

TEXT – Numbers 16:1-18

INTRO – The Bible introduces us to four people named Korah, but only one earned his place in infamy.

- **The first is Korah, son of Esau and Oholibamah;**
- **the second is Korah, son of Eliphaz and grandson of Esau and Adah;**
- **the third is Korah, son of Hebron and a descendant of Caleb**
- **finally, there is Korah, son of Izhar,**

He was a Levite whose blatant rebellion against Moses and Aaron brought about his own demise as well as the deaths of everyone aligned with him. Korah was not content to do his job thinking it was too menial a task. Jealousy set in and caused his demise along with many others. But God made the tabernacle appointments. Not content to rebel alone, Korah gathered 250 princes of Israel, well-known men (most of them probably Levites), as well as three men from the tribe of Reuben.

I. Korah Defies Moses and Aaron

A. They justified their rebellion

It appears that Korah and his followers defied Aaron, while Dathan, Abiram, and On (being descendants of Reuben, the firstborn) questioned the authority of Moses. They were united in their plot.

Rebels rarely give the real reason for their attacks; in [Num 16:3](#) the men argued that all of the nation was “a kingdom of priests” ([Exo 19:6](#)), and therefore Moses and Aaron had no right to take the places of leadership. Of course, this rebellion was based on self-seeking and envy. These men wanted to “lift themselves up” before the congregation.

1 Samuel 15:23 *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.*

B. The church today has its rebels seeking power.

All saints are beloved of God, but some have been given spiritual gifts and spiritual offices for the work of the ministry ([Eph 4:15-16](#); [1Co 12:14-18](#)). **We are encouraged to “desire spiritual gifts” ([1Co 14:1](#)) but not to covet another person’s spiritual office. If a believer wants a place of spiritual leadership, let him prove himself worthy of it by his character and conduct ([1Ti 3:1](#)).**

The church must heed Paul’s warning in to beware [Act 20:28-31](#).

Moses and Aaron did not defend themselves; they let God do the defending. Moses instructed Korah and his followers to bring censers to the tabernacle where God would demonstrate who was right in the dispute.

C. These men were condemned

He called for Dathan and Abiram to come, but they defied Moses’ authority and refused to obey. In [Num 16:25](#), Moses went to them, but his visit meant condemnation, not blessing. Note how the men blamed Moses for their failure to enter the Promised Land ([Num 16:13-14](#)), when it was their own unbelief that brought this defeat. To rebel against Moses meant rejecting the Word of God, for he was God’s prophet; and to rebel against Aaron meant rejecting the work of God on the altar, salvation by the blood.

- **Cain - Jude 1:11** This example takes us back to [Gen. 4:1-26](#), where Cain appears at the altar without a blood sacrifice. **The way of Cain is the way of man-made religion**, rejecting the revelation of God and the blood.

- **Balaam Jude 1:11 - 2 Peter 2:15-16** *Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man’s voice forbad the madness of the prophet.*

The error of Balaam involved leading others into sin for personal gain. (Gainsaying) Balaam knew the truth but deliberately led Israel into sin that he might make money.

- **Korah Jude 1:11**

Numbers 16:1-50. Korah and his followers rejected the divine authority given to Moses and tried to assume power for themselves.

False teachers promote themselves and override the authority of God’s servants.

They will be judged, as were Korah and his followers.

Jude 1:12-13 *These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever*

II. God Defends Moses’ Authority (Num 16:19-35)

A. The rebels were judged

The next day God stepped in and judged the rebels. Fire from the Lord killed the followers [Num 16:35](#), and the earth opened up and swallowed the leaders, Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and their possessions.

In [Num. 26:11](#) we learn that Korah’s family was not destroyed. This explains why we have psalms titled “For the sons of Korah” in our Bible. Apparently Korah’s descendants were content to be humble ministers and not priests, for they wrote in [Psalms 84:10](#) *For a day in thy courts is better than*

a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

“tents of wickedness” Numbers 16:26 *And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins.*

It is tragic when a few people sin and cause the deaths of many others.

Before this rebellion was over, nearly 15,000 people had died. Read

2 Pe 2:10-22 for God’s estimate of those who “despise authority.

III. God Defends Aaron’s Authority 16:36-17:13

A. By giving Aaron the censers of the rebels (Num 16:36-40)

Moses told Aaron’s son, Eleazar, to gather the censers and have them made into brass plates for a covering for the brazen altar. When worshipers came to the altar, they would see these plates and be reminded that the sin of rebellion is severely judged by God.

B. By having Aaron intercede (Num 16:41-50)

You would think that the deaths of all these people would strike terror and awe into the hearts of the nation, but it did not. The very next day the entire congregation rebelled again! Only the grace of God can change the human heart; no amount of law or judgment will ever make the heart new.

C. By causing Aaron’s rod to bud (Num 17:1-13)

God was now going to declare once and for all the authority of the Aaronic priesthood. The people had not learned their lesson, so Moses instructed each tribe to bring a rod — a dead stick — to be placed before the ark in the tabernacle. God announced that the rod that blossomed would indicate the one He had chosen for the priesthood. [Num 17:8](#) tells us that Aaron’s rod not only budded, but it blossomed and bore fruit! The other rods were still dead, and each of the princes took back his dead rod, leaving Aaron’s rod to be placed in the tabernacle as a testimony to the nation’s rebellion and God’s appointment of Aaron as the high priest.

The people were fearful after they had seen this demonstration of God’s power. What the death of nearly 15,000 people could not do, the silent blossoming of a dead stick did accomplish! *“Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit . . .” (Zec 4:6).*

CONCL -The priest may learn that his office does not imply that he is holier or better than his brethren, but that it does imply greater responsibility, greater opportunities of good, greater sin if he does evil.

Matthew 10:42 *And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.*