

Rebellion of Korah

(Numbers 16 – 17)

Pre-Session Warm Up

[Teacher, bring in a stick or wooden staff. Ask the children if they think it could produce blossoms or ripe fruit.] This wood came from an almond tree. Do you think it could blossom and produce almonds? (No! It's dead!) Do you think that God could make this stick sprout buds and blossoms and produce ripe almonds? (Yes! He can do all things! There's nothing too hard for God!)

Today we learn how God showed His power to the children of Israel.

Opening Prayer

Father, touch our hearts this morning with the knowledge of Your power and might! You are the all-knowing, all-wise, all-loving God who sees us and knows our names. Help us to fall more in love with You today as we learn of Your greatness. Give us a renewed desire to follow hard after Your ways in everything we think, everything we say, and everything we do. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. (Hebrews 13:17)

Lesson

Last week we learned that after twelve spies went into the Promised Land to check it out, only two of the spies came back with a good report. The other ten spies discouraged the people. They said they couldn't take the land away from the giants; their cities were too well fortified. Their faith in God was weak and soon they had discouraged all the people. They complained against Moses and threatened to get a new leader and go back to Egypt.

This sin of unbelief grieved God. And as a punishment to the people who didn't trust Him, God made them stay in the hot desert for 40 more years!

It was hard for Moses to tell the people that they couldn't go into the Promised Land. But he knew God was right. The people were not ready to follow God. Their faith was not strong enough.

The people were very upset. To think of spending forty more years in the wilderness was horrible! And, why should they? Who was Moses anyway to tell them to return to the desert?

So Korah started a rebellion. He stirred up two hundred fifty other leaders and together they went to see Moses and Aaron.

Numbers 16:3

They united against Moses and Aaron and said, "You have gone too far! The whole community of Israel has been set apart by the LORD, and he is with all of us. What right do you have to act as though you are greater than the rest of the LORD's people?"

How disrespectful! These people didn't appreciate all that Moses had done for them. They thought Moses was acting like he was more important than the rest of the people and they blamed Moses for their troubles. They had forgotten that God Himself had chosen Moses and Aaron to be their leaders! It was God, not Moses, who had told the people that they must go back into the desert for another 40 years. But the people were jealous of Moses' authority.

Moses told Korah and all the men with him to meet with him at the gate of the tabernacle, that God would decide who should be the leaders.

Listen to what Korah said...

Number 16:13-14

Isn't it enough that you brought us out of Egypt, a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us here in this wilderness, and that you now treat us like your subjects? What's more, you haven't brought us into another land flowing with milk and honey. You haven't given us a new homeland with fields and vineyards. Are you trying to fool these men? We will not come."

Moses demanded that they meet at the gate of the tabernacle.

Numbers 16:16

And Moses said to Korah, “You and all your followers must come here tomorrow and present yourselves before the LORD. Aaron will also be here.”

Moses told them that God would decide who should be the leaders.

Numbers 16:19

Meanwhile, Korah had stirred up the entire community against Moses and Aaron, and they all gathered at the Tabernacle entrance. Then the glorious presence of the LORD appeared to the whole community

The Lord told everyone who faithfully followed Moses and Aaron to get away from the tents of Korah and his men. Then Moses tells the people how God will show them who He has chosen to be the leader.

Numbers 16:28-30

And Moses said, “This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things that I have done—for I have not done them on my own. If these men die a natural death, or if nothing unusual happens, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD does something entirely new and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them and all their belongings, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have shown contempt for the LORD.”

Hardly had Moss finished speaking when the ground began to rumble.

Numbers 16:31-33

He had hardly finished speaking the words when the ground suddenly split open beneath them. The earth opened its mouth and swallowed the men, along with their households and all their followers who were standing with them, and everything they owned. So they went down alive into the grave, along with all their belongings. The earth closed over them, and they all vanished from among the people of Israel.

Korah and all his followers and all of their belongings were swallowed up into the earth.

Then God wanted to prove once and for all who he had chosen to be the high priest over the people. He told each tribe to bring a rod with the name of the leader of that family group carved on it. Aaron’s name was on the rod from the tribe of Levi.

Numbers 17:1-3

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell the people of Israel to bring you twelve wooden staffs, one from each leader of Israel’s ancestral tribes, and inscribe each leader’s name on his staff. Inscribe Aaron’s name on the staff of the tribe of Levi, for there must be one staff for the leader of each ancestral tribe.”

Moses laid the rods in the tabernacle next to the Ark of the Covenant that contained the tablets on which the Ten Commandments were carved. Then God told Moses how he was going to stop the people from complaining against him.

Numbers 17:5

Buds will sprout on the staff belonging to the man I choose. Then I will finally put an end to the people’s murmuring and complaining against you.”

The next morning there was a big crowd at the Tabernacle to learn the results. Which if any of the twelve rods had blossomed?

Numbers 17:8

When he went into the Tabernacle of the Covenant the next day, he found that Aaron’s staff, representing the tribe of Levi, had sprouted, budded, blossomed, and produced ripe almonds!

Moses brought out the rods. How surprised everybody must have been when they saw that one of the rods had budded! It was blooming and had ripe almonds hanging from it!

Now everyone knew that God has chosen Aaron to be their high priest. There was no question about it.

The Lord told Moses to place Aaron’s rod in the Ark of the Covenant with the Ten Commandments to remind them that God had chosen Aaron.

Numbers 17:10

And the LORD said to Moses: “Place Aaron’s staff permanently before the Ark of the Covenant to serve as a warning to rebels. This should put an end to their complaints against me and prevent any further deaths.”

If there was ever any doubt again about Moses’ and Aaron’s authority over the people, they could show them Aaron’s rod that budded.

So, what’s the lesson here for us today? To respect authority! God has placed certain people in our lives to be our spiritual leaders, such as our parents, pastor, or Sunday school teacher. He’s put them there to guide us so that we will grow up to be faithful followers of Jesus.

God’s word says:

Hebrews 13:17

Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.

God expects us to respect our spiritual leaders and show our appreciation to them!

God did everything He could to show love to Korah and his men; but, they refused to obey Moses’ authority over them and God couldn’t do anything more to save them. God didn’t want to kill Korah and all those people; He created people and loves everyone. But, God has to punish sin. The Bible tells us that the *wages of sin is death*. That’s eternal separation from God. That’s why Jesus came to die on the cross; He took the punishment for our sins. Jesus died in our place so that we don’t have to. If we believe that, our sins will be forgiven. And

when God forgives our sins, He forgets all about them! When we are forgiven by God, He restores us to right standing before Him and we are back in fellowship with Him—no more separation from God.

Let’s thank Him for dying on the cross for our sins and taking the punishment that we deserve.

Closing Prayer

Father, forgive us for the times that we are rebels against our parents and teachers. Thank You for providing these leaders to us. Help us to remember that You have given us these people to be there for us to guide and protect us. Help us to show our appreciation to them for all that they do for us by listening and obeying them. And, thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I love You. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Use the following review questions in a game of your choice:

1. Why couldn’t the people go into the Promised Land? (They didn’t have strong enough faith in God.)
2. What complaint did Korah and his followers have against Moses? (They blamed Moses for their troubles and questioned his authority over them.)
3. Where did Moses tell Korah to meet with him? (At the gate of the Tabernacle.)
4. When everyone met at the gate of the Tabernacle, what did God tell Moses and Aaron to do? (Get away from the tents of Korah.)

5. What happened to Korah and his followers? (The ground opened up and swallowed them!)
6. How did God prove once and for all who He had chosen to be high priest over the people? (Aaron's rod budded.)
7. Where did God tell Moses to put Aaron's rod for safe keeping? (In the Ark of the Covenant.)
8. What else was in the Ark of the Covenant? (The Ten Commandments and the jar of manna.)
9. What lesson did God want us to learn from today's story? (To respect and appreciate authority.)
10. Why has God given us leaders? (To protect, guide, and help us to grow up to be followers of Jesus.)
11. Why did God have to kill Korah? (Korah didn't repent. He didn't respect Moses' authority over him. All sin deserves death; God has to punish sin.)
12. How can you be sure that you are not eternally separated from God? (Believe that Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment you deserve.)
13. How can you show your parents that you appreciate their leadership over you? (Listen to them and obey them!)