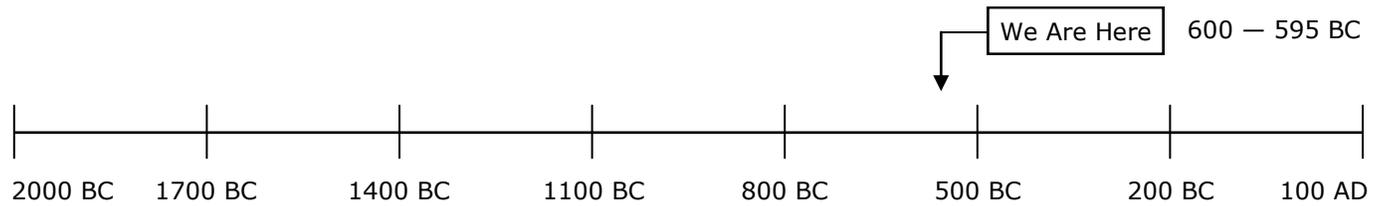


Divine Discipline

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Week 32: August 6-12 — *2 Kings 24; Jeremiah; Daniel 1-3*

61.2% Complete — 141 Days to Go



Helpful Resources

Overview of Bible History (p.37), Nebuchadnezzar's Statue (p.91)

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

The time has come. What we've read about and discussed for months has finally come to pass, the final phase of terminal decadence — God's judgment on the nation of Judah. The Babylonians, under the leadership of their ambitious king, Nebuchadnezzar, have conquered the waning Assyrians and Egyptians at the Battle of Carchemish (609) and have now come to complete their new empire by taking smaller nations like Judah. Three times Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, inflicted damage, and deported exiles (Daniel was one); this week, we read of the first two attacks (608 BC in *Dan. 1:1, 2*, and 597 BC in *2 Chron. 36:6-8*). The third and final blow will leave Jerusalem and the surrounding area both destroyed and desolate.

Much of the anticipation of this judgment was a result of the prophet Jeremiah. While there were other men who foretold of Judah's doom, Jeremiah witnessed it first-hand. Despite all of his warnings, the kings and the people ignored him and remained steadfast in their devotion to false gods and false prophets. Eventually, Jeremiah watched the erosion and destruction of all that he held dear, even the sacred Temple and his beloved Jerusalem. *God dealt the people of Judah a crushing blow; however, it was not a fatal blow.* In the midst of Jeremiah's gloomy predictions of destruction and duress, there was a seed of hope, a message of promise, a promise to return. Take a minute to re-read *Jeremiah 29:1, 4-14*.

In light of God's mercy towards Judah, a question comes to mind; after eliminating the vast majority of ten tribes and erasing the nation of Israel, why did God not do the same to Judah? If they were as guilty of apostasy as Israel, why did the Lord choose to spare them? God did have to discipline them but He couldn't destroy them (*Jeremiah 30:11-19*). Why not?

1. **He spared them for His Name's sake.** No matter what happened to the Jews, God's name was forever linked to them and their history. He had made known His glory and power by bringing them out of Egypt, by defeating every tribe before them, and by protecting them for generations from their enemies; He was not about to disgrace His name because of the apostasy and failure of His people.
2. **He spared them for Abraham's sake.** In order to prove His faithfulness to His own words, God had to keep His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that their people would always have the land of Canaan. Though He had led His people away to exile, He would keep His promise and allow them to return soon.

3. **He spared them for David's sake.** David was the man "after God's heart, and because of the Lord's love for him, He would forever preserve his kingdom, city, and people.
4. **He spared them for the Messiah's sake.** If God annihilated the Jews, there would be no Messiah; Christ was to come from them to save the world from sin. The prophecies had been made, and the time had been chosen; God would send Him as He promised.

Though God had allowed the Jews to be conquered by the Babylonians, there still existed great evidence that He was merciful to His people (*Ezek. 20:39-44*). How so? First, the *Jews were preserved*. The tragedy of Israel's exile was that the people were scattered and forced to intermarry with Assyrians, thereby compromising their pure blood. That was not the case in Babylon; the people were allowed to marry Jews and continue their tribal bloodlines. God preserved a remnant that He would use to revive the nation. Second, the *Jews were protected*. Though the Jews were in a foreign land, they were not sorely mistreated. They were allowed to live somewhat normal lives under Babylonian rule. Some of their people (like Daniel) even rose to leadership; and, although they were endangered by the wicked kings, God always delivered them (*Daniel 1-3*). Third, the *Jews were promised a return*. Surely their sins had done them in, but the Jews knew that their God was merciful; they claimed His promise of a future and a hope and looked forward to the day when they would see their beloved homeland again.

- Personal Application

1. **God disciplines us because He loves us.** Just as a parent disciplines a child out of love and a desire for what's best for him, so God, who wants the very best for our lives, must keep us in line (*Hebrews 12:5-11*).
2. **God has a plan for our lives.** Though we often see the short term, God sees the long term; He knows what He has planned for us and how to move us to that point (*Jeremiah 29:11*). He is the Potter and we are His clay (*Jeremiah 18:1-7*); we must die to ourselves and surrender to the mold of the image of Christ (*Romans 8:29*).
3. **We were created to cling to Him.** As we live this life, we must not lose focus of what we are here for — not for our sake but for the Lord's. We were created for Him and, therefore, must live for and give all to Him. Just as a belt is made to cling to the waist of a man, so we were made to cling to our God (*Jeremiah 13:1-14*).

- Prophetic Passages

1. **Fall of Judah** (*Jer. 19:1-15; 20:4-6; 7:1-15; 9:11-16; 10:17-22; 16:5-13*)
2. **Return of Judah** (*Jer. 24:1-7; 29:8-14; 30:3-22; 31:7-14*)
3. **Future Reign of the Messiah** (*Jeremiah 23:5,6*)
4. **Empires of History** (*Daniel 2*): Daniel was privy to the rise and fall of the world's great kingdoms. See the chart entitled, "Nebuchadnezzar's Statue" for more details.

The Bottom Line

God *disciplines* us because He *loves* us and wants what is *best* for us.

Questions to Consider

1. We know that God disciplines us out of love; what about love drives Him to discipline us?
2. Share a time when God had to discipline you in order to bring you back to Him.
3. Read *Jeremiah 13:1-14*. Is your belt clinging to the Lord or is it buried under a rock?