

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 16 October 2023

Greetings.

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

But, first, the eagle-eyed among you may spot that today's document consists of '*Malcolm's Monday Musings - 153*', signifying that it is, indeed, the 153rd 'Musings' to be issued since the series began at the outbreak of COVID-19.

As many will know, the number '*153*' appears only once in Scripture; namely, in John's account of the manifestation of the risen Lord by 'the Sea of Tiberius' (known elsewhere as 'the Sea of Galilee', John 6. 1, and as 'the lake of Gennesaret', Luke 5. 1):

After these things, Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed Himself: Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing". They said to him, "We are going with you also".

They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him, "No". And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some".

So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish. Therefore, that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish.

Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have just caught". Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, *one hundred and fifty-three*; and although there were so many, the net was not broken.

John 21. 1-11 (New King James Version)

With his eye on an earlier miracle performed by Jesus at the same body of water, Don Carson comments:

'They are unable to haul the net "because of the large number of fish"—a rather different result from the episode of Luke 5. 1–11, where two boats are so filled with fish that they are in danger of sinking (Luke 5. 7). Characteristically, the beloved disciple exhibits *quick insight*, and Peter *quick action* (John 21. 7) ... "the net was not torn". It is hard not to see an allusion to Luke 5, where the nets were torn (Luke 5. 6)'.
(D. A. Carson, '*The Gospel according to John*', page 671.)

And now to today's document, in which both the 'Scripture' reading and the first 'Musing' follow on directly from the Bible passage and the comments above.

Happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

(i) Scripture.

Jesus said to them, 'Come and eat breakfast'. Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, 'Who are you?'—knowing that it was the Lord.

Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.

So, when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you'. He said to him, 'Feed my lambs'.

He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you'. He said to him, 'Tend my sheep'.

He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you'. Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep'.

John 21. 12-17 (*New King James Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'Do you love me?' (See John 21. 12-17 above.)

It would be hard to miss that the Lord Jesus asked His question, 'Do you love me?' three times. And I note that on each occasion He addressed the apostle in the same (and unusual) manner, 'Simon, son of Jonah'. As far as the Gospel records go, the Lord had spoken to him in this way only twice before—on only the most important occasions:

(i) over three years before, when they had met for the very first time (John 1. 42), and

(ii) following Peter's great confession that He, Jesus, was 'the Christ, the Son of the living God' (Matt. 16. 16).

And I suspect that, from the way in which the Lord addressed him, Peter now realised that the Lord was about to say something important to him.

The risen Lord had chosen the location most carefully at which to ask His pointed question.

Not only was this on the shore of the Sea of Galilee—the place where He had first called Peter to follow Him as His disciple (Matt. 4. 18-19)—but it was also near what the Gospel calls 'a fire of coals' (John 21. 9; a charcoal fire).

And this place held special significance for the apostle, because it was at another 'fire of coals', not that long before, that he had publicly disowned the Lord Jesus, denying (reinforced with oaths and curses) that he had ever known Jesus—still less had ever been one of His disciples (Mark 14. 71; John 18. 17, 25).

Back in chapter 18, John tells how, on the evening immediately before our Lord's crucifixion:

'The detachment of troops and ... officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him. They led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year ... Simon Peter followed ...

The servant girl who kept the door said to Peter, "Are you not also one of this man's disciples?" He said, "I am not".

Now the servants and officers had made a *fire of coals* and stood there warming themselves, for it was cold. Peter also stood with them warming himself ...

They said to him ... "Are you not also one of His disciples?" He denied it and said, "I am not!" One of the servants of the high priest ... said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" Peter then denied again; and immediately the cock crowed'.

That is the only other place in the entire New Testament where we read of a 'fire of coals'. At that time, Peter stood alongside the fire to warm himself in the company of our Lord's enemies, and it was there that he denied the Saviour. How forcibly then must this 'fire of coals' by 'the Sea of Tiberias' (namely, 'the Sea of Galilee', John 6. 1) have reminded him of that dreadful occasion.

Indeed, the fact that Jesus chose to pose His question *three times* by the fire was itself charged with meaning. For had not Peter denied Jesus *three times* when he had stood alongside that earlier fire? Peter—not then grasping the significance of the thrice-repeated question—'was grieved because He said to him *the third time*, "Do you love me?"' (John 21. 17).

But, for Peter's own sake, our Lord ensured that, just as once Peter had denied Him three times in the presence of witnesses near a charcoal fire, so he would now, correspondingly, affirm his love for Him three times in the presence of witnesses near another charcoal fire.

Alongside the first fire, the apostle had protested three times that he didn't know Jesus (Matt. 26. 70, 72, 74). Now, alongside the second fire, he gladly affirms three times that Jesus knows him—and that He knows, therefore, that he truly loves Him (John 21. 15-17).

(Lightly edited notes of a talk given at a Coffee Morning in June 2009. Many times since then, when reviewing wayward thoughts, words and actions, I have (as it were) heard the Lord question me in the words of Delilah of Sorek, 'How can you say, "I love you", when ...?' (Judg. 16. 15).)

'In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year' (Heb. 10. 3).

'The annual day of Atonement did not accomplish "remission of sin" but only "reminder of sin" ... True, the nation's sins were covered, but they were not cleansed'.

(Warren Wiersbe, 'Be Confident', page 111.)

Angels at the Lord's two advents.

(i) At our Lord's first advent, angels praised God: 'a multitude of the heavenly host praising God' (Luke 2. 13).

(ii) At our Lord's second advent, angels will worship Him: 'when He again brings in the first-born into the world, He says, "And let all the angels of God worship Him"' (Heb. 1. 6).

The First Book of Samuel.

'The first book of Samuel shows the fall of the house of Eli, the rise and subsequent fall of the house of Saul, and then the rise of the house of David.

'In each case, Samuel is the man in the middle, providing continuity in the transition periods between these three waves of power.

'In fact, this provides our outline of the book:

(i) Part One (chapters 1–7): the collapse of the house of Eli and the raising up of Samuel, the emergency man, with a summary at 1 Sam. 7. 15-17.

(ii) Part Two (chapters 8–14): the rejection of the house of Saul and God's replacement with David's house, concluding with another summary at 1 Sam. 14. 49-52.

(iii) Part Three (chapters 15–31): the main section that continues into 2 Samuel, presenting two kings and the call to a choice of loyalty, ending with the ignominious death of Saul and his sons ...

'1 and 2 Samuel tell the tale of three kings and a kingdom. Saul, David, and Solomon (each reigning 40 years— Acts 13. 21; 2 Sam. 5. 4; 1 Kings 11. 42—where "40" is associated with testing in Scripture) picture for us the natural man, the spiritual man, and the carnal man.

'Saul is the big-little man, big on the outside but little on the inside. David is the weak-strong man, weak in himself but strong in the Lord. And Solomon is the wise-foolish man, having all the resources necessary to live in victory, but defeated by his own desires'.

(J. B. Nicolson Jr., 'A Synopsis of the Book', Uplook Ministries: Taste and See, 29 August 2023.)

'Absent from the body and at home with the Lord' (2 Cor. 5. 8).

'Fallen asleep,
Lying at rest,
Tranquil and deep,
Safe on His breast!
Life's journey o'er,
Heaven's portal passed,
Pilgrim no more,
Safe home at last!
Safe home at last!

'No more to fear,
No more to die,
Shed every tear,
Breathed every sigh!
All sorrows borne,
All trials past,
No more to mourn,
Safe home at last!
Safe home at last!'

(I. Y. Ewan, 'The Caravanserai', page 32).

The hand of the Lord in the Acts of the Apostles.

'The hand of God denotes His power to accomplish things.

'The Acts of the Apostles illustrate His hand as:

1. An exalting hand—'being by the right hand of God exalted' (Acts 2. 33).

2. A purposing hand—'to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done' (Acts 4. 28).

3. A healing hand—'By stretching forth thine hand to heal' (Acts 4. 30).

4. An honouring hand—'Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour' (Acts 5. 31).

5. A delivering hand—'how that God by His hand would deliver them' (Acts 7. 25).

6. A converting hand—'the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord' (Acts 11. 21).

7. A judging hand—'behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind' (Acts 13. 11)'.
(F. E. Marsh, 'One Thousand New Bible Readings', page 195, number 417.)

'They will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead' (1 Pet. 4. 5).

'In 1934 ... Catholicism as a national movement in Germany was sidelined and compromised to some extent by the Concordat the pope had entered into with Hitler. Protestantism and its reigning liberal theology were undermining the witness of the church. In this time of great crisis, Christians gathered and issued the Barmen Declaration, which said: "Jesus Christ, as he is testified to us in the Holy Scripture is the one Word of God whom we are to hear, whom we are to trust, whom we are to obey in life and in death".

'Those who signed that statement and those who drafted it soon found themselves excluded. Karl Barth, one of the drafters, lost his professorship at the University of Bonn and was sent into exile. Another, Martin Niemöller, was placed in a concentration camp and became Hitler's private prisoner.

'Again and again, he was interviewed by Hitler, and on one of those occasions he said to Hitler, "You can imprison me and you can torture me and you can kill me, but Herr Hitler, one day you will give an account to one who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords".

(David S. Dockery and Timothy George, 'The Great Tradition of Christian Thinking', pages 75-76. [I have been unable to trace any historical source for the reported conversation between Hitler and Niemöller.]

'Judge nothing before the time' (1 Cor. 4. 5).

'Chuck Swindoll was speaking at a camp in California. A gentleman came to him and said, "Oh, Dr Swindoll, I have waited so long for this week, I am going to eat up everything you have to say". Swindoll thanked him.

'Sunday night, the man was sitting on the front row, and the man started nodding. Swindoll figured that he'd had a long drive and was probably tired. 'Tuesday night, the man started nodding. Wednesday night the man nodded again.

'Swindoll was now getting a little upset. Here this man sat on the front row, sleeping away. As a preacher who had prepared well for this ministry opportunity, it didn't feel good to see someone sleeping on him. He was getting frustrated. Thursday night, the man nodded and slept again.

'On Friday morning, the lady who was sitting next to the man came to Swindoll and said, "I want to thank you for the ministry this week. Oh, and by the way, I am sorry about my husband sleeping on you ... He has terminal cancer and the doctors have just given him a couple of weeks to live. When we talked about what he wanted to do before he died, he said, 'I want to go hear Chuck Swindoll'. But you see, Dr Swindoll, the doctors gave him medicine to keep away the pain, and the medicine makes him sleep. I wanted to apologize to you that he has been sleeping, but I wanted you to know you made this the best week of the last part of his life".

'Swindoll later said he could have crawled under a rock, because he had made a judgment and without any investigation he had reacted'.

(Tony Evans, 'Stories, Quotes, and Anecdotes', Moody, article 'Judging').

(iii) Go on, smile.

Coffee and chocolate.

1. After a long journey, Esther arrived at her daughter's house for a visit. She was met at the door by her son-in-law, David.

'Well, tell me, mother-in-law', David asked, 'and how long do you plan to stay this time?'

'For however long you want me to', Esther responded.

'What!' David exclaimed. 'You mean that *you're not even going to stay for coffee?*'

2. Becky and Su were close friends. One day, Becky asked Su, 'Have you seen the recent news article which claims that every piece of chocolate you eat shortens your life by two minutes?'

'Yes, I saw it', Su answered, 'I then spent almost two hours doing the arithmetic. *On that reckoning, I died in 1787*'.