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The Rebellion of Korah: Don't Rebel Against God's Word (Numbers 16:1-35)

By Dr. David DeWitt

Korah assembled the leaders of Israel to face Moses (vv. 1-2)

This took some planning and much discussion because Korah, a Levite, was also joined by *two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, chosen in the assembly, men of renown.*

These leaders have six things to say against Moses (vv. 3 and 13)

1. *"You have gone far enough,"* that is, your sole leadership should come to an end.
2. *"For all the congregation are holy, every one of them."* It sounds like they thought that meant they were a democracy. Though it was true that all the congregation was holy (Ex. 19:6), they failed to recognize that Moses and Aaron were God-appointed leaders.
3. *"And the LORD is in their midst."* But they failed to recognize that the Word of God came to them through and only through Moses. Rejecting Moses was not just rejecting God's leader, it was rejecting the only source of God's revelation.
4. *"So why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"* Usually, people who complain accuse their enemies of doing the very thing they are doing. Korah said to Moses, *"You exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD,"* because that is what he was doing.
5. Then *Dathan and Abiram* add two accusations: *"Is it not enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to have us die in the wilderness?"*
6. *"But you would also lord it over us?"*

Moses angrily responds to Korah and the rebels (vv. 4-19)

1. *When Moses heard this, he fell on his face.* I don't know why they fell on their faces, but they did this on five other occasions also (14:5; 16:22, 45; 20:6; 22:31).
2. *And he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, "Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who is His, and who is holy, and will bring him near to Himself; even the one whom He will choose, He will bring near to Himself."* So, it's all about God's choice, not personal ambition.
3. *"Is it not enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the rest of the congregation of Israel [as Levites], to bring you near to Himself, to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them; and that He has brought you near, Korah, and all your brothers, sons of Levi, with you? And are you seeking for the priesthood also?"* Personal ambition can lead to subverting God's will.
4. *"Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the LORD,"* which is Moses' counter accusation.

God responds to Korah and the rebels with judgment (vv. 20-35)

- *Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them instantly. Get back from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram."* God gave Moses the 'rapture principle'—separation of the righteous from the wicked, as God did at the Flood of Noah and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. But it is also generally applicable to life today—separate yourself from those who want to be leaders over the people of God. Notice the difference between Moses and Korah: Moses wanted to follow God but did not want to lead the people. Korah wanted to lead the people but did not want to follow God. The ground opened up and they *descended alive into Sheol*, the grave where the body is placed at death (Psalms 16:10), meaning they were buried alive.
- *All Israel who were around them fled at their outcry, for they said, "The earth may swallow us up!" Fire also came forth from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense.* So, God killed them separately.

Lesson: Do not rebel against those to whom God has given His written Word (the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles of the Bible).

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