

## Who was Jesse in the Bible?

Jesse in the Bible is father of David and thus an important part of the lineage of Christ, the Son of David (Matthew 22:42). We don't know much about Jesse as a person; most of the Bible's references to Jesse come in the context of his relation to his famous son David.

In order to understand the rich history surrounding the name of Jesse, one might begin by tracing his lineage back to Abraham. God chose Abraham and promised that through his seed all the nations of the world would be blessed (Genesis 22:16-18). Jumping forward several generations, we are introduced to Boaz, a wealthy and God-fearing resident of Bethlehem. Boaz demonstrates God's redemptive character by wedding himself to Ruth the Moabitess, who forsook her ungodly heritage (see Numbers 25:1-5) and clung to the God of Israel (Ruth 1:16).

The book of Ruth is an incredible story of God's salvific nature. By faith Ruth is welcomed into the fellowship of God's covenant people, Israel. After her marriage to Boaz, Ruth gives birth to Obed (Ruth 4:13), and the Bethlehemite women rejoice in the blessing of God over her family (verses 14-15). Boaz and Ruth's son Obed later begets Jesse, who becomes the father of David (verse 22), God's choice for king for Israel (1 Samuel 16:1). Thus Ruth was granted a place of honor as the great-grandmother of David, who was a type of and faithful predecessor to the Christ-King

Jesse takes the stage with his eight sons in 1 Samuel 16-17. The prophet Samuel invites Jesse and his family to a sacrificial feast, but Jesse only brings his seven oldest sons, including Eliab, Abinadab, and Shammah; all seven were rejected by God as king (1 Samuel 16:6-10). Jesse had chosen to leave David, his youngest son, to tend the sheep.

However, it is this lowly shepherd boy whom, to the probable surprise of both Jesse and Samuel, God directs Samuel to anoint as the chosen king (1 Samuel 16:11-13). Although it is David's kingship that typifies and anticipates the reign of the Christ-King, Jesse's name still receives mention in a couple prophecies of the Messiah.

In Isaiah, Jesse is mentioned as the stump from which a Branch (Christ) would come forth to be a banner for all peoples; to this banner all nations would rally (Isaiah 11:1-3, 10; cf. Jeremiah 23:5). Furthermore, Micah 5:2 identifies Bethlehem—the little town of Jesse—as the source of the King of all kings. The Branch from the root of Jesse would eventually spring forth and bear everlasting fruit.

The New Testament begins with these words: “This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1). From God's promise to Abraham and all the way to God's promised Messiah, our vision of God's universal program of salvation expands as new narratives bring fuller color and understanding. Jesus' genealogy in Matthew references not only Israelites but also Gentiles, including Rahab, the God-fearing mother of Boaz and former prostitute from Jericho (Joshua 2:1-21), and Ruth the Moabitess, grandmother of Jesse. From this mixed (Jew and Gentile) clan, Christ came to be the banner not just for the people of Israel but for peoples of all nations (Romans 15:7-13). Jesus was not the beginning of a message of salvation for all but the climactic expression and extension of the salvation God had already extended to all who believe.

Who is Jesse? Although a relatively minor character in the biblical drama, Jesse shares in a rich lineage essential to God's plan of redemption for all nations. May Jesse's name be to you a symbol of a grander narrative, a blessed lineage, a beacon of hope for

all who choose to call upon the name of the Lord, young and old, Jew and Gentile, slave and free.