

Let it Shine!

Isaiah Ch 9 v 1-7    Matthew Ch 4 v 12-16

As I write this paper in November, already shop windows are twinkling with fairy lights, television adverts are enticing us to buy early and our towns and city centres are ablaze with strings of brightly shining coloured lights. 'Christmas is coming they shout!!' Light is an integral part of Christmas – commercial – and religious. Most faiths celebrate a festival of light at some time during the darker months of the year and as Christians we prepare, once more, to welcome Jesus, the light of our world, to shine into the 21st century.

The words from Isaiah Ch 9 v 2/3 'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who lived in the land of the shadow of death on them has the light shined' are words so familiar to us all and they have been immortalised in song as part of Handel's famous Oratorio 'The Messiah'.

Isaiah delivered his prophecy around 720 BC to the people of Judah, a nation who had been given all the privileges of being God's chosen ones, but yet had turned their back on God. They were being ruled by King Ahaz who encouraged the worshiping of pagan gods and introduced pagan practices. Against this background Isaiah announces this wonderful prophecy. A child will be born who will grow to be an amazing king – a Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. This new king will be all that Ahaz and all previous kings had not been. The result of this new king's reign will be joy to replace despair, hope to replace gloom and after endless conflict, deliverance and peace for all.

God had not sent a prophet for almost 500 years and then, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy, this amazing light bursts into the world. It broke the darkness of the night and awoke the shepherds on the hill side. It attracted the attention of the wise men so much so that they felt compelled to follow that special star that shone brighter and stood out amongst all the others. Light dispels darkness. It gives direction and offers discovery. Jesus' birth did just that and still does today. Jesus guides us, gives us hope, offers us discovery and much more.

Jewish customs said that the morning star was the first star to appear before dawn around 4 am – the brightest star and often used as a means of direction. In the last chapter of Revelation v 16 Jesus says 'I am the bright morning star'. I think he must have been a Moravian!!!

1. Why not sing Morning Star to end your meeting.

Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New year to you all