



## The Case For Christmas



John: Word of God - December 22, 2019

### OPEN

What if the famous Christmas poem, “A Visit from St. Nicholas”, was not written by Clement Moore? What if it was instead crafted by a technical writer from the National Research Council of Canada? Maybe it would read like this...

*’Twas the nocturnal segment of the diurnal period preceding the annual Yuletide celebration, and throughout our place of residence, kinetic activity was not in evidence among the possessors of this potential, including that species of domestic rodent known as **Mus musculus**. Hosiery was meticulously suspended from the forward edge of the wood burning caloric apparatus, pursuant to our anticipatory pleasure regarding an imminent visitation from an eccentric philanthropist among whose folkloric appellations is the honorific title of St. Nicholas. The prepubescent siblings, comfortably ensconced in their respective accommodations of repose, were experiencing subconscious visual hallucinations of variegated fruit confections moving rhythmically through their cerebrums.....*

A little hard to undersand, isn’t it! So...what are you comprehending about Christmas this Advent? Is the coming of Christ clearer and more compelling for you? We have been attempting to make “The Case for Christmas.” In John’s Gospel, the case made for Christmas is that there is an unimaginable unveiling – the Incarnation makes God **discernable** and **accessible**.

In I John 1:5 the apostle wrote, “*This is the message we have heard from [Jesus] and declare to you.*” Whereas Luke recorded a fusion of “sermon and biography” (Thomas Neufeld, **Recovering Jesus**, Brazos Press, 2007, 53), John presented “*person and biography*” – a “biography of belief” (see John 20:8 and 31).

Today we are considering the *prologue* of John’s Gospel (1:1-18) in which he featured Jesus as the Word of God. Jesus is the main character and His cousin, John the Baptist, appears as a minor character. In this passage we find three ways in which Jesus, the Word, makes God **discernable** and **accessible** to humanity.

### DIG

#### [A] Revelation - vv. 1-5

There are many portraits of Jesus. Many have tried to capture His essence. Consider three painters:

- “Adoration of the Shepherds” painted by Gerard van Honthorst (1622)
- “Christ and the Rich Young Ruler” painted by Heinrich Hofman (1889)
- “The Head of Christ” painted by Warner Sallman (1940)

Perhaps the painting by Sallman is most well known in recent history. Like Mark, John does not include a nativity narrative. His “painting of Jesus” jumps right into a profound presentation of the Incarnation. Notice the use of the term “the Word” or “logos” which means “the intelligence behind the idea”. Jesus is the living revelation of who God is. How did John express this truth about Jesus?

- *eternity* – v. 1
- *deity* – v. 1
- *personality* – v. 1
- *unity* – v. 2
- *creativity* – vv. 3-4
- *superiority* – v. 5

Just think of it! The Creator of the universe took on the form of His creation. Jesus’ birth was the most amazing light show! Jesus Himself told us that He is the “light of the world” (see **John 8:12**). He revealed the truth of God to us.

#### [B] Illumination - vv. 6-13

In verses 6 – 9 we learn about John, the Baptizer, and his role as one who came to prepare the way for the ministry of Jesus. John the Baptizer was but a witness who gave testimony. But Jesus Himself is the “true light that gives light to every man” (verse 9). The case which John makes for Christmas in his Gospel is that Jesus is God’s light and His coming to this world illumines us to know who God is, and how we might come into relationship with God. Clearly, this is a matter of life and death. When John the Baptizer was questioned about Jesus’ message he responded in John 3:36 – “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.”

In verses 10-13 we learn that the illumination of Jesus leads to invitation. He invites us to receive His offer of new life. And sadly, some will reject this offer. How can Jesus transform us? Jesus, the Light of World, has been given as a sacrifice for our sins. I John 1:7 tells us “*If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*” I John 5:8 tells us that the “*true light is already shining*”. Jesus has already dealt with the darkness of this world and delights to transform our hearts.

“The Light of the World” painted by William Holman Hunt (1851) became so popular that it toured the world. A life size version is found in St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. This painting portrays Revelation 3:20 (NLT): “*Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.*” Jesus’ illumination leads to invitation – will you accept Him?

## [C] Explanation - vv. 14-18

In a blog [Paul Tripp](#) writes about Christmas, “With all the bright lights, the cheery music, the shiny decorations, the tasty treats, and the family gatherings, we forget what the scene was really like on that first Christmas. *Glory collided with tragedy*. Unimaginable glory, in the form of a babe, came to earth. Angels literally announced this birth; don’t gloss over the mind-boggling nature of that heavenly incident! God became flesh, and the hope of the universe was born. But at the same time, King Herod, scared to death for his political power, was planning the slaughter of countless infants. Celebration collided with mourning. Life collided with death. Salvation collided with depravity.”

What happens when the glory of God’s grace collides with the tragedy of sin? Christmas happens! And the cross also happens. Notice what John has recorded for us about the coming of Christ in verse 14.

- “*flesh became*” – *Jesus took on the full human experience*
- “*tabernacle among us*” – *Jesus “moved into the neighbourhood”*
- “*we beheld the glory*” – *Jesus portrayed (think theatre) God’s glory*
- “*only begotten of the Father*” – *Jesus is unique and unrivaled*
- “*full of grace and truth*” – *Jesus was not stained by sin*

In this way, Jesus “explained” [the term means “to lead out, explain, recount a narrative”] the Father to us. So what kind of case for Christmas are you hearing this year? Is your vision of Jesus merely “feel good” or is it perhaps “fuzzy”?

Christmas can be confusing – so full of distraction. **But you** don’t have to “pull it all together” by yourself. God is not offering you something like IKEA’s “free snowman” with “some assembly required”!



Instead, God offers us Jesus. Jesus Himself is the revelation, illumination, and explanation of God and His love for us.

### REFLECT

Author Laura Kalmar wrote, “In North America, with the endless noise and rush of life, it’s often difficult to find places where we can steal a glimpse of heaven....we all long for places where the veil of eternity becomes slightly more transparent, awareness of God’s presence is heightened and intimacy with Jesus grows....The ancient Celts called these ‘**thin places**’....more than creating a thin space, Jesus’ birth on earth tore the veil in two. On the first Christmas, he emptied himself to dwell with his people, so that we might truly see God face-to-face.” (“Have A ‘Thin’ Christmas” *MB Herald*, December 2014, 4)

Christmas is one of those rare “thin places”. What better time to come to Jesus, the sinless substitute on Calvary’s cross. What wonderful love He has for us! Receive God’s love, revealed in Jesus Christ, our selfless Savior!

Take a few moments of reflection on the amazing reality that John writes to us about. Jesus is the living demonstration and explanation of the Father! And He not only illumines God, but He also invites us into relationship with God.

To help you “pause and ponder” listen to “[Adore](#)” by Chris Tomlin.

### ***For further reading...***

We are using a great little resource which is helping us explore this topic. It is a book called ***The Case for Christmas*** by Lee Strobel (Zondervan, 2005). Make sure you get a copy from the church office.