

# PALMS / PALM TREE DEVOTIONAL

PSALM 92: 12-15

“The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God. They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green, to declare that the Lord is upright; he is; my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.”

## EXPERIENCE



My family often vacations in South Carolina for a week each year. One morning I was on the porch in a rocking chair taking extended time to pray and read my Bible. I was reading the above passage from Psalm 92 while looking at a palmetto tree, like the one pictured here. The passage immediately became more poignant because of the wedded witness of palm and psalm. The uprightness of the palm tree in front of me was a vivid illustration of the Psalmist’s words. God’s handiwork displayed in the palmetto enhanced my experience of

God's Word. My mind and heart were inspired to consider the Lord's upright character and my own lack of uprightness before God.

## CONTEMPLATION

Like the palm tree (palmettos are a type of palm tree), I also want to flourish and grow in Christlike character. Upright character is a way of speaking of conduct that is not bent or warped by sin. As much as I might desire to be a pillar of moral virtue, my conduct is far from perfectly straight and true.<sup>1</sup> Further meditation resulted in my seeing that I was yearning for what is pictured in another passage in Scripture that includes a reference to palms:

“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” -Revelation 7:9-10

My yearning for victory over sin will be fully realized at Christ's second coming. One day God's people will stand in purified Christlikeness, clothed in white, worshipping the King of kings with palms in their hands. Until that victorious day comes, we worship and live imperfectly, but we who know Jesus are planted in the house of God, growing and flourishing in the Lord's presence, bearing fruit into old age, and full of the Spirit we declare that the Lord is upright. Does this description fit you? Are you planted in the house of God? Are

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<sup>1</sup> See 1 Kings 6:29-35 and Ezekiel 41:18-20 for how palm trees like pillars and palm-like ornaments were used architecturally in the temple of God. It is interesting to note the connections between palms and worship in both the Old and New Testaments.

you flourishing and bearing fruit? Is the Holy Spirit flowing like sap in and through you? Let seeing a palm tree or holding a palm branch on Palm Sunday remind you to ponder these questions. Perhaps you might benefit, like I did, from taking an extended period of time on a porch in a rocking chair today to reflect upon these questions and God's truths symbolized by palms.

## *PRAYER*

Heavenly Father, what wonder that you have created trees, plants, rocks, creatures, and myriads of other elements in the natural world with the intention to communicate. I stand in awe of all that one can learn about you and your truths through creation. The upright stature of palm trees is a picture of who I want to be—a person of godly character. The gospel reminds me to strive to live uprightly, not to earn your approval but because I already have it in Christ Jesus. I want to flourish and bear fruit until my final breath. Fill me with your Spirit O Lord and reign in my life such that people might see my good deeds and glorify you. In Christ's name, Amen.

## *CONFIRMATION*

The emblematic connection between palm trees and God's uprightness is abundantly clear from Psalm 92:12-15. However, the direct link between palm trees and the concept of uprightness is disguised by the English language. Our word, palm, appears to point to the hand like the spreading branches at the top of a palm tree. In contrast, what is evident from the roots of the Hebrew word for palm

tree, “Tamar”, is that the root word literally means upright stature, referring to the tree’s vertically straight trunk.<sup>2</sup>

The other emblematic connection is between palm branches and worship. The presence of palm branch decorations in the temple, combined with the laying of palm branches at Jesus’s feet as he made his way to Jerusalem on a donkey, as well as the description of palm branches in people’s hands as they worship in Revelation 7 all tend to confirm the connection. When Jesus came into Jerusalem, the people were anticipating some type of military victory, not victory over sin through Christ’s death and resurrection. Palm branches are a biblical emblem of reverence, honor, and worship of the victorious Christ Jesus who conquered sin and death.



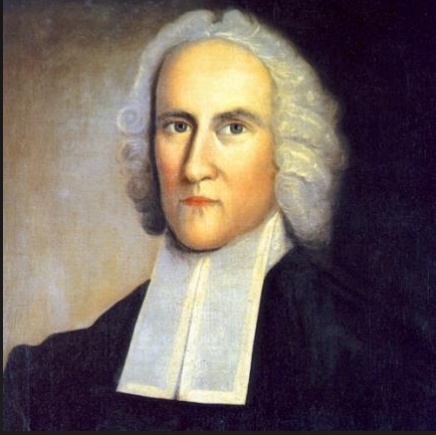
## Palm Sunday

The Sunday that Christians celebrate Jesus’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem is the perfect opportunity to discuss the emblematic nature of palms. Believers should not just be aware that Jesus was honored with palms on the day he entered Jerusalem (John 12:13), they should also understand Revelation 7:9-12 and Psalm 92:12-15. Palm Sunday provides a special moment for pastors, Sunday school teachers, and parents to do an object lesson that inspires congregants and their children to consider the honor Christ deserves, to consider Jesus’s victory over sin and death and to consider the connections between uprightness and flourishing. Palm Sunday is also a time for anticipatory celebration of the victorious

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<sup>2</sup> Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 10th ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 1071.

second coming of the King of kings. Meditation upon the wedded witness of God's Word and God's world is a significant means of spiritual growth.



## Jonathan Edwards

FROM *TYPOLOGICAL WRITINGS*. [\[WJE 11:304\]](#)

As a reminder, for confirmation of a biblical emblem it is beneficial to see if others reference similar connections that you are making. American pastor and theologian Jonathan Edwards also saw the symbolic connections between palm trees and God's people. He wrote: "The church and people of the Messiah are in the prophecies of the Messiah compared [to] and called a palm tree, or palm trees (Canticles 7:7–8, Psalms 92:12), which is an argument that they were typified by the figures of palm trees in the tabernacle and temple."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> [Jonathan Edwards, \*Typological Writings\*, WJE 11:304](#)