

1) **The Nativity Window, St. Leon Cathedral** →

2) **Handel's Messiah: Bringing Scripture to Life, Week 3 of 7**, John Kincaid, Autumn, 2018

3) **A Friend in Need.** When Handel was at his lowest point, 2 events converged to change his life. The 1st event was a gift from a friend. Charles Jennens had written the life of Christ, using Bible verses organized like a poem, so they were well-suited to be used in a song. →

4) **Faith, Hope, Charity.** The 2nd significant event in Handel's life was a job offer. A charity in Dublin Ireland asked Handel to write the music for a benefit. The timing of the 2 events shows God is in control. Consider the purpose of the 2 events: the life of Christ was a wonderful way to spread the Gospel; the charity wanted to extend the love of Christ to those in need.

The 2 events combined to produce an unexpected response in Handel. *Before* the events, he was resigned to spend the rest of his life in prison. A few weeks later, Handel had been *transformed* and filled with joy. What he accomplished cannot be explained; it was not humanly *possible* to write Messiah so quickly, and yet it happened. God was clearly at work in Handel's life. →

5) **A Super-Human Feat.** The music in our 1st 3 lessons was composed in 6 days. All the music you hear today was finished in 2 days. Handel wrote 100 times faster than composers today; he didn't have computers. Just pen & paper. If someone had given Handel a 250-page music book like a hymnal, there wasn't enough time to *copy* that much music. Yet Handel *created* it. Handel kept up this pace for 3 weeks! Biographers concluded that Handel could not have done this without a team of people, yet witnesses testify that Handel was alone in the room. →

6) **What did Handel *experience*** as he wrote Messiah? He tried to explain by quoting *Paul's* vision of heaven: "Whether I was in the body or out when I wrote, I do not know." The experts agree: the number of pages, the quality of the music, the incredibly short time: Handel's Messiah is the greatest accomplishment in the history of musical composition. →

7) **A Vision of Heaven.** Handel worked alone in a room for 3 weeks. Food was delivered, but not eaten. The servant reported an unforgettable moment: Handel said with tears streaming: "I saw all of heaven before me". The servant looked down and saw the title on the sheet music. It was the Hallelujah Chorus - the Apostle John's vision of heaven. →

8) This is a **page from the Hallelujah chorus**, currently in the British Library. This is the original page written by Handel. This may be one of the pages that Handel's servant saw. →

9) **Timeless.** Messiah was 1st performed for the Dublin charity. It raised enough money to pay off the debts of 100 people. Handel faced debtor's prison when he wrote Messiah. But God provided for Handel, with enough left over to provide for 100 people from the overflow. →

10) **Messiah: Rejected.** Handel lived 17 more years. The *church* finally gave their blessing to Messiah. They had been critical of Handel's sacred operas, but Handel's *Messiah* did not involve *actors* or costumes or scenery. There was nothing that could be considered sinful. →

11) The Church of England did Handel a *favor*. Messiah was *much* less expensive to produce than a sacred opera. Handel kept telling Bible stories, but using the *Messiah* approach. Handel had invented **another new musical form**: the English oratorio. If you enjoy hymns & anthems, thank Handel. Great church music traces its roots back to Handel's Messiah. →

12) It is More Blessed. Handel donated much of his income to charity. Handel remembered his *own* time of suffering. He became famous but never lost his compassion for others. His *giving* prompted *one* author to write that Messiah has provided more *food, clothing & shelter*, to the homeless & orphan than any musical production. God's blessing continues. More than Messiah, Handel's legacy is his great sacrifice, in the name of Christ, to relieve human suffering. →

13) God So Loved. Handel's Messiah *also* bears fruit that has *eternal* value. There are so many who have never heard God's Word. *We* have spiritual *discernment* & the indwelling Holy Spirit to reveal *truth* to us. Our unsaved neighbors don't. Matt.9:12 God wants all people to be saved, to come to a knowledge of the truth. The unsaved *desperately* need to know the truth. If *we* don't tell them, who *will*? Handel's Messiah provides a *natural* opportunity for evangelism, a *comfortable* place to invite our unsaved friends & neighbors to hear the Gospel. Messiah reaches *out* to the unsaved, with a *persuasive* message: God cares about *them*, too. →

14) After the 1st London performance of Messiah, people *congratulated* Handel for excellent entertainment. Handel replied, "I should be sorry if I only entertain them. **I wish to make them better.**" He died on Easter weekend, 1759, soon after conducting Messiah one last time. →

15) Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey, London where Handel is buried →

16) Westminster Abbey is the place where kings & queens have been crowned for a thousand years. Handel was buried alongside the great figures from the history of England: Dickens, Kipling, Isaac Newton. Near the monuments to Churchill, Longfellow, Shakespeare, John & Charles Wesley. There is a statue of Handel at the grave, holding the music for the opening song from Part 3 of Messiah: "**I know that my Redeemer liveth**" from Job 19. →

17) Joy of the Lord. Handel developed new musical techniques in the Messiah, which greatly influenced other composers. Haydn & Beethoven admitted that they were indebted to Handel, and standing on his shoulders. During the *difficult* years before Messiah, Handel never gave in to the setbacks, the health problems or the money problems. His life illustrates that our joy does not depend on our circumstances. Phil.4:12-13 Our *joy* comes from relying on *God*. →

18) The Christmas story in Luke 2 repeats Isa.40. The song *For Unto Us* announced **the king is coming**. We expect a fanfare of trumpets to *herald* the Messiah's birth, but He was born in a humble stable. Instead of trumpets, we hear violins playing a tranquil song without words. →

19) The Little Hills. The Pastoral Symphony is not associated with a royal palace. The setting is the hillsides of Bethlehem, the same place where David wrote the Lord is my shepherd, 1000 years earlier. Our English word *pastor* comes from a Latin word for shepherd. The language of Messiah involves flocks, lambs & yokes. The Lamb of God came into the world in the quiet countryside, surrounded by farm animals and ordinary people. The Messiah's birth is good news for *all* people. And *that* news was given *first* to certain poor shepherds. Carol: The 1st Noel →

20) In the Presence. When the angel appears, Handel's music uses delicate fluttering from the violins to help us picture the angel's wings. But as the angel announces the birth, the shepherds are *terrified*. Handel used the soprano voice to recreate that moment. During the song "And Suddenly", if you don't feel chills, you might want to check whether you have a pulse. The shepherds were about to be in the presence of the *Lord*. Like *Saul* on the Damascus road, like *Moses* at the burning bush. The Old Testament prophets were afraid to even *talk* about it; now these shepherds were *experiencing* it. →

21) He Gives Us Victory. Just when the shepherds felt overwhelmed by *1* angel, the *multitude* of the heavenly host joined in. The Greek word for host means *army*. So Lord of hosts is the God of armies. God's Son had arrived on the earth, ready for battle. But this was the *first* coming, of the Prince of *Peace*. He would *win* the victory over sin, by His *love*. →

♪ **22) Pastoral Symphony/There Were Shepherds** Luke 2:8

There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night →

♪ **23) (0:15) Luke 2:9 And, Lo, the Angel** of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. →

♪ **24) (0:35) And the Angel** said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord →

♪ **25) (1:21) And Suddenly** there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God →

♪ **26) (1:39) Luke 2:14 Glory to God** in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men. →

27) What was the purpose of Messiah's birth? Jesus came to earth to die for lost sinners. This was God's plan before creation. Pontius Pilate did not make the decision whether Jesus would be crucified; Pilate was just God's *instrument*. The priests *desperately* wanted Jesus dead, but even *they* said "Not during Passover". Jesus, not His enemies, determined the *time* that He would go to the cross. Jesus, not His enemies, determined that He *would* go – Jesus willingly sacrificed Himself for us (no one forced Him). God is always in control. Phil.2:5-8 →

28) Rejoice in the Lord Always. The week before Easter, we celebrate Palm Sunday - the triumphal entry of the Messiah into Jerusalem. He did not ride in on the white stallion of a conqueror; he rode a small donkey. This literally fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah from 5 centuries earlier. Luke chapter 2 records the birth of the Messiah: the giving of God's perfect gift – the answer for our greatest need. The shepherds *witnessed* this gift; Handel leaves them standing at the manger. Handel turns back to the *prophets*, who saw these events in *advance*.

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." John 20:29 Peter said, "Though *you* have not *seen* him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy." 1 Pet.1:8 The prophets did not see the Messiah in the flesh; they only saw through the eyes of faith what the Holy Spirit revealed to them. *Their* response was to *rejoice*. →

♪ **29) Rejoice Greatly – Zech.9:9-10** Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee. He is the righteous Savior; he shall speak peace unto the heathen →

30) Meekness is not weakness. Moses & Jesus are the great examples of meekness. Meekness is a fruit of the Spirit, power under control, balancing strength with compassion. **God was able** to bring home the people of Judah. God is stronger than the greatest armies. He is able to save and keep us saved, able to keep us from falling. But God is also *gentle*. →

31) The Good Shepherd - John 10:11 Jesus described Himself as the bread of life, the living bread from heaven, the light of the world, the resurrection and the life, the true vine, the Son of God and Son of man, the gate, the way, the truth and the life. Out of *all* these illustrations, the early church pictured Christ as the Good Shepherd. In the catacombs of Rome, under the city where the church met in secret, there are *paintings* of Christ with a lamb draped over His shoulders. Out of *all* the images in the Bible, *this* is the one Handel wants us to remember, as the Christmas portion ends. →

32) When Handel moves from Isa.40 to Matt.11, Handel is making his statement of faith. The *gentle* shepherd of Isaiah is *same* person as the *Good Shepherd* of the Gospels. How did Handel express this profound truth in his music? Simple: the 2 women sing the same *tune*. The song “He shall feed his flock” uses the words of Isaiah. The song “Come unto him” uses the words of Matthew. But it *sounds* like the same song, 2nd verse. This is the unchanging message of Scripture. Our good Shepherd cares for us, protects us, and supplies our need. *He* is our peace and rest. God has *always* been the source of comfort. His name is Jesus Christ. Come unto Him. Take His yoke upon you. He is the same, **yesterday, today and forever.** →

♪ **33) Then Shall the Eyes – Isa.35:5-6** Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing. →

♪ **34) (0:35) Isa.40:11 He Shall Feed His Flock** like a shepherd: and he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young. →

♪ **35) (2:38) Matt.11:28 Come Unto Him** all ye that labor, that are heavy laden, and he will give you rest Take his yoke upon you & learn of him; for he is meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls →

♪ **36) His Yoke Is Easy - Matthew 11:30** His yoke is easy, and his burden is light. →

37) His rod & His staff, they comfort us. The rod & yoke of the oppressor is a *terrible* burden. Christ *willingly* gave Himself to pay for our sins. His wounds have paid my ransom. But Calvary’s cross did not remain on His shoulders forever. Ultimately, the *government* will be upon His shoulders. Christ puts *His* yoke on *us*; it is light and easy for us to bear. Christ harnesses together people from every tribe & language & nation, and made them to be a *kingdom*, & *priests* to serve our God. Rev.5:9-10 He chose us before creation to serve as *His* ministers of reconciliation to a broken world. →

38) We think of Christmas as the birthday of Jesus. This is the simple meaning we teach the children. It is the anniversary of the time when God came to us in Christ. This *distinguishes* Christianity from all the man-made religions: God *chose* us before creation to *glorify* Him. He is *seeking* us. **The true meaning of Christmas** is even more: →

39) Because the Messiah came to *us*, *we* can come to God. We are in Him; He is in us. John 14:20 We can come *boldly* to the throne of grace Heb.4:16 because Christ *redeemed* us from *all* our sins. We have comfort that our sins are *forgiven*. That is **the greatest gift** we could *ever* receive.