



Many times the people of Israel murmured and complained about Moses. Even his own brother and sister—Aaron and Miriam—spoke against him. After repeatedly angering God by speaking against His chosen leader, you would think that the people would have learned. But they didn't!

This story of rebellion is about another relative of Moses. Korah (*KOR-ah*) was a cousin to Moses. Korah's father was Kohath (*KOH-hath*). God had ordered that the "sons of Kohath . . . do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation." They were given the important job of carrying the "ark of testimony." They had to be very careful that they did "not touch any holy thing" nor "see when the holy things are [being] covered" (Numbers 4:1-20).

These men, also known as the sons of Levi, had been chosen and "separated . . . from the congregation of Israel, to bring [them] near to [the Lord] to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD." Korah should have felt honored and satisfied with this responsibility from God, but he wasn't.

Korah found other men who felt as he did: Dathan (*DAY-thuhn*), Abiram (*uh-BI-ruhm*), and On. These four men (along with two hundred and fifty important men, leaders of Israel) rose up against Moses and Aaron. They said, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy."

When Moses heard this, "he fell upon his face." Then Moses said to Korah and to those who were with him, "Tomorrow the LORD will show who are his, and who is holy." Moses told all of them to bring their censers, filled with fire and incense, and God would make it known who was holy.

Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram, but they

# Church of God Sunday School

## THE REBELLION OF KORAH

Numbers 16:1 — 17:13

refused to come. They made terrible accusations against Moses. Moses was very angry, and he told the Lord: "Respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them." Moses did not deserve such disrespectful treatment!

The next day Korah and his company came with their censers "and stood in the door of the tabernacle." Aaron, too, had brought his censer, as he was told. "And the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation." God told Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from the people. Once again, God intended to destroy the congregation.

Moses and Aaron fell on their faces and pleaded with God for mercy. God then told Moses to tell the people to move away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Moses warned the people, "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins."

The people obeyed. Then Moses said, "Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind." Moses told the people that "if these men die the common death of all men," the people would know that the Lord had not sent Moses to be their leader.

But Moses warned, "If the LORD make a new thing, and the earth . . . swallow them up . . . and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD."

As soon as Moses finished speaking, the ground opened up. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and their families and all their belongings fell into the pit. "And the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation."

All the people who were close by fled because they were afraid the ground would swallow them up also. Then fire from the Lord came and "consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense."

God told Moses to tell Aaron's son, Eleazar (*el-ee-AY-zuhr*), to gather up the censers, for they were holy. The censers were then made into plates to cover the altar as a memorial, or a reminder. God wanted the people to know that Aaron and his sons were His chosen priesthood.

After the ground swallowed people and fire from God destroyed the others of this rebellion, do you think the people learned the danger of speaking against Moses? No, they didn't! The very next morning "all the congregation" accused Moses and Aaron: "Ye have killed the people of the LORD." (Were Korah and those of the rebellion truly God's people?)

Now God's anger was really stirred! When Moses and Aaron saw "the glory of the LORD" appear, they went before the tabernacle. God told them, "Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment." Moses and Aaron fell on their faces. They knew something terrible was about to happen.

Moses told Aaron to "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."

Aaron did as Moses commanded. He ran into the congregation where the plague had indeed begun. Aaron burned incense, making atonement (or a covering) for the people. And Aaron "stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed [or stopped]." Because of Aaron's actions, many people lived.

(Many years later, Jesus would die on the Cross as

an atonement for our sins. He would stand between us and the judgments of God. His sacrifice would save people from eternal death.)

The rebellion of Korah and his company was a terrible thing. Not only did they die, but 14,700 others also died from the plague. This rebellion was not only against Moses and Aaron, but it was also against God Himself (Numbers 26:9).

Many years before, God had chosen Aaron to be the high priest. After the rebellion of Korah and others, God confirmed His choice of Aaron in a special way. God told Moses to take twelve rods (staves), one each from "the head of the house of their fathers," and write "every man's name upon his rod."

Moses was to "write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi." Then the rods were to be placed in the tabernacle. God said He would cause one of the rods to blossom to stop the "murmurings of the children of Israel." This would show everyone God's choice for the high priest.

The next day when Moses went into the tabernacle, Aaron's rod had buds and blossoms and almonds. Moses brought out all the rods to show the children of Israel. "And they looked, and took every man his rod."

God commanded that Aaron's rod be kept in the tabernacle as "a token against the rebels." It was to take away Israel's murmurings, "that they die not."

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**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah . . . and they became a sign."*  
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—Numbers 26:10