

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 8 August 2022

From sundown on last Saturday to nightfall yesterday (6th to 7th of August; the 9th of the month 'Av' in the Hebrew calendar), the Jewish people held their annual fast day ('*Tisha B'Av*') which commemorates the destruction of both the First Temple and the Second Temple in Jerusalem ... by the Babylonians in 587/586 BC and by the Romans in AD 70 respectively.

With respect to: (i) the destruction of the city of Jerusalem of His day and (ii) of the Second Temple, the Lord Jesus foretold (doubtless with some degree of hyperbole):

(i) *The city* ... 'Your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and *tear you down to the ground*, you and your children within you. And they will *not leave one stone upon another* in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation' (Luke 19. 44; cf. Luke 21. 24), and

(ii) *The temple* ... 'As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will *not be left here one stone upon another* that will not be thrown down' (Luke 21. 6; contrast the expression, 'a stone was laid upon a stone', spoken concerning the rebuilding of the temple under Zerubbabel, Haggai 2. 15).

Over 40 years later, Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian (who personally witnessed the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in AD 70) reported as follows.

(i) *The city* ... 'Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple, but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminency ... and so much of the wall as enclosed the city on the west side ... but for all the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly *laid even with the ground* by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited'.

(Flavius Josephus, '*The Wars of the Jews*', Book 7, Chapter 1, Paragraph 1.)

(ii) *The temple* ... 'Titus retired into the tower of Antonia, and resolved to storm the temple the next day, early in the morning, with his whole army, and to encamp round about the holy house. But as for that house, *God had, for certain, long ago doomed it to the fire*; and now that fatal day was come, according to the revolution of ages; it was the tenth day of the month ('Av') upon which *it was formerly burnt by the king of Babylon* [see Jer. 52. 12; cf. 2 Kings 25. 8] ... *thus was the holy house burnt down*'.

(Flavius Josephus, *ibid.*, Book 6, Chapter 4, Paragraphs 5 and 7.)

Apart from numerous references to literal, physical temples (such as those in Jerusalem, Corinth and Ephesus) and one metaphorical reference to the 'temple' of our Lord's body (John 2. 19-21), the New Testament speaks:

(a) of a temple built, and brazenly and profanely occupied by 'the man of sin', during the great apostasy prior to our Lord's second Advent (2 Thess. 2. 3-4; Rev. 11. 1-2);

(b) of God's temple in heaven (Rev. 11. 19; 14. 15-17; 15. 5-8; 16. 1, 17);

(c) of the New Jerusalem:

'... the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God ... I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it' (Rev. 21. 10, 22).

'Since the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are dwelling in this city no further shrine is needed. The city itself is the temple'.

(J. Allen, '*Revelation*', 'What the Bible Teaches', page 68).

'A temple necessarily confines the presence of God and introduces the thought of near and more distant worshippers. "No temple" signifies that full and free access to God is equally granted to all ... God and the Lamb make themselves known throughout every part of the vast city of gold'.

(Walter Scott, '*Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ*', page 436); and,

(d) metaphorically, of:

(i) *The local assembly*.

'Know ye not that *ye are the temple of God*, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are' (1 Cor. 3. 16-17);

'And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people' (2 Cor. 6. 16).

'When the purity of the assembly was threatened, he reminded them that they were the shrine in which the Holy Spirit dwells; here when the purity of the life of the Christian is at stake, he declares that the body of the believer is also a shrine, a sacred enclosure, and as such it ought not to be defiled'.

(J. Hunter, '1 Corinthians' in '1 and 2 Corinthians: What the Bible Teaches', page 68.)

(ii) The body of the believer.

'What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?' (1 Cor. 6. 19).

Thankfully, the Spirit of the Lord will never depart from 'the temple' of the believer's body as the glory of the Lord once departed from the First Temple (Ezek. 10. 4, 18-19; 11. 22-23).

(iii) The church (the mystical body of Christ) in its future glory.

'In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord' (Eph. 2. 21; cf. 1 Pet. 2. 5).

'The world-famed temple of Diana at Ephesus may have been in the apostle's mind—its symmetry, its glory, the relation of each several part to the rest and to the whole, as a suitable external emblem of the spiritual body which is being built up in Christ; but the Christian Church is a *holy* temple, dedicated to God, purified by his Spirit, entirely foreign to those defilements which disgraced the temple of Diana'.

(W. G. Blaikie, 'Ephesians', The Pulpit Commentary, pages 68-69.)

You and I may well praise God today that, unlike in the cases of both the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem, this 'temple' will never be destroyed by hostile forces—human or Satanic.

For this week's main 'Musings', please see below.

Happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

(i) Scripture.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So, glorify God in your body ...

You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.

1 Corinthians 6. 19-20; 7. 23-24 (*English Standard Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

No devil in the bookends of the Bible.

There is no devil in the first two chapters of the Bible and, thank God, there is no devil in the last two chapters.

'Remove far from me vanity and lies' (Prov. 30. 8).

'The happiest state of a Christian is the holiest state. As there is most heat nearest to the sun, so there is most happiness nearest to Christ ... I do not blame ungodly men for rushing to their pleasures ... Let them have their fill. That is all they have to enjoy ... Christians must seek their delights in a higher sphere than the insipid frivolities or sinful enjoyments of the world'.

(C. H. Spurgeon, 'Morning and Evening Daily Readings – Evening, June 13', page 331.)

The incarnation.

"When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law" (Gal. 4. 4) ... He whom God sent forth was His Son. God did not send Him forth into the body of a man. He "was manifested in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3. 16).

'He became flesh [John 1. 14], possessing full and perfect manhood, body, soul and spirit. These three constitute the totality of all that is essential to manhood, and this is here the meaning of the word "flesh".

'Christ Himself speaks of His body and of His soul, and of His spirit.

(i) Of the emblematic significance of the loaf in the Lord's Supper, He said, "This is my body" [Matt. 26. 26].

(ii) In the dark hour of Gethsemane, He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful" [Mark 14. 34].

(iii) And on the cross, "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit" [Luke 23. 46].

(W. E. Vine, *'The First and the Last'*, Collected Writings, Volume 4, page 232.)

Things which Jesus did not do.

It goes without saying that the New Testament has much to tell us of things which **Jesus did**. For example, the apostle John closed his gospel with the words, 'there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written' (John 21. 25). And, on account of the way in which the New Testament is constructed, the very next book, Luke's 'Acts of the Apostles', opens with the words, 'The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, (speaking, of course, of the Gospel according to Luke) concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach' (Acts 1. 1).

But the New Testament testifies not only to the quantity but to the nature and the quality of all that He did. The apostle Peter once summarised the nature of our Lord's deeds in the words, He 'went about doing good' (Acts 10. 38). Mark, the author of the second gospel, reported the verdict of the crowd on the quality of what the Lord Jesus did when He healed a deaf man from Decapolis with a speech impediment, 'He has done all things well' (Mark 7. 37). We note then that He not only did 'good' but that He also did it 'well'.

And, given the wealth of material in the gospels, we tend naturally to concentrate on the many things our Lord did. But I can assure you that the New Testament has a great deal to tell us also of things **which He didn't do**. Let me select just a few examples – one each from several different writers of the New Testament:

(i) We learn from Luke that the Lord did not authorise two of His disciples, when they asked, to call down fire from heaven to consume a Samaritan village which had refused to receive Him (Luke 9. 52-56).

(ii) We learn from John that the Saviour did not lose any of those given to Him by the Father (John 6. 39; 17. 12; 18. 9).

(iii) We learn from Peter that, unlike you and me, He 'did no sin' (1 Pet. 2. 22).

(iv) We learn from the writer to the Hebrews that He 'did not glorify Himself to be made a high priest', being appointed to that office by God Himself (Heb. 5. 4-6).

(v) We learn from the apostle Paul that He 'did not please Himself' (Rom. 15. 2-3).

Most certainly, then, the New Testament has much to tell us of things which the Lord Jesus didn't do.

Indeed, in the context of the closing scenes of His life on earth—of what is known as **our Lord's passion**—there is a concentration of instances. I could point, for instance, to the One who did not:

(i) accept the drugged wine which was offered to Him when He hanged on the cross (Mark 15. 23);

(ii) speak out in His own defence (for example, Matt. 27. 12); and

(iii) revile or threaten those who were responsible, humanly speaking, for His sufferings (1 Pet. 2. 23).

But, for me (with my eye especially on the Gospel according to Matthew), the most striking instances in the passion narratives consist of:

(i) the One who did not insist on His own will (Matt. 26. 39, 42, 44);

(ii) the One who did not request angelic help (Matt. 26. 53);

(iii) the One who did not hide His face from shame and spitting (Isa. 50. 6; Matt. 26. 67; 27. 30);

(iv) the One who did not save Himself (Matt. 27. 40; Luke 23. 35, 37, 39); and

(v) the One who did not come down from the cross (Matt. 27. 40, 42).

Think on 'these things'!

The cross—the revelation of God.

Nature with open volume stands
To spread her Maker's praise abroad,
And every labour of His hands

Shows something worthy of our God.

But in the grace that rescued man
His brightest form of glory shines;
Here on the cross 'tis fairest drawn
In precious blood and crimson lines.

Here His whole name appears complete;
Nor wit can guess, nor reason prove
Which of the letters best is writ,
The power, the wisdom, or the love.

(Isaac Watts)

'Christ died for us' (Rom. 5. 8); 'Christ lives in me' (Gal. 2. 20).

He who died our death for us now lives His life in us.

'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound' (Rom. 5. 20).

'The sin of the world is like the waves of an angry sea breaking on the eternal shore, and transformed from its sullen darkness into the gleaming beauty of the breakers ... Sin is an intruder into God's universe, but the wisdom of God has made around that intruder the pearl of grace'.

(H. Wheeler Robinson, 'Suffering Human and Divine', pages 170-171.)

'Casting all your care'

'I have learnt at the cross what God was to me as a sinner; and now I have to learn how He meets my wants as a saint, by feeling my need and bringing it to Him.

To be hungry is not enough, I must be really starving to know what is in His heart towards me. When the prodigal was hungry he went to feed upon husks; but when he was starving, he turned to his father's house, and then learnt the love of the father's heart'.

(J. N. Darby, 'The Perfections of Christ', Pilgrim Portions: Meditations for the Day of Rest, Thirty-Ninth Week.)

Baptism in the Spirit.

'There is only one place in the whole New Testament outside the gospels and Acts—in other words, there is only one place apart from those which record or echo the promise of John the Baptist—where the baptism of the Spirit is mentioned. That is in 1 Corinthians 12. 13, where Paul reminds his converts in Corinth that "in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body"; and here the meaning of the Pentecostal event is made plain.

'It is the risen Christ who baptizes his people—all his people—"in one Spirit", and by this baptism they are incorporated into one body'. The 'body', or the 'body of Christ', is Paul's distinctive term for the new, Spirit-indwelt community. The baptism of the Spirit is an expression which is often used loosely; it is helpful to mark what its New Testament meaning is'.

(F. F. Bruce, 'The Work of Jesus', page 46.)

'Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you ... we love the brethren' (1 John 3. 13-14).

'Is it not enough that all the world is against us, but we must also be against one another? O happy days of persecution, which drove us together in love, whom the sunshine of liberty and prosperity crumbles into dust by our contentions!'

(Richard Baxter, 'The Saints' Everlasting Rest', page 59.)

'Our citizenship is in heaven' (Phil. 3. 21).

'I am surrounded by priests who repeat incessantly that their Kingdom is not of this world and yet they lay their hands on everything they can get'.

(Napoleon Bonaparte, 'Napoleon at St. Helena', page 245.)

Can that charge be justly laid at my door?

'Let him deny himself, and take up his cross' (Matt. 16. 24).

'We are not bearing our crosses every time we have a headache. An aspirin tablet will take care of that. What is meant is the trouble we would not have if we were not Christians'.

(Attributed widely to Vance Havner.)

Will I be a Benaiah today! (2 Sam. 23. 20; 1 Chron. 11. 22).

The world is the pit.
The lion is your battle.
You are Benaiah.

Today is your snowy day'.
(Robert Noland, *'Legacy of Leaders'*.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

Children!

1. One day little Johnny came home from school and told his mother, 'Mummy, I've got to tell you that I was punished today in school for something I didn't do'.

'That is terrible!' Mrs Dickens responded angrily. 'I'm not having it. I'm going up the school now to talk to the headmaster about this. But, first, tell me what was it that you didn't do?'

Without batting an eyelid, Johnny replied, '*My homework*'.

2. Sammy and his classmates at the local school had just finished a tour of the City Fire Station.

Before each pupil left, the fire chief quizzed him or her.

'And what would you do, young man', he asked little Sammy, 'if your clothes caught fire?'

Promptly, Sammy replied, '*I wouldn't put them on*'.