

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 15 February 2021

Greetings.

This is my 'Monday Musings' email.

I understand that this coming Thursday marks the anniversary of the first publication (on 18 February 1678) of John Bunyan's world-famous allegory, 'The Pilgrim's Progress'.

The following quotation from that allegory is appropriate, not only for 'the hour of death' (about which Mr Bunyan was then writing), but also for any adverse circumstances through which we may be called to pass:

'These troubles and distresses that you go through in these waters are no sign that God hath forsaken you; but are sent to try you, whether you will call to mind that which heretofore you have received of His goodness, and live upon Him in your distresses'.
(John Bunyan, 'The Pilgrim's Progress: Christian's conflict at the hour of death'.)

Happy reading!

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

PS

Conscious of the abnormal length of this week's attached document about the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, I have decided to repeat what I did recently and to spare you a further document next Monday. I think I can safely say that, together with the numerous 'Notes', this week's document should keep you well occupied for two weeks.

However, I shall, God willing, issue the Musings email itself next Monday.

(i) Scripture.

If you call on Him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

1 Peter 1. 17-21 (*English Standard Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

The character of God revealed consistently in the three main sections of the Old Testament.

(i) The historical books: 'merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness', (Exod. 34. 6 ESV).

(ii) The poetical books: 'merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love' (Psa. 103. 8 ESV).

(iii) The prophetical books: 'gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love' (Joel 2. 13 ESV; cf. Jonah 4. 2).

The Lord Jesus: two natures in one person.

'It is important to note that these two natures were united in Him as one person. He was not a dual personality. He did not do some things as man, and other things as God. Certain things that He did reveal His humanity, such as when He hungered or was asleep. And certain things reveal His deity, such as the rebuking of the winds and the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The two natures were separate and distinct. They were not fused into one. He was one person with two inseparable natures'.

(J. M. Davies, 'Collected Writings Vol 2' (Scripture Teaching Library), page 196.)

Without blemish, without spot, without sin.

(A) Sacrifices and offerings in the Old Testament:

- (i) 'Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats' (Exod. 12. 5; cf. Lev. 1. 3, 10; 3. 1, 6 etc.).
- (ii) 'Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke' (Num. 19. 2; cf. Num. 28. 3, 9, 11; 29. 17, 26).
- (iii) 'If there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame, or blind, or have any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the Lord thy God' (Deut. 15. 21).

(B) The Lord Jesus:

- (i) 'For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin' (Heb. 4. 15).
- (ii) 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?' (Heb. 9. 14).
- (iii) 'But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot' (1 Pet. 1. 19).

O Thou, whose offering on the tree.
The legal offerings all foreshow'd,
Borrow'd their whole effects from Thee.
And drew their virtue from Thy blood:
The blood of goats and bullocks slain,
Could never for one sin atone:
To purge the guilty offerer's stain.
Thine was the work, and Thine alone.

(John and Charles Wesley, 'Hymns on the Lord's Supper', number 123.)

Bones in Egypt.

There are two references to bones in the Passover narrative (Exodus 12-13).

- (i) Don't leave. The one reference is to the bones of Joseph: 'Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you"' (Exod. 13. 19).

This represented the fulfilment of an oath which had been entered into several hundred years earlier (Gen. 50. 25; cf. Josh. 24. 32; Heb. 11. 22).

- (ii) Don't break. The other reference is to the bones of the Passover lamb: 'This is the ordinance of the Passover: No foreigner shall eat it ...nor shall you break one of its bones' (Exod. 12. 43, 46). This represented a type which would receive its fulfilment many centuries later (John 19. 36; cf. Num. 9. 12).

Christ: the Sheaf of the First-fruits (Lev. 23. 10-12).

'There can be no doubt that the sheaf of first-fruits reaped from the harvest field, on the morrow after the Sabbath, and waved before Jehovah in His temple for acceptance—the pledge to Israel of many sheaves to follow—was a type and foreshadowing of Christ risen from the dead. The very name of that sheaf is the name given to Him as the Risen One from among the dead—"Christ the First-fruits" [1 Cor. 15. 23] ...

'The Lord Jesus honoured the day of the killing of the paschal lamb, by presenting Himself to God in death, "a Lamb without blemish and without spot" [1 Pet. 1. 19]. He honoured the day of the waving of the sheaf of first-fruits, by presenting Himself to God as the Firstborn from among the dead [Col. 1. 18]. Israel's priest no doubt waved the sheaf in empty form, before a rent veil in the temple at Jerusalem, but outside the city's gates, God had reaped the Great Wave-sheaf from Joseph's tomb early that same morning. The Substance had come, and the shadow passed away'.

(John Ritchie, 'The Feasts of Jehovah', pages 34-35.)

The word 'shed' ('poured out') linked to the Holy Trinity.

- (i) In us – the love of God: 'the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts' (Rom. 5. 5).
- (ii) For us – the blood of Christ: 'my blood, which is shed for you' (Luke 22. 20).
- (iii) On us – the Holy Spirit: 'the Holy Spirit; which He shed on us abundantly' (Tit. 3. 6).

'Tiberius Caesar ... the word of God came unto John' (Luke 3. 1-2).

Luke 'emphasizes the epochal importance of John the Baptist's first appearance in public ministry to prepare the way for his Lord. No less than seven incumbent political and religious dignitaries are named to mark the time-slot in which John came preaching'.

(Cyril Hocking, 'Day by Day: Moments with the Master' (Precious Seed Publications), page 7).

The Epistle to the Hebrews.

'The two themes of the Epistle are (i) the Priesthood of Christ, and (ii) His sacrifice.

The Epistle is one of interesting comparisons:

- (i) chapters 1-6, what is partial and complete;
- (ii) chapters 7-10, what is temporal and eternal;
- (iii) chapters 11-13, what is earthly and heavenly.

As a “word of exhortation” (Heb. 13. 22), its message is threefold:

- (i) “Let us go on” (Heb. 6. 1), *advancement*;
 - (ii) “Let us draw near” (Heb. 10. 22), *approach*;
 - (iii) “Let us go forth unto Him” (Heb. 13. 13), *association*’.
- (A. Leckie, ‘*Day by Day through the New Testament*’, page 310.)

Five ‘Withouts’ in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

- (i) ‘Without *shedding of blood*’ (Heb. 9. 22)—No Remission.
- (ii) ‘Without *faith*’ (Heb. 11. 6)—No Pleasing God.
- (iii) ‘Without *chastisement*’ (Heb. 12. 8)—No Sonship
- (iv) ‘Without *holiness*’ (Heb. 12. 14)—No Vision of the Lord.
- (v) ‘Without *covetousness*’ (Heb. 13. 5)—No Discontentment.

Two mortal men who heard things in heaven.

‘There are only two men, mortal men, who have been in heaven since the day of Pentecost. Paul was caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12. 2-4), and the other was John (Rev. 4. 1)’.

(G. V. Wigram, ‘*In Heaven*’, *The Christian’s Friend* (1877), page 117.)

‘In the Spirit’.

- (i) *Live* in the Spirit (Gal. 5. 25)—Christian Life.
 - (ii) *Walk* in the Spirit (Gal. 5. 25)—Christian Walk.
 - (iii) *Pray* in the Spirit (Eph. 6. 18)—Christian Devotion.
 - (iv) *Worship* in the Spirit (Phil. 3. 3)—Christian Priesthood.
 - (v) *Love* in the Spirit (Col. 1. 8)—Christian Brotherhood.
- (John Ritchie, ‘*500 Bible Subjects*’, Number 66.)

Forbidden mixtures in the New Testament.

- (i) Law and Grace (Acts 15. 1-24; Gal. 5. 4).
- (ii) Truth and Tradition (Mark 7. 8-13; Col. 2. 8).
- (iii) Believers and Unbelievers (2 Cor. 6. 14).

See the attached document, [‘The conversion of Saul of Tarsus’](#).

(iii) Go on, smile.

Two ‘hospital’ smiles.

1. Henry returned from an overseas trip feeling very ill. His local doctor had him rushed immediately into hospital for a wide range of tests.

When Henry woke up after the tests, his mobile phone rang. It was the hospital doctor.

‘I’ve received the results from your tests’, the doctor told him. ‘We’ve discovered that you have an extremely contagious virus’.

‘I don’t like the sound of that’, said Henry. ‘What are you going to do?’

‘Well’, the doctor replied, ‘two things. First, we’re going to put you into one of our special isolation rooms, and then, second, we’re going to put you on a strict diet of pizzas, pancakes and pita bread’.

‘Do you think that food will cure me?’ Henry asked.

‘To tell you the truth, no’, the doctor replied. ‘*It’s the only food we can slide under the door*’.

2. The staff on Ward 4 were having big problems with Brian, one of the new patients. He steadfastly refused to take any evening medicine to help him sleep. Although he would shut his eyes for an hour or so, he would then be awake for the rest of the night, keeping all the other patients awake.

The staff referred their problem to the Consultant. It so happened that, apart from his medical qualifications, this particular Consultant had a master’s degree in Psychology.

That evening, he paid an unexpected visit to Ward 4. Standing not far from Brian’s bed during the hour when Brian was ‘dozing’, he announced loudly to two of the nurses, ‘No, you don’t need to give Brian any sleeping tablets. But, when he wakes up, I want you to give him an enema’.

Brian slept non-stop for the next five days and nights!