

“The Root of Jesse”

Romans 15:12-13

Theme: Jesus Christ alone provides lasting hope for all who trust in Him.

The Christmas season is filled with familiar images—trees trimmed with lights, ornaments passed down through generations, and roots that hold traditions in place year after year. Yet for many, beneath the glow and nostalgia, there remains a quiet ache: *Is there any real hope beneath all of this?* Decorations fade, gatherings end, and the world’s troubles do not pause for Christmas.

When the apostle Paul points us to “**the root of Jesse**”, he draws our attention not to sentiment, but to **substance**—not to what looks impressive above ground, but to what gives life beneath it. Isaiah’s prophecy, quoted in Romans 15:12, was spoken to a people who believed the Davidic line was finished, cut down like a stump. From that place of apparent loss and despair, God promised that a root would spring forth—and that this Root would not only restore Israel but become the hope of the nations.

That is precisely what we celebrate at Christmas. Christ did not come as a decorated tree admired from a distance; He came as the **living Root**, quietly, humbly, yet powerfully, bringing life where there was only death and hope where there was none. He entered a dark world not to entertain it, but to rule it—and to save all who would place their hope in Him.

I. The Provision of the Title – “*Again, Isaiah says, ‘There shall come the root of Jesse, ...’*”

A. The Purposes of the Title

1. As the Apostle Paul addresses the unity that exists within the people of God – both Jew and Gentile - he is directed by God’s Spirit to remind them of God’s original intention to save all men, including the Gentiles – vv. 8-9.
2. He provides us demonstration of the fact that this acceptance of the Gentiles is not an innovation, a “Plan-B,” or some evidence of a failure by Christ to save enough Jews
3. Although it is true that for millennia, the Gentiles were excluded from the people of God and God focused on the Jews, it is not to be considered the unalterable purpose of God – cp. ***Ephesians 2:12***.
4. Rather, it is the eternal plan of God to bring Himself glory – and Paul demonstrates this through the quotation of four Old Testament Scriptures that progressively demonstrate that the Gentiles are to be included in the people of God who bring Him glory.

- a) First, the Jews were to bring God glory *among* the Gentiles – “... as it is written, ‘Therefore I will give praise to You among the Gentiles and I will sing to Your name’.” – cp. *Psalms 18:49*.¹
 - b) Second, the Gentiles were to bring God glory *along with* the Jews – “Again he says, ‘Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people’.” – cp. *Deuteronomy 32:43*.²
 - c) Third, the Gentiles were to bring God glory *on their own* – “And again, ‘Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise Him’.” – cp. *Psalms 117:1*.³
5. Finally, Paul draws from another Old Testament text to demonstrate that the inclusion of the Gentiles was not the accomplishment of the Jews but was the purpose and accomplishment of God Himself – “Again Isaiah says, ‘There shall come the root of Jesse, and He who arises to rule over the Gentiles, in Him shall the Gentiles hope’.” – cp. *Isaiah 11:10*.
 6. In his celebration of the accommodation by Christ of *all men*, Paul appeals to the Law, Prophets, and Writings – demonstrating that this is the theme of the entire Old Testament and not an obscure reference.
 7. The introduction of “*the root of Jesse*” describes the sovereign work of God, serving not only as the source of Davidic promises from which the Messiah would come, but also as the result of His sovereign purposes in providing the Messiah through that line.
 - a) Jesse is David’s father – *1 Samuel 16:1*.
 - b) David is the covenant king to whom God promised an eternal throne – *2 Samuel 7:12-16*.
 - c) David’s descendant will be the fulfillment of this promise to David – v. 12.
 - d) Jesus is this descendant – *Romans 1:3*.
 8. Despite the dire state of Israel and its loss of glory and defeat at the hands of the Assyrians, leaving Israel like a cut-down tree with only a remaining stump to show for it, there is hope to be found in the “root” that is still alive – *Isaiah 11:1*.

¹ Context: David is praising God for victories provided by God throughout his life over the surrounding Gentile nations and prophecies about a time when those nations will likewise glorify God.

² Context: Moses is praising God and reminding Israel of how good God has been – expanding his view beyond the Jewish people to all the Gentiles.

³ Context: the shortest Psalm in the psalter provides a call for “all nations” to praise the Lord.

B. The Power in the Title

1. The references to both the “*root*” firmly established and the “shoot” springing up address the true nature of God’s provision.
2. It speaks to the uniqueness of God’s Son by whom all things are created and from whom they derive life (“root”) as well as the provision that will spring from Him (the “shoot”).
3. In other words, a root is not merely something that extends from a tree, but it gives life to the tree.
4. Jesus is not merely born into history; He stands behind history – it is truly “HIS-story!”
5. Hence, the baby that we celebrate this Christmas is not merely the root, but the shoot as well – cp. *Revelation 22:16*.
6. As such, Jesus alone overcomes – *Revelation 5:5*.

C. The Provision for the Title

1. In giving the Christ child, God demonstrates His faithfulness to His Word, and the incarnation is the grand declaration.
2. Again, the imagery is of the ostensibly dead Davidic monarchy, having been compared to a stump of a felled tree.
3. The Kingdom has been cut down by Assyria, there remains no longer a king, and only a stump remains.
4. The promise given through Isaiah is that new, royal life would spring from what appeared dead.
5. When Jesus is born in Bethlehem, he does not arrive as a reigning king but as a child of an impoverished, forgotten line – cp. *Luke 2:4*.
6. When the angel announces Jesus’ conception to Mary, he declares that Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s promises for a king who will reign forever – cp. *Luke 1:32-33*.

II. The Priority of the Title – “*And He who arises to rule over the Gentiles ...*”

A. The Reign

1. This child, born in obscurity, in a village too small and insignificant to merit such distinction, is the “*root of Jesse*” – having existed eternally – cp. *Micah 5:2*.
2. Yet, his rule will not be only over Israel, but over all men.

3. The term *“arises”* [ἀνίστημι] - speaks of divine action not merely natural process – lit. referring to “standing up” or taking one’s stand – *Psalm 2:6-8*.
4. Jesus came to accomplish a divine mission – that would result in His right *“to rule”* [ἄρχω] – to gain the status of ruler – cp. *Isaiah 9:6-7*.
5. This is the reason the wise men who came from the east sought the King of the Jews – cp. *Matthew 2:1-2*.

B. The Region

1. Yet, Jesus is not a regional King but the universal King – extending his reign beyond Israel and including the entire world – *“rule over the Gentiles.”*
2. We know that the rule of Christ Jesus as He sits on the throne of His father David, will be worldwide – again see *Isaiah 11:10*.
3. This will not merely be a political or governmental but will be a worldwide spiritual reign in which Jesus will endure no rebellion or dissidence – but an absolute compliance with His will, word, and ways – cp. *Daniel 7:13-14; Revelation 11:15; Zechariah 14:16-17*.
4. These verses demonstrate that the reign of Jesus Christ will not be confined to Israel or even to the Middle East, but will engage the entire world during the Millennial Kingdom.
5. Yet, this is the certified future of the baby born in Bethlehem, lauded as the King of the Jews, and destined to rule the world in a literal, earthly kingdom on the literal throne of David for a literal 1,000 years.

III. The Prospect in the Title – *“... in Him shall the Gentiles hope.”*

A. Our Hope’s Focus

1. Whether Jew or Gentile, the hope of the world is focused on Jesus Christ – as our text states: *“In Him shall the Gentiles hope.”*
2. This hope is not a sentimental, positive outlook filled with wishful thinking, but a confidence in the future fulfillment of God’s promises, grounded primarily in the past fulfillment of His Word.
3. The birth of Jesus proves that God keeps His Word, with every promise from Genesis 3:15 to Isaiah 9:6 being literally and completely fulfilled in Christ.

4. Our greatest problem is not loneliness, oppression, or lack of meaning, but the separation from God due to sin – [Ephesians 2:12](#).
5. When God provided the solution to our sin, hope was also born – [Luke 2:10-11](#).
6. Jesus Christ, the one born of Mary and lived as the Son of God is Himself our hope – cp. [Colossians 1:27](#).

B. Our Hope's Faith

1. This hope is available to all men – not merely the Jews – there is a clear demonstration that *“the Gentiles”* will *“hope” “in Him.”*
2. As a group, the Gentiles demonstrate what is available to the individual – they went from being excluded from God to being reconciled to Him through faith in Christ Jesus – cp. [Ephesians 2:11-13](#).
3. It isn't favorable circumstances, financial prosperity, or environmental improvement that provide “hope”; it is Jesus Christ, who Himself is our “hope.”
4. In this sense, our faith in Christ Jesus provides us the assurance of our hope – cp. [Hebrews 11:1](#).

C. Our Hope's Fruitfulness

1. As we place our faith in Christ our *“hope,”* is not a vague optimism, but a saving hope that becomes increasingly fruitful – *“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”*
2. This is the Christmas message – the “good news” announced on that first Christmas long ago – [Luke 2:10-11](#).
3. The *“root of Jesse”* is the prophecy of Him who will not only reign forever as ruler over all people, but it is the identity of the One in whom our hope of redemption rests.
4. Christmas is not ultimately about what was born in Bethlehem – but about who it is who saves and reigns – the *“root of Jesse”* and “Son of David” has come and has been given the power and authority to save anyone who will place their faith in Him.
5. The question of the morning is whether your life is truly rooted in Him.

So What?

1. Where might I be celebrating the baby of Christmas while resisting the authority of Jesus the King.
2. How does the reality that Christ reigns now – not merely that He was born then – call for repentance, renewed faith, or deeper obedience?
3. Is my faith rooted in Jesus Christ and what is the evidence that the fruit of that root is genuine?

Jesus Christ alone provides lasting hope for all who trust in Him.