

LESSON 7



## KORAH'S SIN OF REBELLION

**Scripture Text:** *Numbers 16*

The children of Israel left Kadesh-barnea, where they doubted God, and wandered forty years before entering Canaan. The Bible is almost entirely silent concerning that time of punishment, the incident of today's lesson, with its related events, being all we know of the history of those years until Israel again came to Canaan's borders.

Is it right that children should share the punishment of the fathers? Do they not always, more or less? Do not wicked parents always bring suffering on their children? Is not that the nature of sin? Children usually stand with their parents, sharing their feelings.

**MEMORY VERSE:** *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.*

—1 Samuel 15:23a

### Korah Leads Others to Rebel

**Numbers 16:1-3** Korah was of the tribe of Levi, and Dathan, Abiram, and On were Reubenites. They got together, drew to themselves two hundred and fifty influential men, and rose in opposition to Moses and Aaron. They complained, **Ye take too much upon you . . . all the congregation are holy . . . the Lord is among them.** Why then do you lift yourselves above the rest of the people? The fact was, God, not themselves, had placed Moses and Aaron as leaders. Jealousy appears here. The Levites were especially designated by God to carry on the religious service of the tabernacle. Having that much privilege, they desired more. Moses showed his understanding of their purpose when he asked, **Seek ye the priesthood also?**

Only the seed of Aaron, or priests, were authorized to offer incense before the Lord. The rebels desired the office of the priesthood without the divine enduement of priests. Do we see similar attempts today? Since Christ, every saint is a priest with the privilege of offering prayers and worship and service to God (Revelation 5:10). These are never accepted from the unsaved. How does God look upon the unsaved holding position in the church, some even attempting to teach the Word of God and to handle other sacred things? (Read Hebrews 5:4.)

### Moses Put Them to the Test

**Numbers 16:4-24** When Moses heard it, he fell upon his face, in meekness and sorrow and in prayer for instruction. He heard from the Lord. **To morrow the Lord will shew who are his.** Each man should come before the Lord to the tabernacle bringing his censer with fire and incense. Aaron was to do the same. The offering of incense belonged to the priest's office, the position they desired. The incense is a type of prayer and worship and spiritual service of saints, holy people. They all professed to be holy; now comes the test.

When Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram, they answered in contempt, **We will not come.** They turned values around and called Egypt **a land that floweth with milk and honey.** They blamed Moses for not bringing them into Canaan. **Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men?**—can you keep them from seeing what a failure you have made? Oh, how arrogant and disrespectful rebellious ones can be! Korah came to the tabernacle as told, bringing his two

hundred and fifty followers, plus **all the congregation**, whom he seems to have stirred to his way of thinking against Moses. God showed His glory to them and was about to consume them all. At the urgent prayer of Moses, He mercifully relented somewhat. How often the children of Israel owed their lives to the prayers of Moses. Do we ever stand between sinners and the wrath of God? May it be that God is listening for our prayers to draw sinners to Christ and avert the damnation that would fall upon them? There is a great power in intercession (Exodus 32:10-14; Numbers 14:12-20; 16:22, 45-48).

At God's command, Moses went to the tents of Dathan and Abiram and warned the people to get away from them and not even touch their belongings, lest they be consumed also. **They gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.** Apparently these men had set up a rival tabernacle to the one of God, desiring to lead the worship of the nation in rebellion against the true tabernacle. These men **stood in the door of their tents**, their families with them in agreement. The offering of incense by the rebels is a type of the attempt to usurp the privileges of saints without being a saint. It is trying to climb up some other way (John 10:1).

### Punishment of Korah and Followers

**Numbers 16:25-50** A test would prove to the people whether or not Moses was God's chosen leader acting on His authority. If these men died naturally, he was not. If the earth swallowed them up, he was, and **these men have provoked the Lord.** Immediately **the ground clave asunder**—split open— . . . **the earth . . . swallowed them up, and their houses . . . the men . . . their goods . . . the earth closed . . . they perished . . .** Frightened at the sudden, tragic end of their neighbors, the people near them **fled at the cry of them**, fearing to be swallowed up also. But the tragedy was not over.

**And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men**—those with Korah—at the door of the tabernacle. They **offered incense** with fire in an attempt to force their way as priests. They reaped as they had sown; their punishment was by fire (Numbers 26:9-10; Psalm 106:16-18).

The Lord commanded that the censers of the rebels be made into an altar covering as a memorial and warning to others that no one who is not a priest should **offer incense before the Lord.** But the people had not yet learned the lesson of this tragedy. They accused Moses and Aaron of killing God's people. They gathered in anger against them. The Lord would have consumed them all, but the prayers and offering of incense of Moses stopped the plague after 14,700 had died.

### Let Us Fear

God gave us this history because it is necessary. We need the warning of these examples (1 Corinthians 10:11). Envy, jealousy, covetousness, and self-will can tempt us as they did the Israelites. God wants us to know what happens to those who rebel against God's provisions or commands or the leaders He has placed. Do we seek to exalt ourselves, or humble ourselves **under the mighty hand of God?** (1 Peter 5:6). The way down is to lift ourselves; the way up is to humble ourselves. Thoughts of sin begin small but, if harbored, grow to consume a man's entire being. Read Hebrews 4:1.

### JUST A THOUGHT

**You cannot lift your children to a higher level  
than that on which you live yourself.**