

## Figures of Speech found in the Scriptures.

When one is young in the Lord , and we set out to read the scriptures, our understanding is often clouded through a limited knowledge of the metaphors used by the scribes.

Sometimes others add to this confusion.

***Mt 3:10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.***

The verse above at first glance can be quite perplexing to the modern man when reading the King James Version. I personally have heard many differing interpretations of it. What do you understand by this or have heard others tell you?

1. What is meant by the use of an axe?
2. What is meant by the root?
3. What are the trees John the baptist is speaking of?
4. What is meant by good fruit?
5. What is meant by hewn down?
6. Finally what fire is John the Baptist speaking of?

Prophetic use of language is found in the prophets who brought a message of impending judgement upon apostate Israel. It is always in a historical contextual setting, and these words were spoken to the populace in a specific time frame: circ. Ad 26. It's relevance today is to teach us the fear of the Lord as they were fulfilled to the letter.

*Isaiah 10:5 ¶ O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.*

*6 I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.*

*7 Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.*

*8 For he saith, Are not my princes altogether kings?*

*9 Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria*

*as Damascus?*

*10 As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria;*

*11 Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?*

*12 Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the **king of Assyria**, and the glory of his high looks.*

*13 For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man:*

*14 And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.*

*15 **Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood.***

In the Above example in Isaiah we see the King of Assyria being called the Axe in the Hand of Lord.

*Jeremiah 51:11 Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple.*

***Jer 51:20 Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms;***

In this Example above we find the Medes and Persians being declared as the Lords Battle Axe.

The Lord had used the Assyrians (as his Battle Axe) against against the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah. After the Assyrians had taken Israel into captivity (the Lost 10 tribes) , he turned the Assyrians back when the King o f Judah ,Hezekiah repented.

Later in their History Nebuchadnezzar invaded the Kingdom of Judah and

took the remaining descendants to Babylon (the seventy year Babylonian Captivity ). Babylon fell to Cyrus the Persian and Darius the Mede who became the Lords Battle Axe.

*Da 5:30 /31 In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain, And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.*

- 1. The Axe is an invasion by a foreign power . The Roman Empire was the invader in John the Baptist's life. *Mt 3:10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees . John's use of words places it in his generation.***

*Mal 4:1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.*

John was reiterating that what was spoken of him by Malachi. He was the Levite messenger spoken of.

*Mal 2:7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.*

*Mal 3:1 Behold, I will send my **messenger**, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.*

There is a reason for this digression , because some have made the claim that they are Elijah and have led many astray in my generation. Modern Dispensationalist's are prone to this type of error. Single verse eschatology that ignores the contextual historical setting of the prophets leads to this type of error.

*Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:*

Firstly John was a Descendant of the Priestly family of Levi the Son of

Jacob, born to *Zacharias* and *Elisabeth*.

*Luke 1:5 ¶ There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.*

Christ confirms this by calling John Elijah(Hebrew). Elias (Greek equivalent)and the messenger of Malachi

*Mt 17:10/12 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, **Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.** But I say unto you, **That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.***

*Mt 11:8 /11 **But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.***

There were two anointed ones in the scriptures namely the King and The High Priest. (Note: read Zechariah)

John as the Levite Prophet/High Priest who would Anoint the true King of Judah and Israel.

Christ's descent through Mary the Cousin of Elisabeth the *granddaughter* of Aaron the first High Priest under the Law of Moses, unites these two offices in one person, when he was baptised by John.

*Mathew 3:14/17 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, **Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.** Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up*

*straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

*Heb 7:1 For this Melchisedec, **king** of Salem, **priest** of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;*

*Heb 6:20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an **high priest for ever** after the order of Melchisedec.*

With this understanding we have a historical backdrop to the events in the Gospels and the ability to refute any pretender to these titles. Also we begin to understand why Herod ordered the murder of the infants, and why John was beheaded.

***Mt 3:10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.***

John's words of fire were an apocalyptic message to those who understood what he was saying. It is none other than the overthrow of status-quo in power at that time.

Herod the Great who had obtained the Kingdom through his allegiance to Rome , as an Idumean he was a descendant of Esau and did not have the lineage to support his claims. Secondly the Herod's gave the High Priest title to men of their own choosing, some even bought it. (see Josephus)

*Mal 1:2/3 I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.*

**2. The Root is the source of the lineage contained in the family tree. No descendants and pretenders will be able to follow them.**

*Jer 49:10 But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbours, and he is not.*

Now we come to the trees themselves and how they are linked to these apocalyptic words of fire from John.

Lu 13:18/19 Then said he, **Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.**

Eze 31:18 To whom art thou thus like in glory and in greatness among the **trees** of Eden? yet shalt thou be brought down with the **trees** of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth: thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with them that be slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD.

### **3. Trees are the Kingdoms that rule over nations. They are the dynasties in power over the populace.**

*Mt 3:10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

John has proclaimed the demise of the dynasty of Herod's and the various leadership groups namely the priesthood, the Pharisees and the Sadducees and their scribes and teachers.

Every time the kings of Israel and Judah went astray and became idolatrous , the Lord would send a prophet who would proclaim their demise.

*Jer 27:8 And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.*

***4. The bearing of good fruit is staying true to the Lord God of Abraham , Isaac and Jacob and obeying his commands. Apostasy leads to Judgment.***

***Mt 3:10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.***

***Mt 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.***

To conclude it is evident that the words of Christ and of John were fulfilled during the lifespans of that apostate generation. The Herod's lost their kingdom and the Pharisees and the Sadducees saw the words being fulfilled forty years after Christ ascended into Heaven . The Romans Invaded Judea and the Temple was burnt to the ground , the populace were scattered and many were sold into slavery. Today Israel has neither a King, a Temple or a High-priesthood. The Body of Christ has a high priest , the Heavenly Jerusalem and an Eternal King of Kings sitting at the Right hand of the Father.

***Mr 8:38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.***

***Mt 23:36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.***

***Lamentations 5:1/19 ¶ Remember, O LORD, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach. Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens. We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows. We have drunken our water for money; our wood is sold unto us. Our necks are under persecution: we labour, and have no rest. We have given the hand to the Egyptians, and to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread. Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities. Servants have ruled over us: there is none that***

*doth deliver us out of their hand. We gat our bread with the peril of our lives because of the sword of the wilderness. Our skin was black like an oven because of the terrible famine. They ravished the women in Zion, and the maids in the cities of Judah. Princes are hanged up by their hand: the faces of elders were not honoured. They took the young men to grind, and the children fell under the wood. The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their musick. The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning. The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned! ¶ For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes are dim. **Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it.** Thou, O LORD, remainest for ever; thy throne from generation to generation.*

*Luke 13:34/35 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! **Behold, your house is left unto you desolate:** and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

*Luke 19:41/44 ¶ And when he was come near, he beheld the city (jerusalem), and wept over it, **Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and **they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another;** because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.***

## **5. The apocalyptic fall of Israel's Capital city and it being demolished was the hewing down of the Nation.**

***Mt 3:10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.***

The infant church fled to the mountains having heeded Christ's words and those of John the Baptist.

Lu 21:20 /24 **And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.**

***Mr 13:14** But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains: etcetera*

***Mt 22:7** But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.*

Jerusalem was burnt to the ground by the Romans and was purged by fire.

## **6. Fire is used of the purging and cleansing of the land.**

***Mt 3:10** And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

**Mt 24:28** For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

*Verse 28. For wheresoever the carcass is, the dead carcass. The Jewish nation, which was morally and judicially dead.*

*There will the eagles. The Roman armies, called so partly from their strength and fierceness, and partly from the figure of these animals which was always wrought on their ensigns, or even in brass, placed on the tops of their ensign-staves. It is remarkable that the Roman fury pursued these*

*wretched men wheresoever they were found. They were a dead carcass doomed to be devoured; and the Roman eagles were the commissioned devourers. See the pitiful account in Josephus, WAR, b. vii. c. 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, and 11. (from Adam Clarkes Comentary)*

## **The Jewish War-Book VI**

**CONTAINING THE INTERVAL OF ABOUT ONE MONTH. FROM THE GREAT EXTREMITY TO WHICH THE JEWS WERE REDUCED TO THE TAKING OF JERUSALEM BY TITUS.**

### **CHAPTER 1.**

**The miseries of the Jews increase—The Romans make an assault on the tower of Antonia. 70 AD**

(1) Thus did the miseries of Jerusalem grow worse and worse every day, and the seditious were still more irritated by the calamities they were under, even while the famine preyed upon themselves, after it had preyed upon the people. (2) And, indeed, the multitude of carcasses that lay in heaps one upon another was a horrible sight, and produced a pestilential stench, which was a hinderance to those who would make sallies out of the city and fight the enemy: but as those were to go in battle array who had been already used to ten thousand murders, and must tread upon those dead bodies as they marched along, (3) so were not they terrified, nor did they pity men as they marched over them; nor did they deem this affront offered to the deceased to be any ill omen to themselves; (4) but as they had their right hands already polluted with the murders of their own countrymen, and in that condition ran out to fight with foreigners, they seem to me to have cast a reproach upon God himself, as if he were too slow in punishing them; for the war was not now gone on with as if they had any hope of victory; for they gloried after a brutish manner in that despair of deliverance they were already in. (5) And now the Romans, although they were greatly distressed in getting together their materials, raised their banks in twenty-one days, after they had cut down all the trees that were in the country that adjoined to the city, and that for about twelve miles all around, as

I have already related. (6) And truly, the very view itself of the country was a melancholy thing; for those places which were before adorned with trees and pleasant gardens, were now become a desolate country all over, and its trees were all cut down: (7) nor could any foreigner that had formerly seen Judea and the most beautiful suburbs of the city, and now saw it as a desert, but lament and mourn sadly at so great a change; (8) for the war had laid all the signs of beauty quite waste: nor, if anyone that had known the place before had come suddenly to it now, would he have known it again; but though he were at the city itself, yet would he have inquired for it notwithstanding.

***Mt 3:10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.***

***Malachi 4:1 ¶ For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.***

The proof a true prophet of God is the fulfillment of his message. Today so many false prophets who have no understanding of the historical and contextual setting of the gospels proclaim that these words of Christ and the prophets are still to be fulfilled.

**Mt 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.**