

# ADJUSTMENTS FOR ADVENT

<sup>19</sup> he sent them to the Lord to ask, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?”

Luke 7:19

## I. An Advent theme

- A. The coming of our Lord revealed many expectations that had to be reconsidered, many confident forecasts that had to be re-interpreted.
- B. Jesus fulfilled, and yet disappointed and transformed, so many of the hopes of Israel.
- C. John’s Gospel (John 7:40-45) illustrates the constant public debate that raged around Jesus.

<sup>40</sup> On hearing his words, some of the people said, “Surely this man is the Prophet.” <sup>41</sup> Others said, “He is the Messiah.” Still others asked, “How can the Messiah come from Galilee?” <sup>42</sup> Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David’s descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?” <sup>43</sup> Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. <sup>44</sup> Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him. <sup>45</sup> Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and the Pharisees, who asked them, “Why didn’t you bring him in?”

- D. John the Baptist had looked for a Messiah—judge with ax and flail and fire upon the wicked.
- E. All public and private hopes seemed on the edge of fulfillment – and yet so changed.
- F. Victory comes when we can learn to revise our hopes without losing them, or nursing disillusionment, or becoming cynical.
- G. God’s fulfillments are always greater than his promises

## II. Three principles of advent hope.

- A. Advent principle #1 - Christ was a far more human figure than they thought.
  - 1. The pietists wanted: A super-Pharisee more-than-Moses; stern, rigorous, devoted to the law, a champion of orthodox zeal.

2. The nationalists wanted: A royal figure of power; a leader with authority, military strength, and dominion.
3. The apocalyptists foretold: A figure from the skies; supernatural, glorious, frightening.
4. Yet Christ came a simple babe, of peasant family, in ungodly Nazareth. Moderns are bothered by the star the virgin birth, wonders. The ancients were bothered by his ordinariness.
5. He came much nearer to common people.

\* Fulfillments are always closer to home than we realize.

B. Advent principle #2 - Christ was a far more generous figure than they wanted.

1. He was no King for the elect; he served no exclusive national purpose. He was so much wider than all expectations or beliefs that they did not want him. He was a Christ for sinners, Greeks, Romans, the world.
2. Whenever our hopes are circumscribed by self-interest, or nourish exclusiveness, he will break through them.

C. Advent principle #3 - Christ was a far more involved figure than they expected.

1. Where men expected a deliverance “out of” evil and wrong to be wrought from above, by supernatural means and magic, He brought a deliverance “within” the evil and the pain, entering fully into our suffering situation.
2. Jesus offered an intimate involvement with each soul that would involve an ongoing, lifelong relationship of cleansing and maturity that will not be done until he has safely brought us home.

## Summary

“We must continually be ready to revise our hopes in order that we may keep pace with God.”