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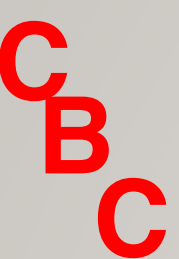
Min. Marossa Davis



Sunday Church School

NOVEMBER 14, 2021

“KORAH’S REBELLION”
Numbers 16: 1-16



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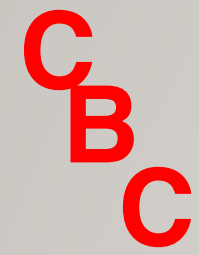
“Korah’s Rebellion”
Numbers 16: 1-14 (KJV)

v. 1. “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:

v. 2. and they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown:

v. 3. and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much 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?”

v. 4. And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face:



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Numbers 16: 1-14 (KJV)

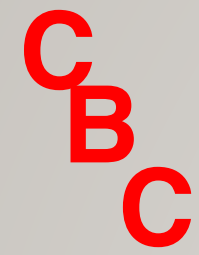
v. 5. and he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow the LORD will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him.

v. 6. This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all his company;

v. 7. and put fire therein, and put incense in them before the LORD to morrow: and it shall be that the man whom the LORD doth choose, he shall be holy: ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.

v. 8. And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi:

v. 9. 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



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v. 9 cont’d ... before the congregation to minister unto them?”

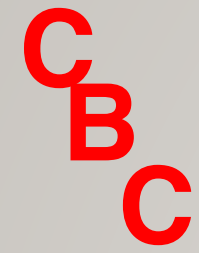
v. 10. “And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also?”

v. 11. For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the LORD: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?

v. 12. And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, We will not come up:

v. 13. 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 wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?

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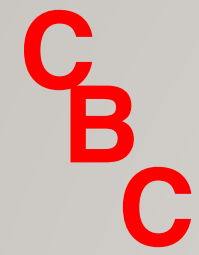
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v. 14. Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up.”

The events recorded in Numbers have just gotten worse and worse—from repeated complaints to attacks on God’s chosen leaders, to rebellion against God and His promises and plan. As a result, God had threatened to annihilate His people. As we come to Numbers 16, we might think that things are finally going to get better. Perhaps Israel has been scared straight. Perhaps God’s people will truly repent.

The narrative in Numbers 16 , however, demonstrates no spiritual progress among the people. In fact, Korah’s rebellion proves another new low



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in the history of Israel.

Again, the acts of Korah and his co- conspirators demonstrate that many in the camp of Israel still did not support Moses and Aaron. There were those who supported only themselves and their own agendas despite what God had done through Moses and Aaron in the past.

Sometimes it seems that we never learn from our mistakes or the mistakes of others. If we want to experience the blessings of God, we must stop any pattern of disobedience, rebellion and unbelief that may be present in our lives. Wise people will learn from their failures and seek God’s help to not repeat them.

Apparently, the children of Israel had a hard time learning from their sins and appreciating the graciousness of God. We would be wise to learn from **their** mistakes so that we do not repeat them ourselves.



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TODAY’S AIM

FACTS: to delve into a study of the depths of sinful propensity and examine its motives and methods.

PRINCIPLE: to understand that rebellion against God’s order is rebellion against the Lord Himself.

APPLICATION: to sharpen our discernment in recognizing and combating the spirit of rebellion against God and His kingdom so that our lives demonstrate a consistent desire to follow and obey God.

LESSON OUTLINE

- | | | |
|------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| I. | KORAH REBELS AGAINST MOSES | NUMBERS 16: 1-3 |
| II. | MOSES CONFRONTS THE REBELS | NUMBERS 16: 4-11 |
| III. | THE REBELS ACCUSE MOSES | NUMBERS 16: 12-14 |



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“Korah’s Rebellion”

I. KORAH REBELS AGAINST MOSES

NUMBERS 16: 1-3

Unfounded resentment against Moses and Aaron continued, and in this week's lesson we see a new group of insurrectionists rising up against God's appointed leaders over Israel. Insubordination was a very real problem for the Israelites after they left Egypt, as the former slaves were not content nor satisfied with God's directions in spite of His faithful protection and provision for them as they wandered through a foreign wilderness.

The leader of this latest insurrection was a man named Korah, a Levite who was the grandson of Kohath. Kohath and his children had been chosen by God for the special service of transporting and caring for the tabernacle and its furnishings (Num. 4: 1-29). Although not a priest, Korah was a noted leader among the Levites.

Allied with Kohath, were Dathan, Abiram, and On, all of whom were

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Reubenites, descendants of Jacob’s eldest son Reuben. Since the Reubenites and Kohathites both camped close together on the south side of the camp(2:10; 3: 23), it is easy to see how men from these two groups would have conversed and conspired together.

Together, these men assembled a group of 250 others to join them in their rebellion. They were not just a random collection of men from the people; they were all respected chiefs and leaders who were well known among the people.

After gathering his collection of rebellious cohorts together, Korah and his fellow insurgents angrily approached Moses and Aaron to protest their leadership. The people apparently had been growing increasingly restless ever since the ten spies came back with their negative report. Although God punished the spies with a plague that cost them their lives (14:37) and pronounced judgment on the entire adult population, declaring that they would not personally

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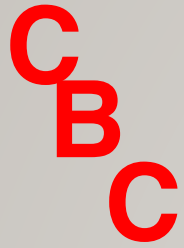
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enter the Promised Land (vs. 29-35), it was now clear there were still many Israelites who felt no loyalty to Moses or Aaron- or to God, for that matter.

This large coalition led by Korah accused Moses and Aaron of going too far in exerting their authority over the people. At the heart of their protest was that all the people were holy, not just Moses and Aaron. As far as the rebels were concerned, they had just as much right to leadership as Moses and Aaron because they, too, were set apart to God.

Since the Lord was among all the Israelites, Korah and his supporters asserted that Moses and Aaron were no different or better than anyone else. While it is true that God chose Israel to be a holy nation, set apart to Him (Ex. 19:6) , personal holiness in their actions and attitude was, in large measure, sadly lacking.

The rebels then charged Moses and Aaron with appointing themselves as



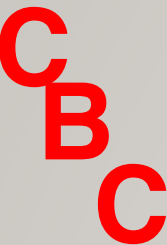
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Israel leaders. Yet, God had repeatedly affirmed Moses’ leadership (cf. Ex. 4: 1-5, 29-31: Num 12). Moreover, the ordination of Aaron as High Priest had taken place in the sight of all the people (Lev.8); there should be no question, therefore, as to the validity of his leadership.

While the Lord had a special plan for the Israelite nation as a whole, this did not negate His special calling on special people. The Kohathites were divinely chosen specifically to transport and care for the tabernacle. That responsibility was a very prestigious calling. However, Korah was not content to do what God called him to do. He wanted a higher position, one that undoubtedly, included the authority to tell other people what to do.

Perhaps at issue too was the people’s lingering desire to choose a new leader to take them back to Egypt. Korah may have been stepping up to assume that role. In order to successfully take the people back, however, he had to replace Moses and Aaron. And that is exactly what they set out to do



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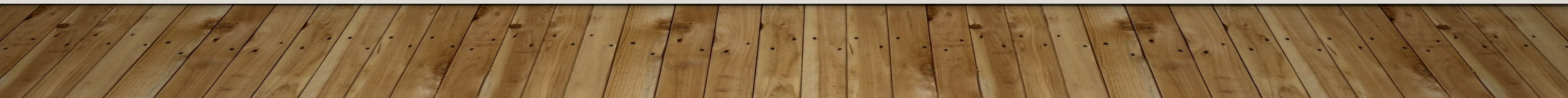
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II. MOSES CONFRONTS THE REBELS

NUMBERS 16: 6-11

When Moses realized he was going to have to deal with yet another rebellion, he fell on his face in front of his accusers. This was not a position of weakness or surrender, but of grief and mourning. The people were constantly rebelling against Israel’s leaders, and therefore against God Himself, and Moses knew this meant trouble for the guilty parties. The trouble they would bring on themselves would spill over into the entire camp if the problem was not effectively and quickly dealt with.

Staying true to his typical behavior when his authority was there, Moses did not defend himself but appealed to the Lord. He did not get into a shouting match with Korah or the others, he simply stated that the Lord would make it known who His leaders were.



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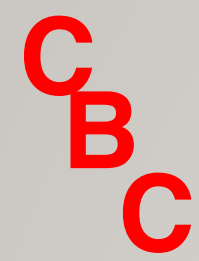
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Moses had nothing to fear in this encounter because God had defended and vindicated him time and time again. There was no reason for him to get defensive against men he knew were rebelling against God’s authority, not just his own. God would clear the matter up and again leave no doubt as to whom He had chosen to lead His people Israel.

Moses was a very humble man, (cf. 12:3) yet, he was confident that the Lord would defend him. He instructed Korah and his entire company to take censers with fire in them and bring them before the Lord the very next morning.

Time was of the essence, for the insurrection could not be allowed to continue. The rebels had to either repent immediately or face God, but they would not be allowed to mount a further attack on the person or character of Moses. God would make it known once again whom He had chosen to lead Israel. There was no reason for any suspense leading up to this ‘showdown’ because God had made it abundantly clear in the past who Israel’s leaders



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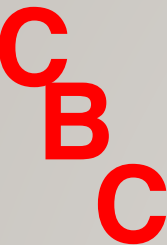
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were to be.

Moses stood firm against the challenge of Korah and his company as he returned the words they had used against him, telling them they had taken “ too much “ upon them- they had gone too far (v. 7, v. 3). That is what they had accused Moses of doing, but he retorted that they were the ones who had tried to grab too much for themselves. They were not satisfied with what God had for them. Korah was not content with the special role God had prepared him for. Instead, they sought the preeminent positions as Israel’s political and religious leaders.

Moses specifically called out the sons of Levi who had joined Korah in this rebellion. They were seeking power for themselves and the prestige that came along with it. They were not satisfied that God had already called them to a special sphere of service. Sadly, the great privilege they already enjoyed was not enough for them.

This type of attitude is also prevalent among modern day Christians,

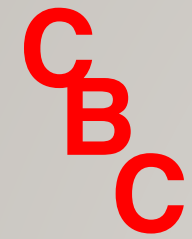


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much to the detriment of the church. Some are not content with the positions God has called them into and resent the spiritual authority that has been placed over them. Instead of simply and faithfully serving where God has placed them, they rebel against pastors, elders and other leaders. This kind of behavior causes dissension within the body of Christ and leads to division, as it makes others feel forced to pledge allegiance to one side or the other

Moses asked the sons of Levi if they considered it a trifling thing to have been singled out from the rest of the Israelites by God to serve the Lord in the tabernacle and to serve His people. They may not have had the most glamorous position conceivable, but it was still very significant. We should consider it an honor to do anything the Lord wants us to do. To desire only those positions that bring visibility and public acclaim is a sign of immaturity and selfishness. Some positions are obviously more visible than others, but the Lord determines who serves in what roles.



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Moses continued to question the Levites who were associates in the rebellion. Now he reminded them that their appointed service had brought them near to God. They encamped near the tabernacle and their service brought them into frequent contact with it. They were literally close to the earthly presence of God manifested in the tabernacle. Their privileged role should have more than enough for them, but it was not.

Moses asked the challengers specifically why they were grumbling against Aaron. These Levites apparently were upset that Aaron had been chosen from among all the Levites to be the high priest and that only his sons and future descendants could serve as priests. They were not satisfied with being servants of the Lord in the tabernacle ; they had their eyes on the priesthood.

The rebels were not really grumbling against Israel’s human leadership. Their complaint ultimately was against God. They did not like and did not approve of God’s selection of Moses and particularly Aaron.

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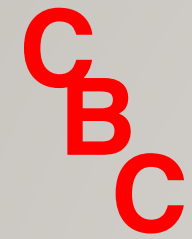
Jealousy filled their hearts, leading them to oppose God’s already clearly revealed will.

III. THE REBELS ACCUSE MOSES

NUMBERS 16: 12-14

Dathan and his brother Abiram represented the Reubenite contingent in the rebel coalition. These two refused to come before Moses when called to do so. This shows that they were fully entrenched in their cause and had no respect for Moses’ leadership or authority.

To flatly refuse the instruction of a God-ordained leader was the height of rebellion, as it showed disrespect not only to the leader but also to the One who appointed him. The depravity in the hearts and minds of the two Reubenite brothers is further exemplified in their specific choice of words in describing Egypt. They asserted that Moses had led them out of a land flowing with “milk and honey,” which was exactly how God had described Canaan (cf. Ex. 3:8:). Their use of this phrase to describe the place they had been delivered from was a deliberate insult and challenge to the Lord.



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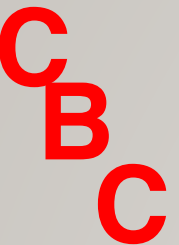
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At no time during the long years of Hebrew slavery was Egypt ever considered a land flowing with milk and honey. For the Israelites, Egypt was a place of cruelty and bondage, not prosperity and opportunity.

To further their case against him, Dathan and Abiram accused Moses of making himself a prince over the people of Israel. Their complaint was that Moses gloried in his authority and superior position. They did not view him as a compassionate leader who loved them but as an opportunist who was trying to take advantage of a terrible situation and exploit them for his own benefit.

Dathan and Abiram continued their rant against Moses, next accusing him not only of bringing them out of a land with milk and honey but also failing to bring them into a land that fit that description. Moses had not come through on what he had promised, and they considered that sufficient grounds on which to challenge him.

To make matters even worse, Dathan and Abiram then asserted that



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Moses wanted to “put out the eyes of these men” (Num. 16:14). While this may be a literal allusion to the people dying in the wilderness, it is probably a figure of speech, similar to when we speak of “ pulling the wool” over someone’s eyes. In this case, they clearly would have been accusing Moses of deceptive practice, blinding people to his failures and true motives.

Korah, Dathan, Abiram, On, and the other 250 men clearly had an agenda. They opposed Moses for personal reasons. They were not happy with his leadership, and they saw this as an opportunity for themselves to seize upon the dissatisfaction and fear of the people and wrestle leadership away from Moses and Aaron.

In conclusion, the actions of Korah and the others in Numbers 16 in rejecting God’s chosen leaders for the nation illustrate the truth that those who exalt themselves find it easy to despise and denigrate those who have been exalted by God.

Korah and the other rebels had convinced themselves, and now

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wished to convince the rest of Israel, that they deserved positions of authority equal to those of Moses and Aaron. Korah and his company thought they could do a better job than Moses and Aaron. They even believed that usurping the roles of Moses and Aaron would be an act of justice and liberation for the people of God. These men serve as a prime example of how sin can warp and manipulate one’s thoughts and feelings and put them in direct opposition to God’s clearly stated will.

Sometimes the Lord takes us through hard times as with the Israelites in the wilderness. It is not easy to submit when the prospects for our future look bleak and painful. But rebellion only makes matters worse. The only way to react is with humility and humble submission to the Lord. Today’s lesson encourages us to be thankful for what we have and not be jealous of what others have. Let us determine to live our lives in such a way that our love for Christ is clearly evident.

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Practical Points

1. Just because people have charisma does not mean you should follow them (Numbers 16:1-2).
2. We must not be jealous of other people’s roles in the church. God has a meaningful role for each of us (v. 3).
3. If someone wrongly accuses you, respond with humility, and let the Lord provide a defense (vs, 4-7).
4. We should always be thankful for the ways that God uses us. (vs. 8-10).
5. There is often no reasoning with people who are set on rebellion, but we must try to help them see their error (vs. 11-12).
6. When God does not meet our expectations, we must have faith that His plans are good (vs. 13-14).

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“ Korah’s Rebellion” Questions For Reflection

1. Why is it so hard to be humble in the face of accusations? Is it wrong to be upset when injustice is done to you?
2. How did Moses respond to Korah’s dispute about Israel’s true Leadership?
2. Do you struggle with the ways in which God wants to use you in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:14-18)?

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