



Growing into Church Discipline Pt 5: AI, Judges, Bad Kings, and Captivity! *Learning from the Old Testament Pt 3, August 6, 2023*

Text: 1 Cor 10:11

Review:

From the Garden of Eden, God has always regulated His people. God's discipline is ubiquitous in Scripture. Therefore, we put forward a proposition:

Biblical discipline (God's correction) began at the Fall (leaving the garden, curses, death), intensified at the Flood, and continued through the Tower of Babel. After God called Abraham, it took on a more "congregational" feel because God had called a unique people for Himself.

We believe loving and redemptive discipline MUST be present in the church if we are to be faithful to the Scriptures and grow thereby.

So far, we have:

1. Defined and discussed the local church and her importance.
2. Discovered the nature of Biblical discipline: for God's glory and for the good of His people.
3. Began rereading some Old Testament examples of God's discipline, which are given for *our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.*"(1 Cor 10:6)
4. Indeed, *upon us whom the end of the world has come* (that is, we who live in the Gospel and Church age, prior to the return of Christ), learning from these examples is all the more urgent:
 - *The Disbelief in Paran (Num 13-14)*, where God's people refused to enter the Promised Land. **God disciplined** His people by sending them into the wilderness until the faithless rebels died.
 - *The Rebellion at Mt. Sinai (Ex 32)*, where God's people impatiently set up a golden calf to worship. **God disciplined** His people through punishment via Moses, the swords of the Levites, and plague.
 - *The Incident at Peor (Num 25)*, where God's people committed whoredom with the daughters of Moab and Midian and worshipped their gods. **God disciplined** His people by having the leaders hanged, having the idolators killed, and killing via plague. 24,000 (23,000 in one day) died!
 - *Tempting Christ in with Wilderness (Num 21)*, where God's people murmured against God, Moses, and Aaron, expressing dissatisfaction with God's care and provision. **God disciplined** His people by sending fiery serpents among them, and "much people" died.
 - *Murmuring against God's appointed leaders (Num 16)*, where some of God's people grumbled that Moses and Aaron lifted themselves above the congregation. **God disciplined** those involved by causing the earth to swallow up Korah, his household and his fellow conspirators, killing the 250 leaders who agreed with Korah via fire from heaven, and unleashing plague upon anyone blaming Moses and Aaron for Korah's death until 14,700 were dead.

These are tough passages to read! Nevertheless, **our heart has been to remember the holy nature of our God, be reminded that He is to be hallowed among His people, and lay a scriptural foundation upon which loving but firm New Testament discipline would stand.**

To those ends, just a bit more from the Old Testament...

Sin in the Camp at Ai

Historical Context:

This situation is chronicled in the book of Joshua. Moses, the servant of the LORD, had died in the land of Moab. (Deut 34:5) Joshua, Moses' assistant, was commissioned to be Israel's new leader and bring them into the Promised Land. (Deut 31:1-9) God promised to help Joshua, and in very familiar passages, commanded him...

Joshua 1:5-8 (KJV) *There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. 6 Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them. 7 Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. 8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*

So, in preparation to invade the Promised Land, Joshua also sent out spies (two of them). They are met, encouraged by, and hidden from danger by the prostitute Rahab (Josh 2). After their return, Joshua moves the people from Shittim to cross over the Jordan River (Josh 3-4). After circumcising the new generation, celebrating the Passover for the first time in Canaan, and beholding the Commander of the LORD's Army near Jericho (Josh 5), Israel, in miraculous fashion, utterly destroyed and plundered Jericho (Josh 6). A mighty success in their first battle in Canaan was ushered in by the LORD of Hosts!

However...

Congregational Contempt:

IN THE VERY NEXT CHAPTER, we come to the Ai narrative. Ai was this small town in Israel's path, with only a few people. BUT, God's congregation was not pure. Scripture says:

Joshua 7:1 (KJV) *But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel.*

- Not knowing yet about Achan's sin, Joshua sent out a few spies who return and report that a small force would be enough to defeat Ai.
- This small force however, (about 2-3000 men) were routed by Ai!
- After rending his clothes and prostrating himself before the LORD in repentance, the LORD revealed what happened:

Joshua 7:10-13 (KJV) *And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? 11 Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff.*

12 Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you. 13 Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.

- With God's help, Achan was found out and set before Joshua. He had taken some clothes and money from the spoils of war (Josh 7:21).
- **It is noteworthy that ONE man's sin caused the defeat of the WHOLE CAMP. Verse 7:1 says "the children of Israel committed a trespass." Achan's sin was attributed to the whole group! This is a narrative so we don't want to draw a dogmatic conclusions, but perhaps we should be mindful that our actions could affect the whole congregation!**

God's Discipline:

- An initial humiliating loss to their enemies due to "sin in the camp."
- Achan, his family, the items he stole, and all his possessions were taken to a valley. They were stoned with stones and burned with fire.
- A tough rematch against Ai, which they won with God's God's help. But it wasn't easy! (Josh 8)

Judges as Judgment

As the book of Joshua closes with his death, Israel must still fight the Canaanites. Although much had been done during Joshua's time of oversight, there was more conquering left to do. And after some initial success, we read this sad commentary in the midst of much more detail:

***Judges 1:28 (KJV)** And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out.*

***Judges 2:1-4 (KJV)** And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swear unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. **2** And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? **3** Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. **4** And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept.*

They might have wept, but their disobedience continued:

***Judges 2:11-15 (KJV)** And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: **12** And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger. **13** And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. **14** And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. **15** Whithersoever they went out, the*

hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

And although there was grace:

Judges 2:16 (KJV) *Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.*

The disobedience continued...

Judges 2:17-19 (KJV) *And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so. 18 And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. 19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.*

Judges is filled with bizarre narratives, atrocities, and we think, great judgment. In the end, Israel degenerated into reprobate, man-centered living...

Judges 21:25 (KJV) *In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*

Bad Kings and Israel's Continuing Idolatry

The period of the Judges is ended with Israel's last judge and first ongoing prophet, Samuel. (Acts 13:20) When the people asked for a king, God, through Samuel, choose Saul. After Saul ruled David, and then his son Solomon. When Solomon's son, Rehoboam, would not listen to the counsel of the "old men", the kingdom of Israel split in two, with Rehoboam ruling Judah and Benjamin, and one of Solomon's servants, Jeroboam, ruling over the other 10 tribes. (1 Kings 12)

And thus began the "Israel and Judah" narratives we read of in 1/2 Kings and 1/2 Chronicles. Israel was known as the "northern kingdom" and Judah the "southern kingdom." The northern kingdom is sometimes referred to as "Samaria."

Each kingdom had a succession of kings, a few good (Like Asa, Jehoshaphat, and Josiah) and many more bad (like Jeroboam, Ahab, and Manasseh).

Jeroboam, for example, because he feared the 10 tribes returning to Rehoboam, set up a secondary worship system of idol worship in Bethel and Dan:

1 Kings 12:25-30 (KJV) *Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel. 26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: 27 If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn*

again unto their lord, *even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.* **28** Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. **29** And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. **30** And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.

This was anathema to God, who mentions this wickedness as the standard of the evil of kings again and again. (1 Kings 16:3, 16:26, 16:31, 22:52; 2 Kings 3:3, 10:29, 13:2, 13:11, 14:24, and more!)

In another example, Scripture says of Ahab:

1 Kings 16:29-33 (KJV) *And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years. 30 And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him. 31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. 32 And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. 33 And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.*

Manasseh, son of Hekiziah, was one of the worst of all:

2 Kings 21:1-9 (KJV) *Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hephzibah. 2 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. 3 For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.*

4 *And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD said, In Jerusalem will I put my name. 5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. 6 And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.*

7 *And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house, of which the LORD said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever: 8 Neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave their fathers; only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them.*

9 *But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel.*

Ultimate Old Testament Discipline: Captivity in Pagan Lands

God became so angry with both Judah and Israel, He sent them both away into captivity: Israel to Assyria (740-722 B.C.)...

2 Kings 17:6-18 (KJV) *In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.*

7 For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, **8** And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. **9** And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city. **10** And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree: **11** And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger: **12** For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.

13 Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.

14 Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God. **15** And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them. **16** And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. **17** And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.

And Judah to Babylon (607-586 B.C), when Jehoiakim (renamed Zedekiah) was King in Judah...

2 Chronicles 36:11-21 (KJV) *Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. **12** And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the LORD. **13** And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel.*

14 Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. 15 And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: 16 But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy.

17 Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand. 18 And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon. 19 And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. 20 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: 21 To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.

Final Thoughts:

Although many from Judah returned from their captivity (read Ezra and Nehemiah), Israel did not, and instead was resettled and essentially assimilated by Assyria. **Their punishment was permanent.**

CRC, God deeply loves His people. Paul describes such love this way:

***Ephesians 2:4-7 (KJV)** But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

Nevertheless, like a good Parent, God has always disciplined (punished) His people for continuing, ongoing rebellion against Him.

Next week, LORD willing, we'll begin looking at the New Testament and the situations in which our LORD instructs church discipline to be carried out. **Who you are and how you live "within the camp" matters to Christ.**

May we hear, repent, and reform, for God's glory and our good.

Amen.