

**THE REBELS**



**Passages to Study:** Numbers 14:39-45; 15:37-41; 16:1-40; Jude 11.

**Read with the class:** Numbers 16:1-10.

**Texts for memorization:**

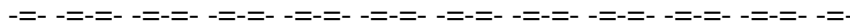
**Younger:** Hebrews 10:31.

**Older** Hebrews 10:30-31



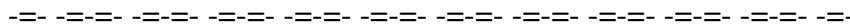
**OBJECTIVES: To teach:**

1. That God chooses whom He wants for leadership and fits them for the work.
2. That to rebel against what God decrees is the same as opposing God Himself.
3. That just as in times past, there are many today who are not willing to submit to God and to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. That the matter of divine judgment must be taken seriously.
5. That punishment fell on those who did not repent.



**INFORMATION for the teachers.**

1. The tribe of Levi was divided into three groups, each group descended from one of Levi’s three sons.. Each of the three groups, the Kohathites, the Merarites, and the Gershonites, had the responsibility of transporting certain parts of the tabernacle across the desert.
2. Korah belonged to the family of Kohath. They were responsible carrying the most holy things - the ark and the furnishings of the tabernacle.
3. The family of Aaron was entrusted with the priesthood. They represented the Israelites before God and were responsible for offering the sacrifices.
4. The institution of the priesthood in the family of Aaron, and its corresponding service, was something new in Israel. This was the cause of murmuring and discontent that came to a head in Kadesh.
5. Dathan, Abiram and On were of the tribe of Reuben, Jacob’s firstborn son. Years earlier, their forefather Reuben had lost the confidence of his father Jacob and they may have felt displaced because of not being the ones chosen as leaders of the people.



**SCENE No. 1.VISUAL AIDS.** A desert scene and figures representing Moses and Aaron facing Korah and his followers.

**DEVELOPMENT:**

- The Bible tells us little about the Israelites in the years following the mission of the 12 spies.
- In Kadesh they had heard God’s sentence condemning them to 40 years of wandering in the desert before they could enter the Promised Land. During this period, all those over 20 years of age would be “consumed”. (Num.14:35).
- Upon hearing this, the Israelites changed their minds and tried to “go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised”. Num.14:40.
- Moses warned them to desist and when they paid no heed, they were defeated by the Amalekites and Canaanites and made to flee. (Núm.14:39-45)
- Previously they had experienced God’s hand in discipline but this did not hinder them from rebelling again.

**Sug.** Ask the students how those who were 20 years old and older would feel if, like the Israelites, they had to live out their days knowing that they would never see the Promised Land, since divine judgment had determined that they would die in the wilderness.

**THE REBELS**



**Lsn.** True repentance for their foolishness in refusing to enter the land would not change God’s decision. It would make them more conscious of His mercy in giving them time to serve Him to the best of their ability.

- Aware of their rebellious hearts, God had told them before to put a visible blue band as a fringe on the borders of their clothing. Num. 15:38-41. The blue would remind them of God in Heaven and His commandments affecting their walk on earth.
- God wanted them to keep heavenly values in mind at all times so “that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes” but rather “remember, and do all My commandments, and be holy unto your God”. (Num. 15:39 and 40)
- In spite of these reminders and God’s continual care, some of the Israelites begin to cause problems.

**Cmt.** Each day as they put on their clothing, they should have been reminded of their commitment to God.

**Sug.** Ask the students what reminders God has given us to keep in mind our responsibilities towards Him. The teacher should have in mind some items like the arrival on schedule of each new day, the perfect balance in nature which promotes production of the food we eat, an open Bible, our conscience, etc.

- The desire to be the first, or to be powerful or outstanding in some way, or to be recognized as outstanding are attitudes that all serve to open a door for Satan to work, who seeks to move people to act contrary to the will of God.
- Korah, the Levite starts the rebellion and three other men from the tribe of Reuben join him. They are Dathan, Abiram and On.
- They get help from another 250 men, all of them princes “famous in the congregation and men of renown”.

**Cns.** When someone is disobeying God, he/she looks for support from others to accompany him/her in the activity.

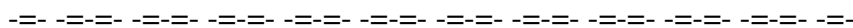
- Korah is a cousin of Aaron and Moses. He was a Levite, son of Izhar, a brother of Amram who was the father of Moses and Aaron. Ex 6:21
- During forty years in the desert the Lord had prepared Moses for the task of guiding the children of Israel. Aarón had been chosen by God for the priesthood, for which there had been no time of preparation.
- Korah and his followers are not happy with Moses’ leadership and with Aaron’s family having exclusive rights to the priesthood.
- They accuse Moses and Aaron of having lifted themselves up above the congregation of the Lord to occupy a place of importance. (Num. 16:3).
- They affirm that “all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them”, stressing their equality and implying that anyone could offer the sacrifices.

**Lsn.** It is most important that care be taken not to fall into the sin of envying others for what they have, either in material things, or in social or secular things.

**Apl.** Envy is discontentment with what God does in the lives of others, and it wants the same treatment. God is Sovereign. Mat. 20:15.

**Sug.** Talk to the students about some of the things that happen in school and their feelings when another student receives a prize or privilege.

**Cmt.** Feelings of jealousy are strong in the hearts of youth and are expressed in “put downs”, scorn, unkind jokes, words and looks. This is sin.



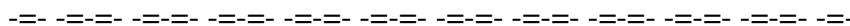
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**SCENE No. 2. VISUAL AIDS:** Figures of the entrance of the tabernacle and Moses and Aaron observing while Korah and some or all of his 250 followers bring censers, (bronze incense burners). Moses could be shown as praying.

**DEVELOPMENT:**

- In Jude vs.11 the “gainsaying (or rebellion) of Core” is summarized by the word “against”. Although they thought they were “against Moses and against Aaron”, (Num. 16:3) they were “against the Lord” (Num.16:11). (NAS Jude vs.11 “Woe to them! For they have ..... perished in the rebellion of Korah.”)
- Inf.** The word used to describe the attitude of Korah comes from a word that means “contradiction, dispute, strife.”
- Apl.** The sinner who does not submit to God is warring against Him.
- Korah and the Levites who are with him undervalue the service the Lord has given them, that of serving in the tabernacle. They are dissatisfied with the important privileges that are theirs, and want to serve as priests. (Num.16:9-10)
- Before replying, Moses goes to the Lord in prayer. Num. 16:4.
- Cmt.** Moses realizes that despite his knowledge of God and His ways, he still needs to pray first and then take action in fellowship with God.
- Cns.** Even with his varied experience in the work of the Lord, Moses recognized his need of more wisdom.
- On this occasion Moses, a meek and longsuffering person, replies and acts with great firmness.
- Apl.** There are times when one must act with firmness and tenacity to uphold the principles the Bible has laid down.
- Moses tries to reason with the rebellious group and suggests a way of proving who has the right to serve as priests.
- The instructions given by Moses (vs.17) are intended to make evident those whom God has chosen.
- The Rubenites, Dathan and Abiram, refuse to leave their tents when called by Moses.(v.12) Nevertheless, they are guilty of having participated in the rebellion, and once again speak evil of Moses.
- They rudely accuse Moses of not having taken them into the promised land and they speak of Egypt as “a land that floweth with milk and honey”. (v.13)
- Their question “Will you put out the eyes of these men?” is a sarcastic way of saying: “Do you want these men to be blinded (by deception) so they will not see what is really going on?”
- They treat Moses as a deceiver, as one out to take advantage of the people.
- In the morning Aaron, Korah and the 250 rebels gather at the door of the tabernacle with their censers and incense. The congregation of Israel has also gathered. (vs.19)
- The glory of God appears there before them and God sentences the rebellious people to judgment. He orders Moses and Aaron to separate themselves in order not to be consumed with those who were sinning.
- Moses and Aaron intercede with God for the congregation (vs.22) and they are saved from judgment.



THE REBELS



SCENE No. 3. VISUAL AIDS: Figures of Dathan, Abiram and their families standing near their tents. Figures showing the earth which opens to swallow the rebels while others of the Israelites look on fearfully.

DEVELOPMENT:

- The congregation is given the opportunity to separate from the rebels and thus show that they do not want to be a part of their sinful actions. (vs.24-26)

**Apl.** It is most important that the Christian believer keep separate from sin.

**Lsn.** Students are tempted to take part in the sins of others. For example, they might be tempted to accept a suggestion to shoplift, or steal money from their parents, or rebel against a rule at school.

- In this case, the whole congregation was involved in the rebellion and those who did not repent would be punished.
- Moses asks for a previously unheard of punishment, that of the earth opening and swallowing up the rebels along with all their possessions. This occurs immediately. Vs.29-30.
- The earth swallowed Dathan and Abiram in the same way that an earthquake swallows buildings and people. They disappeared together with their families.

**Cmt.** Moses expects that the unusual nature of this punishment will clearly indicate to all who are the ones that have been chosen by God to serve Him in the priesthood and leadership.

**Cns.** Divine judgment against sin is always in force. Here it falls only upon those who are rebellious, that is, upon those who do not repent of their sin.

- Unlike the children of the Rubenites, (vs. 27), the sons in the family of Korah apparently had not taken part in their father’s actions and are not included in his punishment.
- Descendents of Korah appear later in the Bible, involved in the temple service, (1Chronicles 9:19) and as authors of many of the Psalms. Psalm 85 has great significance in view of this event.

**Apl.** Moses was chosen by God to liberate the Israelites from Egypt and to lead them as they travelled to the Promised Land. He is a figure of the Lord Jesus, the One chosen by God to save and guide His people today.

**Apl.** There are many who are not willing to believe that the Lord Jesus is the only Saviour and the one Mediator between God and man.

**Apl.** Those who are disobedient and unbelieving will be punished just as were the rebels of this story.

**Cns.** Nothing can stop the destroying hand of God when the time comes to mete out judgment. See memory text.

