



# World Christian Fellowship

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## Jude 09 Rebellion of Korah

**Jude 1:11**, *Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.*

Three historic apostate judgments.

- **Israel,**
- **Angels, and**
- **Sodom and Gomorrah.**

Three characteristics of apostate nature:

- **Immorality,**
- **Disobedience/ insubordination, and**
- **Blasphemy/irreverence.**

Three connections to apostate examples:

- **Cain,**
- **Balaam, and**
- **Korah.**

Three who model what these current, contemporary apostates do.

- These current ones have gone the way of Cain.
- They have rushed into the error of Balaam.
- They have perished in the rebellion of Korah.

They have followed the path that Cain followed.

They have followed the path that Balaam followed.

They have followed the path that Korah followed.

Notice the progression.

- They have gone the way of Cain,
- They have rushed into the error of Balaam, and
- They have perished in the rebellion of Korah.

First there is a path they take. Then there is an escalation of their speed, and ultimately their disastrous.

They start out in the way. They go into the error, and they perish in the rebellion.

- Cain is a model of one who disobeyed God.
- Balaam is a model of one who tries to influence others to disobey God.
- Korah who led a full rebellion.

Apostates are the spiritual children of Cain, Balaam, and Korah.

Korah was the oldest son of Izhar. Korah was a great-grandson of **Levi**, the **third of Jacob's twelve sons**. First cousin to Moses and Aaron, the Jewish leader, and High Priest respectively.

The three sons of **Levi** were **Gershon, Merari, and Kohath**.

The **Gershonites** were responsible for the care of the tabernacle and tent, its coverings, the curtain at the entrance to the tent of meeting, courtyard, courtyard surrounding the tabernacle and altar. The ropes and everything related to their use.

The **Merarites** were appointed to take care of the frames of the tabernacle, its crossbars, posts, bases, all its equipment, and everything related to their use, as well as the posts of the surrounding courtyard with their bases, tent pegs, and ropes.

The **Kohathites** were responsible for the care of the sanctuary. They were responsible for the care of the ark, the table, the lamp stand, the altars, the articles of the sanctuary used in ministering, the curtain, and everything related to their use. They were under the direct supervision of **Eleazar, son of Aaron**.

Korah was born in Egypt.

**Exodus 6:21**, *The sons of Izhar were Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri.*

The time when the Jews were enslaved to King Pharaoh.

Korah experienced the miraculous Exodus from Egypt and journey through the Red Sea on dry land and received the Torah at Mount Sinai along with the rest of his brethren.

Korah was extremely wealthy according to Jewish records and was a clever and astute individual.

His status as a member of the Levite tribe enabled him to participate in the service in the Ark of the Covenant, the portable sanctuary the Jews carried with them throughout their journey to the Promised Land.

Korah was jealous of the fact that Aaron had been chosen as High Priest, to the exclusion of anyone else. Furthermore, his cousin Elitafan had been chosen as head of the Levite family of Kehot, to which Korah belonged, and Korah felt this position was rightfully his.

**Numbers 3:30-31**, *And the leader of the fathers' house of the families of the Kohathites was Elizaphan the son of Uzziel. <sup>31</sup> Their duty included the ark, the table, the*

*lampstand, the altars, the utensils of the sanctuary with which they ministered, the screen, and all the work relating to them.*

Numbers chapter 13 the Israelites decided to send out 12 spies to spy the Promise Land.

When they returned spying the land 10 of them gave evil report and only 2 gave the faith filled report.

Numbers 14 they cried out whole night and decided to select another leader and go back to Egypt.

God wanted to destroy everyone, but Moses intercedes to God and then God relents from bringing harm to them. But God did promise that none of them will enter the Promise Land, except those who were 20 years and younger and Joshua and Caleb.

Now at this they knew that they are going to get into the Promise Land.

With this background we will turn to **Numbers 16**.

**Numbers 16:1-2**, *Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men;<sup>2</sup> and they rose up before Moses with some of the*

*children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown.*

Kohathite which had great privileges. They camped on the south side of the tabernacle.

**Numbers 3:29**, *The families of the children of Kohath were to camp on the south side of the tabernacle.*

He got to bear the most holy things, as the Kohathites carried the instruments that reconciled the people with God.

**Numbers 4:15**, *And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is set to go, then the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them; but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. "These are the things in the tabernacle of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry.*

### **Dathan and Abiram**

Of the tribe of Reuben. The tribe of the firstborn who lost his birth right.

**1 Chronicles 5:1-2**, *Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel—he was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the*

*son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright; <sup>2</sup>yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's—*

Brothers

**On**

Of the tribe of **Reuben**, son of **Peleth**.

**250 princes.**

Men of renown were probably also suffering from an attitude of dissatisfaction toward Moses' leadership. They were possibly disgusted with the sentence of death announced for their whole generation in the previous chapters. They may have interpreted Moses' work as a leader as a slight toward them personally.

**James 3:14-16**, *But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. <sup>15</sup>This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. <sup>16</sup>For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.*

Korah used his relationship with these princes to sway the majority of the people to voice their dissatisfaction and confront Moses and Aaron.

These men were well respected and were used to influence others.

Their Accusation of Moses and Aaron.

**Numbers 16:3**, *They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?"*

Their complaint centred on the exclusiveness of holiness to the priesthood. Everyone is holy before God. God is among all of us, not just you.

Moses is discounted by an appeal to fairness and democratic equality. This has great appeal. It is what seems right to us. We naturally believe that we are both capable and responsible for directing our own lives.

The complaint of **Dathan and Abiram** also included their evaluation of Moses effectiveness and success as God's leader. In their estimation he had not done a very good job.

**Who really led them into the wilderness?**

**Who was telling Moses what to do and where to go?**

## **Whose fault was it that they were not now in possession of the land of Canaan?**

Moses did not want the job at all. 5 Times he refused before accepting it. All Moses could hear was murmuring for 40 years!

## **Why the church split happens?**

In every church the members know how to run the church better except the one who is leading as the pastor.

## **Moses' response.**

**Numbers 16:4**, *So when Moses heard it, he fell on his face.*

First Moses took it to God in prayer.

Whenever there is a conflict or rebellion take it to the Lord God.

Moses could answer this charge. His authority was from God. God was the one being challenged.

Every authority comes from God.

Family,

Work,

Government,

Ministry,

The common denominator for all your problems it is you!

**Psalms 75:6-7**, *For exaltation comes neither from the east Nor from the west nor from the south. <sup>1</sup>But God is the Judge: He puts down one, And exalts another.*

**Romans 13:1-2**, *Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.<sup>2</sup>Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.*

**Daniel 4:17**, *'This decision is by the decree of the watchers, And the sentence by the word of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.'*

**1 Peter 2:13-14**, *Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme,<sup>14</sup> or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.*

Moses emerges from the prayer with the full assurance of what to do!

**Numbers 16:5-7**, and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, “Tomorrow morning the Lord will show who is His and who is holy, and will cause him to come near to Him. That one whom He chooses He will cause to come near to Him. <sup>6</sup>Do this: Take censers, Korah and all your company; <sup>7</sup>put fire in them and put incense in them before the Lord tomorrow, and it shall be that the man whom the Lord chooses is the holy one. You take too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi!”

Moses tells Korah that the lord will show us who is His and who is holy. God’s choice is still the issue not what seems fair or just to us, or what we think will work.

Moses goes on a separate mission to speak to Dathan and Abiram since their complaint was different. They were opposed to the civil authority of Moses. They despised his leadership and were unwilling to submit.

### **The complainers refuse to obey Moses.**

**Numbers 16:9-19**, Then Moses said to Korah, “Hear now, you sons of Levi: <sup>9</sup>Is it a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the work of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to serve them; <sup>10</sup>and that He has brought you near to Himself, you and all your brethren, the sons of Levi, with you? And are you seeking the priesthood also? <sup>11</sup>Therefore you and all your company are gathered

together against the Lord. And what is Aaron that you complain against him?"

<sup>12</sup>And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, but they said, "We will not come up! <sup>13</sup>Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, that you should keep acting like a prince over us? <sup>14</sup>Moreover you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!"

<sup>15</sup>Then Moses was very angry, and said to the Lord, "Do not respect their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, nor have I hurt one of them."

<sup>16</sup>And Moses said to Korah, "Tomorrow, you and all your company be present before the Lord—you and they, as well as Aaron. <sup>17</sup>Let each take his censer and put incense in it, and each of you bring his censer before the Lord, two hundred and fifty censers; both you and Aaron, each with his censer." <sup>18</sup>So every man took his censer, put fire in it, laid incense on it, and stood at the door of the tabernacle of meeting with Moses and Aaron. <sup>19</sup>And Korah gathered all the congregation against them at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to all the congregation.

So, they refused to come when he asked them to come.

**Will you put out the eyes of these men?**

This was the punishment for treason.

They chided his ability to deal with this great show of force.  
You have no authority.

Moses, the meekest man, became angry. But Who was going to deal with this rebellion?

Moses instructs the 250 to bring Censers. Korah and his company take their censers. The glory of the Lord appears.

Moses intercedes for the congregation. God answers to rebellion.

**Numbers 16:21-35**, *“Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.”* <sup>22</sup>*Then they fell on their faces, and said, “O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and You be angry with all the congregation?”* <sup>23</sup>*So the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,* <sup>24</sup>*“Speak to the congregation, saying, ‘Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.’ ”* <sup>25</sup>*Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him.* <sup>26</sup>*And he spoke to the congregation, saying, “Depart now from the tents of these wicked men! Touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins.”* <sup>27</sup>*So they got away from around the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and*

*stood at the door of their tents, with their wives, their sons, and their little children.*

*<sup>28</sup>And Moses said: "By this you shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of my own will. <sup>29</sup>If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, then the Lord has not sent me. <sup>30</sup>But if the Lord creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the Lord." <sup>31</sup>Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, <sup>32</sup>and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods. <sup>33</sup>So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly. <sup>34</sup>Then all Israel who were around them fled at their cry, for they said, "Lest the earth swallow us up also!" <sup>35</sup>And a fire came out from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense.*

Moses' faith in God does not produce a self-righteous attitude. He still has compassion on the lost. God allows him to speak to those who about to feel the wrath of God. He gives us that opportunity as well.

God demanded that those who would be spared to be separated from the rebellious. They had to make a choice to be saved.

The earth, as His representative, is speaking for God. If they do not listen to Moses, they will listen to the earth since both are servants of God.

Fire consumed those who attempted to offer their incense.

Eleazar is commanded to gather the censers. They are to make a plate to cover the altar.

**Numbers 16:36-40**, *Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>37</sup>“Tell Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, to pick up the censers out of the blaze, for they are holy, and scatter the fire some distance away. <sup>38</sup>The censers of these men who sinned against their own souls, let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar. Because they presented them before the Lord, therefore they are holy; and they shall be a sign to the children of Israel.” <sup>39</sup>So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burned up had presented, and they were hammered out as a covering on the altar, <sup>40</sup>to be a memorial to the children of Israel that no outsider, who is not a descendant of Aaron, should come near to offer incense before the Lord, that he might not become like*

*Korah and his companions, just as the Lord had said to him through Moses.*

Imagine someone going to offer incense and there he sees the censers made of 250 rebels?

### **Did Israel learn?**

**Numbers 16:41**, *On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the Lord."*

The congregation was unwilling to accept responsibility and chose to blame Moses for the death of the rebels.

The people of the Lord were not the ones who died, but those who lived.

The seeds of rebellion were still at work. The congregation had no respect for Moses or God.

### **The Aftermath**

As a reminder to the nation of the calamitous outcome of the rebellion, Aaron's son Elazar was instructed to melt the pans and craft them as plates to cover the Tabernacle altar.

To further demonstrate that Aaron was Divinely chosen, each tribe was instructed to give a staff to Moses, upon which was inscribed the name of the tribe's leader. On the staff of the tribe of Levi, Aaron's name was inscribed. Moses placed the staffs in the sanctuary before the Ark of the Covenant, and the next morning, Aaron's staff was discovered to have miraculously flowered and produced almonds.

### **What warning comes to us from that great rebellion?**

**1 Corinthians 10:10-11**, *nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.* <sup>11</sup>*Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*

### **Do not the same evils still exist that lay at the foundation of Korah's ruin?**

Pride and ambition are widespread. When these are cherished, they open the door to envy, and a striving for supremacy. The soul is alienated from God, and unconsciously drawn into the ranks of Satan.

Like Korah and his companions, many, even of the professed followers of Christ, are thinking, planning, and working so eagerly for self-exaltation that in order to gain the sympathy and support of the people. They are ready to pervert the truth, falsifying and misrepresenting the Lord's servants. Even

charging them with the base and selfish motives that inspire their own hearts.

By persistently reiterating falsehood, and that against all evidence, they at last come to believe it to be truth.

While endeavouring to destroy the confidence of the people in the men of God's appointment, they really believe that they are engaged in a good work, verily doing God service.

The false teachers are bent on overthrowing any spiritual authority. Attacking any definitive dogmatic, truth-telling spiritual leaders.

So, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and the people who joined in this rebellion were intent on overthrowing Moses.

Fifteen thousand people died in a subsequent plague. That's how effective their rebellion was.

- They had a major rebellion going on.
- They had a denomination.
- They had an anti-God denomination.
- They had a cult.
- They had a new religion – an anti-Moses, anti-God's law, anti-spiritual leadership, anti-divine authority.

They had an immoral, insubordinate, irreverent cult. Fifteen thousand died in a plague.

- Cain one person got his own religion.
- Balaam gets many people seduced.
- Korah rebellion costed 15,000 lives.

This is about influence.

- If you do not submit to the authoritative Word of God,
- If you do not submit to the truth of God, and show reverence to God, honour to God, and stay away from immorality, and give evidence of a transformed life by the grace of God.
- If you do not submit to spiritual authority and those who have been called by God and are faithful to the teaching of the Word of God.

If you fight against all of that, then you have followed the way of Cain, the way of Balaam, and the way of Korah.

They are the trinity of apostates.

- Cain, the prototype pioneer apostate.
- Balaam who extended apostasy from one person to many.
- Korah who took apostasy to the largest level, engulfing the most people and bringing about a rebellion that

attempted, literally, to overthrow all that God had established by way of authority among His people.

They are all three immoral, insubordinate to the truth of God, and they are all three irreverent.

- They exchanged the way of Christ for the way of Cain.
- They exchanged the truth of Christ for the error of Balaam.
- They exchanged the life of Christ for the destruction of Korah.

## **Application:**

### **1. God chooses people for specific purpose.**

Korah's rebellion reinforces the truth that what God says matters.

God specified that only Aaron and his sons could serve as priests (**Numbers 3-4**).

Korah was a Levite from the Kohathite family. Therefore, he could not serve as a priest. His duties as a Kohathite were specified by God in **Numbers 3:27-32**.

Korah was not content with what God said. His fate reminds readers that God's word is not to be changed or ignored.

## **2. Discontentment breeds Spiritual unrest.**

Discontentment breeds spiritual unrest, ingratitude, and arrogance.

When we take our eyes off Christ and settle them on speculations, fears, and fleshly desires, we open ourselves to a spirit of discontentment which is the opposite of the trusting and resting in God (**Colossians 3:1-11; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5**).

Suddenly God's peace is not as accessible as it once was, His presence seems distant, and ultimately our service to Him becomes compromised.

Korah's greed did not accomplish a closer fellowship between God and His people. Instead of fostering intimacy, the sins of discontentment and pride only served to drive a wedge between them.

The good news is that through Christ, God has provided to us peace that surpassing understanding, intimacy that brings us sweet fellowship, and power to grow in righteousness.

## **3. Murmuring never harmless**

Grumbling and complaining are never harmless.

The deception of sins like these is that they seem harmless. If we are honest, many of us have even grown comfortable with sins like these in our own lives.

However, like all sin, these snares always produce the fruit of active rebellion against God and often breed unrest in the hearts of those around us (**James 1:14-15**).

Korah enlisted the help of his friends and incited many who came up against God's chosen leaders.

We must remember that God will not be mocked, if we choose to foster discontent in our own hearts and sow it in those around us, we will indeed be held responsible for our sin, but others may also suffer the consequences as well.

**Galatians 6:7**, *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*

#### **4. Pride precedes before destruction.**

Pride leads to spiritual blindness and a rejection of truth. This should go without saying, but the pride of life is not from God, nor does it honour Him as God.

**1 John 2:15-17**, *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup>For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust*

*of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. <sup>17</sup>And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*

However, pride often takes forms that are not as recognizable as the brazen pride that we may picture.

In many instances, pride can be disguised by seemingly honourable reasons.

Korah's complaint against Moses and Aaron was grounded on his belief that since the entire nation of Israel was considered holy then no one should be seen as more exalted than anyone else.

They even go as far as using God's very name and presence to support their grievances (**Numbers 16:3**).

However, Korah's pretence was soon revealed as selfish ambition. Prideful and arrogant living results in twisting God's Word for our benefit, thus rejecting our need of God and placing the crown on our own heads.

There is no blessing in prideful living, God blesses the humble and rejects the arrogant.

**James 4:6**, *But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."* (**Proverbs 3:34**)

## 5. Don't be part of your Parents/ partner's sin

### **Korah's Descendants**

At first, Korah's three sons, Asir, Elkanah and Aviasaf, joined in their father's quarrel. However, soon after, they regretted their actions and repented. As a result, they were spared their father's fate and survived.

**Numbers 26:11**, *Nevertheless the children of Korah did not die.*

Indeed, Korah's descendants were among the Levites who sang in Holy Temple. (**1 Chronicles 6:18-22**, & **1 Chronicles 25:4-5**)

Several psalms in the Book of Psalms were either composed or sung by them. (**Psalms 42-49**)

Among Korah's descendants was the famed prophet Samuel, anointer of the first kings of Israel, Saul, and David. (**1 Chronicles 6:7-13**)

**Psalms 42:1-2**, *As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. <sup>2</sup>My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?*

**Psalms 84:10**, *For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.*