

NUMBERS 16 REBELLION

ACT 1: NUMBERS 16:1-40

CAST: CAN YOU GIVE A LITTLE DETAILS ABOUT THE PEOPLE IN THIS UPRISING?

Korah:

Dathan:

Abiram:

On:

250 leaders of the congregation:

Looking at the profiles of these people, what would be your assessment on this rebellion?

ISSUE OR ISSUES: WHAT ARE THEY?

Verse 3:

Verse 12-14:

Why do you think these people are upset?

Examine the claims of Korah; he made 2 assertions:

1.

2.

Do you think what Korah said is true?

Korah used these 2 assertions to justify his cause, what did he really want?

Is his conclusion or application correct? Why or Why not?

Examine now the rebuttal of Dathan and Abiram (verse 13-14):

What would you consider as the source of their unhappiness?

Looking at the reply in verses 13-14, we see similar refrains from the previous rebellion:

“Milk and honey” is the description for the Promised Land that God will give to Israel, but now it is applied to _____. Egypt was the place of their suffering under the heavy hands of Pharaoh (remember Exodus 1:11-14, and Israel’s response in crying to the Lord Exodus 3:7; 5:6). But here Dathan claimed like the rebels in Numbers 11:5 the same for Canaan.

“To kill us in the wilderness” – compare to Numbers 14:2

“Keep acting like the prince” – compare to Exodus 2:12

“Field and Vineyard” – prosperity, wealth and properties promised did not materialized. A complaint of Moses not delivering according to his promise. Questions: (1) whose promise was that? And (2) why was it not fulfilled?

“Put out the eyes of these men” – probably not physical, but c.f. to Deuteronomy 16:19 the reference is probably an accusation on Moses misleading, or hoodwink the people. A modern day idiom would be “to pull wool over one’s eye”

Would you consider the accusations of Dathan and Abiram to be fair? Discuss the motivation behind these accusations and what might be the causes.

MOSES’ REACTIONS

Verse 4:

Verse 5:

Verse 6-7:

Verse 8-11:

Verse 12:

Verse 23-27:

Verse 28-30:

GOD'S JUDGEMENT AND OUR SUMMARY REMARKS

Verses 31-35 gives us the account on the judgment of God:

Verses 31-34: Judgment on those who opposed Moses and brought false accusations concerning Moses. As Moses stated in verses 28-30, since Moses has been faithful in delivering all that Yahweh has instructed him to do and what Israel's experienced is the providence of God, the rebellion is really against God. The judgment tells us whose claim is correct; Moses or Dathan. The extraordinary execution of justice should leave no doubt whatsoever that "This is the judgment of God".

Verse 35: This judgment settles the question with regard to the order when it comes to the worship of God. Can anyone do anything? Or has God place a divine order in His worship? We have seen similar cases before:

Consider the rule given in Exodus 30:9. Then look at the account in Leviticus 10; what does this say on the worship of God?

Consider also the rule given in Numbers 4:15. Then look at the account in 1 Samuel 6:6-7. What does it say about the worship of God?

So, what more can we say now with this judgment on the worship of God?

Summary: What is your take-away from this section of Numbers?

ACT 2: NUMBERS 16:36 – 50

Read Numbers 16:36-40

What was the instruction from God?

What was the purpose of the monument (verse 40)?

Now read Numbers 16:41-42

Can you draw out the extent of the murmuring? Do you see any parallels to the rebellion in Numbers 14?

What should be the people's response to the monument? What was the people's actual reaction towards the monument?

Who executed the judgment on Korah and his companions?

Look at the people's assertion "You have killed the people of the Lord". Who are they accusing of murder? How did they classify the band of Korah? Why do you think they acted that way?

What did God do?

Verse 42-43:

Verse 44, 49:

What did Moses tell Aaron to do?

Who has to do it? Why?

What do you think is the significance of the action in verse 46?

Can you picture Aaron in the midst of all that is happening? In front of him is the oncoming death plague. He stands with his arm outstretched with the censer with the burning incense. Behind him stands those who will live because of him.

Read Leviticus 21:11 and then consider the action of Aaron. Discuss with your group the significance of this act in the light of the prohibition in Leviticus.

Summary Note:

ACT 3: NUMBERS 17:1-12

God now intervene with an actual sign. Why do you think is the purpose of this demonstration?

What is the test? What happened?

Some side note: Aaron is named as the leader of the Levites. In familial arrangement, Aaron is actually the descendant of Levi's second son, Kohath, and Moses being his brother is also a Levite. So we have to say here that the arrangement is one only for the priesthood. So while Moses remain the leader of Israel, Aaron's role is one to lead the priests and Levites in their ecclesiastical duty.

How obvious was the identification of Aaron as the chosen priest for Israel?

Some commentators said that the sign was both a miracle and a parable. That is, it conveys a message to Israel. Discuss among your group as to what that message might be:

What is the reaction of the people (verse 12)?

Why is chapter 17 necessary? Pen your thoughts here first. Go through chapter 18 and then come back again to review your answer.

ACT 4: NUMBERS 18

Observe the people's cry in the last verse of chapter 17, then look at 18:1-7.

What was the primary duty of the priests and Levites (c.f. Hebrews 5:1; Numbers 3, 4)?

What is the additional duty/responsibilities now being introduced?

Do you think this is relevant today for Shalom Church? What is the implication of this duty and who should be mindful of them?

SUPPORTING THE PRIESTS (NUMBERS 8:8-32)

There are various ways in which priests are to be supported by Israel. Identify these in the following verses:

Verse 8-9a (c.f. Lev 7:28-34):

Verses 9b-10 (c.f. Lev 2:2, 3):

Verses 11-19:

Verse 14, (c.f. Leviticus 27:12):

Meanwhile, the Levites were also supported, see verse 12 and 29. But special instructions are now given concerning what they receive. Detail your findings below (see verse 28-30)

How would you apply chapter 18 in modern 21st Century Shalom Church?

ACT 5 NUMBERS 19 ON PURIFICATION

Take a look at these verses (Leviticus 5:2; 11:8, 24-25; 21:1-4, 11; Numbers 5:2; 6:6-12) what is the focus of these verses?

Looking back at the passages in Numbers 17, can you describe the scene in the camps of Israel?

Can you make a guess as to why there is a need to have a chapter to deal with purification?

THE SACRIFICE

Make the following observation about the sacrifice, put just one characteristic in each box

Verse	Observation	Differences/Similarity to other sacrifices?
19:2		
19:2		
19:2		
19:2		
19:3		
19:3		
19:4		
19:4		
19:5		

19:6		
19:9		
19:9		

In verse 13 and 20 there is a judgment pronounced on anyone who is unclean and refuses to go through the water of purification. What is the judgment? Why do you think it is so severe?

Look at verses 7, 8 and 10, what does it say of the people involved in the purification sacrifice?

WATER OF PURIFICATION AND ACT OF PURIFICATION

What is the composition of the water of purification (Verse 17)?

Can you write down the steps of purification below?

Verse 19a:

Verse 19b:

IS THIS TEXT ON PURIFICATION RELEVANT FOR US TODAY?