

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 12 January 2026.

Greetings.

There are three items for this week:

(i) I set out below today's 'Musings'. Happy reading.

(ii) I have a simple Bible quiz question to tax your mind this morning:

Who was the first king in Israel?

To help you on your way, four clues are included in the 'Musings' below.

Hint: consider the wording of the question carefully!

God willing, the answer will be in next week's 'Musings'.

(iii) For those who are interested, the following link will take you to an illustrated message which I gave last Wednesday at my home assembly ... <https://youtu.be/zD40DKAERJg>. The set subject for the evening was 'The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus'.

[An earlier two-part version of my notes about Saul's conversion was attached to the 'Musings' for the 15th and the 22nd of February in 2021. A revised single-document version of my notes (those I used in last Wednesday's meeting) is available on request.]

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

(i) Scripture.

Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'

And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do'.

The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.

Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, 'Ananias'. And he said, 'Here I am, Lord'.

And the Lord said to him, 'Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight'.

But Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name'.

But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name'.

So Ananias departed and entered the house.

And laying his hands on him he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit'.

And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight.

Then he rose and was baptized; and taking food, he was strengthened. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus.

Acts 9. 1-19 (*English Standard Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'God has spoken'.

Ponder the following:

(1) 'I want to know one thing, the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God Himself has condescended to teach the way ...

'He has written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be "*Homo unius libri*" [translated: "A man of one book"]'.

(John Wesley, 'Sermons on Several Occasions in Three Volumes', Volume 1, Third Edition, 1759, page 6.)

(2) 'The God of the universe wants to be known; He has gone out of His way to communicate with human beings.

'He reveals himself to them through His word. He teaches them about His character, ways, and purpose. He shows them how they can come into a right relationship with Him. Our God speaks because He is committed to inviting people into relationship with Him, so that they can actually know the God who created them! ...

'Throughout human history, from God's first words to Adam and Eve, we see that God's primary way of relating to human beings is through His word to them. He spoke to Abraham. He gave the law to Moses. He spoke to His people through the prophets. His Son, Jesus, came as the "Word . . . made flesh".

'Now, God's word is His primary way of relating to people. That's why His people have always been people of His word'.

(J. Nielson, 'Knowing God's Truth: An Introduction to Systematic Theology', slightly adapted.)

Bible quiz question, clue 1:

Not a son of Kish!

Looking away to Jesus.

'Learn much of the Lord Jesus. For every look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ. He is altogether lovely. Such infinite majesty, and yet such meekness and grace, and all for sinners, even the chief ...

'Bask in His beams. Feel His all-seeing eye settled on you in love, and repose in His almighty arms ... Let your soul be filled with a heart-ravishing sense of the sweetness and excellency of Christ, and of all that is in Him'.

(Robert Murray McCheyne, quoted by Andrew Bonar in 'Memoir and remains of the Rev. Robert Murray McCheyne', page 271.)

The Lord Jesus as the lamp of the sanctuary (Exod. 25. 37-38).

'Whether challenged or rebuked, there is never the recalling of a word, nor the retracing of a step. Every tongue that rises in judgement against Him, He condemns.

(i) His mother rebukes Him in Luke 2; but instead of making good her charge, she has to listen to Him correcting the error of her thoughts.

(ii) 'Peter takes upon him to admonish Him: "This be far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee". But Peter has to learn that it was Satan himself that in Peter prompted the admonition.

(iii) 'The officer in the palace of the High Priest goes still further, correcting Him, and smiting Him on the cheek. But he is convicted of breaking the rules of judgment, in the very place of judgment ...

'When we look at the Lord Jesus as the lamp of the sanctuary, the light in the house of God, we find at once that the tongs and snuff-dishes cannot be used. They are discovered to have no counterpart in Him'.

'Consequently, they who undertook to challenge or rebuke Him when He was here, had to go back rebuked and put to shame themselves.

They were using the tongs or snuffers with a lamp which did not need them, and they only betrayed their folly ... the light of the lamp shone the brighter, not because the tongs had been used, but because it was able to give forth some fresh witness (which it did on every occasion) that it did not need them'.

(J. G. Bellett, 'The Moral Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ', pages 24-25.)

The Lord Jesus: the testimony of His foes.

'Demons acknowledged Him as "the Holy One of God" (Mark 1. 24), an appellation applicable to none other save Christ Jesus; it predicates His absolute freedom from taint of sin.

'Negatively, His bitterest foes, the Pharisees, assiduously watching through the whole course of His public ministry to find even the slightest fault in Him, plotting to catch Him in His words, prying frequently even into His private life, could at length raise no charge against Him but the baseless accusation of showing disrespect to Caesar, a charge declared void by the Roman judge who sat to hear the case.

'His betrayer remorsefully said, "I have betrayed innocent blood".

'His judge declared, "I find no fault in this man".

'His executioner exclaimed, "Certainly this was a righteous man".

(W. E. Vine, '*The First and the Last*', page 44.)

The sevenfold witness to the Lord Jesus.

(i) John the Baptist—John 5. 33.

(ii) The Lord's own works—John 5. 36.

(iii) The Father—John 5. 37.

(iv) The Lord Jesus Himself—John 8. 14.

(v) The Holy Spirit—John 15. 26.

(vi) The prophets—Acts 10. 43.

(vii) The apostles—John 15. 27; Acts 1. 8.

Mary of Bethany at Jesus' feet.

(i) Getting: 'Mary ... sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His teaching' (Luke 10. 39).

(ii) Grieving: 'Mary came to where Jesus was and ... fell at His feet, ... Jesus saw her weeping' (John 11. 32-33).

(iii) Giving: 'Mary ... took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus' (John 12. 3).

Bible quiz question, clue 2:

A 'thorny' character!

'The incarnation of the Son of God'.

'You can read every fairy tale that was ever written, every mystery thriller, every ghost story, and you will never find anything so shocking, so strange, so weird and spellbinding as the story of the incarnation of the Son of God.

'How dead we are! How callous and unfeeling to your glory and your story, O God! How often have I had to repent and say, "God, I am sorry that the stories men have made up stir my emotions, my awe and wonder and admiration and joy, more than your own true story".

(John Piper, '*That You May Believe*', 'Good News of Great Joy: 25 Devotional Readings for Advent', Day 22.)

'An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them ... "unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour', Luke 2. 9-11).

'If Professor ... (never mind his name) had been there on that memorable night, he would certainly have debated with the angel, and denied that a Saviour was needed at all. He would coolly have taken notes for a lecture upon the nature of light, and have commenced a disquisition upon the cause of certain remarkable nocturnal phenomena, which had been seen in the fields near Bethlehem.

'Above all he would have assured the shepherds of the absolute non-existence of anything superhuman. Have not the learned men of our age proved that impossibility scores of times with argument sufficient to convince a wooden post? They have made it as plain as that three times two are eighteen that there is no God, nor angel, nor spirit.

'They have proved beyond all doubt, as far as their own dogmatism is concerned, that everything is to be doubted which is most sure, and that nothing is to be believed at all except the infallibility of pretenders to science'.

(C. H. Spurgeon, '*The Great Birthday*', sermon preached on 24 December 1876 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London.)

The failure of atheism.

'My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust? ...

'Of course, I could have given up my idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of my own. But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too—for the argument depended on saying that the world was really unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my private fancies.

'Thus, in the very act of trying to prove that God did not exist—in other words, that the whole of reality was senseless—I found I was forced to assume that one part of reality—namely my idea of justice—was full of sense.

'Consequently, atheism turns out to be too simple. If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning: just as, if there were no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with eyes, we should never know it was dark'.

(C. S. Lewis, 'Mere Christianity', 1952 edition, page 31.)

'The iniquity of the fathers': distinguishing things that differ.

'Question: Why are children not visited by the sins of their fathers in Deuteronomy 24. 16 as in Exodus 20. 5?

'Answer: Deuteronomy refers to being put to death by the word of man, where it would be manifestly unjust to put one to death for the sins of another; however, God may see fit in His providence to punish whole generations who tread in their fathers' steps.

'The two passages are in no way parallel. Deuteronomy refers to man's conduct towards his fellow man and Exodus to God's dealings with His creatures, according to His infinite wisdom and perfect justice'.

('Bible Queries', The Bible Student, Volume 2, 1882, page 55.)

'My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus' (Phil. 4. 19).

'Mark the intimacy there is in "my God". It is emphatic. It is saying, "I know Him; I can answer for Him; I have come through all kinds of things, and I can answer for it that He never failed me. I know the way He acts even in the small things of everyday life".

(J. N. Darby, 'The Book of Experience', Collected Writings, Volume 27, page 214.)

The prophets Nahum and Habakkuk.

Nahum announces the judgment of Assyria, which destroyed the kingdom of Israel; Habakkuk predicts the utter ruin of Babylon, which destroyed the kingdom of Judah.

Bible quiz question, clue 3:

An upper millstone really spoiled his day!

Mary of Bethany at Jesus' feet.

(i) Getting: 'Mary ... sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His teaching' (Luke 10. 39).

(ii) Grieving: 'Mary came to where Jesus was and ... fell at His feet, ... Jesus saw her weeping' (John 11. 32-33).

(iii) Giving: 'Mary ... took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus' (John 12. 3).

'The shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil' (2 Sam. 1. 21).

The close of the verse is literally, 'there the shield of the mighty was defiled', the shield of Saul, not anointed with oil, and the reference to the absence of anointing is doubtless a reference to Saul's shield rather than to Saul himself.

Oil rubbed on a wooden and leather shield was essential to keep it in proper condition—that it might successfully deflect missiles and darts, which would glance off the shield. And, in his imagination, David sees Saul's shield lying somewhere on the mountain, no longer polished and ready for action, but now discarded as worthless.

Compare Isa. 21. 5, where the complacent and self-indulgent 'princes' of Babylon are urged to 'Arise' and to 'anoint the shield'.

(Source: personal notes on 2 Sam. 1. 21b; accessible at <https://voicesforchrist.org/notes/23.>)

Bible quiz question, clue 4:

He once had as many brothers as there were palm trees in Elim.

(iii) Go on, smile.

Two examples of Jewish humour (adapted from Jewish sources):

1. Moishe, a medieval Jewish astrologer, foretold that the king's favourite horse would die in three days.

Sure enough, the horse died three days later.

The king was outraged at the astrologer, convinced that his prophecy had brought about the horse's death.

He summoned Moishe and commanded him, 'Prophet, tell me when you will die!'

Moishe realized that the king was planning to kill him immediately, no matter what answer he gave. He knew that he had to answer carefully.

'I don't know when I will die', he answered finally, 'I only know that, when I die,

the king will die three days later'.

2. A Jewish man and a Chinese man are in an American café. Suddenly, the Jewish man punches the Chinese man in the face.

'Ouch! Why did you do that?' asks the Chinese man.

'That's for Pearl Harbour', says the Jewish man.

"But it was the Japanese who bombed Pearl Harbour. I'm Chinese!" objects the Chinese man.

'Japanese, Chinese, what's the difference?' says the Jewish man.

The Chinese man then punches the Jewish man in the face.

'Ouch! Why did you do that?' asks the Jewish man.

'It's for the Titanic', says the Chinese man.

'I don't get it. It was an iceberg which sank the Titanic', says the Jewish man.

The Chinese man says,

'Iceberg, Steinberg, Goldberg, Spielberg, what's the difference?'