

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 7 April 2025

(i) Scripture.

Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful.

The Lord ... gathers together the outcasts of Israel. He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.

He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name. Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite.

The Lord lifts up the humble ... Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving.

Psalm 147. 1-7 (*The New King James Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

Gratitude: a hallmark of a Christian.

'Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness ['grace', lit.] in your hearts to God.

'And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him' (Col. 3. 15-17 ESV).

'Redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace' (Eph. 1. 7).

'If I am in uncertainty, I do not enjoy this grace. I must cast myself entirely on God ... how can I calculate the riches of that grace? We cannot number our sins, and how much less the riches of the grace of the Lord. But it is this which has to be calculated. I say it for those who are in anguish, the only thing to be done is to consider the riches of the grace of God'.

(J. N. Darby, *The Earnest of the Inheritance*, Collected Writings, Volume 16, pages 210-211.)

Samson: a Nazarite.

'Samson is the most famous of the judges and receives the lengthiest treatment, even including a neatly constructed birth narrative that will serve as a "Chekhov's gun" [*] for his eventual death (Judg. 16. 17-30). A messenger of the Lord commands his mother that he will be a Nazirite from birth to death—which means, among other things, his hair cannot be cut (Judg. 13. 5)'.
[*] Anton Pavlovich Chekhov was a well-known nineteenth century Russian author/playwright. A famous observation of Chekhov's has become known as 'Chekhov's gun'. He wrote, 'If you say in the first chapter that there is a rifle hanging on the wall, in the second or third chapter it absolutely must go off. If it's not going to be fired, it shouldn't be hanging there'. (Source: S. Shchukin, 'Memoirs', 1911.)

(J. Edson, *Guide to All the Judges of Israel in Order*, accessed at <https://www.biblegateway.com/learn/bible-101/about-the-bible/twelve-judges-israel/>.)

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Psalm 23.

David expresses his relationship with the Lord 'with three great confessions of faith, three confidently expressed implications of knowing the Lord:

'(i) "I shall not lack"—for you are my shepherd (Psa. 23. 1)— If I have Him, I have everything. He is mine; so, I have all I need;

'(ii) "I will fear no evil"—for you are my companion (Psa. 23. 4); and

'(iii) "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever"—for you are my host (Psa. 23. 6).

'The psalm is an expression of *total trust in God's total care*'.

(D Gibson, *Crossway Daily Devotional*, meditation for 31 March.)

'Our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us' (Tit. 2. 13-14).

'One of the funniest cartoons I ever saw showed a pompous lawyer reading a client's last will and testament to a group of greedy relatives. The caption read, "I, John Jones, being of sound mind and body, spent it all".

'When Jesus Christ wrote His last will and testament for His church, He made it possible for us to share His spiritual riches. Instead of spending it all, Jesus Christ paid it all'.

(W. Wiersbe, 'Be Rich', page 17.)

Jacob's dream (Gen. 28. 10-15).

'The word "Behold" occurs four times in Jacob's dream.

'(i) "**Behold a ladder**" (Gen. 28. 12a). The ladder symbolized unbroken communication between earth and heaven. It reached from Jacob, in his need and loneliness (for his only companion was his "staff", Gen. 32. 10) up to God's immediate presence. Jacob was taught that, though his home was over fifty miles away—and would soon be much further—heaven was very near!

'(ii) "**Behold the angels**" (Gen. 28. 12b). Jacob saw the angels of God as he journeyed away from home, and he met them as he returned (Gen. 32. 1-2). They "excel in strength ... do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word", and minister to His people (Psa. 103. 20; Heb. 1. 14).

'(iii) "**Behold, the Lord**" (Gen. 28. 13). Jacob recognised, "The Lord is in this place" (Gen. 28. 16). The Lord was more important than the ladder or the angels, and, consequently, He alone is mentioned whenever reference is later made to this incident (Gen. 35. 1, 7; 48. 3).

'(iv) "**Behold, I am with thee**" (Gen. 28. 15). Jacob was not only given the security of God's promise of future blessing (Gen. 28. 13-14) and the assurance of His protection "in all places" (Gen. 28. 15b) but also the guarantee of His presence to go with him. The guarantee was emphasized, being expressed both positively, "I am with thee", and negatively, "I will not leave thee". Truly, "happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help" (Psa. 146. 5).

'Jacob expected to be away from home for only "a few days" (Gen. 27. 44) but it was over twenty years before he returned (Gen. 31. 38). The most important thing, however, was that, whether for a few days or twenty years, he was guaranteed the presence of the God of his fathers.

'Jacob later witnessed that, as He had promised, God had been with him (Gen. 31. 5; cf. Gen. 35. 3) and had saved him from being further exploited by Laban (Gen. 31. 7, 41-42). God renewed the guarantee when Jacob headed home (Gen. 31. 3) and when, later, he left Canaan for the last time (Gen. 46. 4)'.
(Reprinted, with kind permission, from 'Day by Day through the Old Testament', Precious Seed Publications, 1982, page 33).

'The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord'" (Prov. 21. 1).

1. 'A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps' (Prov 16. 9).

'Human beings are responsible for what they choose and what they do. The entire book of Proverbs maintains this perspective, for otherwise the fundamental chasms between wisdom and folly, good and evil, the fear of the Lord and haughty arrogance, could not be sustained. Yet at the same time, even with all the plotting in the world, a mere human cannot escape the sweep of divine sovereignty. Elsewhere we are told, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; He directs it like a watercourse wherever He pleases" (Prov. 21. 1)'.
(D. A. Carson, 'For the Love of God', Volume 2, meditation for 1 April.)

2. 'Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, who has put such a thing as this in the king's heart' (Ezra 7. 27).

'Ezra knew it was the Lord who "extended mercy to me before the king and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes". So, he writes, "I was encouraged, as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me" (Ezra 7. 28).

'That **the king's heart** was for him was a miracle, but what thrilled him even more was that **the Lord's hand** was on him. They're interconnected, of course: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord" (Prov. 21. 1)'.
(J. B. Nicholson Jr, 'Of Saints & Stars', Taste and See, Uplook Ministries, 31 March 2025).

3. 'General Gordon has had an Arabic text inscribed ... in the Palace (at Khartoum, Sudan), which may be translated as "God rules over the hearts of men". It is conspicuous in the Reception Chamber'.

('The Pall Mall Gazette', Friday 28 March 1884.)

'Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?' (1 Cor. 1. 20).

'The crucifixion of Christ was a memorable instance of the short-sightedness of worldly policy. 'Not a single calculation of those who compassed the Saviour's death was destined to be fulfilled:

(i) **Pilate** did not escape the emperor's displeasure. [Pilate prized the title, 'friend of Caesar' (John 19. 12) but he was removed from his office as Governor and sent back to Rome soon after the crucifixion];

(ii) **Caiaphas did not save Jerusalem.** [Caiaphas counselled the Sanhedrin that the death of Jesus was necessary lest 'the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation' (John 11. 50) but the Romans did just that less than forty years later];

(iii) **the scribes and Pharisees did not put down the doctrine of Jesus.** [The Saviour was accused by the leaders of the Jews of 'teaching throughout all Judea' (Luke 23. 5) but, following the crucifixion and resurrection, 'the preaching of the cross' (1 Cor. 1. 18) 'has gone out to all the earth' (Rom. 10. 18)].

(J. J. Lias, 'The First Epistle to the Corinthians: Cambridge Greek Testament', page 44.)

Yes, **Pilate, Caiaphas and the scribes and Pharisees each failed to achieve their object in the crucifixion of Jesus.**

So, too, did **Judas**, who, before going out to hang himself, flung away the thirty pieces of silver for which he had agreed to betray the Saviour (Matt. 27. 3-5; cf. Matt. 26. 14-16).

But, praise Him, **there was One who most certainly did achieve His object in our Lord's crucifixion:** 'God ... loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins' (1 John 4. 10); 'Jesus Christ the righteous ... is the propitiation for our sins' (1 John 2. 1-2).

'Turned out'.

'It is not only that **man has been turned out of the garden of Eden** on account of his sins, but **man has turned God out of the world** when He came in grace'.

(J. N. Darby, 'Christ Departing to the Father', The Christian Friend, 1882, page 170.)

'He set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved' (Psa. 104. 5).

'The word translated "foundation" in the expression "**the foundation of the world**" occurs eleven times in the New Testament. Apart from Hebrews 11. 11, where it is translated "conception", it is only used to denote the founding (lit. 'the casting down') of the world.

'The ten references to the foundation of the world are divided into two distinct categories. The first category concerns the expression "from the foundation of the world", and the second the expression "before the foundation of the world". These two expressions must not be confused ...

'The words "**from the foundation of the world**" are used in a variety of contexts ... The expression is used in connection with the human timetable, God's dealings with the earth and in particular with the nation of Israel ...

'The phrase "**before the foundation of the world**" occurs only three times in the New Testament. Twice it is used of the Lord Jesus and once of the church ... Before there were any created beings, the Father loved the Son (John 17. 24), the Lamb of Calvary was foreknown (1 Pet. 1. 20) and believers of the present dispensation were chosen in Christ (Eph. 1. 4) ...

'Pentecost was the commencement of an era in which is realized the fulfilment of what God purposed in Christ "before the foundation of the world". The church is not something which God has somehow managed to salvage from the wreck of fallen humanity, nor does it owe its existence to Israel's present rejection by God. **The church was conceived in the heart of God before time**; it is not a mere extension of God's dealings with Israel ... Israel was viewed as a nation in the world. In contrast, the church is not national; God is taking out of the nations a people for His name (Acts 15. 14) ...

'When the heavens and earth have passed away and time has ceased to be, those distinctions among men which are related to God's dealings "from the foundation of the world" will cease. It is written concerning the eternal state, "the tabernacle of God is with men" (Rev. 21. 3). That is, there will no longer be those distinctions among men which were the result of God's dealings in government as recorded in Genesis 11.

'Jew, Gentile, king, tribe and nation will no longer exist as such. **The church only will retain its identity in eternity.** John speaks of "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21. 2). That which was the subject of divine purpose "before the foundation of the world" will remain in all its distinctive glory.

'The church is something completely new; it had neither place nor existence in Old Testament times ... Let us make no mistake. **The church which is Christ's body, stands unique. It is the masterpiece of divine wisdom.** It is heavenly and eternal in its character. The marvel is that, by the free grace of God, we form part of it.'

(Albert Leckie, 'The Foundation of the World', comprising two articles in the 'Young People's and Bible Students Section' of the Precious Seed magazine, Volume 32, Numbers 3 and 4.

The complete articles can be accessed at <https://www.preciousseed.org/articles/the-foundation-of-the-world-part-1/> and <https://www.preciousseed.org/articles/the-foundation-of-the-world-part-2/>.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

Sound asleep.

1. Joan Hancock hasn't been sleeping well for several nights so she goes to her doctor for help.

'Dr Fielding, I can't sleep. My husband, Brian, has a terrible habit of talking in his sleep! I don't think I can cope with it any longer? I am in despair. Is there anything you can do to help me? Brian's talking goes on and on, sometimes for hours at a time in the early hours of the morning'.

Pausing only to catch her breath, Joan continues. 'As I was saying, doctor, it has become simply unbearable. I am at the end of my tether. Night after night, Brian hardly ever stops. You are my only hope. Is there anything at all that I can give him to cure it?'

Finally able to get a word in, Dr Fielding replies, 'Mrs Hancock, you could *try giving your husband an opportunity to speak when he's awake*'.

2. Eighty-five-year-old Beryl Hopkins went on a blind date with ninety-year-old Morris Chapman. When Beryl returned to her daughter's house late that evening, she seemed upset.

'Whatever happened, mother?' Beryl's daughter asked anxiously.

'It was simply awful', Beryl replied, 'I had to slap Morris's face three times!'

'Oh no', her daughter responded, 'Did he keep saying rude things to you?'

'It was nothing like that', Beryl answered, 'He hardly stirred all evening and *I was afraid he was dead*'.