

The Book of Numbers

The Rebellion of Korah

Text: Numbers 15 – 17

- I. Instructions for Offerings (Numbers 15:1-16)
- II. Instructions for Special Offerings (Numbers 15:17-29)
 - A. Vs. 17-21 – Heave offering
 1. This was to be done when they first ate of the bread of the Promised Land.
 2. This implies that God will keep His promise and bring them to the land.
 3. It also looks forward to the end of the provision of manna – no longer needed because they will have inherited the land.
 - B. Vs. 22-29 – Offerings for sins of omission (committed in ignorance)
 1. Instructions for sins of ignorance had been given in Leviticus 4.
 2. However, those seem to have been sins that were committed in ignorance.
 3. These seem to be things that were not done due to ignorance.
 - C. All sin is serious (cf. James 4:17).
- III. Sins of Presumption (Numbers 15:30-36)
 - A. In contrast with sins of ignorance are presumptuous sins – willful disregard for the Word of God.
 1. The word for ‘presumptuously’ literally means, “With a high hand.”
 2. It as if one is raising his hand to God, declaring that he knows better than the Lord.
 - B. Israel was guilty of such a sin when they sought to take the land after God had told them not to (cf. 14:44).
 - C. Another illustration of this type of sin is given in the man who gathered wood on the Sabbath Day (vs. 32-36).
 - D. Such a sin reproached the Lord – blasphemed and reviled Jehovah Himself.
 - E. Such a sin despised the Word of the Lord – held it in contempt as worthless.
 - F. For one with such an attitude, there was no sacrifice to take away his sin.
 - G. His iniquity was something he would have to bear, cut off from his people (cf. Heb. 10:26-31).
- IV. Reminders of Obedience (Numbers 15:37-41)
 - A. The Israelites were commanded to make fringes – tassels or floral designs – in the edges or corners of their garments.
 - B. These were to remind them of the importance of keeping the commandments of God and not committing presumptuous sins.
 - C. Under the New Testament, God also gave His people memorials to remember the importance of faithful obedience.
 1. The Bible (1 Cor. 15:1-2)
 2. The Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-27)

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- V. The Rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16:1-3)
- A. The lineage of Korah
 1. Amram, the father of Moses (Exo. 6:20), was a son of Kohath (Exo. 6:18).
 2. Izhar, the father of Korah, was also a son of Kohath (Exo. 6:18) – making Moses and Korah cousins.
 3. When a leader for the Kohathites was chosen, God selected Elizaphan, the son of Uzziel – another brother of Amram and Izhar.
 4. Perhaps this contributed to the anger and jealousy of Korah.
 5. Note that Korah was a Levite, but not a priest.
 - B. The lineage of Dathan, Abiram, and On
 1. These men were descendants of Reuben – the firstborn son of Jacob (Gen. 35:23).
 2. In those days, the right of priesthood usually passed to the firstborn son.
 3. However, God had chosen the descendants of Levi to serve as priests.
 4. Note that On is never mentioned again following this first verse – perhaps indicating that he removed himself from this conspiracy.
 - C. Both the Kohathites and the tribe of Reuben encamped on the south side of the Tabernacle; thus, they were in close proximity to one another.
 - D. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram gathered a group of 250 men – leaders among the congregation – to stand against Moses and Aaron.
 - E. They accused them of taking their positions by their own will and design.
 - F. Furthermore, they claimed that anyone and everyone among the nation had the right to fulfill the role of priest.
- VI. The Response of Moses (Numbers 16:4-18)
- A. As usual, Moses recognized the gravity of their actions and fell upon his face.
 - B. He declared that God Himself would make known who He had chosen to lead the people and to serve as priests.
 - C. He instructed the 250 men to light censers and bring them before the Lord on the next day.
 - D. Dathan and Abiram refused to come out before the Lord and chose to remain at their tents.
 1. They made further accusations against Moses.
 2. They claimed that he had not kept his word to bring them to the Promised Land.
 3. They claimed that he had made himself a prince over them.
 4. They declared that they would not be blinded by the deception of Moses.
 - E. On the next day, the men prepared their censers and came before the Tabernacle.
- VII. The Rebuke of Jehovah (Numbers 16:19-35)
- A. The whole nation gathered to see what would happen and the glory of Jehovah appeared at the Tabernacle.
 - B. God sought to destroy the entire congregation, but Moses interceded on their behalf.
 - C. Thus, God commanded everyone to remove themselves from the vicinity of the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.
 - D. Moses informed the people of what was about to happen.

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- E. Then, the Lord caused the earth to open up, sending the families and possessions of these men into the pit.
- F. The 250 men who had joined with them were killed by fire from the Lord.

VIII. The Rebellion of Israel

(Numbers 16:36-50)

- A. The censers that were used in this rebellion were formed into plates that would cover the altar – reminding the Israelites of the danger of acting as priests for themselves.
- B. Sadly, Israel did not learn from these events.
- C. On the next day, they murmured and complained against Moses and Aaron – claiming that they had killed Korah and his company.
- D. As a result, God sent a plague among the people that killed an additional 14,700 people.
- E. It was only stopped by the intercession of Aaron making atonement for the people.

IX. The Rod of Aaron

(Numbers 17:1-13)

- A. As further confirmation that God had chosen Aaron to be High Priest, God instructed the Israelites to bring twelve rods – one for each tribe – to the Tabernacle.
- B. Aaron's name was written on the rod representing the tribe of Levi.
- C. God promised that he would make the rod bloom of the one He had chosen to be High Priest.
- D. On the next day, only one rod had bloomed – Aaron's.
- E. Not only had it bloomed, but it had also produced almonds!
- F. This rod was to be kept before the testimony as a reminder to the children of Israel.