

Day 163 - MONDAY: May 22nd

Numbers 16

Numbers 16:1-50 NKJV

Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men; and they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown. They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?" So when Moses heard it, he fell on his face; 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 cause him to come near to Him. That one whom He chooses He will cause to come near to Him. Do this: Take censers, Korah and all your company; put fire in them and put incense in them before the LORD tomorrow, and it shall be that the man whom the LORD chooses is the holy one. You take too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi!" Then Moses said to Korah, "Hear now, you sons of Levi: Is it a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the work of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to serve them; and that He has brought you near to Himself, you and all your brethren, the sons of Levi, with you? And are you seeking the priesthood also? Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the LORD. And what is Aaron that you complain against him?" And Moses sent to call

Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, but they said, "We will not come up! Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, that you should keep acting like a prince over us? Moreover you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!" Then Moses was very angry, and said to the LORD, "Do not respect their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, nor have I hurt one of them." And Moses said to Korah, "Tomorrow, you and all your company be present before the LORD—you and they, as well as Aaron. Let each take his censer and put incense in it, and each of you bring his censer before the LORD, two hundred and fifty censers; both you and Aaron, each with his censer." So every man took his censer, put fire in it, laid incense on it, and stood at the door of the tabernacle of meeting with Moses and Aaron. And Korah gathered all the congregation against them at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the congregation. And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." Then they fell on their faces, and said, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and You be angry with all the congregation?" So the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the congregation, saying, 'Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.'" Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. And he spoke to the congregation, saying, "Depart now from the tents of these wicked men! Touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins." So they got away from around the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents, with their wives, their sons, and their little children. And Moses said: "By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do

all these works, for I have not done them of my own will. If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the LORD." Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods. So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly. Then all Israel who were around them fled at their cry, for they said, "Lest the earth swallow us up also!" And a fire came out from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense. Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Tell Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, to pick up the censers out of the blaze, for they are holy, and scatter the fire some distance away. The censers of these men who sinned against their own souls, let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar. Because they presented them before the LORD, therefore they are holy; and they shall be a sign to the children of Israel." So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burned up had presented, and they were hammered out as a covering on the altar, to be a memorial to the children of Israel that no outsider, who is not a descendant of Aaron, should come near to offer incense before the LORD, that he might not become like Korah and his companions, just as the LORD had said to him through Moses. On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the LORD." Now it happened, when the congregation had gathered against Moses and Aaron, that they turned toward the tabernacle of meeting; and

suddenly the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared. Then Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of meeting. And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." And they fell on their faces. So Moses said to Aaron, "Take a censer and put fire in it from the altar, put incense on it, and take it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them; for wrath has gone out from the LORD. The plague has begun." Then Aaron took it as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and already the plague had begun among the people. So he put in the incense and made atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; so the plague was stopped. Now those who died in the plague were fourteen thousand seven hundred, besides those who died in the Korah incident. So Aaron returned to Moses at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, for the plague had stopped.

Daily Deep Dive:

We now come to a very important example recorded for us in the Bible. So many problems could be avoided if more attention was given to this chapter. Let's begin with the UCG reading plan for this day: "Korah, a first cousin to Moses, and 250 leaders of the assembly arose in self-exaltation against Moses and Aaron with claims that they were superseding their authority. These men hypocritically accused Moses and Aaron, saying, "You exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord" (verse 3). There is within

sinners the proclivity to accuse others of the same sin they are committing (verse 7; Romans 2:1). These men wanted a piece of the action, to appoint themselves as leaders and teachers over the congregation. They took too much upon *themselves*, speaking evil of things they did not understand (compare Jude 1:10–11). They were refusing to recognize that God was working in a special way with Moses and Aaron, and they hadn't learned anything from Miriam and Aaron's misjudgment in a similar way regarding Moses.

Moses told Korah and the 250 to bring bronze censers (devices for burning incense, each made of a bowl with a colander on top, swung on a chain). Why? Because besides the contention over judging the nation, these men were also disputing Aaron's position over the priesthood. They were not priests, and the burning of incense was a priestly duty these men were trying to usurp (Numbers 16:40).

Again, they had apparently not learned anything from the terrible mistake of Nadab and Abihu, who had died because they offered strange fire before the Lord (Numbers 3:4; Leviticus 10:1–2).

Because God is the One who put Moses and Aaron in their respective offices, the rebellious action of the men led by

Korah was actually against God (Numbers 16:11, Numbers 16:30). Moreover, as the sons of Levi, they had already been appointed to very respected positions in the service of His tabernacle. And yet they weren't satisfied—they wanted the judgeship and priesthood also (verses 9–10). "The men who were seeking a higher position were in fact being contemptuous of the place to which God had appointed them. Moses' response was condescending and scathing: 'Is it a small thing to you?' The dissenters should have realized how gracious God had been in giving them the life work He had provided. They were not unlike people who complain about the gifts God has given them" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Numbers 16:9–11).

These men rejected Moses' authority, claiming that he was lording authority over them like some worldly prince—which is utterly ridiculous given the humility of Moses and His many intercessions for the Israelites, including his offer to give up His own eternal salvation to save them. Dathan and Abiram, two allies of Korah, even praised Egypt as the land of milk and honey (verse 13), accused Moses of wrongdoing for leading them out of that land, and absurdly blamed him for the fact that the Israelites had been denied entrance to the Promised Land (verse 14). It may be that

many were beginning to be swayed by these accusations, since God once again stands ready to blast the entire nation from existence—though He relents from this course at the intercession of Moses and Aaron. Nevertheless, the principal evildoers come to a dramatic end.

It is easily overlooked here, but, thankfully, not all of Korah's family followed him in this rebellion (Numbers 26:11). Indeed, Korah's descendants were later prominent among the Levites (see 2 Chronicles 20:19), serving as gatekeepers at the temple (1 Chronicles 26) and as musicians, contributing many psalms for temple worship (see Psalms 42; 44–49; 84–85; 87–88). There is a natural human tendency to support those within our families. But this becomes a problem when the family member being supported is engaging in wrongdoing. There is a similar sin in the supporting of those in leadership positions when they are leading sinful lives (verse 26). The scriptures are clear that God disqualifies leaders who refuse to repent of overt sin in their lives. We can never condone sin. To just say, "I'll put it in God's hands," when we have an obligation to stand up and be counted, is the same as temporarily approving of a sinful situation—and that is always wrong. That's why Moses drew that proverbial "line in the sand,"

asking people to show where they stood by backing away from the rebels.

The people of the congregation do back away and witness the incredible event of the earth swallowing up the leading rebels with their families and fire consuming the unauthorized incense offerers. But astonishingly, the congregation complains against Moses and Aaron the next day, blaming them for killing God's people. God is understandably infuriated, and again—only the next day!—He tells Moses and Aaron to get out of the way so that He can destroy the nation (verses 44–45). In His wrath God sends a terrible plague. But again, Moses desires to save the people and orders Aaron to quickly make atonement for them. Aaron, as a clear type of Christ—a mediator, a savior, a deliverer—intercedes for the congregation, standing between life and death to stop the plague, which had already slain nearly 15,000 people (verses 48–49).” [END]

As we begin to go through these verses in detail, I want to again reference Romans 13:1-2 where it says: “...For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.”

God places and removes individuals from positions of authority. We are often tempted to justify rebellion against authority. David correctly understood this principle when in 1 Samuel 26:9-11 David said to his warrior Abishai regarding killing King Saul: "Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless?" David said furthermore, "As the LORD lives, the LORD shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish. The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed."

Division and rebellion are not of God. It can be easily justified in our human minds, but God is the one who raises/lowers leaders. Let's now dive into these verses.

Verse 2 – Notice there were 250 “leaders of the congregation” and “men of renown”. These were men with reputations, a name people knew. They were famous in the nation. People will often follow people who are well known, have built up reputations over the years, and assume they must be right since they are so well thought of and respected, yet, in this case, these 250 “men of renown” were leading a sinful rebellion that God hated.

Verse 3 – Here comes the accusations and justification. First, they claim that Moses and Aaron took “too much on themselves”. Did Moses and Aaron place themselves in

those positions? Did they take the authority to themselves? No, God had placed them in those positions and given them that authority. These men simply didn't like it.

Next, they say that the whole congregation is holy and the people are holy and that God is with them. All of this is true. It's also true of the church today. The whole Church is Holy (1 Peter 2:9), yet, even though that is true, we are not all in the same positions of authority within God's church. Ephesians 4:11-13 tells us: "And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;" Here these 250 men take a true statement and twist it/misapply it, to justify & excuse their rebellion.

Remember, Number 12:3 told us that Moses is more humble than anyone on the earth, and yet he is being accused of seizing power and exalting himself. Here these accusations aren't based on reality at all, yet these well-known leaders are convinced they are correct.

Verse 9 – Sometimes people reveal their true motivations for power and position. Sometimes people are not satisfied with where God has placed them in the body but want a different place in the body (one God hasn't given or placed them into). What about us? Do we serve wherever God places us with all our might or do we desire something different?

Verse 12 – Dathan and Abiram will not submit under the authority of Moses and refuse to come.

Verse 18 – While the nation of Israel was holy to God, these men were not consecrated and separated for the purpose of serving as priests before God with the Holy things. That was a position that God appointed to Aaron and his sons.

Verse 35 – When we see God handle a situation so strongly (opening up the earth to swallow individuals or sending fire from heaven) it should make us stop and think seriously about this situation and how careful we should all be not to repeat their mistake.

Verse 38 – John Gill’s commentary states: “they offered them in his presence, they burned incense in them, and to him, though it was not their business, but the business of the priests; yet these being done, and by his orders, for an open trial who were his priests and who not, they were not to be put to common use:”

Verse 41 – Could we ever be guilty of complaining against some authority of God, thinking they are doing something wrong, or that they have mishandled a situation, etc...but it was actually God who did the thing we are complaining

about? I ask these questions because we must try to put ourselves into these situations so we can learn and not make the same mistakes ourselves.