



Korah

Tried To Get More
Than He Deserved

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Overview:

KORAH WAS TRYING TO GET MORE THAN HE DESERVED

Korah's story is told in Numbers 16:1-40. He is also mentioned in Numbers 26:9; Jude 11

Some notorious historical figures might have remained anonymous if they hadn't tried to grab on to more than they could hold.

But by refusing to be content with what they had, and by trying to get more than they deserved, they ended up with nothing. Korah, one of the Israelite leaders, was such a person.

Korah was a Levite who assisted in the daily functions of the tabernacle. Shortly after Israel's great rebellion against God (Numbers 13; 14), Korah instigated his own mini-rebellion.

He recruited a grievance committee and confronted Moses and Aaron. Their list of complaints boils down to three statements:

- (1) You are no better than anyone else;
- (2) Everyone in Israel has been chosen of the Lord;
- (3) We don't need to obey you.

It is amazing to see how Korah twisted the first two statements—both true—to reach the wrong conclusion.

Moses would have agreed that he was no better than anyone else. He would also have agreed that all Israelites were God's chosen people. But Korah's application of these truths was wrong.

Not all Israelites were chosen to lead. Korah's hidden claim was this: "I have as much right to lead as Moses does." His error cost him not only his job—a position of service that he enjoyed—but also his life.

These are the clans of the Levites, listed according to their genealogies.

Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, and she bore him Aaron and Moses. (Amram lived to be 137 years old.)

The descendants of Izhar included Korah, Nepheg, and Zicri.

The descendants of Uzziel included Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri.

Aaron married Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab and sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

The descendants of Korah included Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph. Their descendants became the clans of Korah.

Jealous of Moses, Korahy leads two-hundred and fifty princes in an insurrection, and is swallowed up in the earth

Numbers 16:1-50

One day Korah son of Izhar, a descendant of Kohath son of Levi, conspired with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and on son of Peleth, from the tribe of Reuben.

[2] They incited a rebellion against Moses, involving 250 other prominent leaders, all members of the assembly.

[3] They went to Moses and Aaron and said, "You have gone too far! Everyone in 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 anyone else among all these people of the Lord?"

[4] When Moses heard what they were saying, he threw himself down with his face to the ground.

[5] Then he said to Korah and his followers, "Tomorrow morning the Lord will show us who belongs to him and who is holy. The Lord will allow those who are chosen to enter his holy presence.

[6] You, Korah, and all your followers must do this: Take incense burners,

[7] And burn incense in them tomorrow before the Lord. Then we will see whom the Lord chooses as his holy one. You Levites are the ones who have gone too far!"

[8] Then Moses spoke again to Korah: "Now listen, you Levites!

[9] Does it seem a small thing to you that the God of Israel has chosen you from among all the people of Israel to be near him as you serve in the Lord's Tabernacle and to stand before the people to minister to them?

[10] He has given this special ministry only to you and your fellow Levites, but now you are demanding the priesthood as well!

[11] The one you are really revolting against is the Lord! And who is Aaron that you are complaining about him?"

[12] Then Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, but they replied, "We refuse to come!

[13] 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?

[14] What's more, you haven't brought us into the land flowing with milk and honey or given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Are you trying to fool us? We will not come."

[15] Then Moses became very angry and said to the Lord, "Do not accept their offerings! I have not taken so much as a donkey from them, and I have never hurt a single one of them."

[16] And Moses said to Korah, "Come here tomorrow and present yourself before the Lord with all your followers. Aaron will also be here.

[17] Be sure that each of your 250 followers brings an incense burner with incense on it, so you can present them before the Lord. Aaron will also bring his incense burner."

[18] So these men came with their incense burners, placed burning coals and incense on them, and stood at the entrance of the Tabernacle with Moses and Aaron.

[19] Meanwhile, Korah had stirred up the entire community against Moses and Aaron, and they all assembled at the Tabernacle entrance. Then the glorious presence of the Lord appeared to the whole community,

[20] And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, [21] "Get away from these people so that I may instantly destroy them!"

[22] But Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground. "O God, the God and source of all life," they pleaded. "Must you be angry with all the people when only one man sins?"

[23] And the Lord said to Moses, [24] "Then tell all the people to get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram."

[25] So Moses got up and rushed over to the tents of Dathan and Abiram, followed closely by the Israelite leaders.

[26] "Quick!" he told the people. "Get away from the tents of these wicked men, and don't touch anything that belongs to them. If you do, you will be destroyed for their sins."

[27] So all the people stood back from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Then Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the entrances of their tents with their wives and children and little ones.

[28] And Moses said, "By this 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.

[29] If these men die a natural death, then the Lord has not sent me. [30] But if the Lord performs a miracle and the ground opens up and swallows them and all their belongings, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have despised the Lord."

[31] He had hardly finished speaking the words when the ground suddenly split open beneath them.

[32] The earth opened up and swallowed the men, along with their households and the followers who were standing with them, and everything they owned.

[33] So they went down alive into the grave, along with their belongings. The earth closed over them, and they all vanished.

[34] All of the people of Israel fled as they heard their screams, fearing that the earth would swallow them, too.

[35] Then fire blazed forth from the Lord and burned up the 250 men who were offering incense.

[36] And the Lord said to Moses, [37] "Tell Eleazar son of Aaron the priest to pull all the incense burners from the fire, for they are holy. Also tell him to scatter the burning incense

[38] From the burners of these men who have sinned at the cost of their lives. He must then hammer the metal of the incense burners into a sheet as a covering for the altar, for these burners have become holy because they were used in the Lord's presence. The altar covering will then serve as a warning to the people of Israel."

[39] So Eleazar the priest collected the 250 bronze incense burners that had been used by the men who died in the fire, and they were hammered out into a sheet of metal to cover the altar.

[40] This would warn the Israelites that no unauthorized man—no one who was not a descendant of Aaron—should ever enter the Lord's presence to burn incense. If anyone did, the same thing would happen to him as happened to Korah and his followers. Thus, the Lord's instructions to Moses were carried out.

[41] But the very next morning the whole community began muttering again against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You two have killed the Lord's people!" [42] As the people gathered to protest to Moses and Aaron, they turned toward the Tabernacle and saw that the cloud had covered it, and the glorious presence of the Lord appeared.

[43] Moses and Aaron came and stood at the entrance of the Tabernacle, [44] and the Lord said to Moses, [45] "Get away from these people so that I can instantly destroy them!" But Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground.

[46] And Moses said to Aaron, "Quick, take an incense burner and place burning coals on it from the altar. Lay incense on it and carry it quickly among the people to make atonement for them. The Lord's anger is blazing among them—the plague has already begun."

[47] Aaron did as Moses told him and ran out among the people. The plague indeed had already begun, but Aaron burned the incense and made atonement for them.

[48] He stood between the living and the dead until the plague was stopped.

[49] But 14,700 people died in that plague, in addition to those who had died in the incident involving Korah. [50] Then because the plague had stopped, Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

Scripture in Review

Korah and his associates had seen the advantages of the priesthood in Egypt. Egyptian priests had great wealth and political influence, something Korah wanted for himself. Korah may have assumed that Moses, Aaron, and his sons were trying to make the Israelite priesthood the same kind of political machine, and he wanted to be a part of it. He did not understand that Moses' main ambition was to serve God rather than to control others.

Moses saw through their charge to their true motivation—some of the Levites wanted the power of the priesthood. Like Korah, we often desire the special qualities God has given others. Korah had significant, worthwhile abilities and responsibilities of his own. In the end, however, his ambition for more caused him to lose everything. Inappropriate ambition is greed in disguise. Concentrate on finding the special purpose God has for you.

One of the easiest ways to fall away from following God is to look at our present problems and exaggerate them. Dathan and Abiram did just that when they began to long for better food and more pleasant surroundings. Egypt, the place they had longed to leave, was now looking better and better—not because of slavery and taskmasters, of course, but because of its mouth-watering food!

These two men and their followers had completely lost their perspective. When we take our eyes off God and start looking at ourselves and our problems, we begin to lose our perspective as well. Overrating problems can hinder our relationship with God. Don't let difficulties make you lose sight of God's direction for your life.

The Israelites were told not even to touch the belongings of the wicked rebels. In this case, doing so would have shown sympathy to their cause and agreement with their principles. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were directly challenging Moses and God. Moses clearly stated what God intended to do to the rebels (Numbers 16:28-30).

He did this so that everyone would have to choose between following Korah or following Moses, God's chosen leader. When God asks us to make a fundamental choice between siding with wicked people or siding with him, we should not hesitate but commit ourselves to be 100 percent on the Lord's side.

Although the families of Dathan and Abiram were swallowed up, the sons of Korah were not wiped out (see Numbers 26:11).

Just one day after Korah and his followers were executed for grumbling and complaining against God, the Israelites started all over with more muttering and complaining. Their negative attitude only caused them to rebel even more and to bring about even greater trouble. It eroded their faith in God and encouraged thoughts of giving up and turning back. The path to open rebellion against God begins with dissatisfaction and skepticism, then moves to grumbling about both God and present circumstances. Next comes bitterness and resentment, followed finally by rebellion and open hostility. If you are often dissatisfied, skeptical, complaining, or bitter—beware! These attitudes lead to rebellion and separation from God. Any choice to side against God is a step in the direction of letting go of him completely and making your own way through life.

Those who conspired against Moses were defying the Lord

Numbers 26:9-10

And Eliab was the father of Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram. This Dathan and Abiram are the same community leaders who conspired with Korah against Moses and Aaron, defying the Lord.

But the earth opened up and swallowed them with Korah, and 250 of their followers were destroyed that day by fire from the Lord. This served as a warning to the entire nation of Israel.

Korah, like others, was a bad example.

Jude 1:11

How terrible it will be for them! For they follow the evil example of Cain, who killed his brother. Like Balaam, they will do anything for money. And like Korah, they will perish because of their rebellion.

Jude gives three examples of men who did whatever they wanted (Jude 1:10)—Cain, who murdered his brother out of vengeful jealousy (Genesis 4:1-16); Balaam, who prophesied out of greed, not out of obedience to God's command (Numbers 22-24); and Korah, who rebelled against God's divinely appointed leaders, wanting the power for himself (Numbers 16:1-35).

These stories illustrate attitudes that are typical of false teachers—pride, selfishness, jealousy, greed, lust for power, and disregard of God's will.

Weaknesses and mistakes of Korah

He failed to recognize the significant position God had placed him in
He forgot that his fight was against someone greater than Moses.
He allowed greed to blind his common sense

Key verses:

“Moses also said to Korah, Now listen, you Levites! Isn't it enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the rest of the Israelite community and brought you near himself to do the work at the Lord's tabernacle and to stand before the community and minister to them? He has brought you and all your fellow Levites near himself, but now you are trying to get the priesthood too ” (Numbers 16:8-10).

Lessons for life:

Korah's story gives us numerous warnings:

- (1) Don't let desire for what someone else has make you discontented with what you already have.
- (2) Don't try to raise your own self-esteem by attacking someone else.
- (3) Don't use part of God's Word to support what you want, rather than allowing its entirety to shape your wants.
- (4) Don't expect to find satisfaction in power and position.

There is sometimes a fine line between goals and greed if we are discontented with what we have, we may lose it without gaining anything better

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*.

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