

The Nazarene's Table

Matthew 2:23



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FOCAL Matthew 2:23^{KJV} 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.

This is one of the most interesting prophecies of Christ found in the Scripture. It is interesting because scholars have, from the very beginning of the Church Age, debated *what* prophecy Matthew was quoting or citing. You see, most of the prophecies of Christ can be easily traced back to their Old Testament source. That's not the case with this prophecy. There is no one specific Old Testament prophecy that says Jesus **shall be called a Nazarene**. That is not to say that the Old Testament doesn't support what the Holy Spirit said through Matthew. No, that's not the case, as you will see shortly. Our Lord Jesus often spoke in parables to *hide Kingdom truths* from those who had no relationship with Him. He told His disciples when they asked "Why do you speak in parables?":

Matthew 13:11 ... Because **it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.**

If you know Christ by faith, then it is given unto you to know this *parable among prophecies* - but if you do not know Him as Savior you will never see it. Please do as the Master has said and *become as babes*, trusting Him, yielding to Him.

Matthew 11:25 ... Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

Our sermon today is not for the wise, for the wily, for the intellectual giant. Our text is a text of faith, for spiritual people about to partake of a spiritual Table. We declare, with Jesus, that:

John 10:35 ... the scripture cannot be broken;

Prayer for Guidance:¹ O LORD God, help us now really to worship You. We thank You for this perfect moment in time where we, your Children, come to feast at the Table of Your Word and the Table of Remembrance. Our Father, this is a difficult passage, a hard saying, but we know it to be from you. We beg Thee, Precious Spirit, illuminate our minds and our hearts. Please, shut the door upon the world for us. Help us to forget our cares. Enable us to rise clean out of this world. May we get rid of all its down-dragging tendencies. May the attractions of these things be gone. We beg You, dear Spirit, if You will not Rapture our bodies, please Rapture our minds! We do not ask to see an angel in shining apparel, but we do ask that by faith we may see Jesus, and may His presence be so evidently realized among us that

¹ adapted from C.H. Spurgeon *Prayers*, Prayer Number 2, modified from Pastor David Buffalo's heart

we may rejoice as well as if our eyes beheld Him, and love Him and trust Him and worship Him as earnestly as we should do if we could now put our fingers into the print of the nails. Lord, teach us by Thy Spirit. Teach us at the Scripture, and teach us at the Table. Precious Lord Jesus Christ, we do adore You with all our hearts. You are Lord of all, and will one day reign even over the hardest of hearts. We bless You for becoming man that You would become our next of kin. Thank You for taking us into that wondrous marriage union with You. Thank You for redeeming us and for the inheritance that You have promised us in glory. You have given Your life for Your people. Let us give You our undivided attention as we seek to understand this Word. To You, O God, be the glory forever and ever. Amen!

1. The Lord's Table Emphasizes Who Jesus Christ Is And What He Has Done

FOCAL Matthew 2:23 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.

The Jews attached great significance to names, and Nazareth is a fascinating name. The name itself means *a shoot or branch*². The Hebrew name for Nazareth is Netzer³, which means a **Branch**.

² So says Robertson in *Word Pictures*, the full quote being. "The name Nazareth means a shoot or branch, but it is by no means certain that Matthew has this in mind".

When we look in the Old Testament prophecies of the Coming Christ we find the most *interesting parallel* in:

Isaiah 11:1-2 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and **a Branch⁴ shall grow out of his roots:** {2} And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

The *Coming Messiah* would necessarily be **The Branch growing from Jesse, the father of King David.** Messiah *must* come from Judah, must come from King David's dynasty, else He would not be Messiah.

Messiah *must* be **Netzer** or **Nazareth**, the Branch out of Jesse's roots.

God has said it, and it must be done. This is the only place among the Messianic prophecies where Jesus Christ is called **Netzer** or **Nazareth, the Branch from Jesse**, but there is another text where a *synonymous* Hebrew Word is used:

Jeremiah 23:5 "Behold, the days come, saith the

3 John Gill's *Exposition Of The Entire Bible* says, "A Nazarene, as David de Pomis says, "is one that is born in the city Netzer, which is said to be in the land of Galilee, three days journey distant from Jerusalem." (Lexic Heb. fol. 141. 2)

4 H5342, נֶצֶר, nêtser, nay'-tser, From H5341 in the sense of *greenness* as a striking color; a *shoot*; figuratively, a *descendant*: - branch., (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries)

LORD, that **I will raise unto David a righteous Branch⁵**, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth."

and again in:

Jeremiah 33:15 "In those days, and at that time, **will I cause the Branch⁵ of righteousness to grow up unto David;** and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land."

and again in:

Zechariah 3:8 "Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, **I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH⁵.**"

Though Jesus is called **the Branch** in the last three references, this is another Hebrew word for **Branch**.

It was understood by the early Apostles that Jesus would be a Branch from the line of King David. The Apostle Paul, preaching at the Synagogue in Antioch, said:

Acts 13:22-23 "[God] raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and

5 H6780, צֶמַח, tsemach, tseh'-makh, From H6779; a *sprout* (usually concretely), literally or figuratively: - branch, bud, that which (where) grew (upon), spring (-ing)., (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries)

said, **I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will. {23} Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:"**

Messiah is The Branch, and Nazareth means *The Branch*. Therefore Jesus must be known as "The Branch" or the Nazarene.

How important was it that Jesus be born in Nazareth?

You can see it's importance in the number of times that Jesus is given the title **Jesus of Nazareth**. Jesus was known to the crowds as:

Matthew 21:11 "... Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." (also Mat 26:71;

When Jesus met the demon possessed man and Capernaum the demons said:

Mark 1:24 "... Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God."

When blind Bartimaeus was on the Jericho road we read:

Mark 10:47 "when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me."

When the little maiden saw Peter lurking about outside of the Temple she said to him:

Mark 14:67 "... And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth."

When Jesus rose from the grave, leaving behind an empty tomb, the Angel of God told the disciples:

Mark 16:6 "... Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him."

Even after His resurrection our Lord was known in the Heavenly Kingdom **Jesus of Nazareth**. Though we who believe were first called **Christians** in Antioch:

Acts 11:26 "And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."

When the unbeliever wanted to *spit on Christ and the Christian* we were not called "Christian", but

rather **the sect of the Nazarene.**

When charges were brought against the Apostle Paul the enemy said:

Acts 24:5 For we have found this man [a] pestilent [fellow], and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:

Jesus is **The Nazarene**, and we who follow Him are **of the sect of the Nazarenes**. We are identified with Christ in the heavens. If you have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior then you are saved. You are of the **sect of the Nazarene**, members of the Family of God. **You are spiritually alive, raised up with Christ by the power of God. You are seated with Jesus in the heavenly realms^{NIV} (Ephesians 2:6-7).** This is the Table of the Nazarene!

When Jesus Christ took on humanity to be our Savior He did not come to the palace or to the political arenas. From the very beginning Jesus was rejected by the petty kings and priests of that day. Jesus Christ did not come to this earth to wear a kingly robe, but came and grew up in the most common of places.

Through the ages many presidents, kings, priests, and famous people have sat at the Table of the Nazarene, yet few understand it's implications. The Nazarene's

^{NIV} paraphrased from the New International Version of the Scripture

Table is a place where even the lowest of the low may come, for Nazareth was a despised place in Jewish history.

If you think, "I am too lowly to be saved, to share in God's Heaven", even as you say that the Table of the Nazarene reminds you that none are too low. Those who sat around that first Table were given little account by their peers. The first disciples were fishermen, tax collectors, sinners all - and yet all were welcome at Christ's Table. They paid nothing to be there, but Christ paid everything to fill that Table. When our Lord said:

Matthew 26:26-27 ... "... Take, eat; this is my body. {27} And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;"

Our Lord wanted His people to know that He left the Kingdom of Heaven and all it's splendor so as to lower Himself for us. There was no lower place in Israel than Nazareth.

Our Lord Jesus wanted us to know that the Nazarene's Table symbolizes for all time the sacrifice of the Cross. It is symbolic of Christ's **blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28)^{NIV}.**

The Nazarene died on the Cross to fulfill God's Promise

of salvation to all who believe. If you have accepted Christ as Savior, believing in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead *for your sake* (**Romans 10:9-11**), then you are saved. You not only *should* take of the Table, but you *ought* to take of it, honoring Jesus Christ for saving your soul. The Nazarene did the work, and it is His body and His Blood that purchased our salvation - blessed be the name of the Lord!

2. The Lord's Table Emphasizes That You Are Joined To Jesus Christ of Nazareth BY FAITH

FOCAL Matthew 2:23 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.**

There is another truth we need to see in this text. It states, **that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the PROPHETS**, a plural and not a singular word. How does **He shall be called a Nazarene** fit in with the fact that Matthew quoted **prophets**, not *a prophet*?

Nazareth was a place that was ridiculed, despised, the *hick town* of Christ's day that all made fun of. When **Philip** told his friend *Nathanael* about Jesus Christ, Nathanael said:

John 1:46 ... **Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?** Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

The great preacher **C.H. Spurgeon** stated⁶:

Never suppose that when You say, "He shall be called a Nazarene," that it signifies that he was called a Nazarite. Nazarite among the Jews would have been a title of honor, but Nazarene is simply a name of contempt. A late traveler tells us that he had a Mahometan guide through Palestine, and whenever they came to a village that was very dirty, poor, and inhabited by professed Christians, he always said, "These are not Moslems; they are netza," or "Nazarenes," throwing all the spite he possibly could into the word, as if he could not have uttered a more contemptuous term. To this day, then, our Lord has the name of the Nazarene affixed to him by those who reject him, and to this day Christians are called among Mahometans, Nazarenes.

Nazareth was a place that was *despised and rejected of man*. What better place for the Messiah to be identified with?

Jesus Himself was *despised and rejected* - the *prophets* uniformly said that He would be the most hated and ridiculed of men. When the prophet Isaiah spoke of the *Coming Branch, the Messiah*, he said:

Isaiah 53:2-5 For he shall grow up before him as a

⁶ sermon 1632, *The Nazarene and the Sect of the Nazarenes*, preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in Newington, England, June 9, 1881.

tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: **he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. {3} He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. {4} Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. {5} But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.**

Just as Nazareth was despised, the Nazarene was despised. We sing that song:

**Blessed Redeemer! Precious Redeemer!
Seems now I see Him on Calvary's tree;
Wounded and bleeding, for sinners pleading,
Blind and unheeding, dying for me! ⁷**

But we can scarcely understand what it is that Christ went through for us. Never was a Man beaten as our Savior was beaten. Look with shock on what should have been the Face of the Redeemer. His beard has been ripped from His face! Jesus was not forced to the Cross, but the Nazarene said:

⁷ **Blessed Redeemer**, Words by Avis M. Christiansen, Music by Harry D. Loes, 1920

Isaiah 50:6 I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

You sit here today, preparing to partake in the Nazarene's Table because Jesus Christ *willingly* died for your sins and mine. When the religious system of that day, cursed by unbelief in God, brought liars in to testify against Jesus, these violators of God's Eternal Law brought damnation on themselves - yet

Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

This Majesty, this King of Kings, this Lord of Lords, Whose every wish in Heaven was attended by angels, did not meet His earthly death as a Pharaoh would, or as an Assyrian potentate, or even as a Roman Caesar.

These high and powerful men would be attended with trumpets and drums, given every honor available as they were laid to rest in vast pyramids or ornate crypts. Not so with Jesus! The Bible says:

Isaiah 53:12 Therefore will I divide him a portion

with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and **he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.**

This is a Table of the Despised One. Jesus Christ was despised and rejected for *our sake*. Even in the Old Testament sacrifices the animals offered were not beaten beforehand. Bound to the altar, their throats were quickly slashed, and their atoning blood spilled for the sins of Israel. Christ Jesus our Lord was treated worse than any animal was treated - yet He bore this willingly for you and for me.

3. Some Final Thoughts Before We Partake Of The Nazarene's Table

There are several points of application I want to make before I close.

1 This is the Nazarene's Table, a ceremony given to the Church by Jesus of Nazareth. The Table reminds us of the death of Christ. The Scripture tells us that the words **Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews** was placed at the top of Christ's Cross:

John 19:19 And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And **the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE**

JEW.

If you have believed in Jesus Christ for salvation, if you have believed that **Jesus of Nazareth** died to save you, then you should partake of this Table. If not, do not partake of the Table when the bread and the cup are passed. God is watching, and knows your heart.

2 The Nazarene's Table is a ceremony established by the Despised Savior. There are many who love to be called a thing, and yet have no stomach for it once it is offered. Remember the words of Jesus:

John 15:19-20 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but **because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.**

{20} Remember the word that I said unto you, **The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.**

When you share in this Table you are telling both God and the others in this place that *you stand with Jesus*. If you stand with Jesus you will find yourself to be quite unpopular, hated even, because the Way of Christ is not the Way of the world. You partake of this Table showing that your allegiance is to Jesus, no matter what others may say.

3 Finally, the Nazarene's Table is a Table where the Saved gather.

Though we may be despised for our faith, if we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God He will exalt us in due season (**1 Peter 5:6**). One day all who honestly meet at this Table will meet at another Table at the *Marriage Supper of the Lamb*.

What a day that will be! Cling to Jesus, let the Nazarene's Table renew your vows to Him. If you have strayed from Him, let this be a moment where you recommit your life to Jesus. If you do not know Jesus Christ to be your Savior, call on Him, believe in Him, and you shall be saved.

May God touch your hearts with these words.

