



Lesson 38 – The Rebellion of Korah

based on Numbers 16 and 17

The Children of Israel had just been sentenced to wander the desert for the next forty years, and year for every day the spies went through the land and then brought back a faithless review for the multitude.

The judgments visited upon the Israelites served for a time to restrain their murmuring and insubordination, but the spirit of rebellion was still in the heart and eventually brought forth the bitterest fruits. The former rebellions had been mere popular tumults, arising from the sudden impulse of the excited multitude; but now a deep-laid conspiracy was formed, the result of a determined purpose to overthrow the authority of the leaders appointed by God Himself.

1) What was brewing?

Numbers 16:1-2 Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: And they _____ before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown:

Korah, the leading spirit in this movement, was a Levite, of the family of Kohath, and a cousin of Moses; he was a man of ability and influence. Though appointed to the service of the tabernacle, he had become dissatisfied with his position and aspired to the dignity of the priesthood. The bestowal upon Aaron and his house of the priestly office, which had formerly devolved upon the first-born son of every family, had given rise to jealousy and dissatisfaction, and for some time Korah had been secretly opposing the authority of Moses and Aaron, though he had not ventured upon any open act of rebellion.

Close to the tents of Korah and the Kohathites, on the south side of the tabernacle, was the encampment of the tribe of Reuben, the tents of Dathan and Abiram, two princes of this tribe, being near that of Korah. These princes readily joined in his ambitious schemes. Being descendants from the eldest son of Jacob, they claimed that the civil authority belonged to them, and they determined to divide with Korah the honors of the priesthood.

2) What did they accuse Moses of?

Numbers 16:3 And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take _____ upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?

3) How did Moses react?

Numbers 16:4 And when Moses heard it, he _____ upon his face:

The humble shepherd's life of Moses had been far more peaceful and happy than his present position as leader of that vast assembly of turbulent spirits. Yet Moses dared not choose. In place of a shepherd's crook a rod of power had been given him, which he could not lay down until God should release him.

4) What had God previously let be known to everyone?

Numbers 12:7-8 My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak _____ to _____, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak _____ my servant Moses?

They had seen the judgment of God fall upon Miriam because of her jealousy and complaints against Moses. The Lord had declared that Moses was greater than a prophet. These instructions were not intended for Aaron and Miriam alone, but for all Israel.



Jealousy had given rise to envy, and envy to rebellion. They had discussed the question of the right of Moses to so great authority and honor, until they had come to regard him as occupying a very enviable position, which any of them could fill as well as he.

They decided that all their disasters were chargeable to him, and that their exclusion from Canaan was in consequence of the mismanagement of Moses and Aaron; that if Korah would be their leader, and would encourage them by dwelling upon their good deeds, instead of reproving their sins, they would have a very peaceful, prosperous journey; instead of wandering to and fro in the wilderness, they would proceed directly to the Promised Land.

5) What was the accusation against Moses?

Numbers 16:13-14 Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the _____, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us _____ of fields and vineyards...

Many were not ready to accept Korah's accusations against Moses. The memory of his patient, self-sacrificing labor, came up before them, and conscience was disturbed. It was therefore necessary to assign some selfish motive for his deep interest for Israel; and the old charge was reiterated, that he had led them out to perish in the wilderness, that he might seize upon their possessions.

6) What did Moses tell them?

Numbers 16:5 And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow the LORD will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath _____ will he cause to come near unto him.

The test was to be deferred until the morrow, that all might have time for reflection. Then those who aspired to the priesthood were to come each with a censer and offer incense at the tabernacle in the presence of the congregation. The law was very explicit that only those who had been ordained to the sacred office should minister in the sanctuary. And even the priests, Nadab and Abihu, had been destroyed for venturing to offer "strange fire," in disregard of a divine command. Yet Moses challenged his accusers, if they dared enter upon so perilous an appeal, to refer the matter to God.

7) What did Korah really want?

Numbers 16:9-10 Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to _____ unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the _____ also?

Dathan and Abiram had not taken so bold a stand as had Korah; and Moses, hoping that they might have been drawn into the conspiracy without having become wholly corrupted, summoned them to appear before him, that he might hear their charges against him.

8) Did they appear before Moses?

Numbers 16:12 And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, We will _____ come up:

They applied to the scene of their bondage the very language in which the Lord had described the promised inheritance. They accused Moses of pretending to act under divine guidance, as a means of establishing his authority; and they declared that they would no longer submit to be led about like blind men, now toward Canaan, and now toward the wilderness, as best suited his ambitious designs. Thus, he who had been as a tender father, a patient shepherd, was represented in the blackest character of a tyrant and usurper. The exclusion from Canaan, in punishment of their own sins, was charged upon him.



9) How did Mose handle his anger?

Numbers 16:15 And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the LORD, Respect not thou their _____: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them.

Moses made no effort at self-vindication. He solemnly appealed to God, in the presence of the congregation, as a witness to the purity of his motives and the uprightness of his conduct, and implored Him to be his judge.

10) What was the plan?

Numbers 16:16-17 And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the LORD, thou, and they, and Aaron, to morrow: And take every man his censer, and put _____ in them, and bring ye before the LORD every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; thou also, and _____, each of you his censer.

On the morrow, the two hundred and fifty princes, with Korah at their head, presented themselves, with their censers. They were brought into the court of the tabernacle, while the people gathered without, to await the result. It was not Moses who assembled the congregation to behold the defeat of Korah and his company, but the rebels, in their blind presumption, had called them together to witness their victory. A large part of the congregation openly sided with Korah, whose hopes were high of carrying his point against Aaron.

11) Did God speak?

Numbers 16:19-21 And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the _____ of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation. And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may _____ them in a moment.

12) What did Moses interject?

Numbers 16:22 And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with _____ the congregation?

Korah had withdrawn from the assembly to join Dathan and Abiram when Moses, accompanied by the seventy elders, went down with a last warning to the men who had refused to come to him.

13) What was the warning given to all?

Numbers 16:26-27 And he spake unto the congregation, saying, _____, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. So they _____ from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children.

The chief rebels saw themselves abandoned by those whom they had deceived, but their hardihood was unshaken. They stood with their families in the door of their tents, as if in defiance of the divine warning.

14) What did Moses follow with?

Numbers 16:28-29 And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the _____ of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not _____ me.

Numbers 16:30 But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and _____ them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD.

The eyes of all Israel were fixed upon Moses as they stood, in terror and expectation, awaiting the event.



15) What happened?

Numbers 16:31-32 And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground _____ that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their _____, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods.

16) Was it over now?

Numbers 16:35 And there came out a _____ from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.

When Moses was entreating Israel to flee from the coming destruction, the divine judgment might even then have been stayed, if Korah and his company had repented and sought forgiveness. But their stubborn persistence sealed their doom. The entire congregation were sharers in their guilt, for all had, to a greater or less degree, sympathized with them. Yet God in His great mercy made a distinction between the leaders in rebellion and those whom they had led. The people who had permitted themselves to be deceived were still granted space for repentance. Overwhelming evidence had been given that they were wrong, and that Moses was right. The signal manifestation of God's power had removed all uncertainty.

The people had been flattered by Korah and his company until they really believed themselves to be very good people, and that they had been wronged and abused by Moses. Should they admit that Korah and his company were wrong, and Moses right, then they would be compelled to receive as the word of God the sentence that they must die in the wilderness. They were not willing to submit to this.

17) What was on the minds of those that survived?

Numbers 16:34 And all Israel that were round about them _____ at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also.

That night of probation that followed was not passed in repentance and confession, but in devising some way to resist the evidences which showed them to be the greatest of sinners. They still cherished hatred of the men of God's appointment and braced themselves to resist their authority. Satan was at hand to pervert their judgment and lead them blindfold to destruction.

18) Did God intervene?

Numbers 16:42-43 And it came to pass, when the congregation was _____ against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the _____ covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared. And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation.

But the minister of wrath had gone forth; the plague was doing its work of death.

19) What had God told Moses?

Numbers 16:45 Get you up from among this congregation, that I may _____ them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces.

20) What did Moses and Aaron do?

Numbers 16:46-47 And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an _____ for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the _____ of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people.

Numbers 16:48 And he stood between the _____ and the _____; and the plague was stayed.

21) How many perished in their defiance?

Numbers 16:49-50 Now they that died in the plague were fourteen _____ and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah. And Aaron returned unto Moses unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the plague was stayed.



- 22) What test did God do to further show that Aaron and his family were chosen for the priesthood?
Numbers 17:2-4 Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of their fathers, of all their princes according to the house of their fathers twelve _____: write thou every man's name upon his rod. And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod shall be for the head of the house of their fathers. And thou shalt lay them up in the _____ of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you.
- 23) What did God do?
Numbers 17:8 And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was _____, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded _____.
- 24) What was the result of those who witnessed this?
Numbers 17:12 And the children of Israel spake unto Moses, saying, Behold, we _____, we perish, we all perish.

They confessed that they had sinned in rebelling against their leaders, and that Korah and his company had suffered from the just judgment of God.

In the rebellion of Korah is seen the working out, upon a narrower stage, of the same spirit that led to the rebellion of Satan in heaven. It was pride and ambition that prompted Lucifer to complain of the government of God, and to seek the overthrow of the order which had been established in heaven. Since his fall it has been his object to infuse the same spirit of envy and discontent, the same ambition for position and honor, into the minds of men.

Can you see God knows what is best?

**Would you like to stop placing yourself
in a position of hurt?**

When is it time to do what God asks?