

The Light of the World By William Holman Hunt

The title of this painting comes from Jesus' description of his mission to be "the Light of the World" (John chapter 8 verse 12).

Holman Hunt painted three versions of this image which you can see at Keble College Oxford (1851-1853), Manchester City Art Gallery (1851-1856) and St Paul's Cathedral (1900-1904). The most famous is the St Paul's version, which was taken on a tour of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa from 1905 to 1907 and attracted huge crowds. It is usually this version you see reproduced. Holman Hunt said that working on the first version of the painting had made him become a Christian. The final version is life-sized.

In Detail:

- The idea of showing Jesus knocking on a door is taken straight from a passage in the book of Revelation... "Listen! I am standing and knocking at your door. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and we will eat together" (Revelation chapter 3 verse 20).
- The door at which Jesus is knocking is the door of the human heart – you can see that it does not have a handle on the outside, because Jesus can only "come into a person's heart" if they open up and let him in. See how this door has been shut for a long time – weeds are growing up all over it.
- The bat flying around in the darkness is a symbol of ignorance.
- Jesus wears a crown of thorns to remind us of his death on the cross. He carries a light, but he is himself the light and is shining (halo). The stars and crescents on the lantern show Jesus is the king of the whole world, as these symbols represent Muslim countries.

Wondering questions to ask after reading Revelation 3:20:

- ✓ What do you think the room looks like on the other side of that door?
- ✓ Do you think the door will be opened?
- ✓ How does Jesus feel standing there?
- ✓ Does the person inside know it is Jesus outside?
- ✓ What will Jesus want to do if / when he is invited inside?
- ✓ How will that feel to the person inside?
- ✓ How does the painting make you feel?

