

CONSUMED WITH DYING

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~ **Our Spiritual Safari** expedition through the entire Word of God is still wandering through the wilderness groaning and grunting; with heavy sighs and deep sobs, hot tears and enraged temper tantrums; whining, whaling, murmuring and muttering - missing Egypt and all the world had to offer. We open this report with the children of Israel singing the desert blues. We have no detailed record in Scripture of the mechanics of Israel being turned back into the wilderness by the Lord. I think God is very dignified keeping this a private matter. I know I would want it that way with myself. What we do have are four separate accounts of different incidents that all happened during that particular time.

Our last report introduced us to Korah, who was a prominent man, and who was head over roughly two hundred fifty princes from various tribes. They are called men of renown in the Word of God, so we know they were believers. Unfortunately, this was a serious rebellion they were conducting; and God will deal with them in a very definite way because of it.

The appeal Korah made to the people was a very subtle and veiled accusation against Moses and Aaron alleging they assumed too much responsibility and were usurping too much authority. The same appeal is used in mob rule today; that is, that your rights are being infringed upon and your liberties are being curtailed. It's a powerful motivator. Well, people in this world just happen to have more liberty than at any other time in the history of mankind. The things that are happening in foreign lands would never have happened as recently as two decades ago. It would have been impossible; particularly with the present state of technology. Of course, technology is no blessing to mankind, and it will ultimately destroy or be destroyed. Technology has brought more than one nation down already in history. Well, it was a false charge Korah made against Moses; because Moses was just doing what God had commanded - and it was

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Korah who wanted more liberty and more control because he was jealous of Moses and Aaron.

We have seen how Moses was the meekest man that ever lived. He didn't even want to be in this role of leadership. Moses refused when God offered it to him initially. When the people prophesied, Joshua wanted them to be stopped, because Moses was supposed to be the leader; but Moses didn't stop them from prophesying. Moses said he wished they would ALL prophesy! Moses had a lot of things he was guilty of, but taking too much authority upon himself just doesn't happen to be one of those problems; and that is the false allegation by Korah.

Well, naturally, behind this rebellion is jealousy. Jealousy is the number one destroyer of all churches and the number two cause of all problems in the church. Moses walked in meekness partly in an effort to repel the problem of jealousy, I'm sure. The choir loft is the big battleground in any church. When Satan fell from Heaven, he landed right in the choir loft. The boards of directors are often in disagreement, too - but most times, it's just an individual board member, or congregation member who disagrees, and they divide the entire church as people line up on either side. Jealousy is the root trouble of all divisions in any Christian work; and that is exactly what we have with Korah against Moses.

The Christian must recognize that ALL authority is God-given. No man is to take any honor upon himself in this world. That should preclude many Christians from doing many things - but it doesn't. God had assigned each individual a certain place and a particular function within the camp. Korah was from Kohath, and they all had specific duties. Moses had his own duties. See, the church is to be as a human body; that body has many members. When God saves, He places us in the body by the Holy Spirit and we are to function in a certain way in the body of believers. Likewise, there are many gifts of the Spirit; the notion that there is only a dozen or so is a sad mistake. You can't group them off like that because there's no one superior gift to begin with.

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We are to all function as a body. Are your toes jealous of your eyes? Paul says we are not all one eye or one ear. We have to have a fully functioning body with members. Without all the correct members, we cease to function. Most of the body is usually covered up, too. Many parts cannot be seen and never are seen or touched unless there's a big problem. It's certainly better that way. Every individual has a gift and Paul called one gift "help." I can think of a thousand ways in which we can help. I can SURE tell you how you can "help" me – just ask!

What we are considering in Numbers is insane vanity and a rank spirit of jealousy as Korah wanted to be elevated in position within the camp of Israel with regards to his own religious leadership program. I'm sure he had the plan well in place by the time he spoke to Moses. This always involves apostasy - and it motivates a whole bunch of people today; they're always the troublemakers in a church. Many men and women try to force their way into a place of leadership. They attempt to usurp a gift that they simply have not been ordained with. They never had the ability to do the thing that they insist on doing and God never called them to do it in the first place. They concoct a scheme and execute it. Well, this matter of rebellion must be dealt with because it's very serious and we will now see God move in a very deliberate and definite way. The judgment of these men for what they have done is serious....

XVI

4 And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face:

5 And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow the LORD will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him.

6 This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all his company;

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7 And put fire therein, and put incense in them before the LORD to morrow: and it shall be that the man whom the LORD doth choose, he shall be holy: ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.

8 And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi:

9 Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them?

10 And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also?

11 For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the LORD: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?

12 And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, We will not come up:

13 Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?

14 Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up.

15 And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the LORD, Respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them.

16 And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the LORD, thou, and they, and Aaron, to morrow:

17 And take every man his censer, and put incense in them, and bring ye before the LORD every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; thou also, and Aaron, each of you his censer.

18 And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron.

19 And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation.

20 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

21 Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.

~ This is the second appearing of the glory of God in connection with murmuring and rebellion in the camp of the children of Israel. God is saying, "get out of the way" because He is going to judge the sons of Korah. These men refused to obey Moses and they set up their own worship as they attempted to divide the people. That's not a good thing to do amongst the children of God. God will deal with that every time and God will judge it severely - and, friends, He makes no apologies for doing so....

22 And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?

23 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

24 Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

25 And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him.

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26 And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins.

27 So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children.

28 And 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.

29 If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me.

30 But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD.

31 And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them:

32 And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods.

~ The manner in which God judged Korah is darkly interesting. Korah had attempted to divide God's people. Well, there is a law of God that states that God is not mocked; God always judges according to the way a man sins. That was true of David, Jacob, Paul - and everyone else. The earth divided, opened up and swallowed Korah. The others that were burning incense were consumed with fire. They each went out grouped by and according to their sins.

See, many people that should be serving God in some humble capacity get the idea that they are to be running a Bible study class, for example. That's

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usually a Christian Tragedy. Most of them are convinced in their own minds they are qualified to preach and teach when they aren't. Not every man has been given the gift of teaching and preaching. Dorcus, in Scripture, had the gift of sewing – not one recorded word from her. Without the clothes she made, many widows would not have had any clothes. I'm sure we don't need any more writers today – but we all need nice clothes. None of the pertinent and imperative tasks ever really seem to get done properly anymore....

33 They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.

34 And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also.

35 And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.

36 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

37 Speak unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning, and scatter thou the fire yonder; for they are hallowed.

38 The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates for a covering of the altar: for they offered them before the LORD, therefore they are hallowed: and they shall be a sign unto the children of Israel.

39 And Eleazar the priest took the brasen censers, wherewith they that were burnt had offered; and they were made broad plates for a covering of the altar:

40 To be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the LORD; that

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he be not as Korah, and as his company: as the LORD said to him by the hand of Moses.

41 But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.

~ Here we find the children of Israel are still complaining and murmuring. They are blaming Aaron and Moses for the judgment of the Lord against Korah! Can you imagine that? Can you possibly imagine how Moses and Aaron felt towards them after that? The children of Israel are so deep in rebellion against God they have no idea what's going on. They are actually murmuring against God Himself. To my utter amazement, the glory of the Lord appears every time they murmur - but, this time, God is judging. The very man the people are complaining against is the one who stands between them and God to avert that same judgment of God away from them! This is a magnificent - and bright - and holy – and sovereign – and sobering – message we have unearthed in our safari travels....

42 And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared.

43 And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation.

44 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

45 Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces.

46 And Moses said unto Aaron, 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.

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47 And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people.

48 And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.

~ The man that the children of Israel rebelled against is the one who made intercession so that they were not destroyed. Moses stood between God and the people and saved them from a terrible, slow and agonizing death. The Lord Jesus Christ stands between the dead and the living and the One that was crucified on the cross is rejected today. I think Saul of Tarsus stood there and watched Jesus die on the cross. Some things are impossible for me to articulate. I hope you have gleaned the truths of this chapter, which I simply cannot mine for you; they can only be pointed out to you by the Holy Spirit. Pray for wisdom, judgment and discernment now. There is so much to say that does not need to be said; and that makes for one awkward moment with me....

49 Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah.

50 And Aaron returned unto Moses unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the plague was stayed.

XVII

1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of their fathers, of all their princes according to the house of their fathers twelve rods: write thou every man's name upon his rod.

3 And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod shall be for the head of the house of their fathers.

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4 And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you.

5 And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you.

6 And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, and every one of their princes gave him a rod apiece, for each prince one, according to their fathers' houses, even twelve rods: and the rod of Aaron was among their rods.

7 And Moses laid up the rods before the LORD in the tabernacle of witness.

8 And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds.

9 And Moses brought out all the rods from before the LORD unto all the children of Israel: and they looked, and took every man his rod.

10 And the LORD said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not.

11 And Moses did so: as the LORD commanded him, so did he.

12 And the children of Israel spake unto Moses, saying, Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish.

13 Whosoever cometh any thing near unto the tabernacle of the LORD shall die: shall we be consumed with dying?

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~ Our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God concludes this report with God confirming the priesthood of Aaron in front of all the children of Israel immediately after what happened with Korah and his rebellion. This confirmation came from Aaron's rod that budded, and that symbolizes resurrection. Life out of death was demonstrated to the people. When the plants of the world all blossom in the springtime, we do NOT see an illustration of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, friends. In an egg there is the germ of life; and, in a plant that has lain dormant for so long, there is the genetic code of life. Resurrection is life out of a stone-cold inanimate death. The people were murmuring, and the Lord brought this miracle.

The children of Israel didn't want to accept that Aaron was the only one who could represent them before God, so they rebelled against him. These rods, including Aaron's rod – were dead! Well, Aaron's is alive again - and it has buds and blossoms and fruit on it. Life out of death finds its fulfillment, of course, in the Lord Jesus Christ. The priesthood of Christ rests squarely on the fact of the resurrection. If Christ were here on earth, He would not be our priest because He only became a priest after His resurrection. The resurrection is what made Him our Holy High Priest. No man becomes a priest and taketh this honor upon himself except he that is called of God, as with Aaron! Aaron was God's called priest – not the others. You and I have a Great High Priest today Who is at the right hand of God the Father. He is there for you and me and He ever lives to make intercession for us. The greatest privilege we have as Christian's is to be able to go to Him in prayer. You can turn to Him today – have you really trusted Christ? He can give you mercy in your time of need ~

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