

What Do You See?
Jeremiah 1:11-12, 17-19

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One Day

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Introduction: The comic page includes a puzzle called the Magic Eye? (Show Magic Eye on screen) At first glance, usually you see multiple tiny pictures of one object. Hidden in this picture is something else. The directions read: “Hold the image close to your nose, slowly move it away and suddenly a hidden 3D illusion will magically appear.”

Can I tell you something? Usually, I don’t see the hidden picture. Years ago, sort of knowing that I couldn’t see these pictures, my sister-in-law gave me a whole book of these pictures as a Christmas gift. We had exchanged gifts on Christmas Eve. When everyone else went to bed, I looked at that book. I turned it every direction possible. I looked at the picture for a while; I read the directions for a while. I looked at the picture for a while; I read the directions for a while. Nothing!

If you were to ask me, “What do you see,” I would have responded, “Nothing.” I see random dots all over the page, but I don’t see what I am supposed to see.

If I were to ask you about our world today, “What do you see,” what would you say? Many would say, “I see chaos.” Things are a mess.

God asked Jeremiah in similar circumstances, “What do you see?”

Text: ¹ Then the word of the LORD came to me, asking, “What do you see, Jeremiah?”

I replied, “I see a branch of an almond tree.”

¹² The LORD said to me, “You have seen correctly, for I watch over My word to accomplish it.”

¹⁷ “Now, get ready. Stand up and tell them everything that I command you. Do not be intimidated by them or I will cause you to cower before them. ¹⁸ Today, I am the One who has made you a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the population. ¹⁹ They will fight against you but never prevail over you, since I am with you to rescue you.”

This is the LORD’s declaration.

Sermon:

God first showed Jeremiah the branch of an almond tree. Then, he says to Jeremiah, “I am watching over my word to accomplish it.” Those words seem a little arbitrary to us, but they would not have been to Jeremiah. Several things are happening with this vision. First, there is a play on words going on here. The Hebrew word for almond tree is *shaqed*; the Hebrew word for “watching” is *shoqed*. In addition, the almond tree was the first to bud so some referred to it as the watching tree or the awakening tree. The

tree was watching for spring to arrive. All of Spring was awakened at the bud of the almond tree. In addition, almond trees were most plentiful. These trees would be frequent reminders to Jeremiah that God was watching over His Word.

Maybe there are times in our lives, just as it was for Jeremiah, when we can't really see what God is doing. Look at any news feed, newscast, or paper, and maybe we come away thinking we are losing ground rather than gaining ground. What do you see? Here is what I think God wants us to see—to be reminded of.

God is watching over His Word to accomplish it.

What can we do?

Recognize our call.

The first part of Jeremiah 1 is devoted to his call. We have a call. Individually, we have a call. Collectively, as the church, we have a call. In fact, in 1 Timothy 1:15, we get a real good glimpse of that call for the church.

But if I should be delayed, I have written so that you will know how people ought to act in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

Have courage.

Courage is what I see in Jeremiah 1:17. Sometimes it is as though the church is so defeated, we have lost our courage. We need to get ready, stand up, and keep telling them everything that God has commanded. And, most of all, don't be intimidated.

Trust God's Sovereign Control.

God gives us a promise in saying that he would watch over His Word.

We could say it like this: It is not up to us. (And for that, we are all grateful.) But, then again, it is up to us. God cannot watch over His Word if His Word is not preached by us. In His Sovereign plan, He has chosen to watch over His Word, but use us to deliver His Word.

Conclusion: God is watching over you. He is watching over His Word. One of the things that God wants to accomplish by His providence is your salvation. So, in His providence, He sent Jesus into this world, to die, so that all you would believe in Him would have eternal life. Doubt that? Don't! Here is a great truth from the Apostle Paul: "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1:6) Want another one? "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9) "For everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved." (Romans 10:12)

I did see the Magic Eye picture once—at about 3:00 a.m. on that Christmas Eve. Everyone was long since gone to bed, but I smiled a big smile. It was so rewarding and satisfying. And, it will be satisfying when we see what comes of God watching over His Word.