

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 13 April 2026

Greetings.

I set out below this week's 'Musings'.

I suspect that most (if not all) were glad to learn of the safe return to earth of the four astronauts aboard the Artemis II Orion capsule at the end of last week.

With an eye to both

- (i) the splashdown of that capsule following its ten-day mission around the moon
and
- (ii) the recent Passion Week/Easter period,

I have taken the opportunity of adding, as an Appendix to this week's 'Musings', an extract from a document attached to the 'Musings' circulated on 29 March 2021—which extract focuses on the safe return of the Apollo 11 crew following their historic lunar landing in July 1969.

Happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

(i) Scripture.

When David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, the Amalekites had made a raid against the Negeb and against Ziklag. They had overcome Ziklag and burned it with fire and taken captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great. They killed no one, but carried them off and went their way.

And when David and his men came to the city, they found it burned with fire, and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive.

Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep. David's two wives also had been taken captive, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel.

And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.

1 Samuel 30. 1-6 (*English Standard Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him ... David strengthened himself in the Lord his God' (1 Sam. 30. 6).

1. 'What should the distressed son of Jesse now do? To go back to Israel, he dared not; to go to Achish, he might not; to abide among those waste heaps he could not—or, if there might have been shelter in those burnt walls, yet there could have been no safety to remain with those mutinous spirits.

'But "David strengthened himself in the Lord his God". O happy and sure refuge of a faithful soul! The earth yielded him nothing but reason for dejection and heaviness; he lifts his eyes above the hills to whence comes his salvation.

"It is no marvel that God remembers David in all his troubles, since David in all his troubles did thus remember his God. He knew that, though no mortal eye of reason or sense could discern any escape from these intricate evils, yet the eye of Divine Providence had determined it long before; and that, though no human power could make way for his safety, yet the over-ruling hand of his God could do it with ease.

'His previous experiences had assured him of the faithfulness of his guardian in heaven; and, therefore, he encouraged and strengthened himself in the Lord his God'.

(Joseph Hall, '*Contemplations on the Historical Passages of the Old and New Testaments*', page 206—slightly updated.)

2. 'What does it mean that "David strengthened himself in the Lord"? To me, these words recall what is said of Jonathan's last visit to David, when he "went to David into the wood, and strengthened (*the same word as here*) his hand in God" (1 Sam. 23. 16).

'Jonathan did this by sharing with David his confidence that "the hand of Saul my father shall not find you; and you (*emphatic*) shalt be king over Israel" (1 Sam. 23. 17).

'That is, Jonathan strengthened David by turning David's eyes to God and by reaffirming the Lord's promises to him that his future was assured—that, in God's time, the kingdom would be his.

'And it is this—the focusing afresh on God, on His presence, power and promises—which strengthens. And, with no Jonathan to hand, that presumably is what David did for himself here.

'And with his eyes well and truly back on the Lord, David soon found that nothing was too hard for his God—that not even his present predicament was hopeless'.

(Personal notes on 1 Sam. 30. 6.)

'In God will I praise His word' (Psa. 56. 4, 10).

'This is extraordinary, since Scripture uniformly considers it idolatrous to worship anything other than God (Exod. 20. 5; 23. 24; 2 Kings 17. 35 etc.). But to praise or fear God's word is not idolatrous; to praise God's word is to praise God Himself.

'The Bible is God's word in a finite medium. It may be paper and ink, or parchment, or audiotape or a CD-ROM. The medium is not divine, but creaturely. We should not worship the created medium; that would be idolatry.

'But through the created medium, we receive the authentic word of God, and that word of God should be treasured as if God were speaking it'.

(J. M. Frame, 'The Doctrine of the Word of God', page 67.)

Two incidents during Passion Week, with possible explanations from the 'Essenes' (a Jewish sect that flourished from the 2nd century BC to the 1st century AD).

1. 'You will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, "Why are you doing this?" say, "The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately" (Mark 11. 2-3).

'Bethphage was likely an Essene village. Accordingly, the donkey the disciples appropriated for Jesus would have been considered communal property. They took it. They used it. They returned it. This was common practice for the Essenes (Mark 11. 1-3)'.
(T. B. Tribelhorn, "'When" Changes Everything', page 50.)

2. 'He sent two of His disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'" (Mark 14. 13-14; cf. Luke 22. 10-11).

'It wasn't until the Dead Sea Scrolls discovery that it became evident how important this detail from Mark and Luke is.

'Try to picture what was happening: Following this man meant following him through the Gate of the Essenes [Flavius Josephus, 'Wars of the Jews', 'Book 5, Chapter 4, Section 2], which Herod the Great had made just for them so they could collect water without contaminating themselves with the city people. Upon going through this special city gate, they entered a monastic community of Essenes.

'In the first century, men did not usually carry water jars. Cooking and procuring water were household responsibilities and typically the work of the women. Anywhere else, it would be socially improper for a man to carry a water jar. But since this was a monastic community, the men needed to take turns doing these chores'.

(T. B. Tribelhorn, *ibid*, pages 54-55.)

'He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even to death on a cross' (Phil. 2. 8).

1. 'What will not Christ do for us ... There is no measure to His love; you cannot comprehend His grace ...

'The lower He stoops to save us, the higher we ought to lift Him in our adoring reverence. Blessed be His name, He stoops, and stoops, and stoops, and, when He reaches our level, and becomes man, he still stoops, and stoops, and stoops lower and deeper yet'.

(C. H. Spurgeon, 'Our Lord in the Valley of Humiliation', sermon preached at the Metropolitan tabernacle on 5 June 1890.)

2. 'He is prone to stoop. 'He stooped (i) to embrace children (Mark 10. 16), (ii) to pull Peter out of the sea (Matt. 14. 31), (iii) to write on the ground (John 8. 6, 8), (iv) to wash feet (John 13. 5), (v) to pray in the garden (Luke 22. 41), (vi) before a Roman whipping post (John 19. 1), (vii) to carry His cross (John 19. 17)'.
(Max Lucado, 'Facing Your Giants', 2006, page 238 – slightly adapted.)

'... and that He was buried ...' (1 Cor. 15. 4).

'This is the part of the story we are often tempted to rush past ... On Holy Saturday [also known as "Black Saturday"], the church confesses that the Lord of life entered death itself ... It teaches us not to avert our eyes from the burial of Christ, because only those who have learned to keep watch at the tomb on Saturday will feel the full wonder of the stone rolled away on Sunday ...

'The Saturday is the day between promise and sight. Good Friday has done its work; Easter morning has not yet dawned. The body of Jesus lies in the tomb, and everything waits in silence. It is the day when believers must reckon with the full weight of Christ's death before they can speak of resurrection ... Christ has gone all the way down into the worst we fear, and He has come back with death's keys in His hand (Rev. 1. 18). Because He truly died, sinners can truly live. Because He entered the grave, the grave is no longer the end.

(H. Crowder, 'The Scandal and Grace of Christ's Saturday in the Grave', accessed at ...

[https://www.christianitytoday.com/2026/04/the-scandal-and-grace-of-christs-saturday-in-the-grave/.](https://www.christianitytoday.com/2026/04/the-scandal-and-grace-of-christs-saturday-in-the-grave/))

'... having forgiven us all our trespasses; having cancelled the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them' (Col. 2. 13-15).

1. 'Christ wiped the slate clean and gave believers a fresh start. He took that signed acknowledgment of indebtedness which stood as a perpetual witness against them and cancelled it by His death.

It might even be said that He took the document, ordinances and all, and nailed it to His cross as an act of triumphant defiance in the face of those blackmailing powers that were holding it over men and women in order to command their allegiance.

'There is perhaps an allusion here to the fact that our Lord's own accusation was fixed to His cross. Jesus nails the accusation against His people to the cross, just as his own accusation had been nailed there. Thus, His victorious passion liberates them from their bankruptcy and bondage'.

(F. F. Bruce, 'The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians', NICOT, 1984, pages 109-110.)

2. 'When [Joseph] learned that Mary was pregnant he wanted to divorce her quietly, so as not to "expose her to public disgrace" (Matt. 1. 19). But public disgrace was precisely what God wanted for the forces of darkness'.

(D. Macleod, 'Christ Crucified', page 247.)

'I lay down my life that I may take it again' John 10. 17.

Make no mistake, the One who vacated Joseph of Arimathea's tomb hadn't been forced in there in the first place!

No one could keep Him down because no one ever knocked Him down.

'The last enemy to be destroyed is death' (1 Cor. 15. 26).

1. 'Easter Sunday was a very bad day for death. In the wake of Easter's triumph, we can whisper the taunt that we will one day shout: "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15. 55).

'Easter is not only the day of death's defeat; it is also the day that death was doomed to die. One day, the One who triumphed over death will do away with it altogether. "death shall be no more" (Rev. 21. 4)'.
(C. Manley, 'The Day Death Tried to Swallow Life', accessed at ...

2. Until the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, we might say that death was the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world (see the repeated 'and he died', Gen. 5. 5-31).

'Without resurrection, death reigned as Lord (Rom. 5. 17). But death met its match in the Saviour.

The risen Lord transformed sorrow into joy for Mary Magdalene (John 20. 11-18), 'fear' into 'boldness' for the apostles (John 20. 19; Acts 4. 13, 31), and doubt into faith for Thomas (John 20. 25-29).

'Deceiver' (Matt. 27. 63) or 'Messiah' (Acts 5. 42)?

'Jesus was not the first professed Messiah to be killed by the Romans. In fact, even in the same era, there were two other potential Messiahs: Simon bar-Giora (AD 66-70), and Simeon bar Kochba (AD

132-135). After they both were killed by the Romans, the same thing happened: their Messianic movement came to an abrupt and tragic end.

'In other words, the historical record shows that the death of professed Messiahs is so counter-intuitive to the Messianic expectations of the day that movements can never recover from it. *In the minds of first-century Jews, the death of the would-be Messiah shows that he was definitely not the Messiah.*

'Even Jesus's own disciples seemed to understand this. When Jesus died, they didn't think, "Well, maybe He's the Messiah after all". No, they were utterly defeated, hiding in shame and cowering in fear (John 20. 19).

'But then, amazingly, something changed. *Even though Jesus was killed by the Romans, His movement didn't end like those of the other professed Messiahs. Indeed, it grew. It exploded.* And these same followers of Jesus began to boldly proclaim that He was Lord and Messiah (Acts 2. 36).

'And *that* requires a serious explanation ... *nothing short of the resurrection itself could overturn the disciples' belief that Jesus had been defeated by the Romans*—like all the other would-be Messiahs'.

(M. J. Kruger, 'What's the Best Argument for the Resurrection?'—accessed at <https://michaelkruger.com/whats-the-best-argument-for-the-resurrection/>, *italics original*).

'I also conquered and sat down with my Father on His throne ... the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered' (Rev. 3. 21; 5. 5).

1. With an eye to the famous saying, 'I came, I saw, I conquered'—attributed by Plutarch ('*Life of Caesar*', 50) and Suetonius ('*The Life of Julius Caesar*', 37) to Julius Caesar—we can proclaim of our Lord Jesus, ***'He came, He died, He conquered'***!

2. 'Two thousand years later, *people all across the world gather to worship Jesus, not Caesar.* The church has outlasted the Roman Empire. Joy has triumphed through the death of Jesus on the cross. And that joy still ignites our worship, our wonder, our passion, even today'.

(T. Wax, '*Even to Death on a Cross*', accessed at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/the-most-surprising-lyric-in-philippians-2-even-to-death-on-a-cross/>.)

'If righteousness comes through the law', then:

(i) 'Christ has died for nothing' (Gal. 2. 21).

(ii) 'Christ shall profit you nothing' (Gal. 5. 2).

(iii) 'You are deprived of all profit from Christ' (Gal. 5. 4).

'All things according to the counsel of His will' (Eph. 1. 11).

'To know that nothing happens in God's world apart from God's will may *frighten the godless*, but it *stabilizes the saints.*

(J. I. Packer, '*Hot Tub Religion*', 1993, page 46.)

'I know that it will be well with those who fear God' (Eccles. 8. 12).

1. '*Christian faith* doesn't require us to say that we can see why everything, right now, is good. It *does require us to hold on to the fact that in some way*, which perhaps we can't imagine, *all shall be well*'.

(K. Kilby, '*All Shall Be Well*', accessed at <https://www.plough.com/en/topics/faith/all-shall-be-well>.)

2. The following hymn was written by Mary Bowly and first published (number XXXI) in '*Hymns intended to help the Communion of Saints*', which she composed in 1846. She was then aged 33. She later married John W. Peters (in 1852) but, having contracted tuberculosis, was called home in 1856 at the young age of 43.

Through the love of God our Saviour,
All will be well;
Free and changeless is His favour,
All, all is well.
Precious is the blood that healed us,
Perfect is the grace that sealed us,
Strong the hand stretched forth to shield us,
All must be well.

Though we pass through tribulation,
All will be well.
Ours is such a full salvation,
All, all is well.
Happy still in God confiding;
Fruitful if in Christ abiding;
Holy through the Spirit's guiding:
All must be well.

We expect a bright tomorrow:
All will be well.
Faith can sing through days of sorrow.
All, all is well.
On our Father's love relying,
Jesus every need supplying;
Or in living, or in dying;
All must be well.

[Speaking personally, I have enjoyed listening to this rendition of Mary Bowly's inspiring hymn, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQSNZ92NV7o&list=RDgQSNZ92NV7o&start_radio=1.]

(iii) Go on, smile.

Brian and his wife, Naomi, were enjoying a passenger boat ride out to a small island when their boat began to sink.

They managed to clamber into the same life raft but, sadly, this raft had been damaged during the panic and it too began sinking.

To make matters worse, the waters around them were ice cold and there were sharks around. Along with the others in the raft, Brian and Naomi had neither food nor drink—nor were there any emergency flares on board.

After a few minutes of silence, Naomi turned to Brian and said, 'I suppose we should be grateful, dear. After all, things could be worse'.

Brian stared. 'What on earth do you mean that things could be worse?' he retorted. 'Are you off your trolley or something? How could things possibly be any worse?'

'Well', Naomi replied,

'We could have paid for return tickets when we got on'.

Separately ...

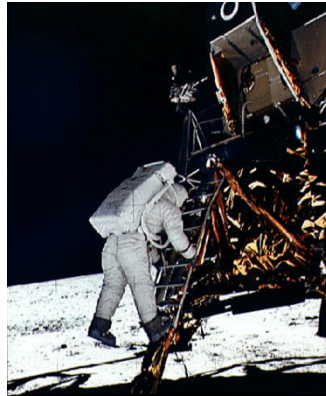
The Junior School teacher asked her class, 'What rhymes with "orange"?'

Little Johnny raised his hand and replied:

'No, it doesn't!'

THE GREATEST WEEK (extract).

It is now almost 57 years since the American astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin stepped down from their Apollo 11 Lunar Module on 21st July 1969 to put the first human footprints on the surface of the moon.



It was three and a half days later (on 24th July 1969) that the Apollo 11 spacecraft splashed down in the Pacific Ocean, 825 nautical miles southwest of Honolulu.



Two hours after splashdown, the then President of the United States, Richard Nixon, greeted the newly arrived astronauts.¹



In his own words:

'When I talked with them through the window of their quarantine chamber, it was hard to contain my enthusiasm or my awe at the thought that the three men on the other side of the glass had just returned from the moon. I said impulsively, "*This is the greatest week in the history of the world since the Creation*".²

This 'impulsive' statement earned the President a gentle word of rebuke from his friend, Billy Graham:

'Mr President, I know exactly how you felt, and I understand exactly what you meant, but, even so, *I think you may have been a little excessive*'.³



You and I can safely say that it was *more* than 'a *little excessive*'!

But I am *not* going to claim that the events of the first 'Passion Week' made it (in Richard Nixon's words) 'the greatest week in the history of the world since the Creation'.

I *am* going to claim that the events of that first 'Passion Week' made it the greatest week *ever*, eclipsing by far even the week of creation, which included, *inter alia*, the creation of at least two trillion galaxies.

What? Greater than the week of Genesis 1?

Most certainly!

It would be hard to miss that, according to Revelation chapter 5, the innumerable company of angels around heaven's throne are said to ascribe their *seven-fold* tribute of praise to Him who had once experienced that which none of them could ever experience (namely, death),⁴ whereas, at the close of the previous chapter, a *three-fold* ascription of praise is addressed to the Throne-sitter in consequence of His immense creatorial achievement.⁵

That we read of a fuller acclamation of praise addressed to 'the Lamb who was slain' suggests that greater glory accrues to God and the Lamb on account of (i) the work of purchasing men for God, than it does on account of (ii) the work of creating the vast cosmos.

For you and I know well that what God achieved in 'creation week' cost Him only His word (Psa. 33. 6, 9) and the exercise of His power, but what the Lord Jesus achieved during 'Passion Week' cost Him everything ... His blood, His life, Himself ... everything!

And, wonder of wonders,

it was all for me.

Notes

¹ Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins

² Richard Nixon's actual statement can be heard at 4 minutes 44 seconds of 'Nixon greets Apollo 11 astronauts after splashdown' (accessible at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cml_rCEZVH8). A transcript of the conversation can be read at ... <https://www.nixonfoundation.org/2008/07/24-july-1969-home-from-the-moon/>.

³ 'When I talked to Billy Graham a few days later, he said, "Mr. President, I know exactly how you felt, and I understand exactly what you meant, but, even so, I think you may have been a little excessive"', Richard Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 1978.

⁴ Rev. 5. 11-12; cf. 'neither can they die any more: for they are equal to the angels', Luke 20. 36.

⁵ Rev. 4. 10-11.