

KEY AIM: AX TO THE ROOTS

When we look at a tree, we can see a trunk, branches, twigs, leaves and perhaps some fruit. The source of its life comes from an unseen realm, the water and minerals in the soil. The channel to carry this life force is the root system of the tree. Roots also anchor the tree in the soil to provide stability and a firm base for the entire tree. Trees are designed to grow and as they do so, the roots will grow deeper and wider. In drier climates, roots grow deeper as they seek moisture. Some desert shrubs have roots that have descended 230 feet below the ground!

Many places in the Bible, God refers to us as trees. Therefore, we must be aware of what soil we are rooted in and what nutrients we have. **Everyone is rooted in something.** When the storms of life come, we will be tested. Do our roots go deep enough to keep us standing? Is good fruit coming out of our lives?

John the Baptist lived in the desert. His roots went deep into God as he pondered the messages of the Old Testament writers and prophets. God promised a coming Messiah and a kingdom of justice and peace, but he also gave warnings to those who were not rooted in Him alone.

‘Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose **heart turns away** from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is **no root** among you that produces such bitter poison.’ - Deut. 29:18

‘...you will be uprooted...’ - Deuteronomy.28:63 (read the surrounding verses for context)

John the Baptist lived in the desert where the rocks got so hot they would scorch your skin. He came with a message so fiery that it could burn off the cords and roots that bound people as they prepared to meet the Lord of a kingdom grounded in God’s righteousness, wisdom, power and love. It was not rooted in this earthly world, a system of lies and deceit.

‘Woe to those who draw sin along with **cords of deceit** and wickedness as with cart ropes. Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness.’ - Isaiah 5:18,20

John prepared the way for Jesus as he preached repentance, a new attitude towards sin, self and God. The Roman Empire exalted might, glory and power. The Greeks emphasized sports, body culture, wisdom, education and sex. The Jewish leaders loved money, position, power and self-righteousness. The ax must be laid to the root of the trees. Behind all of these is the **root sin of pride and selfishness**. That is why John the Baptist had people humble themselves in repentance as they went under the waters of Jordan river. (Jordan means ‘descender’ as its waters originate from Mt. Hermon and descend to the valley below which ends near the lowest place on earth).

God commands us not to boast of wisdom (education and knowledge) nor of strength, military power, riches or wealth. - Jeremiah 9:23

Pride is a root of all evil and started with Lucifer with his five boastful **‘I wills’**

- Isaiah 14:13-14. **Iniquity is going our own way** - Isaiah 53:6. As we will see in another message, **humility is the root of all virtue**. God wants to plant and build good things into our lives, however, first he must **'uproot, tear down, destroy and overthrow'** - Jeremiah 1:10

'Surely the day is coming, it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and evildoers will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire, says the Lord Almighty, not a **root** or branch will be left to them.' -Malachi 4:1

These truths apply to us as individuals but also to world systems as well. God has promised that He is going to **shake** all things before the end of this age - Hebrews 12:26-27. We must prepare to meet Jesus either at the time of our death or when He returns to this earth. We must be rooted in Him if we are to remain secure, stable, strong, sane and serene.

God is calling us to be forerunners like John the Baptist as we prepare the way for the coming of Jesus. God has not left us in the dark as the presence of evil seems to be accelerating. It seems that the world is falling apart, but we should also be aware things are falling into place. God has prophesied about these times.

Arise and shine for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and **thick darkness** is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his **glory appears** over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings come to the brightness of your dawn. - Isaiah 60:1-3

We can live without fear as the world crumbles around us. Practice Psalm 1:1-3, listen to and meditate on His Word.

'Blessed is the man who **trusts in the Lord** and whose confidence is in Him. He will be like **a tree** planted by the water that sends out its **roots by the stream**. It **does not fear** when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has **no worries** in a year of drought and **never fails** to bear fruit.' - Jeremiah 17:7-8

God longs to **turn the hearts** of fathers to their children and children to their fathers.
- Malachi 4:6

'Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life' - Proverbs 4:23

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