

“Taking the Axe to the Root”

So let's turn in our Bibles or on other smart devices to **Matt. 3**. Our Lord Jesus Christ had a spectacular birth that was guided by prophecy that had to be fulfilled. **Remember, prophecy establishes authenticity when fulfilled.** Joseph & Mary went to Bethlehem as found in Mic. 5:2, for they had to obey the Roman emperor's imperial decree (Luke 2:1-5). Then they went down to Egypt as prophesied in Hos. 11:1, following the angel's command (Matt. 2:13). Finally, wicked king Herod slaughtered the innocent children of Bethlehem two years & under in a vain attempt to stop the coming of his rival, the Savior of the world (Matt. 2:18).

Then, according to Joseph's warning dream in which an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, he took the young Child and His mother, and returning to the land of Israel, **Matt. 2:23 NKJV** says, *“And he came and dwelt in a city called **Nazareth**, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, “He shall be called a **Nazarene** (Judges 13:5).”* **TPT note:** “or “*Branch*”. The Hebrew Scriptures give us a wonderful truth about the Branch (Sprout) of the Lord that would come and establish righteousness. The word for “*branch*” or sprout is *netzer*, the root word from which Nazareth, Nazarene, and Nazarite come. The teaching of the Branch of the Lord is a concept taught throughout the Bible, from the Tree of Life, to the seven branches of the Lampstand, to Jesus the Vine calling us His branches (John 15). Jesus is a Scion, [which is] a Branch that can be transplanted & grafted into a human life.”

Websters:

“A **scion** is a detached living portion of a plant (such as a bud or shoot) joined to a stock in grafting.”]” **TPT:** “Additionally, the Aramaic word for **Nazareth** means “heir of a powerful family” or “victorious one.” So

it is entirely possible to translate this, “He will be called the Victorious Branch (of Nazareth).”

2 Cor. 5:17 AMPC *“Therefore if any person is [ingrafted] in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creature altogether; the old [previous moral and spiritual condition] has passed away. Behold, the fresh and new has come!”*

2 Cor. 5:21 AMPC *“For our sake He made Christ [virtually] to be sin Who knew no sin, so that in and through Him we might become [endued with, viewed as being in, and examples of] the righteousness of God [what we ought to be, approved and acceptable and in right relationship with Him, by His goodness].”*

Wielding the Axe at the Very Roots of Adam’s Tree

Silence fills the void of the years between the end of Matt. 2 and the beginning of Matt. 3. Then onto the scene comes John the Baptist, Jesus’s cousin. Listen to what John’s message was about:

Matt. 3:1-12 TPT V. 2 John preached **repentance**, which means not just to change your mind, but to turn your life around by leaving your sins behind, and coming back to the Holy God. In NT *heaven* 238 x; *hell* 23 x.

Matt.3:3 TPT note: “**Isa. 40:3** is quoted in all four Gospels. The Aramaic has in place of Lord, “*Lord Yahweh*,” an obvious implication of the deity of Christ. Isaiah’s prophecy is more than a road-construction project. He uses the metaphor of clearing a path as a parable of cleansing our hearts and being prepared in our hearts to receive the Christ.” **Ax time!**

V. 7 Religiosity leads to judgmentalism, legalism & all manners of expressions of pride, haughtiness, and self-righteousness. Religiosity needs to be cut out of our lives completely & permanently, replaced by love & God’s Word of Truth. **V. 9** No ancestral privileges; only relationship w/God!

V. 10 TPT: *“The **axe** is now ready to cut down the trees at their very roots. Every fruitless, rotten tree will be chopped down and thrown into the fire.”* **TPT note on 3:10** *“The “**axe**” becomes a metaphor of the word of truth that judges hearts & nations.”* **Let God speak to you right now!**

Rev. 22:16 TPT *“I, Jesus, sent my angel to you to give you this testimony to share with the congregations. I am the bright Morning Star, both David’s spiritual root (Jesus is David’s **divine spiritual root**, and He’s ours as well! So be cleansed & be even more like Him.) and his descendant (as the descendant of David, Jesus is human).”*

Roots to Be Removed & Then Some

God wants to remove **roots** of: 1) unforgiveness; 2) pride; 3) sexual immorality; 4) stubbornness; 5) rebellion to authority; 6) witchcraft, (manipulating others & using drugs), which is a **Gal. 5:19-21** work of the flesh; 7) hatred of those who get in your way; 8) idolatry (**TPT**: chasing after things instead of God); 9) resentment when others are favored; 10) temper tantrums; 11) angry quarrels; 12) only thinking of yourself; 13) being in love with your own opinions; 14) being envious of the blessings of others; 15) murder; 16) uncontrolled addictions (lit. drunken binges), etc. Paul warns in **v. 21 TPT** *“Haven’t I warned you that those who use their “freedom” for these things will not inherit the kingdom realm of God?”*

God wants “John 15-fruit” that remains: **John 15:16-17 TPT** *“You didn’t choose Me, but I’ve **chosen** (Aramaic: “I have invited you” as dinner guests) and **commissioned** you to go into the world to bear fruit. And your fruit will last, because whatever you ask of My Father, for My sake, He will give it to you.”* 17. So this is my parting command: **Love one another deeply!**

Love is the key to being set free. Freedom is what we need most of all.