



Christmas Window
First Baptist Church

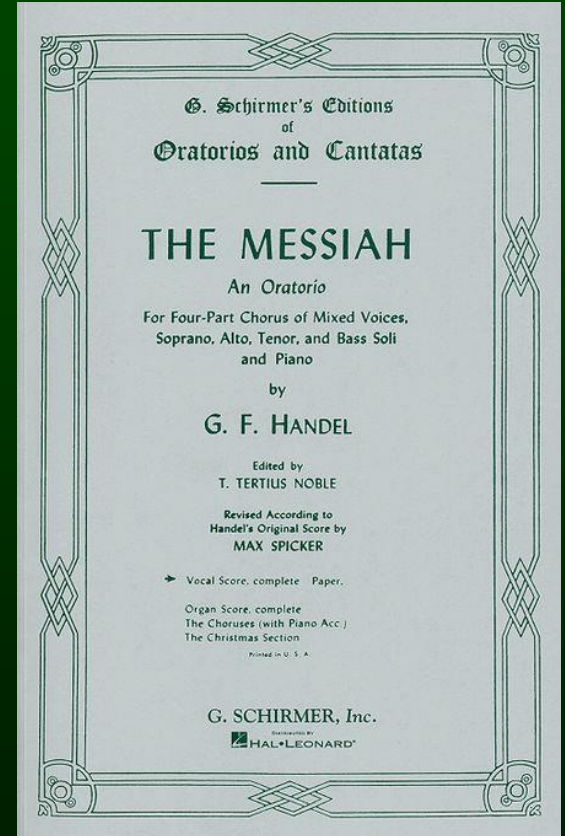
Greenville, SC

Handel's Messiah: Bringing Scripture to Life



Week 2 of 7

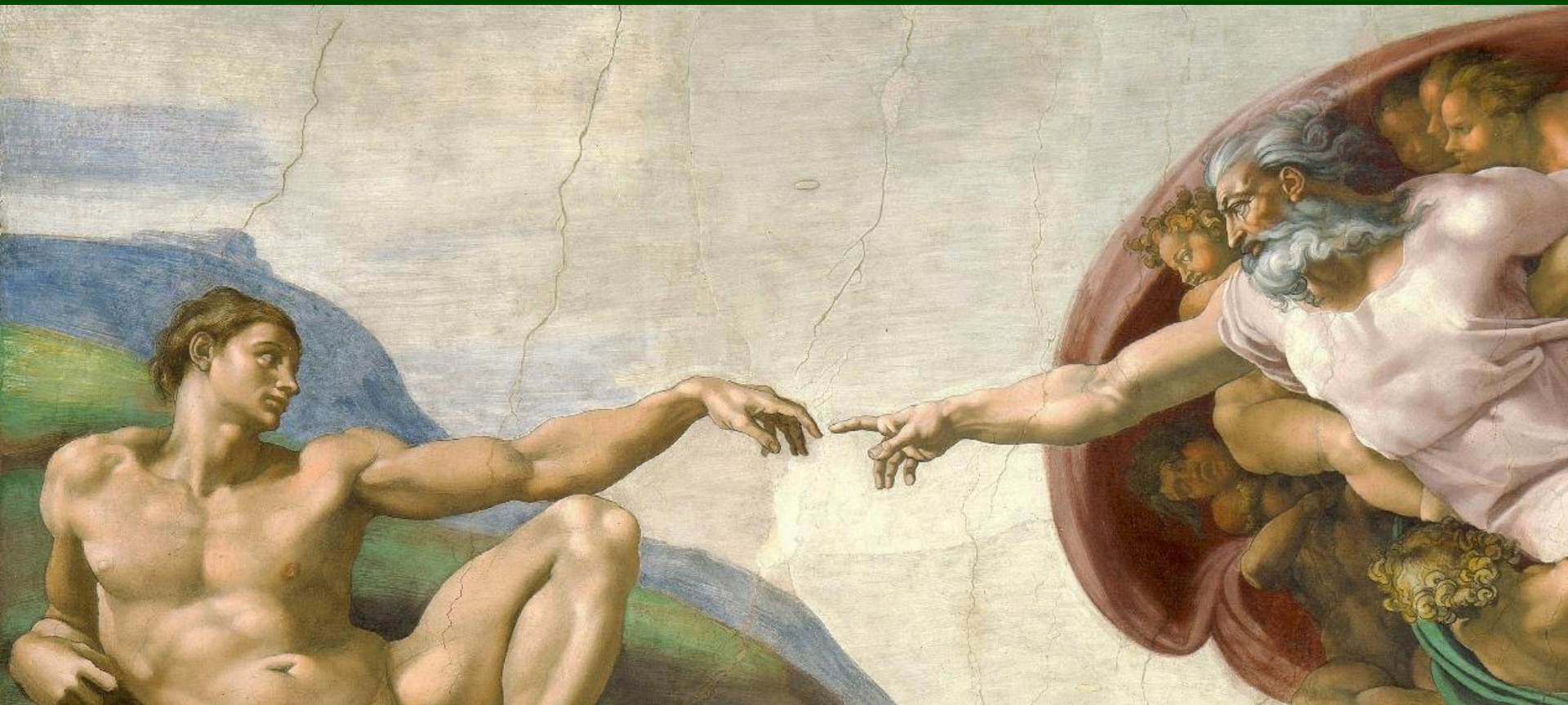
**John Kincaid
Autumn, 2018**



Our God Seeks Us

- **Messiah continues to inspire us, 250 years later, with a message: God is reaching out to us**
- **What separates Christianity from other religions?**
- **The unique characteristic: our God seeks us**
- **We can come to God because Christ came to us**
- **I have some pictures in mind when I listen**

Creation of Adam, Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel, 1511



Michelangelo's Adam, Sistine Chapel

- The hand of God reaches out for Adam's hand



The Light of the World

- Painting by
Holman Hunt
- Christ standing
at the door,
knocking.
Rev.3:20



Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow

- God gives all good gifts
- James 1:17; Acts 17:25
- He gifted every composer, musician, sculptor, artist
- Spiritual gifts to believers
1 Cor.12; Eph.4
- Be thankful. 1 Cor.4:7
- Use your gifts for His glory

Westminster Abbey, London



Christ in Majesty



Christ in Majesty, Chartres Cathedral, France, 1225 AD



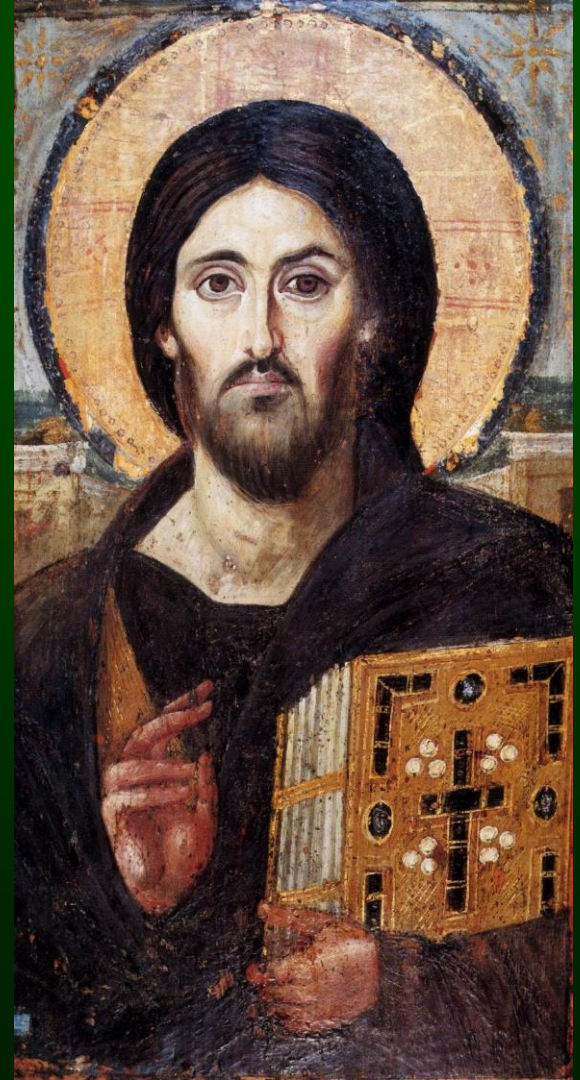
Christ Between Peter & Paul
Catacomb of Saints Marcellinus & Peter
Via Labicana, Rome, 375 AD

Christ Pantocrator

- Parallel to “Christ in Majesty”
- Pantocrator = all-powerful
- Hebrew names of God: Lord of Hosts, God Almighty
- 2 Cor.6:18; Rev.1:8,4:8
- Rev.11:17,15:3,16:7,16:14
- Rev.19:6,19:15,21:22

Christ Pantocrator

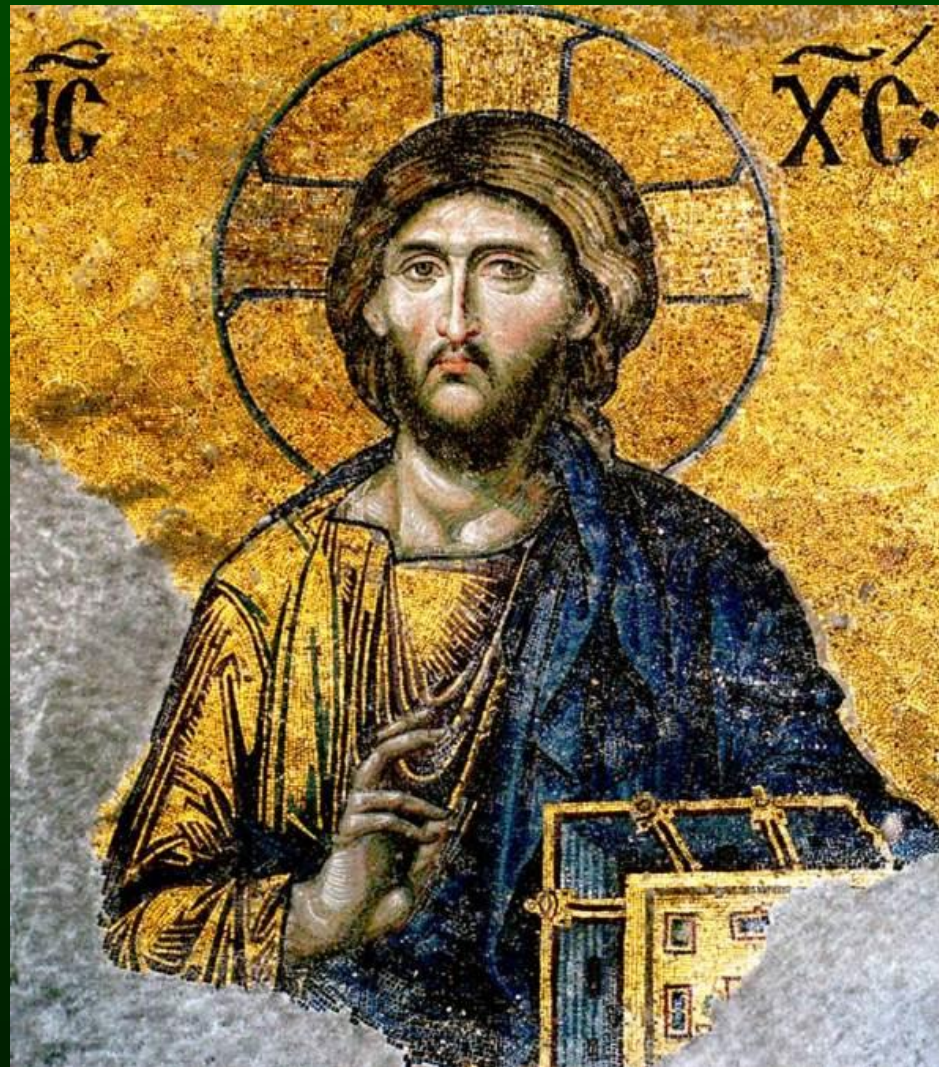
Saint Catherines Monastery, Mount Sinai, 550 AD



Christ Pantocrator

- Church built 355 AD
- World's largest cathedral for 1000 years
- Mosque from 1453-1931
- Now a museum

Jesus Christ Pantocrator
Deesis mosaic, Hagia Sophia
Istanbul, Turkey, 1250 AD



Handel's Youth

- **George Frideric Handel was born in 1685, the same year as Johann Sebastian Bach.**
- **They both grew up in Germany but never met**
- **Handel showed extraordinary musical talent but his father would not allow him to take lessons**
- **At age 9, Handel played the organ after worship**
- **A duke heard this, and persuaded Handel's father**
- **At age 12, Handel composed his first work**
- **He began playing the organ professionally**

Travel to Italy, then England

- Handel worked to master a variety of instruments
- By age 25, he traveled to Rome, Italy
- He wrote his 1st religious work, *The Resurrection*
- 2 years later, Handel moved to England
- There, he would spend the rest of his life and write his greatest music

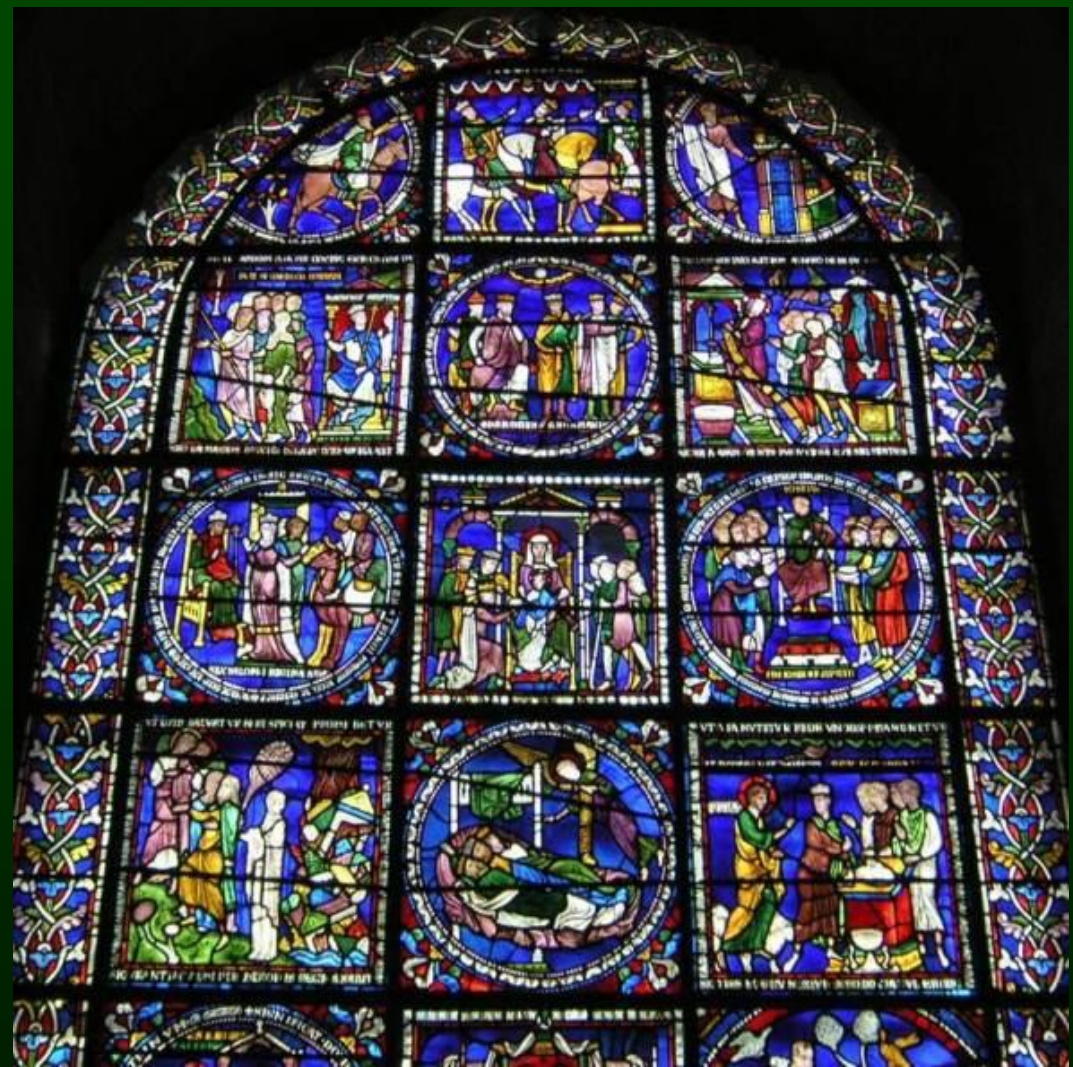
Bach vs. Handel

- **Key differences between the 2 great composers:**
- **Both wrote sacred music to the glory of God**
 - Bach was sung in German during Lutheran worship
 - Handel was sung in English, inside & outside church
 - Bach was focused on exalting God
 - Handel also focused on our *response* to God

Christians in England

Gospel in Britain before 200 AD
Canterbury Church: 597 AD

Poor Mans Bible
stained glass window
Canterbury Cathedral
England, 1250 AD



A New Form of Music

- The Italian opera was losing popularity
- Handel created a new musical form: *sacred* opera
- He used actors in costumes with a biblical theme
- The lavish scenery made these the ancestors of movies such as *The Ten Commandments*

Blessing in the Midst of Adversity

- Handel suffered numerous financial setbacks
- Yet he didn't lose faith during the hard times
- At one low point he visited a small country church
- He offered to play the postlude after worship
- Everyone was rushing out to lunch; they stopped
- They returned to their pews and refused to leave
- Who received the greater blessing from God?
The worshippers, who had never heard such music?
Or Handel, who needed to share his gift of joy?

Handel's Critics

- **The Church of England criticized Handel**
- **His dramas were performed in secular theaters**
- **Church members would have been supporters**
- **But they were forbidden to attend**
- **Handel experienced one failure after another**
- **He pushed himself until his health failed**

The Darkest Hour

- **By 1741, Handel was deep in debt, facing prison**
- **On April 8, he gave his farewell concert**
- **Then, two events came together to change his life**
- **God was reaching out to Handel in his darkest hour**
- **God was not finished with Handel -**
The Messiah had not yet been written
- **That's where we'll pick up his story next week**

Bringing Scripture to Life

- **God's Word is eternally true and never changes**
- **Our understanding of His Word is always growing**
- **Think of the Scripture text as a finished painting**
- **We can place the text in various settings:
What did it mean to Isaiah? To Handel? To us?**
- **Different frame styles or colored mats can bring out different features of the same painting**
- **Each frame uniquely enhances our appreciation**

The Bible Speaks To You

- Christians can see Isaiah's original context
- We can also see the prophecy of Christ fulfilled
- We need to apply the context to our own lives
- The Bible speaks to you; it requires a response
- You'll never be able to listen to the Messiah again without feeling that you are a part of it.
- "For unto us a child is born"
- "Emmanuel - God with us"
- God's Word is intended for each one of you.

God's Prophet and Judah's King

- Isaiah 7 was written *before* the exile in Babylon
- Judah had not yet been captured
- Yet Isaiah wrote that the exile was *finished*
- 2700 years ago in Jerusalem, Isaiah met Ahaz
- Ahaz was the faithless king of Judah
- Israel and Syria had joined forces against Assyria
- They wanted Judah to join their alliance

Dead, but God - Eph.2:1-5

- **Ahaz refused; Israel wouldn't take no for an answer**
- **The army of northern Israel surrounded Jerusalem**
- **Ahaz faced a no-win situation (see Isaiah 7:1-17):**
if he gave in and joined the alliance,
Judah would be destroyed by Assyria;
- **but if he didn't give in, his city (Jerusalem)**
would soon starve to death
- **The southern kingdom's future was at stake**
- **God sent Isaiah as an advisor to King Ahaz**

Be Still and Know

- Ahaz felt great pressure to do *something*
- But God said, “Be calm.” Psalm 46:10
- The kings of Syria and Israel are no match for God
- Isaiah advised Ahaz to *trust God* with the future
- God knew this was hard for Ahaz
- So God offered a sign, to reassure Ahaz
- The sign would show that God was still in control
- The king refused God’s grace and generosity

God *Will* Give the Sign

- **Isaiah told Ahaz that God *will* give the sign**
- **It didn't matter whether Ahaz wanted it or not!**
- **The sign is the child and the child's name:**
Immanuel (meaning God with us)
- **In the end, Ahaz refused to trust God**
- **He rushed to make an alliance with Assyria**
- **He chose a world power instead of God's power**
- **Isaiah left and waited for God's Word to be fulfilled**

God's Words Are Trustworthy – 2 Sam.7:28

- **Now flash forward: Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled after the 70 years of exile in Babylon**
- **The people of Judah are going home to Jerusalem**
- **Isaiah 40:6-9, 60:1 announce the great news:**
- **God is victorious. Powerful nations will pass away but God's Word is trustworthy and everlasting**
- **God had proven to Judah: His word is reliable**



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.

The Annunciation
Luca Giordano, Naples, 1672



O Thou, That Tellest – Isaiah 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.



The Annunciation - Angel Gabriel
Gerard David, Belgium, 1506

He That Walketh in Darkness – John 12:35

- **Listen to the violins in the solo “Behold, darkness”**
- **It is in the key of B minor, associated with sadness**
- **The notes seem to wander around aimlessly**
- **You can imagine people searching without direction**

Shepherds of Bethlehem

- **Notice “the shadow of death” in Isaiah 8:19-9:7**
- **We have peace and comfort in the midst of sorrow**
- **This reminds us of Psalm 23, written by the shepherd David, 1000 years before Christ**
- **David worked in fields at Bethlehem, where angels announced the 1st Christmas to later shepherds**
- **The same language sets the stage in Luke 1:78-79**
- **Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, used the same words as Isaiah. Then we read Luke 2.**

The Wonderful Counselor

- Christ will be the judge, the ultimate authority
- Messiah (Hebrew) and Christ (Greek) mean “anointed one”, the designation of the king
- Ahaz could not even *take* advice from others to be a wise leader, much less *give* advice
- God’s King is called the *Wonderful Counselor*

Adoration of the Shepherds, Gerard van Honthorst, 1622



The Light of the World

- The birth of the Messiah brought joy and comfort
- He is the light shining in the darkness. John 1:5
- The song “For unto us” is like a sunburst
- Have you ever seen the sunrise out of the ocean?
- Christ is the light of the world. John 8:12
- He came to be our beacon when we were lost
- He came to end our hopeless darkness



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, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.
And the Gentiles shall come to thy light,
and kings to the brightness of thy rising.**



**Wise Men
Mathias
Pedersen
2005**



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

The Adoration of the Christ Child
Follower of Jan Joest of Kalkar, 1515





For Unto Us – Isaiah 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.

Virgin and Child with Four Angels
Gerard David, Belgium, 1512

