

Meditation #16: SPIRIT-TEST: The Christmas Story

What does it say? –

STUDY: I John 4:1-6

GOLDEN TEXT: I John 4:2 = *This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.*

What does it mean?

Love transforms. Outside the Bible, every world religion teaches that there is a great gap, or a deep divide, between God and humans. On the one hand, both Hinduism and Islam teach that the deity is *strictly* transcendent—wholly and utterly other than us. He may represent himself on earth through a human prophet or a spiritual “appearance,” but never in the flesh as a fellow human. Their gods are too special to bridge the gap, *but the living God is bigger yet, because his love even brings him into the flesh to be with us.* On the other hand, in other religions—such as Secular Humanism, Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and Zen—either there is no god, or else he plays no active role with humans. *Only the Bible teaches that God has become human flesh,* visiting us as a human—as predicted in the Old Testament (such as in Isaiah 7:14; 9:6) and fulfilled at the first Christmas. That is why I John 4:2 is the test of the true, loving Spirit. In spite of the way creation has been perverted, polluted and depleted, the Creator insisted upon loving and embracing the created flesh fully in order to redeem and transform it. *What an awesome God! What great love!*

1. Is there anything more natural than the supernatural? Where would creation be without the Creator? Who else could have lit the fuse for the Big Bang or orchestrated the intensely complicated creation processes?
2. Is there anything more supernatural than nature? Are the “natural phenomena” too “phenomenal” for even the best scientific methods to *completely* comprehend?
3. Why is the Christmas story—that the Word became flesh—so unique? Outside of the Bible, why does no world religion embrace full “Divine Incarnation”? Is the Christmas story the best story?
4. Does it matter that the Bible reveals a uniquely powerful picture of the Creator? Powerful enough to create the whole universe? Powerful enough to become a human infant?

What are we going to do about it?

5. Is the Christmas story a model for us to fully represent the Creator in the daily care of his creation? In the care of fellow “images of God,” images of the Creator?
6. Should the miracle of Christmas impact how we see, touch and care for the creation? In what ways? Does creation-care take on higher meaning and priority since Jesus so intensely identified with his creation?
7. How is God’s act of embracing his created flesh a model for caring for the depleted and polluted creation? Should we wait until Jesus returns before we take responsibility for it? Or should we act now because he has already come?

Truth To Celebrate: *Affirming the mind-blowing paradox of “the Infinite becoming the Infant” at Christmas is the ultimate test of our accountability to Truth.*

Advent-Action: *Use the energy-saving settings for all of your appliances—including refrigerator, washing machine, dryer and dishwasher, and give the money you save to a church or a charity.*

