

INTRODUCTION

The Christmas Oratorio “The Word became flesh” by Michael Stenov abides exactly by the Scripture and links the Christmas passages from all four gospels synoptic together.

The opening chorus with the text from the Gospel of St. John lets you feel the mystery, the love and the glory of the Holy Trinity before the foundation of the world through the Word, i.e. Jesus Christ: EVERYTHING was made through Him, and the Triune God, who is the light, has nothing in common with darkness.

Both storylines concerning John the Baptist and Jesus are closely interwoven. Each of the two resulting large parts Advent and Christmas consists of four smaller parts, which finish with known chorales.

The Annunciation, the long waiting and finally the birth of first precursor John and finally the Saviour and Redeemer Jesus Christ clearly show what a special gift of God an innocent child in the world has always been, is and will remain.

All names of people occurring in the Christmas story have a special meaning in Hebrew (you can find the names and their equivalents in the booklet): Zacharias – the name expresses: „Jahweh remembers“ – despite the message of the Archangel Gabriel unable to believe that his and Elisabeth’s intimate prayers for a child are still heard because it is impossible from a human perspective; Maria (the beloved), however, believes the in her case much more incredible word of the angel, although she does not understand everything immediately. In her meeting with Elizabeth, the Holy Spirit fills her with praise of God, the Magnificat.

When Zacharias confirms the name John - which means “God has shown grace” - in the circumcision of his son and thus affirms the word of the angel, he gets back his ability to speak, praises God in the Benedictus full of the Holy Spirit and prophesies great things to his child. All present marvel at the grace of God and his wonderful deeds.

The real Christmas story happens in the second part: Jesus, after the fall of the whole sighing and in labour lying creation the long and eagerly awaited saviour of mankind from eternal death and destruction, is born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem. Bethlehem is translated "House of Bread", which already points to Jesus Christ as the living bread, the Eucharist.

So the creator of the universe (the Word) actually comes to the world to save us sinners as a person (in the flesh), hidden and concealed in a stable, because God knows that the highly placed of his people would not accept him as a child of poor people. The jubilant chorus of angels discloses to the simple people, the shepherds that the Messiah, the Saviour, is born, and they worship him as representatives of the Jewish people.

In the presentation in the temple the aged priest Simeon confesses him as the Messiah, bringing fulfilment of the prophecy that he will see the saviour of the world before his death.

The Hl. Three Kings represent the acceptance of the Messiah by the Gentiles, which already shows that Jesus was born not only for the salvation of the Jews but of ALL people. The chief priests and Scribes know from the Torah that the time of the appearance of the Messiah is here and refer rightly to Bethlehem. Herod immediately sees his power as ruler threatened and had have murdered all the boys of the specified age by the three kings in Bethlehem so as to kill also the Chosen Child, that - warned by the angel - succeeds in fleeing to Egypt with Josef and his mother, Mary.

This is probably a bitter foretaste of future suffering and death of Jesus himself and global distress and persecution of many professing Christians in the further course of history. In the last choir resonates that god's plan may be indeed disturbed by the adversary and mankind, but ultimately can not be prevented. With this oratorio, I wholeheartedly wish you a deep spiritual and psychological understanding of the most important story of a child's birth which the world has ever experienced.