

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 22 December 2025.

Greetings.

I hardly need to tell you that we are now only three sleeps away from this year's Christmas Day.

The following is a seasonable extract from the 'Musings' which I circulated at this time **last year**:

'And the angel said to them, "Fear not ... to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord ... you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger"' (Luke 2. 11-12).

Towards the close of his Gospel, Luke speaks about another message delivered by an angel—at our Lord's tomb, following His glorious resurrection from the dead: 'He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him'. Luke recorded, prior to that, that our Lord's body had been 'wrapped in a linen cloth, and laid in a tomb ... where no one had ever been laid' (Luke 23. 53).

On that latter occasion, the Saviour's lifeless body was 'wrapped' in linen and gently 'laid' by the loving hands of a Joseph (Joseph of Arimathea), while a Mary (Mary of Magdala) looked on (Mark 15. 43-47). But on the earlier occasion, His little body was 'wrapped' in linen and gently 'laid' by the loving hands of a Mary (His mother), while a Joseph (her husband) looked on (Luke 2. 7). Both at His birth and at His burial, our Lord occupied a place which no other baby or man had ever occupied before—in the one case, that of the 'womb' of Mary (Luke 1. 31, 34), and, in the other, the 'tomb' of Joseph (Luke 23. 53).

Such are the 'birth and burial' bookends to our Lord's life on earth as recorded by Luke.

Mindful of the wrappings with which our Lord's body was clothed on both of these occasions, I wish **this year** to draw attention to the mention of our Lord's garments on the all-important occasion of His crucifixion. I am setting out below at Appendix 2, therefore, as this week's main 'Musing', my own (revised) notes on the clothing which the soldiers 'took' from the Lord Jesus at Golgotha.

Separately, I am setting out below at Appendix 1 a handful of 'Musings' for today.

Finally, on account in part of family commitments over the coming days, **there will be no 'Musings' next Monday**. God willing, the 'Musings' will resume on 5 January 2026.

Happy Christmas and, as always, happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

(i) Scripture.

In the beginning (before all time) was the Word (Christ), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Himself. He was (continually existing) in the beginning (co-eternally) with God.

All things were made and came into existence through Him; and without Him not even one thing was made that has come into being ...

And the Word (Christ) became flesh (human, incarnate), and tabernacled (fixed His tent of flesh, lived awhile) among us; and we (actually) saw His glory (His majesty), such glory as belongs to the (One and) only begotten Son of the Father (the Son who is truly unique, the only One of His kind, who is), full of grace and truth.

John 1. 1-3, 14 (*The Amplified Bible*)

(ii) Food for thought.

Miraculous conception or miraculous birth?

What was unique was not how our Lord left Mary's womb but how He entered it. His conception was miraculous and utterly unique (Luke 1. 15-17); He was born in the normal way (Luke 2. 7).

Christ at the centre or on the back burner?

'Due to materialism, the focus of Christmas can stray far away from Jesus. Christmas is often associated with giving and receiving gifts rather than celebrating the Lord. Being aware of the materialism surrounding the holiday season will help us keep Christ at the centre of Christmas, rather than placing Him on the back burner.

'The greatest gift has been given to us, and His Name is Jesus'.

(V. Bricker, 'A Prayer to Remember the Real Reason for the Season', accessed at ...

<https://www.crosswalk.com/devotionals/your-daily-prayer/a-prayer-to-remember-the-real-reason-for-the-season.html>).

The Incarnation.

'As the human race, whom God had created rational, was wasting away and God's noble works perishing, what was God who is good to do? Permit corruption to prevail against them and death to hold the mastery over them? In that case, what was the use of their being made in the beginning? ...

'For this purpose, then, the incorporeal and incorruptible Word of God came into our region. He pitied our race and had compassion on our weakness and ...took to Himself a body, one like our own ... He prepared in the virgin the body as a temple for Himself, and personally appropriated this as an instrument, being made known in it and dwelling in it.

'It was impossible for the Word to die, being immortal and the Son of the Father, so for this reason He took to Himself a body capable of death, in order that the Word who is above all might be a sufficient representative of all in the discharge of the penalty of death. Thus, the immortal Son of God, the Word, took to Himself a body capable of death, that He might offer it as His own in place of all. This indeed is the first cause of the Saviour's becoming man.

'The second cause is that, when people see the incarnate Image, the Word of the Father, they may be able to receive through Him a conception of the Father, and thus, coming to know their Maker, live the happy and truly blessed life ...

'As man He comes to dwell, taking to Himself a body, so that they who were not willing to know Him from His providence over the universe, and from His guidance of it, may, through the works done through His body, know the Word of God and through Him the Father'.

(Athanasius (AD 328-373), 'On the Incarnation of the Word of God' (extracts, lightly modernized), accessed at <https://mailchi.mp/crossway/athanasius-on-the-incarnation>).

More than we dared believe or hope.

'The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope',

(T. Keller, 'The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God', the section headed 'No False Choices'.)

A place prepared by the One who was given no place.

When Jesus came into the world, 'there was no room' ('no place'—the Greek word, 'τόπος') here for Him (Luke 2. 7). Yet, in grace, He left the world by way of death, resurrection and ascension 'to prepare a place' (the same Greek word, 'τόπος') in the Father's house for us (John 14. 2).

God walking.

'Since the day that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, (I have) walked in a tent and in a tabernacle' (2 Sam. 7. 6; cf. Lev. 26. 12; Deut. 23. 14; 2 Cor. 6. 16, See, also, 'O God, you went out before your people when you marched through the wilderness', Psa. 68. 7).

What grace—that the One of whom it is said, (i) that 'the Lord God' walked 'in the garden (of Eden)' (Gen. 3. 8), (ii) that 'He walks in the circuit of heaven' (Job 22. 14) and (ii) that 'He walks upon the wings of the wind' (Psa. 104. 3), should deign to 'walk in a tent' that He might be among and with His people!

The measure of man's giving contrasted with the measure of the Lord's giving.

(i) The measure of man's giving: 'that every one of them may take a little' (John 6. 7).

(ii) The measure of the Lord's giving: 'as much as they would' (John 6. 11).

'Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them' (1 Tim. 4. 15).

'J. A. Bengel's advice is very sound: "Apply thyself wholly to the Scriptures, and apply the Scriptures wholly to thyself".

A. Naismith, '1200 Notes, Quotes and Anecdotes', page 188).

'As he thinks in his heart, so is he' (Prov. 23. 7).

It has been well said that 'You are not what you think you are. But what you think ... you are'.

'Give me understanding that I may learn your commandments' (Psa. 119. 73).

'Always respond to every impulse to pray. The impulse to pray may come when you are reading or when you are battling with a text. I would make an absolute law of this: always obey such an impulse'.

(D. M. Lloyd-Jones, 'The Preacher and Preaching', page 395.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

Luke is at the swimming pool with some of his friends. After a good swim together, they are in the changing/locker room.

When the mobile phone on his bench rings, Luke picks it up to answer it. The phone is on speaker mode so his friends can't help but hear all that is said.

Luke: 'Hi there'.

Woman's voice: 'Honey, it's me. Are you still at the pool?'

Luke: 'Yes, we've all had a great swim'.

Woman's voice: 'I'm at the shopping mall at the moment and I have seen a beautiful coat. It's a little on the pricey side—just less than £600—but do you think I can have it?'

Luke: 'Sure. If you really like it, buy it'.

Woman's voice: 'Oh, that's marvellous of you. But also, on the way here, I passed by the Mercedes dealership and the new models have come in. There's one there which I really like'.

Luke: 'Well, how much is it?'

Woman's voice: 'It's priced at £45,000'.

Luke: 'OK, you can have it ... but for that price I want all the optional extras thrown in'.

Woman's voice: 'Thank you so much! There's just one more thing I noticed in the Estate Agent's window that the house I fell in love with last year is now on the market. They're asking £950,000'.

Luke: 'Hmm ... that sounds reasonable. Alright, go back there but tell the Agent we will only go to £900,000 maximum'.

Woman's delighted voice: 'I love you. You really are a treasure. I'll see you later'.

Luke: 'Bye. Enjoy yourself'.

Luke switches off the phone. Turning around, he finds his friends staring at him in utter astonishment.

Luke asks:

"Has anybody any idea who this phone belongs to?"

THE GARMENTS WHICH THE SOLDIERS TOOK.

'They ... divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: "They divided my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots"'.¹

INTRODUCTION

As far as we know, our Lord's garments represent the sum total of His earthly goods. Apart from these, all He could properly call His own was His 'cross'. 'He, bearing *His cross*', John had written a few verses before speaking of our Lord's garments,² 'went out to a place called the Place of a Skull'.³

We know from His teaching that our Lord felt no great concern about the clothes which He (or others) wore. 'Why are you anxious', He asked others in the so-called Sermon on the Mount, 'about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field ... they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these'.⁴

And yet His garments were certainly not the grubby rags of a beggar; clearly, the soldiers deemed His clothing to be worthwhile spoil.

It seems clear that the garments of a man executed for treason were forfeit, automatically becoming the property of the soldiers on duty,⁵ and that, for this reason, it was these men (and not 'His mother', who, we read, 'stood by the cross'⁶) who effectively 'inherited' our Lord's clothing.

THE FOUR PARTS

In his account (and we remember that, of the apostles, he alone was present at the cross), John tells us, 'Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments, and made four parts, to each soldier a part'.⁷

We read that, having had the apostle Peter arrested, Herod Agrippa 'put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him',⁸ a quaternion being a group of four soldiers. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that, together with their centurion, it was four soldiers who were made responsible for our Lord's crucifixion.

Interestingly, in marked contrast to these *four men* who '*sat down* and *kept watch* over Him there'⁹ (presumably, to prevent anyone from attempting to rescue Him), we read of *four women* who '*stood* by the cross of Jesus',¹⁰ '*looking on*'.¹¹

And it is these four men who, according to John *19*, 'took His garments'¹²—*removing* from Him the very garments which, according to John *13*, the Lord Jesus had earlier willingly '*laid aside*', that He might perform the menial task of washing His disciples' feet.¹³

Scholars are generally satisfied that, leaving aside the seamless inner tunic, the four pieces which, according to Mark's gospel, the soldiers distributed and apportioned among themselves by casting lots,¹⁴ consisted of (i) His sandals, (ii) His outer cloak-like garment, (iii) His head-gear, and (iv) His girdle.¹⁵

And it is the same four men who then proceed, by again casting lots, to decide which of them would secure for himself the star prize, by far the most valuable ... our Lord's seamless inner tunic ¹⁶

And what breath-taking associations each of these garments has!

Not least, of course, in that in all likelihood these are the very same garments which had, less than a year before, shone ablaze with glory on the Mount of Transfiguration.¹⁷

Yet now they become the property of four unnamed soldiers.

(i) The pair of sandals.

Just imagine! One of these soldiers left the scene carrying a pair of sandals which the greatest of Israel's prophets¹⁸ had once confessed himself unworthy to carry¹⁹ and the thong of which John had confessed himself unworthy to unloose.²⁰

I wonder how many miles those sandals had covered ... both as (i) at least three times each year, the Saviour had walked the 65 miles from Galilee to Jerusalem and back and (ii) as He made His way, along with numerous other places, to Sychar's well, to Gadara's tombs and to Bethesda's porches.

What I know, is that, although my Lord had been wearing those sandals when Mary of Bethany fell 'at His feet' on the way to Lazarus's tomb,²¹ He was most certainly not wearing them when the women 'who had followed Jesus from Galilee ... took hold of His feet' on the way from *His own tomb*.²² And this, not only because the Risen Lord had no need of them but also because, barely two days before, a Roman soldier had carried them away from the Place of a Skull!

(ii) The cloak-like garment.

But if one of the soldiers walks away with a pair of sandals, the second soldier takes with him a cloak-like garment, the border or fringe of which²³ had once played an all-important role in the healing of a woman with a haemorrhage which she had failed to staunch over twelve long years.²⁴

And I note that Luke intertwines his casebook account of this poor woman's healing with that of the raising of Jairus' daughter—drawing attention, on the one hand, to a man who would gladly have given all he had to hold on to something he had enjoyed for twelve years (namely, his only daughter), and, on the other hand, to a woman who had already spent all she had in numerous unsuccessful attempts to rid herself of something she had endured for twelve years.²⁵

But it is most unlikely that soldier number two had even heard of how a woman from far-off Capernaum had once been healed by touching the hem ('fringe', 'edge') of the cloak-like garment which he carries away with him that day.

(iii) The head-gear.

The third soldier takes away with him our Lord's head-gear, which may well have still exuded the sweet fragrance of the expensive nard with which Mary of Bethany had anointed His head, together with his feet, only a matter of days before²⁶ ... the fragrance of which had filled the whole house at the time.²⁷

I understand that it is by no means impossible that the 'pure nard' which Mary expends on our Lord had itself come from the pastureland of a much higher mountain than that on which our Lord had once been transfigured; namely one in the Himalayas.²⁸

But of the reason for any lingering sweet fragrance, soldier number three, of course, knows nothing.

(iv) The belt.

The fourth soldier takes our Lord's girdle or belt, little suspecting that the man on the central cross would soon wear, in the symbolic language of Revelation chapter 1, a girdle ('sash', 'belt') of gold round His breast.²⁹

The Jewish historian, Josephus, tells us that Israel's priests each had a girdle (a sash) 'girded to the breast a little above the elbows'.³⁰ He assures us also that the girdle (the sash) of the High Priest was distinguished from those of the ordinary priests by 'a mixture of gold interwoven'.³¹

But then, as Christians, you and I have, not just a *High* Priest but a *Great High* Priest,³² the whole of whose girdle is gold!³³

But to such matters, soldier number four is, of course, oblivious.

THE INNER TUNIC

And then, finally, in all likelihood by the toss of the same knuckle-bone dice, one of the four soldiers wins for himself the star prize and, together with his other item, takes away with him our Lord's inner tunic.³⁴

In that this tunic is both woven and seamless, it resembles the robe of Israel's High Priest.³⁵

But, unlike the robe worn by the then High Priest, Caiaphas (which robe, during our Lord's so-called trial, in blatant disobedience to the Law of God,³⁶ Caiaphas had torn³⁷), our Lord's tunic had never been torn! ³⁸

Notes

¹ Matt. 27. 35.

² In John 19. 23-24.

³ John 19. 17; cf. 'making peace by the blood of His cross', Col. 1. 20).

⁴ Matt. 6. 28-29.

⁵ 'By custom the clothes of an executed criminal were the perquisite of the executioners', D. A. Carson, *'The Gospel according to John'*, page 611; 'it is a fact that the clothes of crucified persons were the perquisite of the executioners', C. E. Montefiore, *'The Synoptic Gospels'*, page 370; 'Roman law allowed execution squads to seize the few possessions the condemned might have on his person (Justinian, *'Digest'* 48.20.6; against the Jewish custom, e.g., b. Sanh. 48b)', Craig Keener, *'Matthew'*, on Matt. 27. 35; 'the condemned, besides forfeiture of their property, were deprived of burial', Tacitus, *'Annals'*, Book 6, Section 29); 'Each (of the soldiers) was eager to obtain the usual perquisite of office, the clothing of the condemned. The miserable malefactors perhaps had little to leave. Nothing is said regarding them. But our blessed Lord had been apprehended in His usual apparel. The soldiers now seize upon it', J. Stevenson, *'Christ on the Cross'*, 1851, page 169.

⁶ John 19. 25.

⁷ John 19. 23.

⁸ Acts 12. 4.

⁹ Matt. 27. 36.

¹⁰ John 19. 25; (i) our Lord's mother, (ii) her sister, Salome (Mark 15. 40); (iii) Mary, the wife of Cleopas and the mother of James and Joses; and (iv) Mary Magdalene.

¹¹ Mark 15. 40.

¹² This was, indeed, the second occasion that the soldiers had removed our Lord's own clothes from Him; cf. Matt. 27. 28.

¹³ John 13. 4.

¹⁴ 'When they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take', Mark 15. 24. 'As the value of the four parts was unequal, the first distribution was by lot', E. W. Hengstenberg, *'Commentary on the Gospel of John'*, Volume II, page 412.

Note that 'in the parallel form of Hebrew verse, 'garments' and 'vesture' (in Psa. 22. 18) are to be regarded as synonyms, and not to be distinguished', C. K. Barratt, *'The Gospel of St John'*, page 550. 'What greater humiliation than to see lots drawn for His garments, and thus see them treated like a worthless plaything', F. Godet, *'Commentary on the Gospel of John'*, page 385.

¹⁵ 'The soldiers divided among themselves: the covering of His head; the girdle; the shoes; the coat', E. W. Hengstenberg, *ibid.*, page 412; 'the plural expression refers to Jesus' clothes, including a belt, sandals and head covering. These three plus the outer robe gave the soldiers one item each. That left the tunic', D. A. Carson, *ibid.*, page 612. See also A. Edersheim, *'The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah'*, page 592, and T. E. Constable, *'Expository Notes'*, on John 19. 23-24.

¹⁶ John 19. 24. See A. Edersheim, *ibid.*, page 592.

¹⁷ Matt. 17. 2; Mark 9. 3; Luke 9. 29.

¹⁸ 'I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist', Luke 7. 28.

¹⁹ I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry', Matt. 3. 11.

²⁰ 'One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose', Luke 3. 16.

²¹ John 11. 32.

²² Matt. 28. 9 with Matt. 27. 55-56.

²³ See D. A. Carson, *'Matthew: The Expositor's Bible Commentary'*, on Matt. 9. 20-21.

²⁴ Luke 8. 44; Matt. 9. 20; cf. Num. 15. 38; Matt. 23. 5, and, for separate reasons, Luke 6. 19.

²⁵ Luke 8. 42-43.

²⁶ In a passage applied in the New Testament to our Lord Jesus (Psa. 45. 6-7 with Heb. 1. 8-9), Psalm 45 speaks prophetically and metaphorically of the garments of our Lord Jesus as 'fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia', Psa. 45. 8.

²⁷ Matt. 26. 7; Mark 14. 3; John 12. 3.

²⁸ 'The essence of this ointment was derived from pure nard, which is an aromatic herb grown in the high pasture-land of the Himalayas between Tibet and India', W. Hendriksen, *'John: New Testament Commentary'*, page 175. See also M. S and J. L. Miller, *'Encyclopedia of Bible Life'*, pages 204-205, and the comments on John 12. 3 in *'The IVP New Testament Commentary'*.

²⁹ Rev. 1. 13. John informs us in his gospel that he was known personally to the High Priest, and that, as such, he had access to the High Priest's palace (or court), to which he was also able to secure access for Peter, John 18. 15-16. We may well assume, then, that John was familiar with the High Priest's garments, as described by Josephus (see note 30 below). It is at least possible, therefore, that John would have understood the significance of both the Saviour's garment to the foot and the golden sash as, at least including, that of His priesthood.

³⁰ The priest 'wore a linen vestment ... This vestment reaches down to the feet, and sits close to the body; and has sleeves that are tied fast to the arms: it is girded to the breast a little above the elbows', Flavius Josephus, *'The Antiquities of the Jews'*, Book III, Chapter VII, paragraph 2.

High girding was an indication of high status: 'A long robe reaching to the feet, was an oriental mark of dignity ... denoting high rank or office such as that of Parthian kings or of the Jewish high priest who wore a purple one. High girding (with a belt) was another mark of lofty position, usually reserved for Jewish priests, though the Iranians frequently appealed to their deities as "high-girt" (ready for action. Cf. "Vaya of the golden girdle, high-up girded, swift moving, as powerful in sovereignty as any absolute sovereign in the world", Yasht xv. 54, 57). The golden buckle was part of the insignia of royalty (I Macc. x. 8, 9; xi. 58)', James Moffatt, *'The Revelation of St John: The Expositor's Greek Testament'*, page 344.

³¹ 'The high priest is indeed adorned with the same garments (as the priests) ... only over these he puts on ... a long robe, reaching to his feet, and is tied round with a girdle, embroidered with the same colours and flowers as the former, with a mixture of gold interwoven', Flavius Josephus, *ibid.*, Book III, Chapter VII, paragraph 4.

³² Heb. 4. 16.

³³ 'In the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle ('sash') around His chest', Rev. 1. 13.

³⁴ John 19. 24.

'There are four soldiers. They make four parts, and divide to every soldier a part. The tunic is not included in this division. It is kept by itself, for "the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout". This is recorded as if it were not a very common garment. Neither was it. The soldiers therefore envied its possession. They each desired to obtain it. This covetous disposition was over ruled by Providence. God, who causes even the wrath of man to praise Him (Psa. 76. 10), is able to make all his other passions to subserve His high purposes. This apparently insignificant action, becomes a strong argument for the truth of Scripture to the end of time', J. Stevenson, *ibid.*, page 169. For the four soldiers unwittingly fulfilled the words spoken long ago by the psalmist-prophet ('David ... being a prophet', Acts 2. 30), 'They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots', Psa. 22. 18 with Matt. 27. 35 KJV.

³⁵ 'This robe was not composed of two pieces, nor was it sewed together upon the shoulders and the sides, but it was *one long vestment* so woven as to have an aperture for the neck ... it was also parted where the hands were to come out', Flavius Josephus, *ibid.*, Book III, Chapter VII, paragraph 4.

³⁶ Exod. 28. 32; cf. Exod. 39. 23; Lev. 21. 10.

³⁷ Matt. 26. 65

³⁸ John 19. 24.