so it was.

Ask Matthew what the members of the Sanhedrin and their servants did: '*They spat*', he says, '*in His face*'.²⁷

Ask Mark what they did: 'some began', he says, 'to *cover His face*'.²⁸

Ask Luke what they did: 'when they had blindfolded Him', he says, '*they struck Him on the face*'.²⁹

Over 700 years before, the prophet Isaiah not only says for Him, 'I hid not my face from shame and spitting',³⁰ but also later says of Him, 'His visage (His appearance, His countenance) was so marred ('disfigured'), more than any man, and His form, more than the sons of men'.³¹

Well then did we sing at the outset: 'Thy form was scarred, Thy visage marred. Now cloudless peace for me'.

And the glorious consummation of that 'cloudless peace' will come when, solely on account of the death accomplished at Jerusalem by our Lord Jesus (which death, by means of these symbols, we proclaim this morning) and, as promised in the very last chapter of our Bible, 'His servants shall serve Him: and they *shall see His face*'.³²

Yes, wonder of wonders, you and I shall see His face—once 'set' (as a flint' and 'steadfastly') ...once dishonoured ... once disfigured—but now and forever glorified.³³

Notes

¹ I say 'so-called' because the term itself is something of a misnomer, in that there is no evidence that any of the passages in view was ever sung in Israel, or was ever intended to be sung. But the description has been around a long time and is clearly here to stay.

² Isaiah 42. 1–7; Isaiah 49. 1–7; Isaiah 50. 4–9; Isaiah 52. 13–53. 12.

³ Translated, 'the scourges', in the Greek Old Testament. This is the word used by our Lord Jesus of the treatment meted out to Him, Matt. 20. 19; Mark 10. 34; Luke 18. 33; John 19. 1.

⁴ The Servant is in full control of the situation. He describes Himself as the one who acts. He does not say that men smote Him but that He Himself gave His back to those who struck ('scourged') Him, etc.

⁵ 'Westermann says that in the ancient Near Eastern culture if someone submitted meekly to public humiliation he was admitting, at least tacitly, that he had done something to deserve the abuse. But this person, after meekly submitting, then turns around and declares that, in fact, He had not done one thing wrong ... These verses depict a court scene in which the Servant declares His righteousness and dares anyone to condemn Him, that is, show Him to be wicked', J. N. Oswalt, 'The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66 (NICOT)', comments on Isa. 50. 7-9.

[These two lines in Isa. 50.6 are truly revolutionary in their importance, not only in the history of Israel, but in the ancient world in general, because *in terms of that world's thought* what the Servant here says of Himself, that He allowed himself to be smitten, means that He regards the attacks, blows and insults as justified, and so concedes that God is on the side of His opponents', Claus Westermann, 'Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary', page 230.]

⁶ 'Something very similar is said in the call of Jeremiah (Jer. 1. 18) and of Ezekiel (Ezek. 3. 8-9). But there is a characteristic difference. With these two, this forms part of God's equipment of the prophet at his call: "like diamond harder than rock I make your forehead". Here, on the other hand, the (Servant) says it of Himself', Claus Westermann, *op. cit.*, page 231.

⁷ Literally 'the days were accomplished'.

⁸ When He saw his death and sufferings approaching, He looked *through* them and *beyond* them, to the glory that should follow, when He should be received up in glory, 1 Tim. 3. 16; cf. Heb. 12. 2.

⁹ Mark 16. 19.

¹⁰ Acts 1. 2; cf. vv. 11, 22

¹¹ 1 Tim. 3. 16. The expression 'received (or, taken) up' is the same as that used to describe the ascension of Elijah: 'it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah was *taken up* by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof', 2 Kings 2. 11-12. Before Elijah was 'taken up' from Jordan, he had to go to both Bethel and Jericho. But before He was 'taken up' from the Mount of Olives, our Lord had to go to Jerusalem. In the event, Elijah didn't die before he was 'taken up', but our Lord went to Jerusalem for that express purpose—to die.

¹² Luke 13. 33.

¹³ 'These journeyings to Jerusalem were evidently just before the end. They were the close of the public life. They immediately preceded the last Passover Feast, which all the four evangelists tell us the Lord kept at Jerusalem, and in the course of which He was crucified. They fill up, then, the last six or seven months of His earth-life—that period, roughly speaking, from the Feast of Tabernacles (alluded to in John 7. 1-53.), which falls in October, until the Passover Feast in the following spring. These last months were occupied by the Master in a slow progress from Capernaum, through those parts of Galilee hitherto generally unvisited by Him, gradually making His way toward the capital, which we know He reached in time for the Passover Feast, during which He was crucified', H. D. M. Spence, 'The So-Called Journeyings Towards Jerusalem', St Luke: The Pulpit Commentary, page 244.

¹⁴ See Matt. 26. 32; 28. 7.

And between this point in chapter 9 and the time spoken of in chapter 19, when Jesus 'went on ahead, *going up to Jerusalem*', Luke reminds us no less than twelve times that Jesus was travelling toward Jerusalem (Luke 9. 51, 53, 57; 10. 1, 38; 11. 53; 13. 22, 33; 17. 11; 18. 31, 35; 19. 1, 11, 28) ... telling us, for example, that 'He went on His way ... teaching and *journeying toward Jerusalem*', Luke 13. 22, and that 'as He was *going up to Jerusalem*, He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee', Luke 17. 11.

It is Luke who tells us in Acts 20 that the apostle Paul told the elders of the church of Ephesus (and I quote), 'I go bound in the Spirit (compelled by the Holy Spirit, I take him to mean) to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there (literally, 'not knowing the things going to meet me there'), except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me', Acts 20. 17-24.

Apart then from the Spirit's *general* forewarning of imprisonment and afflictions, the apostle had no clear idea *what* lay ahead of him at Jerusalem.

But, in contrast, *the Lord Jesus* knew full well *all* that lay ahead of *Him* at Jerusalem ... He knew full well *all* that would '*meet*' Him there. A short time before He set His face to go to Jerusalem, He informed His disciples that 'the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain', Luke 9. 22.

In the brief intervening period, on the so-called Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah had spoken 'with Him of His decease (His departure, His 'exodus', if you like) which He was *about* to accomplish at Jerusalem', Luke 9. 30-31, following which, having come down from the Mount, Luke 9. 37, He forewarned His disciples, 'The Son of man is *about to be* betrayed into the hands of men', Luke 9. 44.

O yes, unlike His servant Paul, the Lord Jesus knew well all that would befall Him at Jerusalem.

And yet, knowing all this, 'He ('He Himself', literally) steadfastly set His face¹⁵ to go to Jerusalem'. Indeed, the expression 'steadfastly set' translates the word used in the story told by our Lord in Luke 16 when reporting the words of father Abraham to the one-time rich man, 'between us and you there is a great gulf *fixed*'. We might say therefore that our Lord 'fixed' His face to go to Jerusalem.

¹⁶ Luke 9. 62.

¹⁷ 'I was not rebellious, neither turned away back', Isa. 50. 5.

¹⁸ No temptation, either from the devil or men, could deflect Him from His God-appointed course; Matt. 4. 9; 16. 22-23; John 6. 14-15.

¹⁹ 2 Kings 12. 17.

I share the view of C. F. Keil that the account in 2 Kings 12. 17-18 covers the same events as recorded in 2 Chron. 24. 23-24; see Keil and Delitzsch, '*Commentary on the Old Testament*', Volume 3, pages 371-372, and compare J. Gray, '*I & II Kings*', page 589, and D. J. Wiseman, '1 and 2 Kings: Tyndale Old Testament Commentary', comments on 2 Kings 12. 17-21 (Mr Wiseman notes that 'The historian in Kings emphasizes the punishment and in Chronicles the sin that caused it'.)

Eugene H. Merrill, '*Kingdom of Priests*', pages 364-365, does not agree and sees two separate campaigns by Hazael. Colin Lacey, '*1 Kings and 2 Kings: What the Bible Teaches*', page 348, opts to sit on the fence.

²⁰ 2 Chron. 24. 23-24.

The writer of 2 Chronicles records Judah's defeat immediately following his account of (i) the rejection of the Lord's prophets by King Joash, by the princes of Judah and by the people in general, 2 Chron. 24. 17-19, and, in particular, (ii) the cold-blooded murder of Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, 2 Chron. 24. 20-22. The writer then draws attention explicitly to the fact that 'the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men; and *the Lord delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers*', 2 Chron. 24. 24.

It was, that is, because King Joash and his people had rejected the word of God through Zechariah and the other prophets that they suffered the ignominious defeat at the hand of the much smaller Syrian army—in full accord with what the Lord had forewarned them centuries before: 'If you will not hearken to me ... I will set my face against you, and you shall be slain before your enemies', Lev. 26. 15.

As he was dying, Zechariah had prayed, 'The Lord look upon it, and require it', 2 Chron. 24. 22 ... and so He did.

²¹ Jehoash/Joash.

²² When his army was defeated, Joash followed the example of his ancestor, Asa, and bought the friendship of the Syrians with the Temple treasures, 1 Kings 15. 18, an example followed again later by his descendant, Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18. 15-16.

See Keil and Delitzsch on 2 Kings 12. 17-18.

²³ 2 Kings 12. 18.

²⁴ Compare Mark's later words, 'And they were in the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them: and they were amazed; and they that followed were afraid. And He took again the twelve, and began to tell them the things that were to happen to Him', Mark 10. 32.

²⁵ He asked his disciples to let these things 'sink down' into their ears, but they 'understood not', Luke 9. 44-45. He remained the sole possessor of the secret of His coming sorrow, agony, and death.

²⁶ Isa. 53. 6.

²⁷ Matt. 26. 67.

²⁸ Mark 14. 65.

²⁹ Luke 22. 64.

³⁰ Isa. 50. 6.

³¹ Isa. 52. 14. And so it was that the face which was determined ('steadfastly set') to go *to Jerusalem* was both dishonoured and disfigured *at Jerusalem*.

³² Rev. 22. 3-4.

³³ The face which was once *set 'like a flint'*, Isa. 50. 7, now *shines 'like the sun'*, Rev. 1. 16.