

Foundations Devotional

• FOR THE WEEK OF JAN 17 - JAN 23 •

MONDAY // JEREMIAH 31:31-40; 32-33

The first part of Jeremiah contains prophecies about God's judgment against the people of Judah for their sins, but as the prophecies continue, the predictions shift to promises of God's restoration. Because God's love for the people was unending, He planned to establish a new covenant—one based on the transformation of their hearts rather than on laws engraved on stone tablets. The Lord would be with His people, and they would truly know Him. Chapters 32-33 record promises the Lord made concerning His restored people. He would give them a blessed and hopeful future. Nothing would be too difficult for the Lord to accomplish on their behalf. He would establish an unbreakable covenant with them. This new covenant is a reality for all Christians today, and it is based on the sacrifice of Jesus who made a way for us to have a personal relationship with God and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

TUESDAY // JEREMIAH 52; 2 KINGS 24-25

Jeremiah's prophecies had predicted the fall of Jerusalem as God brought forth His judgment on the people. The Book of Jeremiah ends with a narrative of those events, which are also told in 2 Kings 24-25. Three months after Jehoiachin became king, the king of Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar) invaded Judah, took captive the king and his family as well as thousands of leading citizens, and installed Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's relative, as a puppet ruler. Thirty-seven years after being taken captive to Babylon, King Jehoiachin received a pardon from Evil-merodach, the new Babylonian ruler. Jehoiachin's life changed for the better, although he remained a king-in-exile for the rest of his life. Jehoiachin's release signaled the hope of restoration for Judah. God finally held the people of Judah accountable for their centuries of sin and rebellion against Him, but unlike His unfaithful people, God proved even in judgment that He was still faithful, and that in Him, we find restoration and hope.

WEDNESDAY // EZEKIEL 1:1-3; 36:16-38; 37

With the fall of Jerusalem, the people of Judah were exiled to Babylon. The prophet Ezekiel delivered God's messages to His people while they were in exile, and he was an exile himself. At the heart of Ezekiel's prophecy is God's deliverance and restoration of His people (Ezek. 36:24-26). That God preserved a remnant of exiles from the Northern and Southern Kingdoms reminds us that He never allowed His people to be completely destroyed. Even though the ultimate consequence of sin is death, God kept a remnant for His glory and the good of the world. This restoration was the message behind Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones in chapter 37. Instead of decomposition, God composes. Instead of decay, God restores. Through the power and truth of the Word of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit, you and I are becoming more alive each day. When we become Christians, God raises us from spiritual death. As our old nature is dying, our new nature is growing, and God is putting His words in our mouths so we can offer a message of hope and life within a world of death and decay.

THURSDAY // DANIEL 1-2

Daniel was another of God's prophets who ministered during the exile in Babylon. The Babylonians took many young exiles captive and trained them to serve in the king's court. Daniel was one of these young men, but the actions he took in Daniel 1-2 show he had no plan to adopt the Babylonian faith. Daniel and his three friends disciplined themselves to eat only vegetables and drink water so as not to compromise their faithfulness to God in the matter of dietary laws. God gave the faithful young men knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, enabling them to serve wisely for many years. The dream Daniel interpreted in Daniel 2 focused on kingdoms: the power of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom and a future greater kingdom that would never end. Daniel's interpretation was looking to Jesus Christ, who would institute a new kingdom and whose reign would never end. From the beginning of this prophetic book, we see that God's people can trust in God's power and control along with the goodness of His Word.

FRIDAY // DANIEL 3-4

Daniel 3 records the popular event of three Jewish men—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—who refused to compromise their faith in God. Nebuchadnezzar made a huge statue and demanded everyone bow down to it. To refuse to worship the statue meant disobeying the king's decree, the same as disobeying the king himself. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego meant no disrespect to the king. Their failure to bow down to the gold statue was motivated by their relationship with the one true God. The determination of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was matched only by Nebuchadnezzar's rage at their refusal to obey him. In anger, he ordered the men to be thrown into a furnace of fire. But when they were, nothing went as planned. Nebuchadnezzar witnessed first-hand God's presence with His servants in the fiery furnace, and the men emerged unscathed. In chapter 4, the very authority that he attempted to overrule humbled Nebuchadnezzar. As a result, a pagan king was forced to bow down to the holy God. We are reminded that God is present with His people in every threatening situation and uses their faithfulness to glorify His name. Also, we are warned against claiming authority that doesn't belong to us.

WEEKEND // FINISH UP ANY YOU DIDN'T DO