

General Church Education



The Rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram

Numbers 16:1-40

Lesson 19

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 3: The Lord Is Our Lawgiver

For ages 8-9 years

The Rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram

Numbers 16:1-40

For Parents and Teachers

It seems very discouraging that the Israelites had to wander for forty years in the wilderness before they would be able to enter the Holy Land. We may wonder why it took so long. These years were not wasted and the people were not really wandering. They were led by the Lord every step of the way. He continued to send manna and quail. He appeared before them as the pillar of cloud and fire. They entered the wilderness an untested army and left well-equipped to fight the battles that lay ahead. During this period they were tested and humbled in various ways. The internal sense of this story teaches how selfish ambition “burns up” or consumes people. We also learn that those who refuse to follow the Lord are “swallowed up” by their worldly loves, like the people in our story who refused to worship the Lord and stayed in their own tents instead of going to the tabernacle.

Each of us has to travel in a wilderness of sorts for a large portion of our lives. The wilderness years serve an important use, giving us opportunities to develop more and more trust in the Lord and His power to save us. These trials educate us and give us the ability to follow Him with our whole heart, without hesitation, into heaven.

Ideas for Children

- The Lord gave the Word as a guide or road map to heaven. Without it we are hopelessly lost.
- Insisting on our own self-centered way separates us from the Lord.
- Being jealous of others is wrong. It can make us hurt others and it hurts us too by making us unhappy.

From the Writings

Anyone unacquainted with the nature of true worship may think that the Lord loves to be worshiped and desires glory from people, like someone who grants another person what he requests because that other person pays him respect. Anyone who thinks like that has no idea at all of what love is like, let alone of what God’s love is like. God in His love does not desire worship and glory for His own sake but for our sake and our salvation. For humility exists in those who worship the Lord and give Him glory, and from those in whom humility exists the proprium (what belongs to one’s own self) departs. So far as this departs, the Divine is received; for the self, being evil and false, is what stands in the way of the Divine.

This is the glory of the Lord, and worship of Him exists to that end. Glory for the sake of self exists as a result of self-love; but heavenly love, and infinitely more so God’s love, is as different from self-love as heaven is from hell. See *Arcana Coelestia* 10646

The Rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram

Numbers 16:1-40

Words to Understand

- censer**—a container in which incense is burned
brethren—brothers
vineyard—land devoted to growing grapevines
inheritance—property received from an ancestor
respect—to show honor or high regard
offering—a gift or contribution
depart—to leave or go away
wicked—bad or evil
elders—older people who are looked up to as leaders
exalt—to raise up in dignity and power

The Wilderness Journey

Remember how the ancient Israelites often became restless and dissatisfied, forgetting all that the Lord had done to protect and provide for them? In our last lesson they had come to the border of the land of Canaan. Moses sent twelve men to spy out the land and see what awaited them. Everyone was discouraged by the evil report of the ten cowardly spies and forgot to trust the Lord. So they were punished and made to wander for forty years in the wilderness. Let's see what they learned on this part of the journey.



Moses' Leadership Questioned

The Israelites had plenty of proof that Moses was chosen by the Lord to lead them. Moses had been specially prepared to lead them out of slavery in Egypt. He and his brother Aaron had asked Pharaoh to let the people go. Then he led all the people across the Red Sea and on to Mount Sinai where they received the Ten Commandments and built the tabernacle. And then Moses led them to the border of the Promised Land.

The Lord spoke to the Israelites through Moses, and Moses told the people what the Lord had said. When the Israelites acted badly, Moses asked the Lord to forgive them and give them another chance to keep their covenant with Him. This happened over and over. Everyone knew that Moses was not only chosen by the Lord but that Moses spoke to the Lord for them. But some of the people were jealous of Moses and wanted to be the leader.



The Tribe of Levi

When the Israelites were camped at Mount Sinai, the Lord gave them rules for worship. The tribe of Levi was to serve in the tabernacle. The Lord asked them to care for all the things needed for worship, both when they were camped and when they were traveling on their journey. The Levites were descendants of Levi, Jacob's third son. The Lord also commanded Aaron to be the High Priest and Aaron's sons to priests. In this story another man named Korah became jealous of Moses and Aaron. Korah was also from the tribe of Levi. He and his family took care of the tabernacle. But Korah was not one of the sons of Aaron, so he could not become a priest. Let's read and see how Korah challenged Moses. **Read Numbers 16:1-40.**

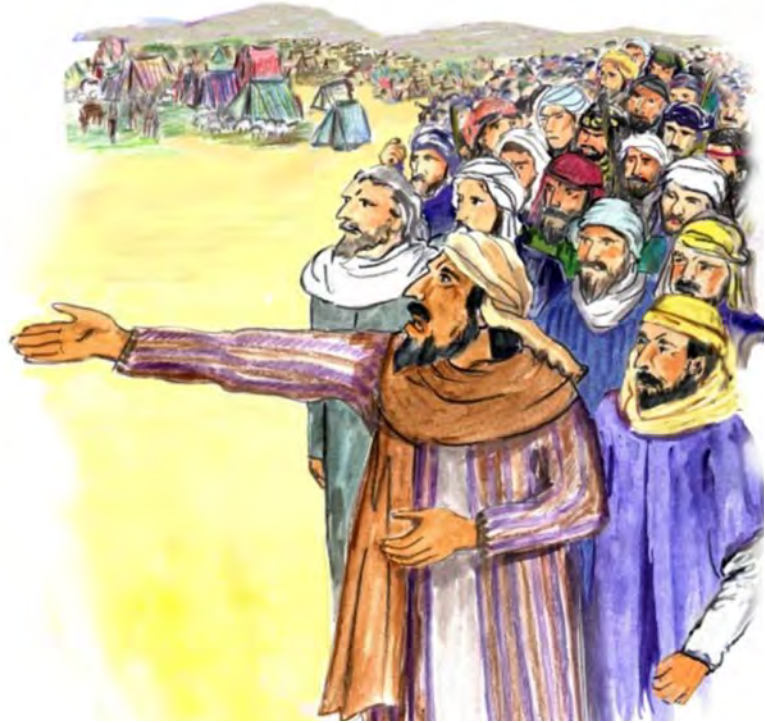
Korah's Challenge

When Korah said that Moses and Aaron took too much upon themselves, he was really rebelling against the Lord because it was the Lord who had chosen Moses and Aaron to lead. Korah and his followers brought censers to the door of the tabernacle the next day. Censers held the incense used in the Israelite worship, so this was a good way to show who should lead the worship. The Lord sent fire down and burned up all the 250 men who were offering incense. Aaron and Moses were spared because they were chosen to offer incense.

Dathan and Abiram Rebel

Dathan and Abiram were not Levites. They were descendants of Reuben. They refused to

obey Moses and come to the tabernacle when he called them and complained bitterly. So Moses and the leaders of Israel went to the tents of Dathan and Abiram. Moses told everyone, “Depart now from the tents of these wicked men! Touch nothing...lest you be consumed in all their sins.” Everyone got away and then the earth opened up and swallowed everything of Dathan and Abiram’s, including their families. It is sad that innocent people died with these men, but innocent people often suffer when others are only thinking of themselves. We can be sure that the Lord took the innocent people to heaven.



The Lord loves everyone, but when people choose to go against Him, they are choosing to think that their own ideas are good enough and all they need. They remove themselves from the Lord’s protection. He can no longer shield them from the harm evil always brings. And if people rebel against the Lord and do evil, others around them are often hurt.

Have you ever felt jealous when another person was picked to be the leader? Most people have thoughts and feelings like this at times. We wonder why another person was picked and we don’t see why we weren’t. We may even be angry or decide not to do what the leader says to. Wanting to have our own way instead of following the Lord will always make us unhappy in the end. Jealous thoughts and feelings can make it impossible to truly enjoy working and playing with others. Trusting in the leadership of the Lord’s Word is the only way to true happiness. Fortunately, the Lord gives us new opportunities to recognize our mistakes and return to Him.

Discussion Ideas

- Explore the topic of jealousy.
- The Lord wants us to freely choose to follow Him. When we make mistakes the Lord wants us to learn, and to be willing to change. The people in this story were not willing to do this.

Activity Overview | The Rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. Any why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Matthew 7:1-3

Songs

O Zion, Rise in Glory

Listen or download at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-o-zion-rise-in-glory/>

Go Up!

Listen or download at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-go-up/>

Projects

Choose one or two activities.

- Activity 1 | Korah, Dathan and Abiram True or False?
- Activity 2 | Make a Model of a Censer
- Picture to color—Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Numbers 16)

Additional Activity Ideas

- The Lord's punishment of Korah's family seems harsh. We know that the Lord is never harsh, that He loves us even when we do something wrong. The consequences evil are harsh, but it is the evil itself that brings about punishment, not the Lord. He wants us to stop doing what's wrong and do what He wants us to because this is how He can bless us.
- The Word says many times that the children of Israel were "stubborn and rebellious." How do you think the people felt when they saw what happened to Korah, Dathan and Abiram? Do you think they learned anything from this?
- Groups usually work well when everyone cooperates. Practice turning your complaints into positive statements for the good of the whole group.
- If you like being a leader, practice giving others a chance to lead, to decide what to do.
- Burn incense and smell the sweet aroma.

Activity 1 | Korah, Dathan and Abiram True or False?

Read each question. Put a “T” for True or “F” for False on the line before each question.

- ___ 1. The ancient Israelites were a stubborn and rebellious people.
- ___ 2. The Israelites always did whatever Moses told them to do.
- ___ 3. Korah was jealous of Moses and wanted to be the leader.
- ___ 4. Only Aaron and his descendants were to serve as priests.
- ___ 5. A censer is something used to count the people or to take a census.
- ___ 6. Dathan and Abiram were also from the tribe of Levi.
- ___ 7. Dathan and Abiram would not leave their tents when Moses called them to the tabernacle.
- ___ 8. The Lord sent fire down on the 250 men who offered incense.
- ___ 9. Dathan and Abiram changed their minds and worshiped the Lord.
- ___ 10. When people make selfish choices, innocent people can sometimes get hurt.

Answers:
1. T
2. F
3. T
4. T
5. F

6. F
7. T
8. T
9. F
10. T

Activity 2 | Make a Model of a Censer

Censers were an important part of worship and are used in many churches today. Make a model of a censer. *Note: This project is not designed for burning incense, but to show what a censer would have been like.*

Materials Needed

disposable paper plate or bowl

single hole punch

3 lengths of yarn or string 12” (30cm) in length
or three long pipe cleaners

Optional: incense, aluminum foil to cover the bowl

Directions

1. *Optional:* cover a disposable plate or bowl with aluminum foil.
2. Punch three holes in the edge of the bowl at evenly spaced intervals.
3. Thread a piece of yarn or string through each hole and secure with a knot.
4. Tie the ends of the three pieces of yarn together.
5. *Optional:* put some incense into the bowl.
6. Walk around and swing the censer as you walk, as the high priest would have done in the tabernacle.



