
The Five Cycles of Divine Discipline

by Rev. Mark Perkins

Whom the Lord loves, He chastens, whether it is an individual, a city or community, or a nation. Because God loves the whole world, there has always been a lot of chastening going on. The history of the Jews as a nation is, in part, a story of the cycles of discipline and recovery they experienced throughout all their generations. There are many parallel lessons to be learned by individual believers regarding the way the Lord handles the individual and nation in Grace when either is disobedient.

This is a study of the doctrine of the Five Cycles of Divine Discipline, as seen in God's dealing with the nation of Israel in ancient times.

The First Cycle, Lev. 26:14-17.

"But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands,

"and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant,

"then I will do this to you: I will bring upon you sudden terror in the form of wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and drain away your life. You will plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it.

"I will set my face against you so that you will be defeated by your enemies; those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee even when no one is pursuing you."

A. Verses 14 and 15 serve as the introduction to the five cycles of discipline.

B. The criterion for invoking the five cycles of discipline is simple: the failure to carry out the laws of Divine Establishment.

C. Each cycle of discipline is worse than the one before, although often in the same forms as a previous cycle.

D. The first cycle includes five forms of discipline:

1. Discipline in the form of illness and disease.

a. The sudden terror is a title - the diseases are described under it.

b. The first form of disease is consumptive diseases such as cancer and tuberculosis and AIDS.

c. The second form of disease is a fever which wastes the eyes and drains away the desire to live. This is mental illness.

2. Discipline in the form of crop destruction.

a. Understand this in the time in which it was written.

b. In the industrial age we have many businesses and corporations that come under this category even though they are not agricultural in nature.

c. The enemy of business can be many things:

1. Inordinate taxation.

2. Greed and graft and corruption.

3. The inordinate demands of labor unions.

d. The seed is investment capital, and the normal crop would be profit. The enemies of business eat up the profits, and put business under a strain.

3. Discipline in the form of defeat on the battlefield.

a. The effectiveness of the military is undermined by poor leadership, immorality, and cowardice.

b. This ineffectiveness leads to defeat in battle.

c. This does not include the destruction of the nation.

4. Discipline in the form of sneering authority.

a. Those in national authority will sneer at the citizens of the nation.

b. Instead of serving the nation, the leadership will serve itself, and only use government benefits to grab more power for themselves.

5. Discipline in the form of sublimation.

a. Flight when no one chases is folly.

b. This is sublimation - getting involved in all categories of distraction, rather than facing the truth.

c. Sublimation is a flight from reality. Reality does not chase anyone.

d. Sublimation becomes painful discipline because it causes damage to the soul, and increases torment from neurosis.

e. Sublimation is based on the lust pattern of the soul, and often results in addiction.

F. The people of the nation will have a chance to respond to God in repentance after this cycle has been administered.

G. Our nation is currently under this cycle, and we have not repented.

II. The Second Cycle, Lev. 26:18-20.

"If after all this you will not listen to me, I will punish you for your sins seven times over.

"I will break down your stubborn pride and make the sky above you like iron and the ground beneath you like bronze.

"Your strength will be spent in vain, because your soil will not yield its crops, nor will the trees of the land yield their fruit."

A. This cycle is a multiplication of the first cycle by a factor of 7. This number is not to be taken literally. The number seven is a common metaphor in Biblical literature which means, "a lot". Here, you would say, "I will punish you for your sins over and over."

B. In this cycle, the land and the environment itself becomes the enemy of the farmer.

C. The modern analogy would be advertising, marketing, and the consumer, all of which are necessary for the production of profits.

D. Also included by analogy are the raw materials from which products are made. They will become more expensive and less available.

E. This cycle of discipline also begins an economic depression in which food supplies dwindle and poverty begins to take hold in earnest over a large segment of the population.

F. This cycle of discipline factors in the bad decisions made by the people from their position of mental weakness.

1. Bad decisions concerning the environment.

a. Decisions which are destructive to the environment.

b. Decisions which protect the environment too much, and so cause damage to the economy.

2. Bad decisions concerning trade.

3. Bad decisions concerning labor and management.

4. Bad decisions concerning investment.

5. Bad decisions concerning production.

F. The people of the nation will have a chance to respond to God in repentance after this cycle has been administered.

G. Our nation is currently under this cycle, and we have not repented.

III. The Third Cycle, Lev. 26:21-22.

"If you remain hostile toward me and refuse to listen to me, I will multiply your afflictions seven times over, as your sins deserve.

"I will send wild animals against you, and they will rob you of your children, destroy your cattle and make you so few in number that your roads will be deserted."

A. The third cycle of discipline multiplies the effects of the second cycle by a factor of seven.

B. The third cycle begins the predominance of the criminal element in society, as the wild animal is a metaphor for crime.

C. In this cycle, there is a great deal of crime against children, and against business.

D. Because of the predominance of crime, the roads are deserted, which means there is virtually no commerce.

E. The people of the nation will have a chance to respond to God in repentance after this cycle has been administered.

F. Our nation is under this cycle, and we have not repented.

IV. The Fourth Cycle, Lev 26:23-26.

"If in spite of these things you do not accept my correction but continue to be hostile toward me,

"I myself will be hostile toward you and will afflict you for your sins seven times over.

"And I will bring the sword upon you to avenge the breaking of the covenant. When you withdraw into your cities, I will send a plague among you, and you will be given into enemy hands.

"When I cut off your supply of bread, ten women will be able to bake your bread in one oven, and

they will dole out the bread by weight. You will eat, but you will not be satisfied."

A. This cycle multiplies the effects of the third cycle by a factor of seven.

B. This is the cycle of civil war, or perhaps war but not yet final defeat. The uprising of the antiestablishment element in society will trap the rest of the people of the nation.

C. In the ancient world, the civil war would begin in the countryside and surround the city or town where the rulers of the nation lived.

D. Without the logistical support from the countryside, a siege ensues and food becomes scarce.

E. In addition to this, being trapped in close quarters means that the potential for widespread disease is great, and will happen. These are desperate times.

F. The people of the nation will have a chance to respond to God in repentance after this cycle has been administered.

G. The United States is flirting with this cycle right now, although it is not quite a reality.

V. The Fifth Cycle, Lev. 26:27-39.

"If in spite of this you still do not listen to me but continue to be hostile toward me,

"then in my anger I will be hostile toward you, and I myself will punish you for your sins seven times over.

"You will eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters.

"I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars and pile your dead bodies on the lifeless forms of your idols, and I will abhor you.

"I will turn your cities into ruins and lay waste your sanctuaries, and I will take no delight in the pleasing aroma of your offerings.

"I will lay waste the land, so that your enemies who live there will be appalled.

"I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins.

"Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths.

"All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it.

"As for those of you who are left, I will make their hearts so fearful in the lands of their enemies that the sound of a windblown leaf will put them to flight. They will run as though fleeing from the sword, and they will fall, even though no one is pursuing them.

"They will stumble over one another as though fleeing from the sword, even though no one is pursuing them. So you will not be able to stand before your enemies.

"You will perish among the nations; the land of your enemies will devour you.

"Those of you who are left will waste away in the lands of their enemies because of their sins; also because of their fathers' sins they will waste away."

[Have a nice day. mp]

A. This cycle multiplies the effects of the fourth cycle by a factor of 7.

B. This cycle describes the total destruction of the nation by foreign enemies.

C. There will be cannibalism because of food shortages, even cannibalism within the family.

D. There will be widespread death directly attributed to involvement in the addiction cycle. People will be killed by the foreign enemies while participating in their idolatry.

E. The industries of the nation, and most of the buildings, public and private, will be destroyed.

F. The people will be carted off to the foreign countries as slaves.

G. Fear will be the modus operandi of those who are left.

H. It is too late for this generation to repent. It is destroyed.

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