

# The Dividing Light of Judgment (Carols by Candlelight): Jesus Christ sheds unique light on the truth

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 24 December 2012

Preacher: William Philip

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good evening, everyone. Welcome to our Christmas Eve by candlelight service. We're very glad to see so many of you this evening. Some of you are tucked around behind the Christmas tree. Feel free to move a little bit when the hymns come up if you can't see.

But it's a joy to be here on Christmas Eve to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Our story this evening begins not on earth, but in heaven, because the Christmas story is first and foremost God's story. It's not the story of a distant God, an unknown God, but one who in the coming of Jesus Christ became Emmanuel, God with us. He came down from earth to heaven, who is God and Lord of all.

He came down from earth to heaven, who is God and Lord of all. Amen. God and Lord of all.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 2 : 16 ] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Then God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created them. Male and female, he created them.

[ 5 : 06 ] And God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.

And have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. The Lord God took the man, and put him in the garden of Eden, to work it and keep it.

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat.

For in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die. That's a wonderful picture, isn't it?

[ 6 : 23 ] Of the world as it was meant to be, as God created it to be, and the world, I suppose, as we would love it to be. Perfect peace and harmony between male and female, between man and nature, and man and God.

No wonder the next carol calls us to sing praises to our Creator God, but notice when we come to the last verse, it tells another story.

We praise God, who made heaven and earth of naught, yes, but also, we praise him because with his own blood, mankind he has bought.

And after the carol, the next reading will begin to explain why that must be so. For Spark, for now, on the list of books, and the original book of heaven, everyone adds to our dear, glory and dear and dear.

For finally, if you're ready, please read your story. Church is so pronounced, please read your mind, please say the directly His name is ■, RHEL, The King is King, the good is Israel and the host of King.

[ 7 : 42 ] The Lamb of God, the Lamb of God, the Lord is the King of Israel.

The King is King, the good is Israel and the good is Israel and the good is Israel.

The Lamb of God, the Lamb of God, the Lord is the King of Israel.

The Lamb of God, the Lamb of God, the Lamb of God, the Lord is the King of Israel.

The King is King, the good is Israel and the good is Israel. The Lamb of God, the Lamb of God, the Lord is the King of Israel.

[ 9 : 27 ] The Lamb of God, the Lamb of God, the Lamb of God, the Lamb of God, the Lord is the King of Israel. The Lamb of God, the Lamb of God, the Lamb of God, the Lord is the King of Israel. RUN ILL ILL YOU Let us pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, Did God actually say, You shall not eat of any fruit in the garden?

[ 12 : 07 ] And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden. But God said, You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden.

Neither shall you touch it, lest you die. But the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it, Your eyes will be opened, And you will be like God, Knowing good and evil.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, And it was a delight to the eyes, And the tree was to be desired to make one wise, She took of its fruit and ate.

And she gave some also to her husband, Who was with her, And he ate. The Lord God said to the serpent, Because you have done this, Cursed are you above all livestock, And above all beasts of the field.

On your belly you shall go, And dust you shall eat, All the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your offspring and her offspring.

[ 13 : 15 ] He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise his heel. To the woman he said, I will surely multiply your pain and childbearing, In pain you shall bring forth children, Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you.

And to Adam he said, Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, And have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, You shall not eat. Cursed is the ground because of you, In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life.

Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, Till you return to the ground.

For out of it you were taken, For you are dust, And to dust you shall return. A curse upon human relationships, A curse upon nature, And a curse upon our very lives.

To dust you shall return. That is more like the world as we actually know it, Isn't it? And it's because, Our rebellion against God has put us in bondage, To the power of sin and death.

[ 14 : 31 ] By God's promise, Even as that curse was pronounced, Was that evil would not have the last word. The promise was that God himself would intervene, In history, Through the offspring of the woman, Who would at last destroy the devil, And liberate, Redeem his people.

And dying through history, That promise shone, Despite long ages of darkness, Until at last, At the first Christmas, That offspring came.

Came to save us all from Satan's power, When we were gone astray. Through Tracy.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 16 : 17 ] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[ 19 : 33 ] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. that St. Paul is presenting there in much plainer words, both simply describing the reality of a contemporary world that we know only too well.

[ 21 : 22 ] Just think about the news this week. How great is the world's need for saving, saving from the darkness of our own humanity.

But because the message of Christmas is out of darkness, we have light. We truly can sing for joy.

And that's why Christmas night, all Christians sing. We truly can sing for joy.

We truly can sing for joy. We truly can sing for joy. We truly can sing for joy.

We truly can sing for joy. We truly can sing for joy.

[ 22 : 53 ] We truly can sing for joy. We truly can sing for joy.

We truly can sing for joy. We truly can sing for joy.

We truly can sing for joy. We truly can sing for joy.

We truly can sing for joy. We truly can sing for joy.

We truly can sing for joy. We truly can sing for joy. There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

[ 24 : 14 ] And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. In that day, the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples, of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

In that day, the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan, the fleeing serpent, Leviathan, the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad. The desert shall rejoice and blossom like a crocus. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing.

Be strong, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the death unstopped.

[ 25 : 34 ] Then shall the lame man leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing.

Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. They shall obtain gladness and joy and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Did you notice that in that prophecy, the king would be both the shoot and the branch of Jesse, the father of David, that is, he would be his descendant.

He's also called the root of Jesse, that is, his origin. And that is because he himself is the root of all things.

He is God with us. God with us with the power to destroy the serpent, to reverse that curse of sin and to make his blessings flow at last, far as the curse is found.

And so the Christmas message is indeed one of joy, joy to the world. We're not here about Allah shores.

[ 26 : 57 ] We're not here about Allah problems. We're not here aboutliness. We're not here about another one. But dance will betray. We're not here about another one. We're not here about Graham, 1stnung 4, 12th Ring, 2nd M■, 2nd Twentyman kial 3rd Catções 1stviticus 2 in já 2 o o Thank you.

Thank you.

singing sing Thank you.

Listen now to the opening words of John's Gospel, which speaks so eloquently of the significance of the incarnation, coming in the flesh of God the Son.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.

[ 29 : 41 ] In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God. His name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through Him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light.

The true light, which lightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him.

Yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own received Him not.

But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

[ 30 : 51 ] Jesus' presence in this world was divisive. While some did receive Him, others, who did His own, received Him not.

They rejected the light of the world. The other more familiar Nativity stories in Mark, in Matthew's and Luke's Gospel, tell us that that was so right from the very beginning.

From His birth, the Christ child had many enemies. And so, o'er this babe, still infant crying, shadows of the cross were lying.

Before we think together a little about what all this division means, let's sing again this lovely carol with that poignant message from the angels. 1 I do not understand and to correct what all these Ciao- moans do.

My lag with my re perde-ness to what is so WHY wordis. In My face forever is equal to what Christ is greater thanshunding.

[ 31 : 58 ] And God SELLED is the same. In My face forever will appear on my face to us. in the the the b o the Sing to them all someday.

Sing to them all someday.

Holy Mother and when all are you do, holiday, normal, and all it is done.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 34 : 01 ] Thank you.

And we saw that he declares Jesus Christ as the defining light of life. He and he alone is the light that defines our whole world.

He and he alone gives meaning. He gives answers to all the great questions of life. Why? Why is there a world at all?

Well, the answer is because of Jesus Christ. He is the source of it all and he is the creator of it all.

How are we to make sense of human life? How are we to find fullness in life?

Answer, in him is life, says John. And that life is the light of men. And John's message all the way through this book that we call John's Gospel, and if you've never read it, I'd love you to take home one of these.

[ 35 : 22 ] We'll give you one after the service tonight. I'd love you to read the whole thing. It's so short. But all the way through this book that we call his Gospel, he tells us that he who is life came into the world that we might find life through him.

And that's the Christmas message in a nutshell. That was John the Baptist's message. He came to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him, that all might believe the witness.

That is the evidence about Jesus as God's ultimate revelation of himself to human beings. And therefore, through believing to find life in his name, real life, the life we really are made for and destined for.

And John says that is the only way to find life in all its fullness, the only way to life that is eternal.

Belief in the witness of Jesus Christ to the invisible God. Only he, says John, has made him known.

No one has seen God, he says, but the one and only at the Father's sight, he has made him known.

[ 36 : 30 ] Now, just be very clear about what that claim really is. He is saying you do not find that light in the Buddha, or in Muhammad, or in Krishna, or in Ron L. Hubbard who founded Scientology that all these stars seek after today, or anywhere else.

I am the way and the truth and the life, said Jesus Christ himself. In John's Gospel, chapter 14, verse 6.

And as the lawyers would say, for the avoidance of all doubt, he added, no one comes to the Father except through me. You can't have the first part of that verse without the second part.

Jesus himself is plain, he's clear, his claim is exclusive, and his claim is absolutely unique. And therefore, it is a devastating claim for every other religious pretension.

It cannot but be. No one has ever seen God, says John, but the only begotten God who is at the Father's sight, that is Jesus, he has made him known.

[ 37 : 47 ] He, Jesus, is the sole reason why life exists on this planet. And Jesus is the unique answer to how you find life, therefore, in all its meaning, in all its fullness.

And if that is so, of course, the next question then is whether. Will people find life and have it abundantly through him? Will they believe in him or not?

And Jesus came, or rather John came, verse 7 says, to witness to him that all might believe. The way to life, says John, is through belief.

Belief in the bright light of evidence that shines to the world in Jesus Christ and nowhere else. And it's either belief or it's unbelief. There's no in-between. There's no third way so beloved of our politicians.

Jesus, the eternal word of God, is the divine light of life. And when he appears, his light shines upon men and women.

[ 38 : 56 ] And when you're faced with that blinding light in Jesus Christ, well, you can't just do nothing. Either you open your eyes to his true light, in other words, you believe and come into the light and find that life, or you refuse that light.

You're determined to stay in darkness. See, Jesus Christ himself is the dividing light of judgment. The person of Jesus Christ divides this whole world forever.

The real Jesus, the real Jesus of history, was a uniquely divisive figure. In verse 9 here that we read, Jesus is said to be the true light that lightens every man.

That's who came into the world 2,000 years ago, to a real place, in real time, in real history. Jesus was the light that lightens everyone.

Now, when John says that, he's not speaking about a light that illumines people inwardly, but he's speaking of a light that shines on them and illumines them outwardly, in the sense of shedding light on them.

[ 40 : 16 ] That's what that word, enlighten, really means. As the apostle Paul speaks about it, when he's speaking of the return of Christ to judge the world, he says he will bring to light the things that are now hidden in darkness and will disclose all the purposes of our hearts.

And that's what John's talking about here in verse 9 of John chapter 1. The true light who brings to light things that are hidden in the darkness about every human being, he was coming into the world. And he came, friends, to shed light on every person and to disclose the true state of their hearts before God.

And all the way through John's gospel, if you read it, and I hope you will, you'll find that that light always has this great discriminating function. It's a dividing light.

Jesus is the light that shines forth the glory of the invisible God from heaven for everyone to see. Therefore, all are without excuse. And yet he also shines that light on human beings and exposes the truth in their hearts to God.

[ 41 : 31 ] Now, it's when light shines, isn't it, that things are shown up for what they really are. We've had a discussion in our house quite recently about the windows. We have secondary glazing.

And for some reason, all the dirt seems to get on the inside of the secondary glazing where it's a pain in the neck to try and clean. And I've been trying to get out of the job of taking it all out and cleaning it for a very long time.

And my wife has been nagging me. And frankly, I couldn't see the real issue until one day, and I think it was actually only one day, when the sun actually shined recently.

And then I saw, in the brightness of the sunlight, all the filth in the windows and was really quite embarrassed. Friends, that is what happens when Jesus appeared in the world.

The light of God's glory shone and people's hearts were exposed. They were exposed, showing whether they truly were lovers of God and His light, or whether they really were haters of God and His light.

[ 42 : 37 ] And the whole of John's gospel is full of the division provoked by that light of Jesus' presence. It's all summed up in verses 10 to 13 here, though, right at the beginning, a clear division.

You see, in verse 10, it says Jesus came to a world that He made. In verse 11, He came to His own, His own people Israel, and yet they rejected that light.

And really, the first half of the whole of John's gospel is that story of how Jesus was rejected by His own people. Often very religious people, because you can be very, very religious, and yet have no real knowledge of God at all.

But as verses 12 and 13 make clear also, there were those who received Him, who believed in Him. And they became not only believers, says John, but children, sharing the very privilege of the Father's house.

And that's the story of the second half of John's gospel, beginning at chapter 13. It's of the intimacy of those for whom Jesus came to prepare a place in the Father's house forever.

[ 43 : 53 ] But do you see how stark that division really is? The light is one of discrimination, it's of judgment, it's of division, because Jesus' presence exposes the human heart.

And what seems hidden and unnoticed by people all of a sudden is utterly visible and opaque when the light of Jesus shines. It's just like a window that seemed half decent in the dullness and the dark suddenly is lit up by the Son and is shown to be the disgrace that it is.

And that's exactly the exposure that the person of Jesus Christ brought to the human heart. And that is why people divided. Some bitterly resented that exposure, they resisted.

But others, they recognized, they kept cleansing. people's hearts were either hardened by the presence of Jesus or they were humbled by his presence.

And the reaction of the world of pride, of self-sufficiency is to resent, isn't it? To resent utterly this intrusion of Jesus that calls our own righteousness, our morality into question.

[ 45 : 10 ] How dare this man show me up? That's what people said of him. I'm as good as anybody else, I won't have this. And though he made them, they refused to come to know him.

That word means to know intimately. It's the word we use of relationship. They will not receive him. It's another intimate word of relationship. Joseph received Mary as his wife.

But they would not receive Jesus Christ. You see, you can be very moral. You can be very upright. You can be very religious. You can be very loving and kind and decent to other human beings.

All of these things. But what matters alone is intimately knowing God through Jesus Christ, his Son. And unless that is real, then the verdict of Jesus Christ himself is evil. John chapter 3, Jesus says, people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.

[ 46 : 27 ] Light had shined, but people resisted it because it showed up a reality that they didn't want to face, that their deeds were evil in God's sight. We're not as good as we like to think we are.

And we hate that when that's exposed about us. And so we reject any message of that kind. That's what happened. But others did react differently.

Jesus went on, whoever does the truth comes into the light so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God. They come into the light and are happy to acknowledge that all that is done to them is God's doing.

And it led them to a wonderful cleansing by God, a cleansing that can only be done by God. There's two attitudes to light, isn't there, when you suspect that your windows are dirty.

One is that you just want it to be dull and cloudy and dark all the time so that you're not exposed. Your pride in your house cleaning regime has not shown up to be false.

[ 47 : 34 ] the other attitude of course is to be glad to see the sun come out, to show you that dirt because you know that's the first step to real cleaning.

And John says back in his prologue here in chapter 1 at verse 12, to those who welcomed the light, the light of Christ's judgment like that, it was the first step to becoming heirs of God himself, born not naturally but born of God into a new world, into a new life of intimacy with him forever.

And all through John's gospel if you read it you'll see Jesus shedding this light that divides the hearts of human beings. When you get to John chapter 9 you'll see a classic example when Jesus heals a man who was born blind and the man jumps up with joy and says, Lord I believe.

And yet to the religious leaders to the theologians to his own who had it all and yet refused him Jesus says these devastating words, For judgment I came into the world that those who do not see may see like this blind man but those who see may become blind.

See, Jesus' person sheds light that divides the world forever because the light that lightens every man who's coming into the world.

[ 49 : 07 ] But it's not only Jesus' person who divides the world. The proclamation of Jesus Christ today still sheds a light that divides the world in just the same way.

The light that shines in the gospel of Christ today shines and causes exactly that same division. Because you see the gospel of Jesus Christ is a light that shines the way to eternal life.

That's why John wrote so that you may have life, he says. And the gospel proclamation of Jesus is also a light that divides in just that same way and with just the same eternal consequences as the

person of Jesus when he walked the earth.

And that's why the message of the gospel, why the message of Christmas has the same urgency about it as Jesus' own words did 2,000 years ago. Because the message of Christmas sheds that same light.

And that light is the dividing light of judgment for eternity. See, Jesus and the message of Jesus is not just one pointer along the road on the way to God.

[ 50 : 22 ] It's not just one insight amongst many. He is the fork in the road. And that's why he came. Look at verse 16.

From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace. Listen to what John says in John chapter 3.

Well, well-known words. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned.

But you can't leave out the second half of that verse, can you? But whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only son of God.

[ 51 : 31 ] You see, not coming into the light of the son of God means you're condemned already. To make no decision about Christ the light of the world is to remain by default in darkness.

Friends, the church today too often has lost its way in its mission. It's why in so many places it's failing and it's disappearing. And it's because it forgets two crucial things that Jesus Christ will always insist that we never forget.

The first is the reality of that darkness. That those who do not believe stand condemned already. But the second is the power of the light of the gospel alone to call people out of darkness and into light.

Whoever believes, says Jesus, whoever believes, finds life in his name. And so if we take John seriously and if we take Jesus seriously, the fact that Jesus Christ is the definitive revelation of God, and the fact that Jesus is the dividing light of God's judgment, and if we believe that the proclamation of him reveals him to the world and thus divides the world forever, then the church's message will be very different, won't it?

It will be marked by three things. First, by urgency. Jesus puts it plainly in John chapter 12 himself. Walk while you have the light, he says, lest the darkness overtake you.

[ 53 : 13 ] While you have the light, he says, believe in the light that you may become sons of light. When the light shines, he says, you need to act, because the default is to choose darkness, to say, oh, later on, another time.

That may be to say never. The message of Christ is urgent, urgent to be proclaimed by those inside the church and urgent to be believed outside the church.

Second, realism. Jesus says there will always be rejecters of the light. And that very rejection is a mark of God's judgment.

Jesus said the very word that they have rejected will be their judge on the last day. John 12 verse 48. Don't let the foolishness of others who reject the light of Christ, don't let that deter you from believing the truth, the evidence about Jesus Christ, or to stop you proclaiming it to others.

But third, if we truly believe Jesus, then above all, our message will be marked by joy. Look at our passage one more time, verse 12.

[ 54 : 43 ] All, all who believe, all are given by God the right to become His children. And friends, that means that until the very last day when Jesus Christ returns, God will be calling out of darkness into light those who will believe in His Son.

The light that divides men and women is the light that saves them forever. It's the light that gives new birth and new life and new beginning as a child of God and as a child of God forever.

That's what Christmas is all about. It's about the birth, not just of Jesus Christ the Lord, not just the birth of the only begotten Son of God from heaven, but it's about the joyful birth of countless millions of others who are called also to be true children of God.

But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but born of God.

Friends, don't miss the joy of the light shining in the darkness this Christmas. Believe in the testimony of John and many others and find that light in Him this Christmas.

[ 56 : 27 ] Let's pray. For God whose light has shone into our darkness with the eternal beam of brightness in the face of Jesus Christ, your Son.

So we pray, shine that same light into our hearts this day, that in this Christmas season the joy of knowing you through your Son, our Savior, may be great and may be lasting to the praise of His glorious grace.

Amen. Well, we sing now our final hymn on the screens. In councils of eternity, before all worlds were formed, no sun or moon shed light on earth, no stars the skies adorned.

There, deep within the Father's heart, love issued in decree, the sons of earth, though lost in sin, my royal heirs shall be.

Amen. increasing move.

[ 57 : 55 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

liberip■■■■ ■■■■■asoni and maky to make true song.

These areance I'm Okey to him, for all He's done to try. Myaiyrod, I know his name I will He, may I be Jong-un going.

The glory of the cross of the King is the glory of the King.

[ 59 : 14 ] The glory of the King is the glory of the King.

The glory of the King is the glory of the King.

The glory of the King is the glory of the King. The glory of the King is the glory of the King. The glory of the King is the glory of the King.

The glory of the King is the glory of the King. The glory of the King is the glory of the King. The glory of the King is the glory of the King.

The glory of the King is the glory of the King. The glory of the King is the glory of the King. The glory of the King is the glory of the King.

[ 60 : 44 ] The glory of the King. The glory of the King is the glory of the King.

Just as you're standing, let me reiterate my invitation to you to take one of these little books, John's Gospel.

If you've never read it before, I urge you to read it this Christmas. It'll only take you perhaps an hour and a half or two hours at the most, and I think you'll find it a life-changing read.

Do stay behind. There's mince pies and mulled wine served downstairs. If you're up here, downstairs and turn right. If you're downstairs watching in the overflow, just turn right, and you'll find things there for you.

If you'd like to find out more about all that I've been speaking about this evening, do come back and join us for one of our regular Sunday services. We're here every Sunday. Or do think about coming to a special course that we run called Christianity Explored, which is just looking through another one of these Gospels, Mark's Gospel, not John's, and it runs over several evenings and will be beginning in the new year.

[ 62 : 11 ] It gives you an opportunity to ask any question you want and make any argument that you want and to listen to the words of Jesus himself and to make your mind up about this evidence.

We'd love for you to come and do that with us and it's an open invitation to anyone here this evening to do so. We meet tomorrow morning at 11 a.m. here to welcome Christmas Day.

But until then, let us pray. Gracious God, our Heavenly Father, who sent into our world the light that shines in the face of your Son, how we pray to you for this Christmas tide and how we ask now that the grace of Christ your Son, the eternal love of God the Father, the presence and power of his Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Amen.