

1) Christmas Window, First Baptist Greenville →

2) Handel's Messiah: Bringing Scripture to Life, Week 2 of 7, John Kincaid, Sept 2018 →

3) The music of Handel's Messiah has been popular for over 2-1/2 centuries. This music has an inspirational message: God is reaching out to us. Compare Christianity with other religions, there is something distinctive about *our* faith. In other religions, people are seeking God. They try to do good works, hoping to earn heaven. But ***our* God seeks *us***. The only reason *we* are able to come to God, is because *He* came to *us*, in Christ, at the 1st Christmas. When I listen to Messiah, I think about some pictures that I wanted to share with you. →

4) Creation of Adam, Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel →

5) Michelangelo's Adam, Sistine Chapel: The hand of God reaching for the hand of Adam. →

6) The Light of the World is a painting by Holman Hunt. It is a picture of Rev.3:20, Christ knocking at the door. There is a small but significant detail: there is no doorknob on the outside. Each believer must respond to Christ, trust & receive Him. Remember these images of God reaching out to *each* of us, to *all* people in *all* places at *all* times. →

7) Praise God: All we have comes from God: every breath. Even unbelievers have creativity, whether or not they thank God. God also gives special spiritual gifts to believers, to share with others, for the building up of the body of Christ, for the common good. 1 Cor.4:7 What do you have that you did not receive? If you received it, why do you boast, as if you did not receive it? Be thankful. God doesn't owe us anything; even if we serve Him, we have only done our duty. Luke 17:10 I chose the picture of Westminster because it combines everything on this slide: God gifted the architects and builders. Inside, you see stained glass, paintings, sculpture. Great music has been performed here for the glory of God: composers, instruments, choirs, soloists. →

8) The image of **Christ in Majesty**, ruling from heaven, appears early in church history. Chartres Cathedral. The painting of Christ Between Peter & Paul is in the catacombs of Rome. It is the 1st fully formed image of Christ in Majesty. The small picture is a close-up of Jesus. →

9) Christ Pantocrator: The same image of Christ in Majesty also appears early in the Greek Orthodox church. Pantocrator is the Greek word for all-powerful. This word was the Greek translation for Hebrew names of God such as "Lord of Hosts" and "God Almighty". This picture is the oldest surviving icon of Christ as the Ruler of All. It was preserved at the Monastery on Mount Sinai, the traditional location where Moses received the 10 Commandments. →

10) This mosaic of Christ is part of a church that dates back to 355 AD: Hagia Sophia. It was the largest cathedral on earth for 1000 years. It was converted to a mosque for 500 years, then it became a museum. This city was called Byzantium, then Constantinople now Istanbul. →

11) Handel's Youth: Handel was born in the same year as Bach: 1685. They never met, even though they both grew up in Germany in the Lutheran church. Handel's father did not want young George wasting his time with music. Handel's father was a doctor; *he* wanted George to attend *law* school. One Sunday after worship, when Handel was 9 years old, he climbed up and started playing the organ. A duke was still in the sanctuary. He was so impressed that he persuaded Handel's father to allow music lessons. Handel wrote his first musical composition in 6th grade & began to play the organ professionally in middle school. →

12) Travel to Italy: Handel learned to play a wide range of instruments. He had such focus and determination that he mastered the instruments of the orchestra, as a teenager. Then he traveled to Rome at age 25, already an accomplished classical musician. He wrote his first religious piece in Italy, then moved to England, where he wrote his greatest music. →

13) Bach vs. Handel: The key difference between the 2 great composers: Bach wrote sacred music to be sung in German at Lutheran worship services. Handel wrote sacred music to be sung in English, both inside & outside the church building. Bach's music exalted God: His glory, His sovereignty. Handel did the same. Then Handel picked up where Peter left off in 2 Pet.3:11 – since all these things are true about God, *how should we live?* Handel was concerned that we should walk in holiness & godliness because we are grateful to God.

English was not Handel's native language. Of course we've already seen that he loves a challenge. Imagine that you grew up here speaking English, then you became the greatest composer in the world of *Spanish* church music. Handel's *music* is remarkable, but he also mastered a different *language* & culture, and even led England in a new direction musically. →

14) Christians in England: Poor Mans Bible window, Canterbury Cathedral. Very few people had Bibles. But anyone could come to this church, and see the pictures of Bible stories. This church was founded in 597 AD. Christianity came to England early. Tertullian: before 222 AD.

Apostle John taught Polycarp of Smyrna who taught Irenaeus of France, who taught Hippolytus a priest in Rome around 200 AD. Hippolytus said when Jesus sent forth the 70 in Luke 10, one of them became a pastor in Britain. Handel died 250 years ago, 17 years before our Declaration of Independence. That seems like a long time. But when Handel came to England, Christians had been there over 1500 years. Yet people *still* needed to hear the gospel. That's still true today. It's true in every generation. →

15) The operas from Italy had been very popular for many years, but then began to fade. Handel introduced **A New Form of Music**. His sacred operas were designed for an *English*-speaking audience. There were actors on stage with expensive backgrounds & sets. But *Handel's* operas were based on *Bible* stories. Just like that window at Canterbury, except the characters moved around in a musical drama. Remember the movie "Ten Commandments", with Charlton Heston as Moses? Imagine doing *that*, on stage with wooden sets, without our technology. No cameras or computers. They had ropes & wheels. Handel's Bible stories were expensive to produce. →

16) Blessing in the Midst: Handel was nearly bankrupt more than once, but he never lost faith. At one low point Handel visited a small church & offered to play the organ after the benediction. After the sermon, everyone was thinking about lunch & rushing out. But when Handel started to play, they stopped in their tracks. They rushed back to their seats and refused to leave. Who received the *greater* blessing from God that day? The worshippers, or Handel?

This is *always* God's method. God gives *each* of us a *gift*, to share with the body of Christ. Then God blesses both the *gift* and the *giver*. Remember what *led* to this blessing? Handel's *suffering* drove him into the countryside, where *God* was waiting. →

17) Handel's Critics: The Anglican Church was critical of Handel's work. Why? Because his sacred operas were staged in *secular* theaters. Handel saw it as mission work; he was taking the light of Christ into the darkness. Christians would have supported Handel. But they were

forbidden by their church. Ticket sales didn't cover the costs. Handel had to let go his crew & do all the work himself without pay. Finally his health failed. →

18) For Handel, *The Darkest Hour* came in the spring of 1741. He was so deep in debt that he was facing prison. Handel had come to the end of his own resources. He had hit rock bottom; his tank was empty. He gave his farewell concert and prepared for jail. He was a broken man; now God could use him greatly. 2 events converged at that moment to change Handel's life. God reached *out* to Handel in his darkest hour. You see, God was not *finished* with Handel - the *Messiah* had not yet been written. That's where we will pick up Handel's story next week. →

19) I call this series "*Bringing Scripture to Life*". It's a play on words. I'm certainly not saying that the Bible is dead. The word of God is living and active. Heb.4:12 We don't need to resuscitate God's Word. Sometimes our *study* of the Bible needs CPR. God's truth *never* changes; our *appreciation* of it changes. We need to learn how to *apply* God's Word in our life. Handel brought Scripture to the lives of everyone who has ever *heard* Messiah. The same Scripture text had meaning to Isaiah, to Handel, to us. Think of the Scripture text as a painting. Imagine changing the frame or use a different color mat, you accent different aspects of the same painting. Each setting enhances our appreciation of Scripture in a unique way. You can graduate from kindergarten or high school. But we never graduate from Sunday School. →

20) *The Bible Speaks:* We can see how Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled, and how this Scripture impacted *Handel's* life. But it's only when we apply God's Word in our life, that we truly know God is with us. That's the goal of this series. When God speaks to you, it requires a *response*. That's Handel's point. You will never again be able to hear this music, without realizing that Jesus is *your* Messiah, not just Handel's. →

21) *God's Prophet:* Isaiah was written long *before* Judah was taken to Babylon for 70 years. And yet Handel's Messiah opened with comforting words from Isa.40: the prophecy that the exile was over - that Judah was going home. What was the setting for Isaiah chapter 7? God sent his prophet Isaiah to meet with Ahaz, faithless king of Judah, 2700 years ago in Jerusalem, during a tense situation. 2 armies, Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel, had combined forces to battle Assyria. They wanted Judah to *join* their alliance. →

22) *Dead, but God:* Ahaz *tried* to stay out of it, but Israel kept *insisting*. Finally Israel's army surrounded Jerusalem. Ahaz saw only 2 options: He could *join* the alliance and be *destroyed* by Assyria. Or he could *resist* Israel, and watch Jerusalem starve. King Ahaz had hit rock bottom; his tank was empty. Remember what was going on in *Handel's* life, just before he wrote Messiah? I believe Handel understood how Ahaz felt. God reached out to *Handel* & God reached out to *Ahaz* by sending Isaiah. Handel *trusted* God; Ahaz did not. →

23) *Be Still:* The king felt that he *had* to do *something*. But God said "Fear not." These kings & their armies are no match for God. Isaiah *advised* the king to put Judah's future in *God's* hands. God knew how *difficult* this was for the king. So God offered a sign, to show that God was *still* in control, even though the *enemy* was at the gate. God offered His grace; the king refused. →

24) Isaiah told the king "*God will give the sign*, whether *you* want it or not!" The sign will be a child; His name Immanuel, God with us. Ultimately, Ahaz could not bring himself to trust God. Ahaz chose to join forces with Assyria. He put his trust in a *world* power, not *God's* power. God's message had fallen on deaf ears. Isaiah *knew* God's Word *must* come to pass. →

25) God's Words Are Trustworthy: Now flash forward; the exile in Babylon is over. Judah is going home. Isaiah's prophecy has *finally* been fulfilled, long after he died. Isaiah had written the joyful proclamation of God's victory. Kings & powers of this earth will pass away. The glory of great kingdoms is *pitiful* & short-lived compared to God, who is constant. God's Word is trustworthy and everlasting. Judah had seen *dramatic* proof: God's Word *never* fails. →

♪ **26) Behold, a Virgin Shall Conceive - Isaiah 7:14**

Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel: GOD WITH US. →

♪ **27) O Thou, That Tellest** – Isa.40:9, 60:1 O thou, that tellest good tidings to Zion, Get thee up into the high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah: Behold your God! Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. →

28) He That Walketh in Darkness: The next songs we will hear are “Behold Darkness” & “The People that walked in darkness”. Handel's music is in the key of B minor. This family of musical notes is associated with grief and sorrow. Handel's music here seems to wander around without direction. That's intentional: Handel is painting a picture of unbelievers. You can almost see the lost people searching, trying to find *purpose* and *meaning* for their lives, unable to see, stumbling through the darkness, filled with fear, despair, and bitter suffering. →

29) Shepherds of Bethlehem: The Scripture for “The people that walked in darkness” is Isa.9:2 This verse is part of a section about the shadow of death. As Christians, the Lord gives us *light* and *joy* in the midst of sorrow. This reminds us of the 23rd Psalm, written by David, who worked as a shepherd a thousand years before Christ, in those same fields of Bethlehem, where angels announced Christ's birth to later shepherds. At the end of Luke chapter 1, the father of John the Baptist used the same words as Isaiah, to set the stage for Messiah's birth. →

30) Christ is the ultimate authority; He will judge the world. The Hebrew word Messiah & the Greek word Christ, mean the same thing: the anointed one. This is what Jews called their king. Leaders of Israel (prophets, priests & kings) were anointed with oil. But the Messiah is *God's* chosen king, anointed by *God*. Ahaz could not be a wise leader, even when God's prophet hand-delivered the wisdom. In sharp contrast, God's King is **the Wonderful Counselor**. →

31) Adoration of the Shepherds, Gerard van Honthorst →

32) The first Christmas brought joy and comfort. Luke 2:10 How does light shining in the darkness give *comfort*? A nightlight for a frightened child, a lighthouse for a ship near the coast. Light is the source of security, reassurance. After 2 dark songs “For Unto Us” is like a *sunburst*. Have you ever seen the sunrise out of the Atlantic Ocean? Christ is **the light of the world**. He came to be the *beacon* for the lost. Christ came to *end* our hopeless darkness. →

♪ **33) For Behold, Darkness – Isaiah 60:2-3**

For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising →

♪ **34) The People That Walked - Isaiah 9:2** The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light, and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined →

♪ **35) For Unto Us – Isa.9:6** For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.