

# ***THE JESSE TREE***

by Phyllis Meshel Onest

Adapted from Dean Lambert's *The Advent Jesse Tree*. Other sources noted where they are used.

**COSTUMES:** If desired, have each speaker dressed in biblical attire, with suggestions as noted.

**PROPS** are essential to this production. They are noted with each speaker. Some can be posterboard drawings.

**SPEAKING PARTS:** Rather than have each part memorized, the speakers are asked to be "familiar" with the text. Each speaker can hold his/her text behind his/her prop.

Speaker 1:	holds the Scriptures
Speaker 2:	holds the icon of the Jesse Tree
Speaker 3,4:	Adam & Eve hold a branch with an apple & snake
Speaker 5:	Noah holds an Ark
Speaker 6:	Abraham holds a camel &/or a tent
Speaker 7:	Isaac holds a lamb
Speaker 8:	Jacob holds a ladder
Speaker 9:	Joseph holds/wears a colorful coat
Speaker 10:	Ruth holds a sheaf of wheat
Speaker 11:	Jesse holds a stump with a fresh shoot/leaf
Speaker 12:	David holds a slingshot or harp
Speaker 13:	Solomon holds a Temple
Speaker 14,15,16:	Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego hold flames
Speaker 17, 18:	Mary & Joseph hold a lily and carpenter's tools
Speaker 19:	holds the icon of the Nativity

## Speaker 1: **HOLDS THE OLD TESTAMENT**

It has been said, "The Old Testament conceals what the New Testament reveals." What is the Old Testament concealing and how are the many events and people tied together? What do they have in common? The answer is revealed in Matthew 1:21 "she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." This was the purpose of the Old Testament! God chose a people to bring forth His only Son. Although these chosen people would not understand many of the events God would allow to happen to them, His purpose would finally be revealed when Jesus came to earth.

## Speaker 2: **HOLDS THE ICON OF THE JESSE TREE**

In many icons and church frescoes we find the symbols and pictures that tell of Jesus' ancestors. One particular icon pattern is called the "Tree of Jesse." In this scene we see a trail of vines connecting King David, Jesse, Abraham, the Three Holy Youths and many other Old Testament figures and family members with the Theotokos and Christ Child. Today we will use symbols from the Old Testament to form our own "Jesse Tree" and trace the heritage of Jesus Christ from the beginning of creation. [*Taken from Feasts & Families: The Season of Christmas by Constance Tarasar.*]

## Speaker 3,4: **ADAM & EVE: The Apple and snake wrapped around it.**

Genesis 3:1-10

In the beginning Satan saw that the most wonderful of all God's works were Adam and Eve. He set out to make them disobey God. There was one fruit tree God had told Adam and Eve not to eat. He told them that if they did, they would die.

Eve listened to the lies of Satan who told her that instead of dying, she would be just like God. Adam and Eve both ate of the forbidden fruit. Their disobedience allowed sin to enter the world. Both were sent out of the Garden. The only way to get back to God was to take sin away. Because God loved His creation, He promised a Savior who would come and take sin away and bring us back to God.

Speaker 5: **NOAH: An Ark** Genesis 6:5-8; 7:17-23; 9:16

After Adam and Eve left the Garden, sin grew worse and worse. Soon there were many people who did not love God, and were doing things God did not want them to do. He decided to destroy all the bad people by sending a great flood! There was one man, however, who did love God and followed Him in all His ways.

God told Noah to build a very big boat called an ark. If Noah was faithful, God would save his family. Sure enough, the flood came, and all the people outside the boat were drowned. Only those in the ark were saved.

After the flood God promised never to destroy the world again. The rainbow is a sign of His promise. Just as the ark was Noah's salvation, Jesus is our salvation, and the Church is our ark.

Speaker 6: **ABRAHAM: A Camel and a Tent**, Genesis 12:1-7

When we think of a camel and a tent, we think of people who travel a lot. God loved Abram and told him to leave his country and relatives to go to another country that he had never seen before. When God spoke to Abram, he believed, and when he believed, he obeyed. He crossed deserts where there was no water, and he lived in tents. When Abram got to the land of Canaan, God promised "I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves." [Genesis 12:3] And God gave Abram a new name, Abraham, which means, "Father of many nations." God gave Abraham a son named Isaac.

Speaker 7: **ISAAC: The Lamb** Genesis 22:1-13

One day God told Abraham to take Isaac to a mountain and kill him as a sacrifice to God. God was testing Abraham's faith. When Abraham took a knife out to kill his son Isaac, God told him to stop. A male lamb, a ram, was caught in a nearby bush. God told Abraham to let the lamb take Isaac's place. In John 1:21 we read "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Jesus is the Lamb of God. He died for our sins. Isaac prefigures Jesus.

Speaker 8: **JACOB: The Ladder** Genesis 27:41-28:22

Let me tell you about a very special dream. Isaac had a son named Jacob. When he journeyed to another country to find a wife, Jacob felt very alone and very tired. He lay down on the ground, used a stone for a pillow, and went to sleep. He dreamed a strange and wonderful dream. He saw a ladder that reached way up to the sky! Angels were going up and down the ladder and God was standing at the top. Jacob was told that many wonderful things would happen to him because God loved him. Jesus would come from Jacob's family. When Jacob awoke, he knew that God was with him and he would never be the same again!

Speaker 9: **JOSEPH: A Colorful Coat**, Genesis 37: 3-36; 50: 18-21

If God loves us and takes care of us, why do troubles come? This is something we cannot understand, but we have a promise from God that He will use everything for our good, even our troubles, if we love Him. Joseph had many troubles, but all his troubles turned out for his good and for the good of many more of God's people.

Jacob loved his son Joseph very much and had given him a special coat of many colors. One day Joseph went out to find his brothers in the field. His brothers were angry and jealous because of some dreams Joseph had that seemed to say that all of Joseph's eleven brothers

would bow down before him some day. Not only that, but the beautiful coat was the kind that important people wore. It showed that their father thought Joseph was the most important of his sons. They wanted to kill him, but instead sold him as a slave to some people going to Egypt.

God allowed all this to happen to Joseph for a greater purpose. Joseph became a great ruler in Egypt and when his brothers needed help, he was able to take care of them. Even though his brothers had been bad to him, Joseph was willing to forgive them.

Speaker 10: **RUTH: A Sheaf of Wheat** Ruth 1:16; 2:5-17; 4:14

Ruth did not know God at first because she was not from Israel. She was from Moab. When her Israelite husband died, she loved her mother-in-law Naomi so much that she was willing to follow Naomi to Bethlehem. Ruth's love for Naomi melted into love for Naomi's God. She wanted to take care of Naomi, so she worked in the fields to get food for both of them to eat. This is where a man named Boaz saw her, came to love her, then married her. They had a child named Obed. And Obed had a son Jesse. The story of Ruth shows God's plan of salvation reaching beyond the people of Israel to include all people who trust in Him.

Speaker 11: **JESSE: A Stump with a fresh shoot or leaf** Isaiah 11:1-5

There came a time when the people of God, the nation of Israel, was cut off from God because of their sins. During this time the prophet Isaiah sang for them a new song of hope. From their brokenness would shoot forth a New Branch. Christ would be firmly planted in righteousness and justice. A 1000 years would pass, and through the family tree of Jesse and his son David, Jesus, the "Anointed One," the Messiah, the Christ, would come. Jesse is the stump; Jesus is the shoot.

In Isaiah 11: 1-3 we read, "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. 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 the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord...."

Speaker 12: **KING DAVID: A Slingshot or a Harp** I Samuel 16-17

King David was one of the greatest kings in the world! He started out as a shepherd boy. He was strong and good and God decided to let him be king over His people. In first Samuel we read that the prophet Samuel poured oil over David's head so that David would know that someday he was going to be king.

One day a giant named Goliath came to fight God's people and everyone was afraid of Him except David. David knew that God's spirit was with him and would take care of him. With a small slingshot David hit Goliath on the head and he fell over dead. Later David became a mighty king because he obeyed God and did the things that pleased Him, and through David, Jesus was in the family line to be our King. And David had a son named Solomon.

Speaker 13: **KING SOLOMON: A Temple** II Samuel

In a vision Solomon chose wisdom rather than wealth and was endowed by God with both gifts. His name became famous throughout the world. The work of building the Temple in Jerusalem was performed under Solomon's direction. His wisdom and wealth brought visitors from afar. During his 40-year-reign he wrote 3000 Proverbs, 1005 Songs and Ecclesiastics. God never forgot His promise to bring a greater King to the world through the royal lineage of the house of David. *[Taken from Who's Who in the Bible by Albert E. Sims.]*

Speakers 14,15,16: **THE THREE HOLY YOUTHS: Flames** Daniel 3

One day, long ago, when the people of God were captives of the Babylonians, a wicked king named Nebuchadnezzar made a huge idol. If his subjects did not bow to it, they would be thrown into a fiery furnace. When the trumpets blew, everyone bowed down except three brave, young men - Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They dared to say "no" to King Nebuchadnezzar, and they were willing to die for their beliefs. The king did throw them into the furnace, but something strange happened!

The King saw a fourth person in the fire walking. It was an Angel of the Lord. The fire did not harm them at all! Because they said "no" the king began to praise God. Just as they knew their God would deliver them from the fiery furnace, we know God will take care of us too.

We remember the three Holy Youths at Holy Saturday Matins. We sing their song: "Praise the Lord. Sing and exalt Him throughout all the ages."

Speaker 17,18: **MARY AND JOSEPH: A Lily and Carpenter's Tools**

Many years have now passed. Mary, the daughter of Joachim and Anna, had been living in the Temple since she was three years old. But now she was a young maiden, about fourteen years of age and it was time for her to leave the Temple and be married, as was the custom of the Israelites. According to the Protoevangelion [First Gospel] of James, Mary did not want to marry. Her parents had devoted her to the service of the Lord and she had vowed to remain a virgin. The High Priest and other holy men consulted God in prayer. A voice was heard saying that according to the prophet Isaiah "A rod shall come forth from the root of Jesse, and a flower shall ascend from his root..." They understood this to mean that all men of the house and family of David that were unmarried and fit for marriage should place their rods, their walking sticks, on the altar in the Temple. Whoever's rod produced a flower was the man to whom the Virgin Mary would be betrothed and married.

Even though Joseph was a much older man, it was God's plan for Joseph to be betrothed to Mary and to become Jesus' guardian. So of all the rods placed on the altar, Joseph's flowered. After they were betrothed, Joseph learned that Mary was pregnant. The Bible says that he was a just man and unwilling to shame her, so he planned to dissolve the betrothal and send her away secretly. After an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and explained all that was to happen, Joseph did what God asked of him. He, too, was faithful to God.

Speaker 19: **HOLDS THE ICON OF THE NATIVITY**

As we celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord, let us remember His many ancestors and their roles in preparing for the coming of the Messiah, the Holy One of God, Emanuel, "God Is With Us."

**All sing the musical ending from Vespers:**

"God is with us, God is with us, Understand ye all nations; and submit yourselves, and submit yourselves, for God is with us..."