

## The Issachar Ministry - Australia

### The Symbolism of the Palm Tree in Scripture

The following chapters will give you some idea of the symbolic importance of the Palm Tree in the Bible. While this might just seem to be an interesting study, the reason it's outlined here is to highlight the link between these "Royal Trees" and the City of Palms Fellowship, based in Carnarvon, Western Australia.

Peter McArthur  
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#### Chapter 1

##### Instances of Palm Trees in Scripture

The Palm Tree plays a significant role in Biblical symbolism, or what is correctly called "typology". Palm trees are first mentioned in the Book of Exodus where 70 palms and 12 wells are described near the town of Elim (Exo. 15: 27). See page 5 for the prophetic meaning of this.

Deborah, one of the judges of Israel, was noted for delivering her pronouncements sitting under a palm tree. And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment (Judg. 4: 5) This means that the palm tree is associated with the ideas of "judging" and "government". For this reason it is sometimes referred to as the Royal Tree.

Palm trees were one of the few images that God commanded should adorn the Temple: Then Solomon carved all the walls of the temple all around, both the inner and outer sanctuaries, with carved figures of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers (1 Kgs 6: 29).

Likewise in Ezekiel's vision of the temple he saw palm trees engraved upon the gates and archways (Ezek. 40: 16-22)

The strategic city of Jericho was known in the Bible as the City of Palms. Then the men who were designated by name rose up and took the captives, and....they brought them to their brethren at Jericho, the city of palm trees (2 Chron. 28: 15). We believe this has prophetic implications in regard to Carnarvon (See page 8). It was also the place where Israel first entered into its spiritual inheritance, when it crossed over into the Promised Land.

In Ezekiel's vision he sees palm trees carved into the gateposts of the Temple. Seven steps led up to it, and its archway was in front of them; and it had palm trees on its gateposts, one on this side and one on that side (Ezek. 40: 26). The gateposts are places of authority and power, and their relationship to palm trees suggest that palms are identified with authority, divine power and entering into new spiritual realms.

At Jesus' entry into Jerusalem the crowds welcomed Him with palm branches in their hands (John 12: 13).

John the beloved disciple was given a vision of heavenly things and there saw thousands of righteous saints standing before the Lord with palm branches in their hands: After these things I



looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands (Rev. 7: 9). These branches represent the righteous acts of the saints.

## Chapter 2

### The prophetic meaning of Palms

The palm was one of the few trees chosen by the Lord to be used for making booths during the Feast of Tabernacles: And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days (Lev. 23: 40 compare Neh. 8: 15). Since Tabernacles is an end time feast, and has a prophetic implication, we can see that the use of the palm tree in this feast gives weight to the tree's importance. The fact that the saints in heaven stand with palm branches in hand (Rev. 7: 9) attests to the truth that palms represent end time issues.

Palm trees also stand for the righteous saints of the Lord. The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree (Psa. 92: 12). The Hebrew word for palm is "tamar" which means "to erect", "to be erect" or "to be a pillar". The association with being righteous is obvious : righteous people can stand erect and upright before the Lord and are pillars of righteousness in His sight.

Exodus 15: 27 is the first mention of palm trees in the Bible, where it's said that the Israelites camped at Elim, a place with 70 palm trees and 12 wells of fresh water. This is significant, for the number 70 is the number standing for Hebrew government (the 70 elders of Moses and the 70 disciples of Jesus) and the number representing the Gentile nations (Gen. 10: 1-26). The number 12 is also that representing "government", as in the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 disciples . Put together this verse gives us a clue to another aspect of palm trees, that regarding divinely inspired government, oversight and eldership. Thus it is seen as an end time verse when the saints of God, initially out of Israel (=12) but now including the Gentiles (=70), shall bring the Kingdom of God to govern upon the face of the earth!

It's also significant that in Exodus 15: 23-27 we find that the very first time palm trees are mentioned is after a divine intervention of healing at the waters of Marah. The very next place that Israel stops at is Elim. Here the palm trees are linked to water and rest, both of which point to our end time refreshment in God and the Sabbath rest that awaits us. So palms clearly speak to us of the refreshment and rest that comes after divine intervention.

In the Hebrew language the palm tree is also referred to as "umbrella-like" referring to the idea of "covering, shade, and protection". Thus the palm tree prophetically represents a place of protection and anointed covering.

Along with the grape vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate and the apple tree, the palm symbolises "joy" .The vine has dried up, and the fig tree has withered; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree; all the trees of the field are withered; surely joy has withered away from the sons of men (Joel 1: 12).

It is called the "goodly tree" by many rabbis. No doubt this is partly due to it being used as a covering in the booths built for the feast of Tabernacles.

In some Jewish thinking the palm tree is regarded as a pillar stretching from earth to heaven, and therefore symbolising "divine communication". Deborah's choice of the palm to sit under while giving judgment in the name of God would seem to indicate that the palm was associated with divine inspiration and communication.

Palm trees were identified with the Cherubim in both Solomon's temple (1 Kgs. 7: 36) and Ezekiel's temple vision. And it was made with cherubim and palm trees, a palm tree between cherub and cherub. Each cherub had two faces, so that the face of a man was toward a palm tree on one side, and the face of a young lion toward a palm tree on the other side; thus it was made throughout the temple all around. (Ezek. 41: 18-19). Cherubs signify supernatural power and lions signify earthly power. The fact that the palm tree is associated with both suggests it has great symbolic value.

### Chapter 3

#### Carnarvon as a walled City of Palms

The town of Carnarvon in Western Australia, has links to its Welsh namesake, the city of Caernarfon. In Welsh the name literally means "the city by the river". This of course also applies to Carnarvon in WA. The similarity doesn't stop there: Caernarfon is on the north west coast of the country, just as Carnarvon is in Australia, and both have a history of maritime activity.

The ancient part of the Welsh city has a wall surrounding it, and although Carnarvon is neither ancient nor has walls around it, in the spiritual sense we believe there have been walls of salvation and praise "built" here through spiritual warfare, intercession, prayer walking, and spiritual mapping through recent years.

However, Carnarvon in WA also has spiritual links with another ancient city, Jericho! This has been called the oldest city in the world, but Biblically it is famous for its strategic location as a gateway to the promised land.

Carnarvon sits almost on the most westerly point of Australia, and like Jericho, is located in a very strategic area. It has been the focus on New Age activity for some years because it sits on a number of "ley lines" that New Agers believe to be spiritually influential. The most easterly point of mainland Australia is Byron Bay. That and Carnarvon are associated with dolphins, New Age philosophy, and ley lines, and both places are regarded as spiritually strategic within New Age circles. The parallel seems obvious in Christian terms - if the enemy has a strategic thrust for Carnarvon, so too does the Lord! Remember that Jericho likewise was a strategic place that also served as the gateway into the Promised Land.

Carnarvon has many varieties of palm trees growing in it, and while it certainly isn't unique in this, it does add to the familiarity many who have been to Jericho feel with Carnarvon.

Sister Francine Lovell, a prophetess from the USA remarked on this when visiting Carnarvon in the 1990's. Being invited to minister here, the very first thing she said after disembarking from the plane was "from the air this place looks just like Jericho!" A wonderful confirmation.

In fact during the 1960's banana suckers from Carnarvon were transported to Jericho to supplement the crops there that had been decimated by disease.

Even in the natural there are links between Carnarvon and Jericho.

### Chapter 4

#### The City of Palms Fellowship

During the early hours one morning in 1998 I abruptly awoke, sitting upright in bed. The words "City of Palms Fellowship" suddenly flashed into my mind. I actually "heard" them within my mind.

I hadn't been thinking specifically about any new name for the church, and at that time wasn't especially focussed on moving out of my denomination; although that had been a recurring thought from time to time over the years.

The words arrested me and then I lay back on the bed and drifted off to sleep again. Upon waking in the morning I recalled the words and wrote them down.

Two weeks later during a morning service, Colleen Milic prophesied in the meeting, and one of the phrases she used was "by revelation change the name of the fellowship". I was stunned. I hadn't shared the words with anyone else, not even my wife. Yet this sister spoke out a come by revelation - the words suddenly

challenge to change the name, and implied that it would even come by some sort of revelation - just as it had done to me that morning! She had no idea that I had already experienced the word she was speaking out and thereby confirming it to be true.

From that point on I kept the name within my heart and have never shared it with a living soul. I believe the Lord wanted it kept "pure" and in secret until the right moment. I now know that time has arrived.

Biblically speaking a "city" is a town that has walls, barred gates, and towers - scripturally speaking a town has none of these. (see 2 Chron. 14: 7). While in the natural Carnarvon also lacks these, spiritually speaking we regard it as a city because it has these in the spirit. Through spiritual warfare, intercession, prayer walking, spiritual mapping and the like, we have built walls, gates, and watchman towers within this community. Even in prayer we regularly refer to this place as a "city".

Hence the name "City of Palms" captures both our association with palm trees, together with the concept of Carnarvon being a spiritual city. Added to this is our familiarity with Jericho, which is called The City of Palms! All in all there is much symbolic encouragement for being called The City of Palms Fellowship.

In Ezekiel 34: 29 it is said that God would restore His people and make them like a "garden of renown". In Hebrew this literally means "a place of planting". Like Jericho, Carnarvon is a rich horticultural district producing bananas, tropical fruits, vegetables, grapes, etc. Our prayer is that the prophecy of Ezekiel shall come to pass both for Israel (the focus of Ezekiel's word) and Carnarvon.

Many prophetic words have been spoken about Carnarvon being like a spiritual "hothouse" for plants, bringing forth plantings of the Lord that will later be established in many other places. The concept of grafting has also been used to support this idea. Many, many times visiting prophetic ministries have seen in the natural what Carnarvon will be like in the spiritual and spoken forth these words.

For these reasons we believe the name "City of Palms" is of the Lord and speaks prophetically of Carnarvon's role now and into the future.

Therefore we believe it only appropriate and honouring to name our new fellowship after the word delivered by the Lord - that this assembly of disciples of Jesus Christ should meet under the banner CITY OF PALMS FELLOWSHIP.