

# A Time to Flourish

## part 2: What to do with a promise

Last week we looked at the wonderful word God gave us for this year, in Psalm 92. We looked at the promise that *“those who are planted in God’s house will flourish”*.

### **Text: Jeremiah 1:9-12**

This is the account of a powerful God-encounter that Jeremiah had when he was young. There, God commissioned Him to be a prophet at a time of crucial importance to the Jewish people. The message he was going to carry was not easy and he was going to face great rejection.

#### **1. God gave him a vision.**

- a) With the kind of assignment he received, it was important to have a vision from God – something powerful, something that he could carry in his mind and heart, something to hold on to, especially in times of hardship and opposition.
- b) God opened the eyes of young Jeremiah so he could look at the promise. Several times Jesus spoke about “having eyes to see and ears to hear”. He also said in Revelation 3:18b – *“anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see”*. It is our responsibility to be positioned to hear and see what he is saying.
- c) To Jeremiah, God asked, *“what do you see?”*. When he replied, God said, *“you have seen well”*. It is very important to ‘see well’, to see with clarity what God has for us.

God’s vision for Jeremiah:

- i. The branch of almond tree,
- ii. followed by the statement: *“I am ready to preform my word”*

#### **2. The branch of an almond tree**

- a) Why an almond tree? What is the significance of that particular tree?

In the Middle East, it is the first of all trees to flourish. It flourishes in January, when other trees are still locked up in their Winter’s sleep. It bears fruit in March, at a time when other trees are just beginning to bud.

While the Spring is still months away, and every other tree looks lifeless, the almond tree puts out a beautiful spectacle of white flowers, declaring that sunny days are coming, warmer days are coming and life will return.

The almond tree prophecies of better days, while still immersed in the desolation of winter.

The almond tree is a picture of **hope**,  
The almond tree is the picture of **a promise of better days and fruit ahead**

The almond tree is **the prophecy about a new season**

In the Winter seasons of life, this is the kind of vision we need to carry.

b) How did the prophet know what kind of tree it was?

How did he know that it was the rod of an almond tree and not the rod of some other tree? The only way he could identify it so promptly is because he would have seen its flower. A leafless branch would have looked like any branch from any tree. Jeremiah must have seen this one blossoming with its unmistakable white flowers.

This is the vision you need to take into 2017: not a 'winter vision' of desolation but a vision of life, flourishing, doing well.

**Jeremiah 31:17a** says *"there is hope in your future, says the Lord"*!

### **3. 'I am ready to perform my word'**

God spoke this words to Jeremiah in verse 12.

This is a crucial revelation you need to hold on to as you consider His promise: God is ready and watches over His word to cause it to pass.

a) I am ready

'Ready' in Hebrew is the word '*shaqad*'. Interestingly, the word for 'almond tree' is '*shaqed*'. In the original Hebrew text, there is a play of words that the English text does not capture.

*Shaqad* simply means: "to be ready, to hasten, to watch over, to stay awake, to care for watchfully. It appears 12 times in the OT. It indicates that God wants to confirm His word promptly, without delay.

**The picture of an almond tree (*shaqad*) is the picture of God Himself: the same way the almond tree is in such haste to flourish and produce fruit, God says, "*I am ready to perform my word (shaqed), I will watch over my word to hasten its fulfilment*".**

**Psalm 147:15** - *<sup>15</sup> He sends out His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly.*

**Isaiah 65:24** - *"It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.*

b) In fact, that branch is a type of Jesus Himself.

**Jeremiah 23:5** - *"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.*

**Isaiah 11:1** - *There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.*

**Zechariah 3:8** - Hear, O Joshua, the high priest, you and your companions who sit before you, for they are a wondrous sign; for behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH.

c) *Behold, I have put My words in your mouth (v.9b)*

In order to fulfil his assignment, Jeremiah was not given an army, or weaponry - not even a miraculous rod like Moses' but simply... words.

Let us review his assignment again:

**v.10** - *See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant."*

That was no small job. However, all he got to do his job were words.

He had to trust in the power of those words from God, he had to believe that they were not like words of men, but special words, full of power and with the ability to deliver. He had to believe that they were enough. God's words are powerful. When all you have is a promise, trust the power of that promise, trust that Jesus is watching over it with urgency to perform it. That is what you do with a promise.

### **Conclusion**

**Psalms 92:12-14** is a powerful promise: *The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing,*

**Proverbs 11:28b** –... *"The righteous will flourish like foliage"*

May you carry this promise into this new year: because of Jesus, you will flourish, do well, grow, expand, excel, make steady progress, be at a high point in life.

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, He is like that rod of the almond tree flourishing and bearing fruit ahead of time, watching over His word to perform it.

**Psalms 105:8** - *He remembers His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations.*

**Isaiah 55:11** - *So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*