

# THE REBELLION OF KORAH, DATHAN, AND ABIRAM

BIBLE TEXT : Numbers 16 :1-50 ; 26 :9-11

LESSON 105 Senior Course

**MEMORY VERSE: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).**

## BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

### **Numbers 16:1-50 (KJV)**

<sup>1</sup> 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 *mer*:

<sup>2</sup> 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:

<sup>3</sup> 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?

<sup>4</sup> And when Moses heard *it*, he fell upon his face:

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all his company;

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi:

<sup>9</sup> *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 minister unto them?

<sup>10</sup> And he hath brought thee near *to him*, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also?

<sup>11</sup> For which cause *both* thou and all thy company *are* gathered together against the LORD: and what *is* Aaron, that ye murmur against him?

<sup>12</sup> And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, We will not come up:

## BIBLE REFERENCES:

### **I The Charge of Korah and His Company**

1 The rebellion was led by Korah, a Levite; and Dathan and Abiram, sons of Reuben, Numbers 16:1; 26:9

2 The conspiracy was strong and included many princes famous in the congregation of Israel, Numbers 16:2

3 They charged Moses and Aaron with usurping the powers of government and the priesthood of which they envied a share, Numbers 16:3;

#### **Psalm 106:16**

<sup>16</sup> They envied Moses also in the camp, *and* Aaron the saint of the LORD.

### **II Moses' Request that the Lord Might Show Who Were His**

1 Korah and his company were commanded to stand before the Lord, along with Aaron, with a censer and incense, that the Lord's chosen might be known, Numbers 16:5-7;

#### **2 Timothy 2:19 (KJV)**

<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

2 God had already separated the Levites to a particular duty and had brought them near unto Himself, Numbers 16:8-11;

#### **Numbers 3:5-9 (KJV)**

<sup>5</sup> And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

<sup>6</sup> Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him.

<sup>7</sup> And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle.

<sup>8</sup> And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle.

<sup>9</sup> And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they *are* wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel.

3 Dathan and Abiram refused Moses' invitation with seditious speeches, thereby showing what manner of men they were, Numbers 16:12-14

4 Moses instituted proceedings, Numbers 16:15-20

5 The glory of the Lord appeared and He threatened to consume the whole congregation, Numbers 16:19-21, 43-45

6 Moses and Aaron interceded, as they had done on previous occasions, Numbers 16:22;

#### **Exodus 32:10-14 (KJV)**

<sup>10</sup> Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

<sup>11</sup> And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

<sup>12</sup> Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy

<sup>13</sup> *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?*

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the LORD, Respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them.

<sup>16</sup> And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the LORD, thou, and they, and Aaron, to morrow:

<sup>17</sup> And take every man his censer, and put incense in them, and bring ye before the LORD every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; thou also, and Aaron, each *of you* his censer.

<sup>18</sup> And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron.

<sup>19</sup> And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation.

<sup>20</sup> And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

<sup>21</sup> Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.

<sup>22</sup> 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 all the congregation?

<sup>23</sup> And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

<sup>24</sup> Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

<sup>25</sup> And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him.

<sup>26</sup> 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.

<sup>27</sup> So they gat up 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.

<sup>28</sup> And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know

people.

<sup>13</sup> Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit *it* for ever.

<sup>14</sup> And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

### III The Lord's Swift Judgment

1 The congregation was commanded to depart from the tabernacle (or tents) of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Numbers 16:23-27

2 By the unusual judgment meted out to the rebels, the Lord proved He had sent Moses, Numbers 16:28-34

3 Fire came out from the Lord and consumed the 250 princes who offered incense at the door of the Tabernacle, Numbers 16:35;

#### **Leviticus 10:1-2 (KJV)**

<sup>1</sup> And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not.

<sup>2</sup> And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

#### **2 Chronicles 26:16-21 (KJV)**

<sup>16</sup> But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to *his* destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

<sup>17</sup> And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, *that were* valiant men:

<sup>18</sup> And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, *It appertaineth* not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither *shall it be* for thine honour from the LORD God.

<sup>19</sup> Then Uzziah was wroth, and *had* a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar.

<sup>20</sup> And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he *was* leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him.

<sup>21</sup> And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, *being* a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son *was* over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

4 The censers had been hallowed for the use of the priests only, Numbers 16:36-40

### IV The Congregation's Complaint About God's Judgment

1 The people charged Moses and Aaron with the death of the Lord's people, Numbers 16:41

2 The plague began in the congregation, but was stayed by Aaron's intercession, Numbers 16:46-48

3 Fourteen thousand and seven hundred died of the plague, Numbers 16:49

#### **NOTES:**

The cause of righteousness and truth shall prevail though there be few to uphold it. The cause of Satan is not so; although he may have untold millions on his side. His realm is based on deceit and error; therefore he is sure of defeat at last, regardless of any temporary successes that he may have.

that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for *I have not done them of mine own mind.*

<sup>29</sup> If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; *then* the LORD hath not sent me.

<sup>30</sup> But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow 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.

<sup>31</sup> And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that *was* under them:

<sup>32</sup> And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that *appertained* unto Korah, and all *their* goods.

<sup>33</sup> They, and all that *appertained* to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.

<sup>34</sup> And all Israel that *were* round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up *also*.

<sup>35</sup> And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.

<sup>36</sup> And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

<sup>37</sup> Speak unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning, and scatter thou the fire yonder; for they are hallowed.

<sup>38</sup> The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates *for* a covering of the altar: for they offered them before the LORD, therefore they are hallowed: and they shall be a sign unto the children of Israel.

<sup>39</sup> And Eleazar the priest took the brasen censers, wherewith they that were burnt had offered; and they were made broad *plates for* a covering of the altar:

<sup>40</sup> *To be* a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which *is* not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the LORD; that he be not as Korah, and as his company: as the LORD said to him by the hand of Moses.

<sup>41</sup> But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.

<sup>42</sup> And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the

## The Rebels

This lesson takes up the study of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. God hates rebellion. These men, as well as the whole congregation, had seen how God dealt with Aaron and Miriam when they spoke against Moses. Miriam was smitten with leprosy, and except for the mercy of God would have died of that terrible disease. Through the prayers of Moses, God healed Miriam; but He said that she should be shut out of the camp seven days. The congregation did not journey again until Miriam was brought into the camp, therefore everyone knew what had happened (Numbers 12:1-16).

This example should have been great enough to keep everyone from speaking against the Lord's anointed. Through the prophet Samuel, God has said, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (**1 Samuel 15:23** <sup>23</sup> 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). Under the Law, witchcraft and idolatry were to be punished by death. We can see, then, just how serious a matter it is to criticize one of God's representatives who is carrying out the will of God. In His sight it amounts to rebellion. Under the Dispensation of Grace the standard is even higher. Jesus said, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (**Matthew 18:6** <sup>6</sup> But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea).

Korah was a Levite of the family of Kohath. This family had been given a specific and important work to do in the Tabernacle (**Numbers 3:30-31** <sup>30</sup> And the chief of the house of the father of the families of the Kohathites *shall be* Elizaphan the son of Uzziel. <sup>31</sup> And their charge *shall be* the ark, and the table, and the candlestick, and the altars, and the vessels of the sanctuary wherewith they minister, and the hanging, and all the service thereof); still Korah was not satisfied with his lot. Dathan, Abiram, and On, sons of Reuben, were not included in the priesthood or service of the sanctuary by divine proclamation. In Exodus 28:1 we read, "And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office." Also in Hebrews 5:4, "And no man taketh this honour [high priesthood] unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." God Himself had chosen Aaron and his family to serve in the priest's office; man could not hope to improve upon the selection.

## A Need for Help

During Israel's wilderness wanderings the time came that Moses needed help in governing this great congregation. As a result, seventy elders were appointed to help Moses bear the burden of the people (**Numbers 11:11-17** <sup>11</sup> And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? <sup>12</sup> Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? <sup>13</sup> Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. <sup>14</sup> I am not able to bear all this people alone, because *it is* too heavy for me. <sup>15</sup> And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou

congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared.

<sup>43</sup> And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation.

<sup>44</sup> And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

<sup>45</sup> Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces.

<sup>46</sup> 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 atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun.

<sup>47</sup> And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people.

<sup>48</sup> And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.

<sup>49</sup> Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah.

<sup>50</sup> And Aaron returned unto Moses unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the plague was stayed.

### **Numbers 26:9-11 (KJV)**

<sup>9</sup> And the sons of Eliab; Nemuel, and Dathan, and Abiram. This *is that* Dathan and Abiram, *which were* famous in the congregation, who strove against Moses and against Aaron in the company of Korah, when they strove against the LORD:

<sup>10</sup> And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, what time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men: and they became a sign.

<sup>11</sup> Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not.

knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. <sup>17</sup> And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which *is* upon thee, and will put *it* upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear *it* not thyself alone.). It was at approximately this same period of time that the Lord gave Moses the names of the men who were to be captains of the tribes of Israel (Numbers 1:5-15). Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were not included in either of these groups of rulers.

They became envious of the authority God had given Moses and Aaron (**Psalm 106:16** <sup>16</sup>They envied Moses also in the camp, *and* Aaron the saint of the LORD). They planned to use the congregation as a basis for the overthrow of Moses; but their argument, "seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them," was entirely without foundation. It is true that God had called Israel to be a kingdom of priests and a peculiar treasure, but they had fallen far short of that calling. Had not Moses prevailed with God more than once, this entire congregation would have been destroyed by the wrath of a just God (**Exodus 32:10-14** <sup>10</sup> Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. <sup>11</sup> And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? <sup>12</sup> Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. <sup>13</sup> Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit *it* for ever. <sup>14</sup> And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. **Numbers 14:11-20** <sup>11</sup> And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? <sup>12</sup> I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they. <sup>13</sup> And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear *it*, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) <sup>14</sup> And they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land: *for* they have heard that thou LORD *art* among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and *that* thy cloud standeth over them, and *that* thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. <sup>15</sup> Now *if* thou shalt kill *all* this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, <sup>16</sup> Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. <sup>17</sup> And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, <sup>18</sup> The LORD *is* longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation*. <sup>19</sup> Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. <sup>20</sup> And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word).

It takes more than a thought, hope, or mental attitude to be holy in God's sight; it takes a work of grace to accomplish this in the heart (**Hebrews 13:12** <sup>12</sup> Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. **Ephesians 5:25-27** <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; <sup>26</sup> That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, <sup>27</sup> That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having

spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish), and a continuous walk with Him to retain it (**1 John 1:7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin). Just because we have seen the manifestation of God at one time and felt the approbation of divine love in our hearts is no guarantee that it will ever be so, unless we walk in the path of His choosing (**Ezekiel 33:13** <sup>13</sup> When I shall say to the righteous, *that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it*).

### **The Accusation Brought**

These rebels accused Moses and Aaron of taking too much upon themselves, but forgot that it was Jehovah who ruled the camp of Israel. Moses and Aaron were His servants and did all things at His command. At Sinai these same rebels had witnessed the glory of the **Lord in "the** thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, **and the** mountain smoking." "And when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said. unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Exodus 20:18, 19). Evidently, these people had forgotten their vows and wanted to take matters into their own hands.

It is easy to make vows when men are in a hard place or fearful **of** God's judgments. Usually God hears prayers at a time like this because they are uttered in desperation. But the man who remains in God's favor, and knows the fullness of His divine love, is the man who pays his vows not in letter only but in spirit as well. "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed" (Ecclesiastes 5:4).

### **The Challenge**

When Moses heard the accusation brought against him by these rebellious leaders and the 250 princes who followed them, he fell on his face before God. Soon he knew what to do: he would let the Lord choose who should be His representatives. He instructed Korah and his company to take censers, put fire therein, and put incense in them before the Lord on the morrow: "And it shall be that the man whom the **LORD** doth choose, he shall be holy." Dathan and Abiram were also called to come up to the Tabernacle, but with a very angry reply they refused to come. The Lord was watching all these proceedings. His glory appeared unto all the congregation, and He instructed Moses and Aaron to withdraw themselves from the people that He might consume the congregation in a moment. It was only Moses' and Aaron's intercession that withheld complete judgment.

### **A New Thing**

Judgment was averted from the congregation as a whole, but it swiftly struck the offenders. The people were warned to separate themselves from the tabernacle, or tents, of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and to touch nothing of theirs, lest they, too, be consumed in all their sins. Moses prophesied that a new thing was about to happen, that the earth would open her mouth and swallow the guilty; and thereby the people would know that Moses had done all these things at the Lord's command. The prophecy was fulfilled immediately, and all that appertained unto Korah (except his children, **Numbers 26:11** <sup>11</sup> *Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not.*), Dathan, and Abiram went down alive into the pit and the earth closed her mouth upon them. Then a fire came out from the Lord and consumed the 250 princes who offered incense at the door of the Tabernacle.

At a previous time, Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, also had been devoured by fire from the Lord, (**Leviticus 10:1-2 (KJV)**)

<sup>1</sup> And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. <sup>2</sup> And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD). They died because they brought strange fire and offered it before the Lord. These princes who were with Korah, remembering this incident, no doubt were careful to bring the right kind of fire in their censers, but they were unfit persons; therefore they suffered a similar fate.

We cannot hope to get to Heaven by doing only half the will of God. We must do His whole will. The censers that these princes had used were hallowed; therefore God commanded that they should be made into **broad** plates for a covering of the altar. This covering would then serve as a warning to all Israelites and strangers that only descendants of **Aaron** could come near to offer incense before the Lord.

### **The Murmuring**

We can understand how deep-rooted this revolt really was. **It** can be clearly seen why God wished to destroy the whole congregation. One would think these people had seen enough of God's judgments to convince them that this was not man's doings. Still they murmured and complained and said, "Ye have killed the people of the LORD." A deadly plague started among them immediately; but once again, through intercession on the part of Moses and Aaron, the people were saved. Aaron ran into the midst of the congregation with his censer in his hand, and made an atonement for the people, standing between the dead and the living. The plague was stayed, but not before 14,700 people died. It is a serious thing to murmur.

Unfortunately, murmuring did not pass out of existence with the scattering of the Children of Israel many years ago. It is still widespread in the world today. The Apostle Paul warns us about murmuring and its inherent dangers: "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer" (I Corinthians 10:10). Murmuring has no place in a Christian's life.

### **"Except Ye Repent"**

As we look at these men upon whom God brought swift and terrible judgment, we are justified in saying that they deserved judgment, that they were blameworthy for resisting God's great leader, Moses. We remember that Israel served God under a theocracy, a government with God as its head. When they "rebelled, they said, in effect, "We are tired of God's rule; we can do better ourselves." There is little wonder, then, that the earth could bear up no longer under the feet of these rebels and ingrates. It was time that the nakedness of their sins be covered, and that the earth should open her mouth to devour those who had so lightly opened their mouths against the Lord and His servants.

What does Jesus say to these things? As the Jews of His day were recounting some of the judgments that had taken place, Jesus answered, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:2, 3). In other words, we do not have to be outbroken sinners in order to miss Heaven. If we have but one unrepented sin, we stand condemned before God. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). But we thank God for a merciful Savior. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8).

"And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mark 12:33).

The cause of the Christian is still the cause of Christ. It is a dangerous thing to usurp sacred functions. Just as jealously as God protected His leaders in Korah's day, so will He guard His ministers of righteousness today. We do not need to come out in open rebellion to incur God's wrath. If we even lend our sympathetic, though perhaps unspoken, support to undermine one of His own, we shall answer to Him for it.

### **QUESTIONS**

- 1 Of what tribe in Israel was Korah? Dathan and Abiram?
- 2 What was their contention with Moses and Aaron?
- 3 What kind of spirit did Moses manifest?
- 4 Did Moses feel that it was against himself or against the Lord that these people were rebelling?
- 5 How did Moses propose to determine whom the Lord had chosen?
- 6 What kind of spirit did Dathan and Abiram display?
- 7 How did God punish these rebels? Had anything like this ever happened before?
- 8 What became of the 250 princes who offered incense?
- 9 Did the congregation acknowledge God in these proceedings, or did they murmur?
- 10 What was the result of their murmurings?