

Christmas

And so we arrive at Christmas 2020 after a long and perilous journey from Christmas 2019 which has been unlike anything most of us have ever experienced.

A couple of millennia ago at this time of year the star of Bethlehem signposted a divine gift which changed the course of human history. Astronomers and astrologers think that it was not a star, but the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter and it was visible from the UK on this winter solstice for the first time in 800 years. Except that it wasn't because of a layer of thick low grey cloud.

The 2020 divine gift is, on the face of it equally disappointing: who wants a new, more infectious Covid mutation for a lonely Christmas lockdown. It's a far cry from seasonal good cheer isn't it? However, just as it did 2000 years ago, it will change the course of human history – how it does depends on us.

We have a choice. We can resent the changes Covid is forcing on us and continue to behave with an egregious lack of concern for both our fellow man and the rest of life on earth as we pursue an elusive, ultimately unattainable satisfaction from self-interested, hedonistic consumerism. If we do, the pandemic continues, environmental damage accelerates and our febrile denial of the reality of our circumstances drives us deeper into the darker recesses of individual and collective human behaviour.

Alternatively, we can look upon the Covid problem as an opportunity to improve our individual, collective and planetary well-being by making fundamental changes to our expectations and the means by which we set out to achieve them. This requires more than a cosmetic exercise involving more purchases of an allegedly environmentally friendly nature, eco-tourism holidays and diligent recycling. It will need to be a thorough re-examination of how we define and arrive at a state of contentment both on a personal and a society wide basis. We all need to ask ourselves what the essential requirements for contentment are, and how we can provide them for ourselves and others.

After all, isn't that what Christmas is all about?

Have a good one, and a happy new year!