



## EASTER CORONA

**This article was released as an audio lecture, with images, for the New York City Branch of the Anthroposophical Society on Easter, 2020. You can hear the lecture by Jonathan Hilton, written below on the website here: [AnthroposophyNYC](http://AnthroposophyNYC.com).** Today is Easter. The new Sun day. It is a strange Easter in our new world of social lockdown. We are all together but alone, each isolated in his or her own home. No coming together in community to celebrate the event of the Resurrection. It is an Easter we will all remember.

For much of my adult life, I have been on a kind of quest. It is a quest to understand the meaning of the Christ event in the Earth and particularly a quest to understand what is the nature of a cosmic Christianity, which is to say, what does the Christ event also mean for the greater world of the stars and planets? Of course, our Earth is one of those planets, a very significant, even pivotal planet, on which that world changing event occurred. This quest led me in about 1990 to seek to understand what the Christ events mean especially with regard to what Rudolf Steiner wrote about the “return of Christ in the etheric realm”, or what is sometimes called “the second coming”, but from a wholly new spiritually enlightened perspective. I was inspired during that time by Sergei Prokofieff’s book, *The Cycle of the Year as a Path of Initiation* which opened the door for my further ongoing work with the meaning of the cycle of the year.

At that time I came across a question posed by Fredrich Rittelmeyer, one of the founders of the Christian Community. He once asked Rudolf Steiner: "How may a soul prepare itself most effectively for an experience of the Etheric Christ?" Steiner answered: “Through meditatively living with the cycle of the year, through a meditative participation in its rhythms.”

RHYTHM. This is an important element. With rhythm we move from the spatial, in which we are so bound today, into the element of time, which is the realm of the etheric or the realm of life. So how do we find the rhythms of the cycle of the year in which we can participate?

One rhythm we experience is the cycle of the four seasons, which are marked by four points: the equinoxes and solstices (these seasons are experienced particularly strongly in our northern region of the hemisphere).

A second annual rhythm is found in the cycle of the seven Christic festivals: Easter (after spring equinox), followed throughout the spring by Ascension and then Whitsun; St. Johns (just after the time of the summer solstice); Michaelmas (shortly after autumn equinox), and Christmas and Epiphany (just after winter solstice).

We have these two rhythms closely connected to each other in the cycle of the year. However one is based on the number four and one on the number seven. Four is the number associated with space and this rhythm is determined out of spatial relationships. These are the relation of the Sun and Earth at astronomical transition points. At Equinox the Sun stands on the point of the plane of the ecliptic where it crosses from below the plane to above the plane, at a specific location on the backdrop of the fixed stars. At solstices the Sun arrives at its peak above the plane and begins its descent in summer and arrives at its nadir or low point on its path around the ecliptic at winter solstice, which also can be identified in space on the backdrop of the fixed stars.

We also have a remarkable rhythm of four in our physical bodily organism. This is the rhythm between breath and blood. On average, for every 1 breath we take, we have 4 heart beats. It is the 1/4 rhythm we find in music. We are intimately bound up in rhythms in our earthly life. Mostly we are unconscious of this.

Plato once said: *The soul of the world is stretched across the earth in the form of a cross.* This can be seen in the solstices and equinoxes...the four points in space that mark the relation of the Sun to the Earth, as well as the cardinal points, north, south, east, west. One can see the daily spatial relations as a microcosm of the annual rhythm of the Earth: morning in the east and spring equinox; noon when the Sun is at its highest and summer solstice; sunset in the west and autumn equinox; and midnight when the Sun is at its lowest below the horizon and winter solstice.

Then we come to the rhythm of seven. This is not a rhythm linked to physical spatial relationships but one which is experienced in the flow of time. We find it in the 7 days of the week; in the 7 year cycles of human development in biography; in the 7 archangel ages; and in the 7 cultural ages in one great Epoch of Time, as some examples. We also find it in the 7 Christic festivals.

All of these we experience in time, not based on spatial dimensions. Even though many of the festivals are closely associated with equinox and solstice points, they are not determined by these spatial points but rather independent of them. We have Easter as one example. Easter is not based on a spatial event but on a coming together of events in time and space. It is on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, after the spring equinox. This year the first full moon was also the year's greatest Super Moon on Tuesday, April 7th. So here the spatially observed events of equinox and full moon meet the fully temporal event of the first Sunday.

So as Plato noted, we have the four across our earth in the form of the cross, the cross of the solstice/equinox line. It is at the event of Golgotha that this cross takes on a whole new meaning: the soul of the world stretched upon the Earth in the form of the cross. But this cross is not an end. It rather marks the beginning of a new Earth.

What then is the relationship of the seven new Christic festivals with this cross? These festivals experienced in the rhythms of life and time, which Steiner describes as a path to the experience of the etheric Christ. Perhaps there is an image, a world image which can be created in bringing together this four of the cross with this seven.

From the Rosicrucian stream, which is that stream founded by Christian Rosenkreuz and is also that stream with which Anthroposophy unites itself, we can find an answer. This Rosicrucian stream is that spiritual stream which works to integrate the world of Earth with the world of the spirit. It sees in this integration a path that works against the growing divide between heaven and earth in human consciousness, between faith and knowledge, which has developed in history to the point that now even faith, or the belief that there is a divine meaning for the human soul and the world, is nearing extinction in the modern materialistic world view.

From this stream we have the image of the Rose Cross. Rudolf Steiner gives this image as a central meditative image of the power of resurrection. Out of the dead black wood of the cross there sprouts and blooms seven vibrant deep red roses. This is an imagination for life arising from death. It is not an image of the world of death on Earth and the divine world of life up above in heaven. It is an imagination for how the four and the seven can come together. On a world scale, it can also be an imagination of the living cycle of the year in which, out of the world cross arises the seven transformative Christic festivals -- the life of the spirit, as a manifestation of the Christ being working in the Earth.

So today, on Easter let us look further into the world changing event of Golgotha and the Resurrection from one perspective. That is from the perspective of its effect on this life realm of the Earth, which we can experience in living with the spiritual year and which can lead to an experience of the Christ in this realm.

If we picture for a moment the event of the Crucifixion, the full union of Christ with the physical body through death, again we have this image of the four way Cross as primary. But there are stories taking place at the Cross. One of these John describes in his Gospel. It is also about the four.

When I undertook my study of the festival year many years ago, I was struck by this story at the foot of the Cross. I am sure we all know the experience of reading something and suddenly being struck by a profound insight or moment of understanding that goes deeply into us. For me it was this verse from John which describes an activity at the foot of the Cross. John tells of the soldiers at the foot of the Cross and how they took the garments of Christ and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier. They also took His tunic, but because it was seamless, woven in one piece from the top, it could not be divided. So they cast lots for it. His tunic was woven all of one piece. This image struck me as a picture of the etheric body, that which is woven all in one piece. It is not part of our spatial earthly existence which can be divided, the four parts of the garments.

This image became a kind of spark that led me to further understand the etheric body. Around our Earth and in each of us is that which is woven all in one piece, in time, as our life body and the body of life around the Earth.

So today I would like to look together at Easter in the light of this etheric body, which will also carry us to the event of Ascension when this process was completed, 40 days later with this description of the Christ radiant and transfigured in light. Perhaps we are all familiar with the significance of the Mystery of Golgotha in relation to the redemption and transformation of the physical body and the realm of death. Rudolf Steiner speaks often of this event in this context. But what about that intimate sheath of the life or etheric body, that sheath which permeates us with life and that extends a bit beyond and around our physical bodily form. That etheric body which now is loosening more and more from our physical body as a part of evolution. Perhaps one can sense this etheric body in what we sometimes call "our personal space", which we can feel when it is invaded by someone coming too close, crossing the boundary from shared space into our personal space. It is a space which in these times of corona is no longer entered by others. What about the etheric body of the Earth? Does the Earth also have a sheath of life around it? And what was the significance for the Earth's etheric body of the Christ event?

So let us look at this etheric body.

First of all, it is a body of life and light...it sustains us, keeps us alive and healthy, renews us each night when we sleep, restores and rebuilds our physical bodies which we have worn down during day time through our waking consciousness and our life in the world of the senses. It is that sheath that mediates between the physical body and the astral or consciousness body to sustain health. It is manifest in our immune system, which keeps our health in balance.

It also is a light body. It is of the nature of the Sun and comes from the Sun. In fact by its nature it continually strives for the Sun. It seeks to expand and dissolve into the light and life ethers towards the Sun, but is held together by the physical body in earthly life. As the physical body has the nature of Earth and gravity and death, so the etheric body has the nature of the Sun, of levity, of life. As the physical body is centripetal, center oriented by gravity, so the etheric body is centrifugal, oriented to the periphery.

It also is the body in which all memory pictures of our life experiences are kept. It is a body of living pictures as can be seen in our experience at death. What happens? At the moment of death, we leave behind our physical body and it follows the laws of matter and decays. The etheric body, then no longer united with the physical body, follows its own laws and begins to expand and dissolve into the universal ether. It seeks to return into that element from which it came, and unite with its divine source, which is the greater Sun sphere, where before the mystery of Golgotha was found the dwelling place of the Christ. In this expansion and dissolution, for about three days, we experience a great living tableau of our past life. In mighty pictures, but in minute detail, our life passes before our spiritual eyes. This has been frequently documented in studies of people who have in NDE's, near death experiences. After these few days, an essence of this etheric body is retained, this essence of life experiences, and we then begin our journey in the life after death towards the Sun consciousness, or the higher spiritual worlds, after our time in the soul world or Kamaloka as it is called in eastern terminology. This essence remains with us and becomes the foundation for our causal body for the next incarnation, out of which our future karma will be shaped.

This is what happens in ordinary life at death. But at the mystery of Golgotha, upon Christ's death, this did not happen. The etheric body of the Christ did not leave the Earth and dissolve into the ether sphere of the Sun. Rather, it was held together by the Christ Ego and remained united with the Earth. This thereby brought to the Earth the renewal of life and the forces of the Sun, as well as into the etheric bodies of human beings. This was done to prevent the loss of etheric forces for humanity who would have suffered under increasing hardening of the forces of the Earth, making incarnation increasingly difficult into these hardening bodies.

This event was the beginning of transforming the Earth into a new Sun. It is because of this that there is no longer the need for the old initiations through which highly trained pupils would ascend to the Christ sphere, which at that time was the Sun, to receive illumination. Now this capacity exists for human beings on the Earth through the union of the Christ with the Earth.

Rudolf Steiner describes this in a lecture on May 7, 1923: *as an event of untold significance, enacted "behind the scenes" as it were of earthly evolution. ...Until the Mystery of Golgotha, Christ's dwelling-place was the sun. Therefore in that the etheric body of man strives towards the sun, it is striving towards the Christ.... at the time of the Mystery of Golgotha..., it was held together by Christ...Christ remains in union with the earth. Thus the Christ Impulse holds man securely on the earth.... The Deed on Golgotha was fulfilled for the physical body and the etheric body in the universal human sense.*

Let us think about this for a moment. We have this image of the Resurrected One in which the center is no longer bound to the physical body which is based on the forces of gravity, a centripetal force. And a body which no longer strives to expand and dissolve into the the periphery, the centrifugal force. But we have One who sustains its center out of its own being. The "new Adam" is born.

We now bear the force of the life of Christ in our etheric bodies. The Earth too bears in its etheric sheath the Sun-like life of Christ. Thus it also carries in this etheric sheath the memory tableau of the Three Years of Christ's deeds on the Earth, which we can experience if we raise our consciousness to them through this relation to the cycle of the Christic year. In this sense is the Earth, since Golgotha becoming Sun. Rudolf Steiner describes that at the moment of Christ's death, when His blood flowed into the Earth, if one were to be viewing the Earth from outer space clairvoyantly, one would see that the Earth lit up. It's path to becoming a Sun/Star began. Here we have an image of our Earth with its corona of life and light.

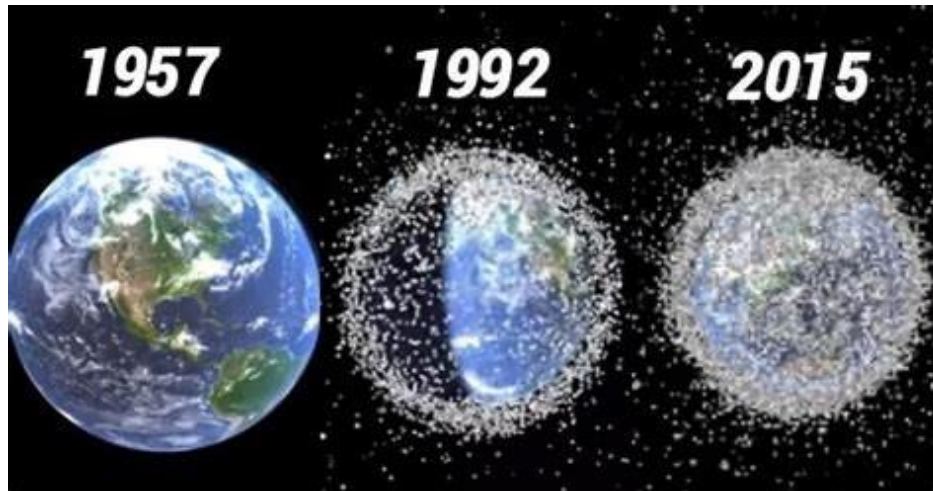


The definition of corona in the dictionary, the word meaning crown, is “the tenuous outermost part of the atmosphere of a star (such as the Sun)”. One can now say, since the mystery of Golgotha, the tenuous outermost part of the atmosphere of the Earth.

Perhaps in this sense can we look at this image of the Earth, with its corona of life as bearing the Christic life force enveloping its body. We can imagine it is the same with our own bodies when we unite ourselves with the Christic force in us.

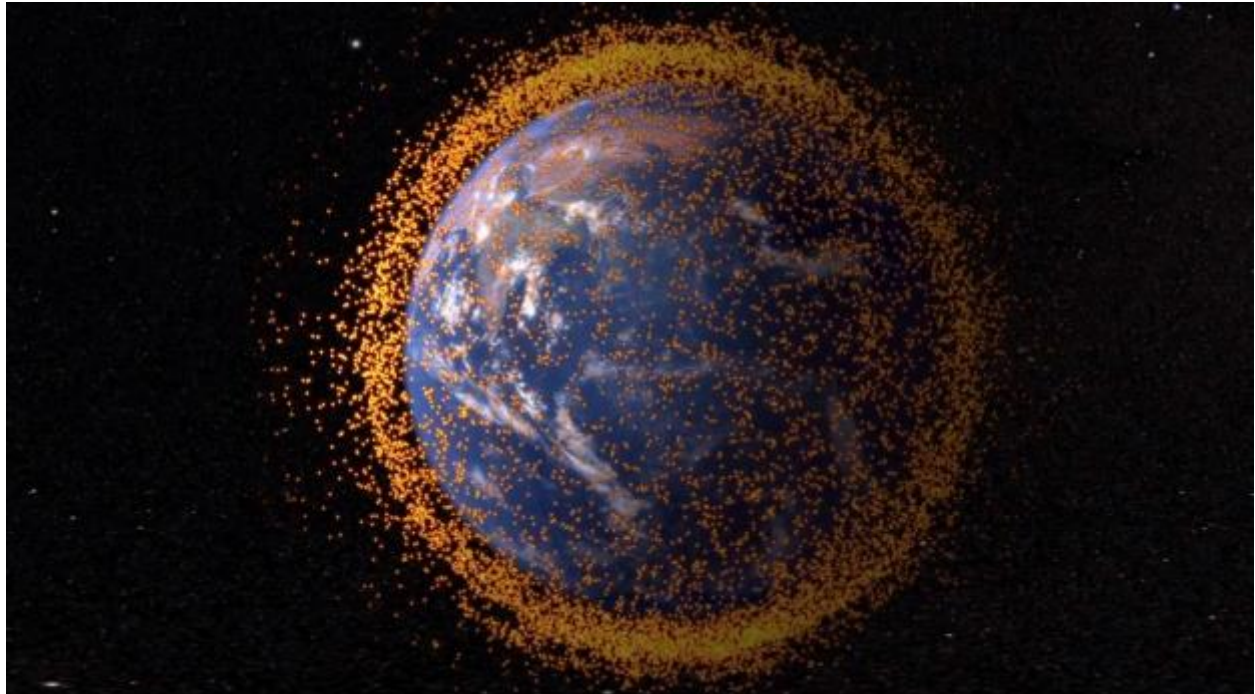
But what is happening to our Earth corona, its life sheath? Let us take this image further. Of course we are this Easter in the midst of a crisis of fear of which the virus is the catalyst, the physical threat that creates a world soul full of fear. Rudolf Steiner speaks of fear as being the nourishment for these kinds of bacilli (the word virus was not known at that time), when he spoke about the flu pandemic. I think we can all see clearly that in our materialistic view of the world and in our endless consumerism we have severely damaged the life of the Earth through environmental degradation. Our Earth as mother is under extreme duress and suffering. But also, in a way not so observable outwardly, our Earth suffers through technological degradation. However, for most of the world this is not fully recognized in the same way as is the climate crisis. In fact for most people, the better is technology, the better is the internet service... then the better is life!

But is this so? How might we see the degradation of the life sphere around the Earth, our sphere of health, in relation to technology? Let us move from the previous image to another image.



This image shows a progression of the space around the Earth, as seen from outer space, not clairvoyantly, but we can imagine in just such a material picture also the pollution of the etheric realms around the Earth. Here we see the progression only since very recent history. The first GPS satellites, were launched in the late 1970s and spewed signals across the radio spectrum.

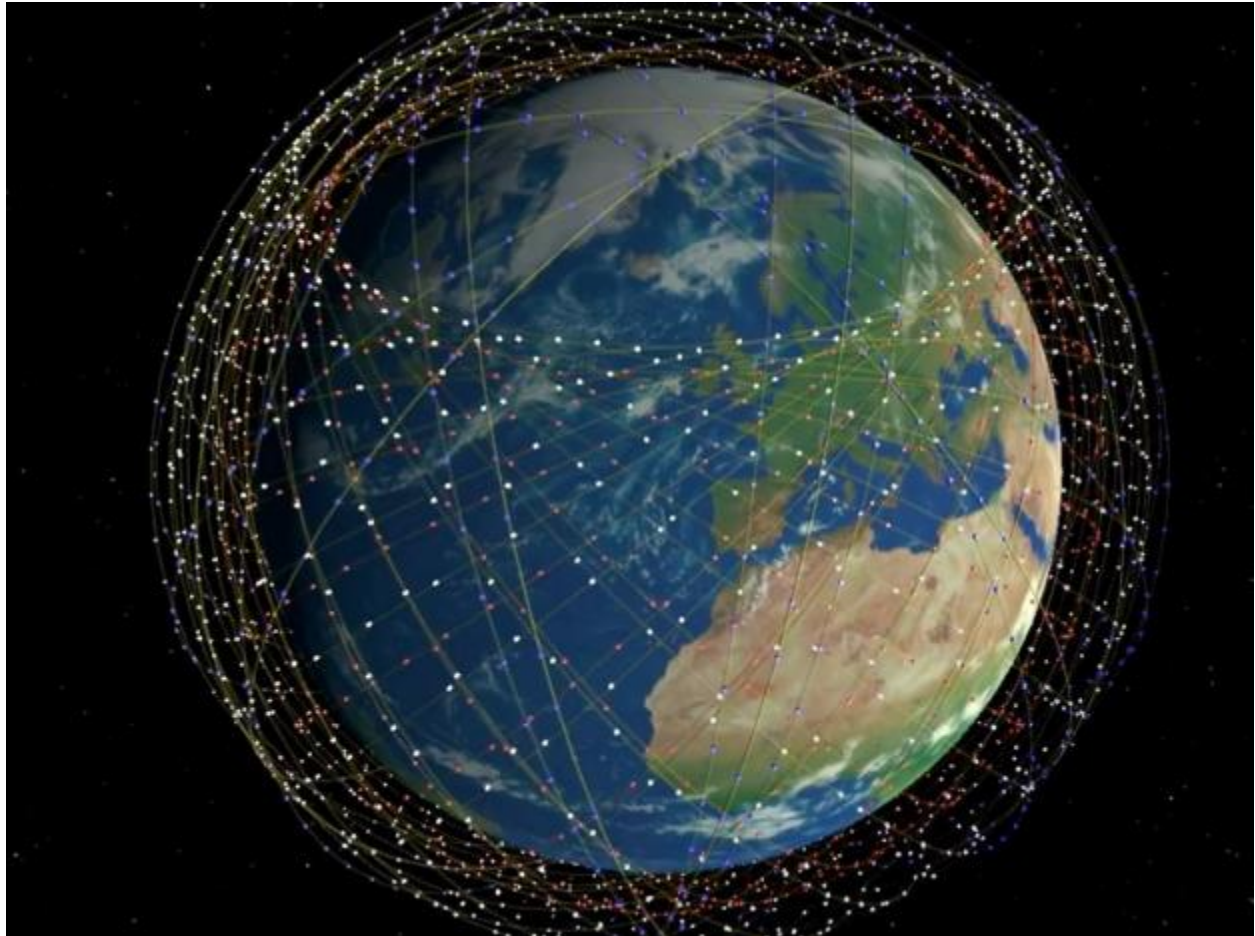
This ethericsphere around the Earth is composed of five layers. The warmth ether, the light ether, the chemical or tone ether and the life ether. This is our world etheric body, our corona, which is now cluttered with “debris” from satellites as well as immense electrical and radio activity. **These pictures are worth a thousand words.** Just observe and consider our Earth.



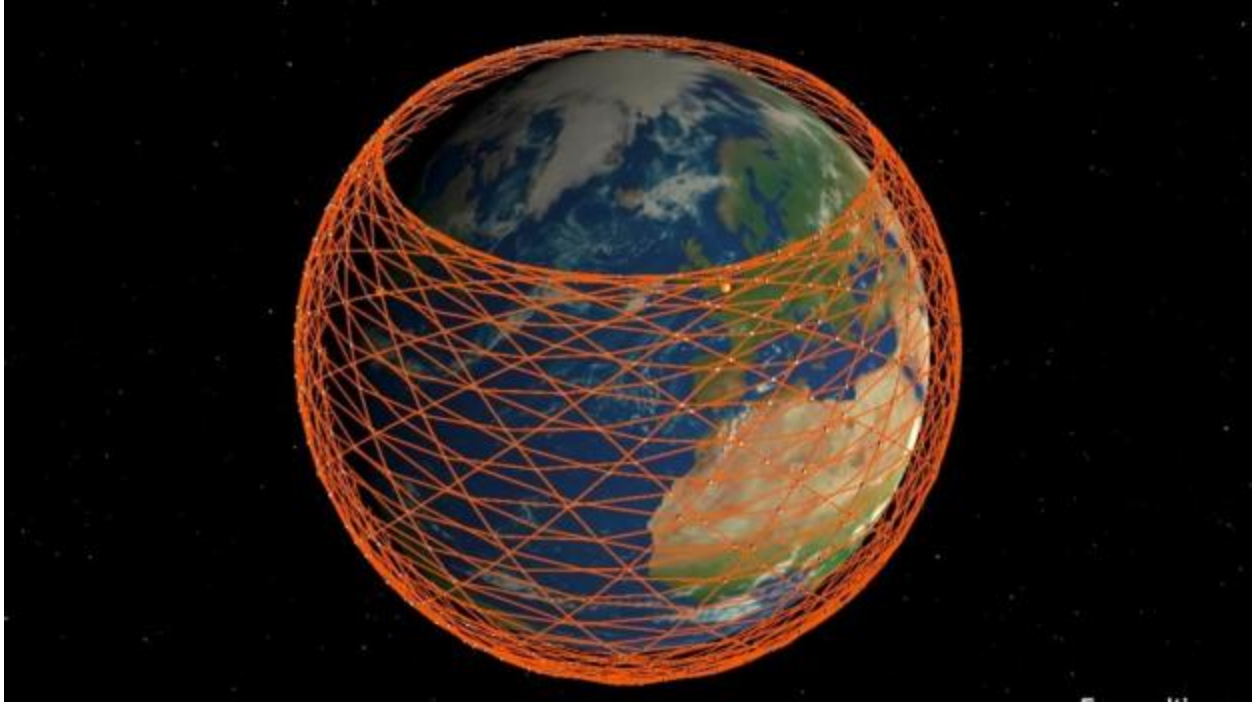
But now we can go even a step further and consider the most recent and future technology around our Earth. I read now from an article in The Atlantic, from May 2019:

*On May 19th, after gaining approval from the Federal Aviation Administration, the company SpaceX, founded by Elon Musk, launched a rocket carrying 60 of its first of 12,000 internet providing Starlink satellites. The FCC has approved the launch of the 12,000 Starlink satellites so far, and SpaceX wants to launch 30,000 more. Starlink will cover most of the Earth with high speed internet. Via laser beams, each satellite will link to others creating a robust mesh network around the Earth. The goal is to use Starlink to relay internet traffic close to the speed that light travels through a vacuum. Elon Musk plans to launch 60 satellites, 15 times a year, which means a robust global network may be realized in less than a year. The project could affect the lives of potentially everybody.*

Here are two other images from StarLink of the near future.







*Another company OneWeb is scheduled to launch a batch of its own internet satellites. A proposed constellation of about 650. Also, Jeff Bezos's Amazon has asked the FCC for permission to someday launch a network of 3,200 internet satellites. In a few years' time, three companies alone might transform the space around Earth, with SpaceX leading the pack. By the end of this year, the company's operational satellites in orbit could outnumber all other satellites combined. That would be a tremendous, wholesale change to the night sky; one company in one country would have made an immense impact on a borderless piece of nature that everyone on Earth can access.*

*And from another article in The Atlantic, Sept. 27, 2019: Swarm Technologies envisions a loose exoskeleton around the planet, allowing internet-connected devices, from tiny sensors to phones, to communicate with one another back on the ground. Swarm's satellites are known as SpaceBEES.*

Here we have a transition from the space junk image of satellite debris to a host of technological instruments employing lasers connecting at the speed of light in a vacuum, to weave a global web in the sphere around our Earth. What impact does this have on our etheric corona?

*Sergei Prokofieff writes: The Being of the Internet is esoterically best understood on the basis of Rudolf Steiner's Dornach lecture of May 13, 1921. Steiner describes how the further development of our present abstract intellect will gradually produce a kind of new nature kingdom. This intellect which is merely of a "shadowlike character" can only function "automatically" and can only comprehend the material, as such, and never the etheric.*

His reference is from this lecture by Steiner, already in 1921: *And from the earth will well up terrible creations of beings who in their character stand between the mineral kingdom and the plant kingdom as automative beings with super-natural intellect, an immense intellect. When this development takes hold, the earth will be covered, as with a web, a web of terrible spiders, spiders of enormous wisdom, which however, in their organization don't even reach the plant status.*

Steiner speaks of this as happening in about 7,000 AD. This is a futuristic scenario. One can imagine that in 1921, this was probably hard to believe by his listeners. But are we now already in the beginnings of this?

So my friends we began with Easter and the sphere of the new Christic life around our Earth, and we now arrive at these pictures of the sphere around our Earth. This is not meant to cause more fear or alarm. The worst thing would be to get caught up in fear. However it is important that we are awake to what is happening in our world and not sleep through the efforts being made to destroy that realm of life. We can only think, what is this doing around us? What impact is it having on spiritual life and even on souls incarnating to Earth? Is it affecting our health directly in unknown ways? How can we meet this?! So let us return to our original image, pure and shining so that we can remember who we truly are as Earth. We can at this Easter moment consider the true spiritual reality of this realm, in which the Christ being reveals Himself to humanity if we can but raise our thinking to the etheric, living thinking....that new thinking as described in anthroposophy as the modern path to spiritual knowledge.

In this sense do Steiner's words on the union with the Christ in the rhythm of the year point to the work we are to do. *'...in the course of a year the human being participates in a rhythm which is in accordance with the rhythm of the year and in which one experiences a union with the world of the Son'....* And later in the same lecture - *'And so we shall find that, closely connected with what lives in the rhythm of the year, in the same way that breathing indwells the human individual, there lives a spiritual essence which is part of the human soul, which is the human soul itself; we find that, to the yearly cycle and all its secrets, there belongs the Christ Being Who has passed through the Mystery of Golgotha.'* (The Cycle of the Year, Easter, 1923)

If we can truly "live" in autumn with the conscious awareness of Michael the Spirit of our Age, and awaken to the battle to redeem the fallen shadow intelligence, lifting our thinking again to a spiritual knowledge which can raise what is fallen. If we can live at winter solstice and the festivals of Christmas and Epiphany recognizing the Logos becoming flesh, the birth of the Sun has occurred in the Earth at the darkest time of the year in order to bring a new light into the World. If we can live through the spring festivals in the powerful knowledge that the force of resurrection and the power of love has transformed our Earth in physical body, in life body and in soul, lighting like flames at Whitsun in awakening our spirit. If we can then arrive in summer at St John's to a conscious union with the heights of the cosmos, the periphery, in recognition of and alignment with the greater evolutionary divine plan for our humanity and hear in a new way the voice of John, "Change your thinking!" for the new has come! Then in this rhythm do we participate in the true life of the Earth which is the life of the Christ.

It is not a matter of battling against this powerful shadow intellect that will permeate our world in order to defeat it. It is not a matter of living in fear of its power. It feeds on fear and trauma, the dark side. We have nothing to fear! But we must be awake! We must have confidence that we are living in a new age of great light. With a great light comes a great shadow. We must recognize and know the shadow but not obsess on it. We must move forward and focus on developing the light in the world in practical applications rising out of this new thinking and understanding of our true humanity, which is the power of Christ. Otherwise we will be lost. For to fight the shadowy brilliant intellect is useless. If we fight we enter into its cold logic and on the physical plane of the intellect it is much stronger than we are. But it has no power against spiritual truth and it is unable to defeat the force of love. So we work at

building the new Earth, which will carry us into the future and eventually lead to turning back to help those who have fallen.

In the gospels 31 times, we find in various phrasings, "Do not be afraid". It is truly a time for trust and confidence in the ever present help of the spiritual world.

I would like to conclude today with a selection from *Hymns to the Night* by Novalis

*To its end inclined*

*The Ancient World.*

*The happy garden*

*Of the youthful race*

*Withered away;*

*Out into freer spaces*

*Strove the full grown*

*Unchildlike humankind.*

*Vanished were the Gods;*

*Lonely and lifeless*

*Stood nature,*

*Robbed of her soul*

*By strict number*

*And iron chains.*

*Laws arose,*

*And in ideas*

*As in dust and air*

*Fell to pieces*

*The measureless prime*

*Of the thousand-fold life.*

*Fled away*

*Was all-powerful Faith*

*And Fantasy,*

*All transforming,*

*All unitiing,  
Heavenly comrade.  
Unfriendly blew  
A cold North wind  
Over the frozen plains  
And the wonderland home  
Passed away in the Ether.*

.....

*No longer was Light,  
The abode of the Gods,  
And a heavenly token –  
Around them they drew  
The curtain of Night.*

*Thou art that youthful form our tombs display  
Standing above them, deep in contemplation,  
Consoling emblem in our darkest day  
Of the higher human's joyful new foundation.*