

The Purpose of Judgment as Part of the Restoration Process | KIB 546

Kingdom Intelligence Briefing



Introduction

In Scripture, God repeatedly uses judgment—not merely to punish His people, but to dismantle spiritual corruption, remove false foundations, and bring His covenant people back to the foundation He originally established.

A useful biblical principle is:

GOD'S JUDGMENT CAN FUNCTION AS COVENANTAL
RESTORATION.

Judgment exposes what has departed from God's order, removes what competes with that order, and creates the conditions for repentance and restoration.

THE BIBLICAL PATTERN

The recurring pattern is:

Foundation established by God, then . . .

- gradual departure
- mixture and compromise
- prophetic warning
- refusal to repent
- divine judgment
- stripping away of false structures
- repentance/remnant preserved
- return to covenant foundations
- restoration

This pattern appears throughout both Testaments.

We also see as a part of this pattern:

- A great influx of false prophets and teachers that continue to lead God's people away from covenantal fidelity, while prophesying great and wonderful things.
- False prophets will be in the majority. True prophets will be few and in the small minority. What is popular among the people at this point will be carnal and paganism wrapped in acceptable religious tones that the people have been conditioned to desire.
- God's true prophets will have an anointing like Jeremiah and will serve as harbingers of God's approaching judgment. These prophets will also rebuild the faith on the true foundations of the Kingdom once judgment has passed.

Now, let's examine how judgment is a part of God's redemptive process.

I. JUDGMENT CAN BE CORRECTIVE RATHER THAN MERELY DESTRUCTIVE

Jeremiah 30:11 is especially important:

Jeremiah 30:11 (ESV)

For I am with you to save you, declares the LORD; I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end. I will discipline you in just measure, and I will by no means leave you unpunished.

Notice the distinction. God judges the nations destructively, but He disciplines His covenant people restoratively.

According to the **Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT)**, the Hebrew word for “discipline” is יָסַר (yāsār), which carries the ideas of correcting, chastening, instructing, and disciplining.¹ **Logos Word Sense** states: to punish in order to gain control or enforce obedience.²

Therefore, divine judgment upon God’s people can have an educational and restorative purpose. God is saying, in effect:

“I will judge what you have become without destroying what I have called you to be.”

That distinction is enormously important.

II. GOD SOMETIMES TEARS DOWN BEFORE HE REBUILDS

Jeremiah’s prophetic commission demonstrates this principle.

Jeremiah 1:10 (ESV)

See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

¹ Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 418–419.

² Logos Bible Software. FaithLife, Spokane, WA.

Notice the sequence:

- Pluck up
- Break down
- Destroy
- Overthrow.

Then:

- Build
- Plant

Biblically, restoration sometimes requires demolition.

God does not simply renovate Babylonian structures within His people. Sometimes He removes them so that His original order can be restored.

This gives us an important theological principle:

Divine restoration may require divine deconstruction of everything built on a false foundation.

III. THE EXILE WAS JUDGMENT THAT RETURNED ISRAEL TO COVENANT FOUNDATIONS

The Babylonian exile provides perhaps the clearest Old Testament example.

Israel had accumulated:

- Idolatry
- Syncretism
- social injustice
- covenant violation
- false prophecy
- corrupt priesthood
- and confidence in religious institutions rather than God.

Jeremiah 7:4 records their misplaced confidence:

Jeremiah 7:4 (ESV)

Do not trust in these deceptive words: ‘This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.’

They believed possession of the Temple guaranteed divine protection.

God shattered that assumption. The Temple was destroyed. Jerusalem fell. The monarchy collapsed. The people were exiled. Yet, God was not abandoning His covenant purposes.

He was stripping away the structures in which they had placed false confidence.

Jeremiah 29:10–14 then promises that after the Babylonian judgment God would bring them back.

Jeremiah 29:10–14 (ESV)

10 “For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. **11** For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. **12** Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. **13** You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. **14** I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

Therefore:

Exile was judgment, but exile also became purification, and purification prepared the way for restoration.

IV. JUDGMENT CAN CAUSE GOD’S PEOPLE TO “RETURN”

This concept is deeply connected to the Hebrew word שׁוּב (shuv).

Shuv means:

- to turn
- to return
- to turn back

- to restore

This is one of the major covenant words of the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 30:1–3 describes the pattern remarkably well.

Deuteronomy 30:1–3 (ESV)

1 “And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, **2** and return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, **3** then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you.

Israel experiences covenant judgment and dispersion. Then Israel “returns” to the LORD, and the LORD restores them.

The sequence is:

Judgment → remembrance → return → obedience → restoration.

Therefore, biblical repentance is fundamentally a return. God's people are not being called to invent something new. They are being called back to what God established.

V. JUDGMENT REMOVES FALSE FOUNDATIONS

Isaiah 28:16 declares:

Isaiah 28:16 (ESV)

16 therefore thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: ‘Whoever believes will not be in haste.’

God establishes the foundation. Human beings then build on it. **This distinction becomes crucial in the New Testament.**

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3:11 (ESV):

For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Then Paul describes different materials being built upon that foundation:

- gold
- silver
- precious stones
- wood
- hay
- straw

And then comes fire.

1 Corinthians 3:13 (ESV)

each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.

The foundation survives. The false construction does not. That is a powerful picture of divine judgment.

THE FIRE DOES NOT DESTROY THE FOUNDATION. THE FIRE REVEALS WHAT WAS NEVER WORTHY OF BEING BUILT UPON IT.

VI. HAGGAI SHOWS JUDGMENT REDIRECTING PRIORITIES

After the exile, the returned Jews became focused upon their own houses while God's house remained unfinished. God, therefore, affected their economic circumstances.

Haggai 1:5–7 (ESV)

5 Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. **6** You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes. **7** “Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways.

They planted much but harvested little. They earned wages but put them into “a bag with holes” (Haggai 1:6). Then God explains why.

Haggai 1:9 (ESV)

You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house.

This was not random hardship. It was covenantal correction. God disrupted their prosperity because their priorities had shifted from His. Judgment was being used to reorder their lives around God's purposes.

VII. JOSIAH SHOWS WHAT RESTORATION LOOKS LIKE

Second Kings 22–23 provides another important model.

- The Book of the Law had effectively disappeared from Israel's spiritual life.
- Then it was rediscovered.
- When Josiah heard the Word, he tore his clothes.

2 Kings 22:13 (ESV) records his realization:

“Go, inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us,

because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.”

Notice what happens next. The threat of judgment produces repentance. Repentance produces covenant renewal. Covenant renewal produces reform.

Then, Josiah begins removing everything that had accumulated around the worship of God that God had never commanded.

Second Kings 23 describes the removal of:

- idolatrous vessels
- Baal worship
- Asherah
- pagan priests
- high places
- occult practices
- and other corruptions

Then, something remarkable happens. Passover is restored.

Second Kings 23:21 (ESV):

“And the king commanded all the people, ‘Keep the Passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant.’”

This is precisely the pattern we are discussing.

- Word rediscovered

- judgment recognized
- repentance
- idols removed
- covenant renewed
- biblical worship restored.

Judgment drove them backward—not backward historically, but backward covenantally—to their God-established foundation.

VIII. THE NEW TESTAMENT CONTINUES THIS PRINCIPLE

Hebrews 12:5–11 provides the theology of divine discipline.

Hebrews 12:6 (ESV)

“For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

The goal is stated in Hebrews 12:10:

“that we may share his holiness.”

Therefore, divine discipline has a destination: **HOLINESS.**

God's correction is intended to bring His people back into alignment with His character.

Hebrews 12:11 says that afterward discipline yields:

“the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

Thus:

Discipline → holiness → righteousness.

IX. CHRIST HIMSELF USES JUDGMENT TO RESTORE CHURCHES

Revelation 2–3 may be one of the strongest New Testament examples.

Jesus does not merely commend the churches. He judges them. Consider Ephesus.

Revelation 2:4 (ESV)

But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

Then, Christ commands:

Revelation 2:5 (ESV)

Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.

Three words summarize Christ's restorative process:

- REMEMBER
- REPENT

- RETURN

This pattern reveals that God's restoration brings us back to the foundation.

But notice that judgment accompanies the warning:

“If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place” (Revelation 2:5).

The threatened judgment is meant to provoke repentance before it becomes final.

X. LAODICEA MAKES THE SAME POINT

Revelation 3:19 (ESV)

Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

Notice again:

Love → correction → discipline → repentance.

Divine judgment and divine love are therefore not necessarily opposites. Within covenant relationship, God's corrective judgment can express His covenant faithfulness. He loves His people too much to indefinitely permit them to redefine Christianity around something He never established.

XI. FIRST PETER 4:17 BECOMES VERY IMPORTANT

First Peter 4:17 (ESV) declares:

For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God.

This establishes a significant Kingdom principle. God deals with His house. Before judgment moves outward, God addresses corruption within the covenant community.

This parallels Ezekiel 9:6, where judgment begins at God's sanctuary.

There is therefore a biblical pattern:

SANCTUARY → PEOPLE OF GOD → NATIONS.

God cleans His own house.

XII. THE SHAKING OF HEBREWS 12

Hebrews 12:26–27 provides perhaps the most powerful theological framework for this subject.

Hebrews 12:26–27 (ESV)

26 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” **27** This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates

the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.

God promises another shaking. I believe we are there now!

Hebrews 12:27 explains the purpose:

“This phrase, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.”

That is extraordinarily significant. God shakes things in order to reveal what cannot be shaken. The purpose is not merely destruction. It is differentiation.

The shaking reveals:

- what came from God
- what came from man
- what belongs to the Kingdom
- and what belongs to the surrounding culture

Hebrews 12:28 then concludes:

“Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.”

So, the shaking removes what is temporary in order to reveal what is Kingdom.

This gives us an excellent theological definition:

DIVINE JUDGMENT IS SOMETIMES GOD'S PROCESS OF REMOVING WHAT HE NEVER ESTABLISHED SO THAT WHAT HE DID ESTABLISH CAN ONCE AGAIN BECOME VISIBLE.

XIII. THIS CONNECTS DIRECTLY TO THE CONCEPT OF REMNANT

Judgment repeatedly produces a remnant.

- Isaiah 10:20–21 speaks of “the remnant of Israel” returning to the LORD.
- Zephaniah 3:12–13 describes a humble and lowly remnant preserved by God.

The remnant is not necessarily the group that preserves the most religious institutions. The remnant consists of those who remain faithful to God when those institutions are shaken.

This suggests another important principle:

God may reduce something numerically while restoring it spiritually.

Biblically, smaller does not necessarily mean weaker, loss does not necessarily mean defeat, and institutional collapse does not necessarily mean Kingdom collapse.

Sometimes pruning precedes fruitfulness. Jesus makes precisely this point in John 15:2:

“Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”

XIV. THE FOUNDATION GOD SEEKS TO RESTORE

When we put these passages together, the foundation is not simply “the way things used to be.” That distinction is critical. Biblical restoration is not nostalgia. God does not necessarily restore His people to a previous cultural expression of Christianity. He restores them to Himself. Therefore, the foundation includes:

- Christ as cornerstone — Ephesians 2:20
- The apostolic and prophetic foundation — Ephesians 2:20
- The authority of Scripture — 2 Timothy 3:16–17
- Holiness — Hebrews 12:14
- Obedience — John 14:15
- Love for God — Matthew 22:37–38
- Love for one another — John 13:34–35
- Prayer — Acts 2:42
- Fellowship — Acts 2:42
- Breaking of bread — Acts 2:42
- Sound doctrine — Titus 2:1
- The fear of the Lord — Acts 9:31
- The power and leadership of the Holy Spirit — Acts 13:2–4

- Kingdom mission — Matthew 28:18–20

XV. THIS CREATES A POWERFUL DISTINCTION

A major difference exists between REVIVAL and RESTORATION.

Revival emphasizes bringing life again. Restoration emphasizes returning something to its proper condition and order. Judgment can contribute to both.

But there may be seasons when God is not primarily trying to revive existing religious structures. He may be judging those structures because they prevent restoration.

That would mean the prayer should not merely be:

“God, revive what we have built.”

It may need to become:

“God, remove everything we have built that prevents us from becoming what You intended.”

That is a much more searching prayer.

XVI. A POSSIBLE PROPHETIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE MODERN CHURCH

Without claiming that every hardship or institutional decline is necessarily a direct act of divine judgment, Scripture gives us grounds to recognize this pattern:

- God establishes His Church upon Christ and His Word.
- Over generations, human traditions, cultural accommodation, entertainment, consumerism, celebrity culture, false doctrine, prosperity thinking, political dependency, and moral compromise can accumulate.
- God sends warnings through His Word and faithful voices.
- If repentance does not occur, shaking comes.
- Institutions begin failing.
- False ministries are exposed.
- Financial structures are shaken.
- Leaders are uncovered.
- Cultural acceptance disappears.
- Nominal believers depart.
- What looked powerful becomes weak.

But underneath the rubble remains something enormously important: THE FOUNDATION.

- Christ has not moved.
- The Word has not changed.
- The Kingdom has not been shaken.

- The covenant purposes of God have not failed.
- The shaking has simply exposed what was built by man.
- And from that foundation God can raise a purified, obedient, covenant-faithful remnant.

XVII. THE CENTRAL THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE

I believe the biblical evidence allows us to formulate the principle this way:

GOD'S COVENANTAL JUDGMENT CAN SERVE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF RESTORATION BY SHAKING, EXPOSING, AND REMOVING EVERYTHING THAT HAS DISPLACED HIS ORIGINAL FOUNDATION, CALLING HIS PEOPLE TO REPENTANCE, AND RETURNING A FAITHFUL REMNANT TO CHRIST, HIS WORD, HOLINESS, COVENANTAL FAITHFULNESS, AND KINGDOM PURPOSE.

Or even more succinctly:

JUDGMENT DOES NOT ALWAYS MEAN GOD IS FINISHED WITH HIS PEOPLE. SOMETIMES, JUDGMENT MEANS GOD IS DETERMINED TO RESTORE HIS PEOPLE.