

ADVENT 4 – 2007

John 3: 22 - 36

I must admit that I still sometimes get irritated with what the world of business and commercialism does with Christmas. But I will also have to say, I do not get as upset about it as I used to. It is not because I am just numbed to it, either. It is because I have come to realize that I have missed the point of Christmas, too, if I make the world's abuse of it my chief focus.

Let John the Baptist help all of us rejoice in the point of Christmas, which is Jesus Christ, God, our Savior.

In our estimation, too,

May Jesus Ever Increase More and More, Even as We Ourselves Become Less and Less.

The main point of John the Baptist, and for that matter, of John the Apostle, too, is that Jesus must of necessity increase and John gives many reasons why.

The Number One reason – and this really fits Christmas, so if we get this we can really celebrate Christmas – is this: Jesus is God from God. He is from above, from heaven.

Jesus' conception and birth on earth is very different from every other human conception and birth. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin, the Virgin Mary. That makes it different, but I am thinking about something else.

In every other human conception and birth, a new person begins to exist and then to develop and then is born and then continues to develop, etc. But Jesus' person and existence did not begin at conception and birth. Jesus came from heaven as God, the Son, an eternal Person along with the eternal Persons of the Father and the Holy Spirit. They are the one, true God.

In Jesus' case, only His humanity began at conception, and even that happened by a miracle of God the Holy Spirit. This means that the Father sent His Son from heaven to the earth, and did so adding humanity to Jesus' person. Now the Son was God in the flesh, the God/Man. What we celebrate at Christmas is that miracle. It is amazing that God sent His eternally loved, on Son, in the flesh, to this earth. He did it to help all human beings.

Jesus is above all people. That is simply because He is eternal God from heaven. All the rest of us are earthly, from the earth. And because of sin, dust we are and to dust we shall return. Because of Jesus, though, that is NOT going to be the end of us.

Jesus is above you, me, everyone, above John the Baptist. Because He is God the Son, the Father had given all authority over everything to Jesus. That is what it means that the Father gave everything into Jesus' hand.

It is humbling to remember that not one of us is the top authority above anything. Jesus is. On the other hand, as we see how corrupt sin has made every human authority, what a joy and comfort it is to know that Jesus, perfect God, is the top power and authority. He can and will overcome every sin and every abuse of authority. We can endure trouble and persecution because we know it is only temporary. Jesus' kingdom is eternal!

Jesus is the Groom. All of God's people are His Bride. All believers, all of God's people, belong to Jesus.

So, God's people never belonged to John the Baptist. Neither do God's people nor any part of them, belong to you or me. John the Baptist just was getting people ready for

the wedding of Jesus to His people. Let us continue to get more people ready for that wedding!

John was serving Jesus. John was like the best man. John's joy was seeing Jesus and people coming together. Nothing could have made John happier than seeing people flock to Jesus. Why would people keep hanging around the best man after the Bride and Groom arrived? Why would people hang around John? Why would they want to? Do you see John gently pushing his envious followers away from himself toward Jesus? Yes!

The church is not my church or your church. It is Christ's church. There is no place for our personal envies and jealousies, no place for competition and favorites around us. 'Membership drives' are not for us but for Jesus, God our Savior.

Christ's Word is God's Word first hand. Jesus was not just another Prophet like John the Baptist. No other Prophet got God's Word from himself. Jesus did. God's Word is Jesus' own native Word. He always had it from eternity in heaven. The other Prophets and Apostles received the Word. God gave it to them. You and I have received it from the Apostles and Prophets who received it from God. Jesus, with the Father and the Spirit, is the One who gave it.

If we do not believe what Jesus says, we will not believe in Jesus, and we are not believing God's Word. If we believe God's Word we will believe in Jesus because God, through all His Prophets and His Apostles and Himself directly testifies about Jesus. "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His Name." "These Old Testament Scriptures testify about Me."

Most people then and most now reject Jesus' testimony because they reject God's Word as God's Word. Of course, they reject what Jesus says because it is God's Word.

God gave the Spirit without limit to Jesus, because He placed everything into Jesus' hand.

Eternal life comes to everyone who believes in Jesus. Every believer in Jesus has eternal life, now by faith, later by sight and experience in heaven; now in spirit, later in body and spirit.

If anyone does not believe in Jesus, God's wrath remains on him. If nothing changes for the natural born sinner, then only God's wrath is reality. But Jesus came here to free us from sin and all guilt and to give us eternal life.

So, obviously, not only John the Baptist but all of us too, need to decrease, even as Jesus increases, in our own estimation. If we trust in Jesus, He is our Savior, our God and Lord. He is our joy. He is why we love and the One to whom and for whom we want to live. We follow; He leads. We deny ourselves so He can lead us to heaven.

Do not deny Jesus to preserve yourself, to protect yourself, or to promote yourself. This Christmas let Christ be the point, not ourselves, not our wants, our wishes, our happiness, then we will be truly happy, as we see our own Savior truly growing, flourishing, bearing fruit. Amen.