

## Jesus, the Root Of Jesse's Tree

---

Michael J. Nielsen

Jesse Tree / Faith; Future; Root of Jesse / Genesis 22:1–18; Hebrews 11:17–22

---

- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Coming Advent King. Amen.

Many people today are fascinated by genealogies. For me, I would love to do this at some point in the future. In recent Christmas's a popular item for a gift was the DNA testing kit that would tell you where your ancestors came from. Through other links in online data sites such as ancestry.com, you can learn the names of the recent and distant men and women who form your family tree. You and I are all linked to an ancestral tree, and we pass on our ancestral DNA to the next generation.

The story told by the Jesse Tree began in the garden, and today, it leads us to a descendant of Adam and Eve, an elderly man by the name of Abraham. He was not the Promised Seed of the woman. But he was chosen by God to be the link between Eden and Bethlehem. Abram, as he was once known, was not a special person worthy of this blessing, in fact he was a pagan. He, like all of us, was chosen simply by the grace of God.

Today we consider a story familiar to most of us—a story told by the ram on the Jesse Tree. How Abraham, the bearer of the promise of the Seed of the woman, was prepared to obediently do the impossible: destroy Isaac, the son of promise and the next generation of the bearer of the promise of the Seed. But Abraham knew something that changed everything: he knew that God could raise Isaac from the dead. Jesse's tree would grow because its very root is not Adam, Eve, Abraham, or Isaac, but rather, it is Jesus.

Modern genetics can tell you a lot about who your ancestors were. In August 2012, the remains of a fifteenth-century English king, Richard III, were discovered under a parking lot. How did Archaeologists confirm the identity of the bones? By comparing the DNA in the bones to the DNA of a known twenty-

first century descendant of Richard III's brother! Hidden to the is the link that extends from generation to generation. But it is there.

In the Garden of Eden as man and woman fell into sin, their Creator had immediately promised that One who was the "Seed" of the woman would defeat the serpent. Through the generations, God had preserved the human race, and the world was populated. Generations later, a man by the name of Abram was called by God from the idolatry of humanity to a relationship with Him. And then God made a promise—to Abram, now to be called Abraham, and to his wife, Sarah, would be born a son.

The challenging part of God's promise of a son to Abraham and Sarah was that they were long past the age for bearing children. Through married for years, Sarah had never conceived a child. The very idea of having a son at their age would be...well, impossible. They were in their 9th and 10th decades! Yes, impossible—except for one thing. It was not man but God who made the promise, and with Him, nothing is impossible.

This promised son was to be named Isaac. But more important than his name was his role in redemption of all humanity. Isaac was to be the bearer of a seed and the father of nations. From Isaac would come Jacob. From Jacob would come Judah. From Judah would come Jesse. From Jesse would come David. And from David would come Mary. And miracle of miracles, from Mary, the virgin mother, would come the Christ, the Seed promised to our first parents at the fall. Impossible? Not with God.

It is hard to imagine what Abraham must have felt as heard the promise of the Lord, who gave him Isaac. Oh, the joy he and Sarah must have experienced when their son, Isaac, was born! I can't relate to what could have been 60-70 years of praying for a child, but we did for several years...and the joy we had when Hannah was born and likewise Miriam, Jonah, and Naomi. Surely, like any parents, Abraham and Sarah must have invested them of themselves in this son of promise as he grew from infancy to childhood. This promised son must have been the center of their world.

What must have gone through Abraham's mind and heart as he later heard the same Lord say:

**English Standard Version Chapter 22**

“Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

If it was me, my mouth would have dropped open, I would have sobbed. I would have questioned what God was doing. I would have cried out to God. Abraham though in an amazing act of obedience prepared to fulfill this demand. He prepared the wood, the fire, and the knife. And there was His Son, Isaac, the son of promise, bound on an altar and wood. In Abraham's hand was the knife as he prepared to kill his son.

Until God said,

**English Standard Version Chapter 22**

“Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”

Imagine that scene. Imagine the sweat pouring down the face of Abraham...and Isaac. Imagine the nervousness in the stomach of Abraham. The future, embodied in Isaac, was on an altar about to be sacrificed. The future now appeared dark and horrifying. Have you ever been there? Looking at the future and being afraid, because it appears dark and horrifying. Maybe it's from the death of someone you love...it's scary without them. Maybe it's the diagnosis of a life-threatening illness. Maybe it's just the Covid-Crisis we are in. Maybe you have lost a job or taken a break from school. It doesn't matter what it is that causes the future to look dark and horrifying. Abraham was there. He went from ecstatic joy to looking at a future, that didn't make sense.

Except for one thing, Abraham, as the writer to the Hebrews would express it:

**English Standard Version Chapter 11**

He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

Abraham could not see the future, but he trusted the Lord, who held the future, and knew that with God, all things were possible.

God's promises can never fail. Abraham knew that. He believed that. And so do we. Just look at what happens through the Son of Promise, Isaac. He lives, and though he fails and fails over and over, he still fulfills God's purpose. The generations of Isaac's descendants continue through the centuries. The promised Seed remains in the line God had chosen to bear a Savior, not just for that family, but for all the children of Adam...which includes you and me. Abraham rejoiced when his son was born. He rejoiced when his son was spared. And he rejoiced at the promise of a Son yet to come.

And we rejoice also in the promised Seed, who, as the angels would declare, we call by the name Jesus. He is the Seed promised. He is the Root from which Jesse's tree grows. He is the reconciler of the past, the redeemer of the present, the hope of the future.

In Isaac was a Seed, and we know that Seed in human form in the virgin-born Son of God. There is the very Lamb of God. When Isaac was spared from Abraham's knife, the Lord provided a sacrifice in Isaac's place—a ram caught in a thicket. So He provides a substitute for you and for me and all of humanity—Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. One sacrifice for all time and all people. One death in place of our deaths. One tomb in place of our tombs. And one resurrection by which we, too, shall be raised on the Last Day. One Baptism that we share. One Supper where He brings life, forgiveness and peace. Hope, joy, and certainty. All in Jesus, the Root of Jesse's Tree.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

- › Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.