

THE GIFT

River of Life - March 2011



The Vision

On Saturday 12 March 2011, I was talking with God about a visit the next morning to our friends Dave and Royree Jensen at the 'River of Life Church' in Brisbane. I told Him that I wanted to take a gift - just like you would take some food or a drink when visiting a friend's home.

That night I had a vision.

In the vision I was standing looking up into a small tree. The thing that struck me about this tree was that it was totally covered with an abundance of exotic fruit; so many in fact that I could hardly see any leaves! The fruit themselves were plump and ripe, and looked unlike any fruit I had ever seen. Their colour was amazing – kind of a cross between orange and blood-red; and they looked so amazing...

In my dream-state my wife was beside me, also looking at the amazing fruit. I asked her 'What are these fruit? I've never seen anything like them.' 'They are pomegranates,' she replied.

When I woke, the vision remained clearly etched in my mind. I needed to find out more information – was I just imagining all this? Because we were staying with family, I could not access my usual library and resources. I did, however, find a bible dictionary and it immediately fell open to a page where an image caught my eye; a picture of an ancient artefact – a bronze perfume flask in the shape of a pomegranate! It was one of only a handful of images in the whole book. The Holy Spirit instantly confirmed in my spirit the gift for our friends that day – pomegranates!

I then started searching on-line. I learned about the fruit; the characteristics, origins and the symbolism.



Symbolism

The pomegranate, from the abundance of its seeds, was regarded in ancient times as an emblem of fruitfulness. A symbol of Jesus' resurrection and life everlasting, the pomegranate also represents plenitude, abundance and hope. Because of this abundance of seeds, it can also symbolize royalty and the church, where the seeds represent the many believers who make up the one universal church.

Jewish tradition teaches that the pomegranate is a symbol for righteousness, because it is said to have 613 seeds, which allegedly corresponds with the 613 mitzvot, or commandments, of the Torah. For this reason, and others, many Jews eat pomegranates on Rosh Hashanah, which is itself a festival falling over the Day of Trumpets. It was introduced in the third century of the current era.

The pomegranate is one of the few images which appear on ancient coins of Judea as a holy symbol, and today many Torah scrolls are stored while not in use with a pair of decorative hollow silver "pomegranates" (*rimmonim*) placed over the two upper scroll handles. 1 Kings 7:13–22 describes pomegranates depicted on the capitals of the two pillars (Jachin and Boaz) which stood in front of the temple King Solomon built in Jerusalem.

Some Jewish scholars believe that it was the pomegranate that was the forbidden fruit of the Garden of Eden.

The pomegranate has a calyx shaped like a crown. In Jewish tradition it has been seen as the original "design" for the proper crown. It is said that Solomon designed his coronet based on the pomegranate's 'crown'.



Pomegranates and Bells...

The biblical 'principle of first mention' means the first time a thing is mentioned in scripture it contains within it a meaning that will be carried all through the Word of God. The first mention of pomegranates in the Bible is found in Exodus 28 where God directed that images of pomegranates be woven onto the hem of the me'il ("robe of the ephod"), a robe worn by the Hebrew High Priest. Upon the skirts or hem of the seamless robe of blue were alternating pomegranates and bells:

"And upon its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet, all around its hem, and bells of gold between them all around: a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe all around." Exodus 28:33-34

Colours are significant to the Israelites. The pomegranates embroidered on the hem of the priest's garment are in blue, purple and scarlet - colours of truth and love and charity. The blue, purple and scarlet which are blended in this fruit upon breaking, prophesies of the bruising and the crushing of the LORD JESUS.

There is a multitude of seeds in the pomegranate, which signify "fruitfulness." The bell, which is pure gold, has a tongue in it . . . this tells of Testimony (tongue) DIVINE Testimony (gold). It rings clearly because there is a pomegranate, which acts as a pad between each bell. The softness prevented the bells from clanging together and producing discord.

Jesus wore the "spiritual fruit and bells" all around the hem of His seamless garment as He walked on the earth. He had a clear ringing testimony, which was backed up by the fruit of His life. It should be the same with believers who wear the spiritual robe of blue. It is not by our much speaking, or by our preaching, neither by the miracles we perform in the name of Jesus; or the gifts of the Spirit operating through our life that we are known.

But, the Lord Jesus said, **"By their FRUIT you shall know them."** Matthew 7:16,20



The JEWISH TALMUD states it this way:

*"The bells said to the fruit-bearing tree, 'Why do you not make any noise?'
They replied, 'Our fruits are sufficient advertisement for us.'"*

NEW COVENANT priests wear the bell with the pomegranate - not one without the other; in order to bring a clear ringing testimony with the fruit of DIVINE love to the world. This is so strikingly portrayed for us in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians where there are the two 'power chapters' and between them, the 'fruit chapter':

- Chapter 12 is the Bell, the Testimony of GOD'S POWER.
- Chapter 13 is the Pomegranate or Fruit of DIVINE LOVE; and
- Chapter 14 is another Bell or Testimony of the POWER OF GOD.

Always together... Sound and Fruit... Preaching and Practice.

The Gifts of the Spirit must operate with and by Divine Love! 1 Corinthians 13 is the only chapter of the writings of Paul in which he does not mention the Lord Jesus by name; and yet He is there. . . He is LOVE!

The golden bells were an audible announcement of the high priest's service, a beautiful sound, backed up by beautiful fruits, the pomegranates. This same balance of words and deeds we find in the Lord Jesus. Luke 24:19 says:

"What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.



Pomegranate Facts

A pomegranate is a fruit the size of an orange. The leathery reddish-pink skin shelters the pure white membranous walls and bitter tissue that house compartments or sacs filled with hundreds of seeds. A translucent red pulp that has a slightly sweet and tart taste surrounds these seeds.

The pomegranate is native to the region of Persia and the western Himalayan range. The fruit is typically in season in the Southern Hemisphere from March to May*.

The exotic pomegranate, fondly called the "jewel of winter," is currently being re-discovered as a sought-after delicacy, not only for its wonderful tangy zing of flavour, but also for its remarkable health benefits.

Pomegranates offer amazing food value, providing substantial amounts of potassium, vitamin C and niacin, and are naturally high in fibre. Also a potent source of disease-fighting antioxidants, pomegranate juice contains almost three times the total antioxidant ability of the same quantity of green tea or red wine.

In addition to a high antioxidant content, pomegranate juice also has very high "quality" polyphenols that act efficiently in the body to neutralize harmful free radicals. Using the DPH testing method, pomegranate juice is found to neutralize 71% of the free radicals it comes into contact with.



The striking appearance of the bright pink pips, packed in compartments separated by a white membrane, shining like rubies, and beautifully arranged. . . .

Pomegranate juice is used for natural dyeing of non-synthetic fabrics. Pomegranate juice stains clothing permanently unless washed with bleach.

When laundering white garments initially stained red with pomegranate juice, as soap is applied the stain changes colour to a distinct purple and then to royal blue – the three colours directed by God for the pomegranates on hem of the priestly robe.

*NOTE: It is interesting that the gift of pomegranates were given to River of Life Church by the Holy Spirit on Sunday 13 March, just as the first fruits were coming into season.