

In the wilderness, after the people had been numbered and organised in their tribes around the tabernacle, there was yet another rebellion against the divine arrangement. It seemed that the unfaithful spies had hardly received their condemnation then another uprising arose due to the dissatisfaction of the flesh. We are ever so, being partakers of the same flesh, we should not exclude ourselves from such behaviour. Can we say that this would never be us who fell away into such foolishness? What is crucial is not that we do not do it, although we should always strive to avoid marring ourselves into such a quagmire, but what we do when we realise that we have let God down, again but our transgressions. If we say we would never do this, we make ourselves children of that evil generation.

Trouble rarely comes in isolation. We often find that matters compound, and in the history of the Truth, divisions and strife can come in clumps with several issues arising in close proximity and then a lull perhaps before future storms erupt again!

The rebellion of these three characters was not done alone. They were joined by 250 men of renown, famous in the congregation. There was a basic appeal to truth *“all the congregation is holy every one of them and the LORD is among them”*. However, something can be true and yet irrelevant to the matter in hand. I do not have two heads, that is true, but so does 99.999999% of the population. What is important is not only what may be true but what is relevant to divine truth and the furtherance of God’s purpose. That all the nation was holy was not at stake, apart from the fact that that holiness did not confer righteous activity in all. Being holy did not stop you from sinning. Another truth was being ignored, the Truth that God had appointed both Moses and Aaron in their official capacity and that had not actually appointed themselves.

“Satans” or adversaries, as that Hebrew word means, often cloak themselves in something that is true in order to advance their cause. This can be done as a deliberate ruse to fool others, or it can be an example of self-deception where they fail to see that something being true does mean that you have the Truth!

The appeal to something being true suggests that they felt on higher moral ground than those they were accusing of sin. However, the paucity of their argument was insulting as had not all witnessed aspects of the divine selection by God, and therefore should not have accused them and self-elevation. Hebrews 5v4 *“and no man takes this honour onto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”* The jealousy which these three characters felt for the two brothers is disappointing and is a common occurrence when the reasoning of the flesh is allowed to vent its opinions.

The rebellion seems to have fermented in the southern part of the camp of Israel in the wilderness. The family of Kohath from the tribe of Levi, had to pitch their tents to the South of the Tabernacle, close to the tribe of Reuben therefore the protagonists had some degree of social intercourse, and rather than accepting the divine order an arrangement whereby God had elevated first Moses and then Aaron to positions of authority and responsibility, sadly it was their own first cousin Korah who seems to have been a leader in this rebellion. There is a reference in Jude verse 11 where an equivalence is drawn with the 1st century corruption to this very incident. *“But these speak evil of those things which they know not, but what they know naturally as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. Well unto them for they have gone in the way of Cain and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for award and perished in the gainsaying of Korah. These are spots in your feasts of love when they feast with you feeding themselves without fear.”* Korah then is highlighted as a gain-sayer, one who speaks against. Rather than speaking about positive and uplifting things he permitted his own petty

jealous is to set himself up as a Satan. Sadly, there are many such like found even at the table of the Lord, who for a time feast with the disciples of Christ, before they reveal themselves by their actions for what they truly are.

It is always possible to come back from the path of error if we do not clean to the personal relationships above those of our spiritual relationships. There are 11 references to the sons of Korah in the titles of the psalms who were not condemned with that evil ancestor but in subsequent generations took a different stance and will be used by God as instruments in the inspiration of the holy word. What a contrast with one who is held up as an example of corruption as Korah himself was.

When the divine vengeance was executed, a plea was made to *“depart from the tents of these wicked men and touch nothing of theirs lest you be consumed in all their sins”* verse 26. There was therefore an opportunity for all to distance themselves by physical separation from the evil doers. This was extended to all including members of their families, and it could only have been from amongst those who made that separation from whom the sons of Korah used in the psalms were found.

In verse 22 an appeal is made to God himself for mercy, and the detachment in justice from others who are not the main protagonists in the transgression. *“Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment. And they fell upon their faces and said, Oh El, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin and wilt thou be wrath with all the congregation?”* There is a reasoning of the flesh which attributes injustice to God, because he punishes those who fellowship an error rather than instigate the error. God himself however does act in this way, because to Him, those who refuse to condemn, condone. Also, it should be noticed, that it was not one man who sinned, but the sin of 253, at least, with no doubt many more supporters, who were sympathetic, not only to their

cause, but also to the means they had chosen by which to materialise their evil aspirations!

God is the power of the spirits of all flesh, and as their creator has every right as the divine Potter to re mould the clay into a new lump and advance his purpose in a different direction than the one which the clay itself had spoiled. There are many men of claim who rail against their God as unjust, who are absurd in the ridiculousness of their accusations and the hypocrisy their false sincerity. They are not the arbiters of a new morality, but rather the corrupters of the original morality, which is the divine morality God has engendered in mankind ever since the garden of Eden.

That God chose the dramatic punishment of an earthquake, by which to impose his violent judgement upon the sinners is interesting because they were literally taken down to hell. Hell or sheol, as it is in the Hebrew, literally means the grave and it was to their deaths that these sinners and their families who refused to detach themselves from them, were taken “does not mean with speed”. Quick here does not mean with speed although they would have descended with alacrity, but rather that they well taken down alive. This was to be a new thing and without doubt earthquakes had happened previously this was a new experience to the nation of Israel who previously in Egypt had lived far removed from geological fault lines but we're now returning to the promised land, which was to experience future earthquakes as the Bible records. There are also many geological changes which will occur in future in line with Bible prophecy which will be affected by this instrumentality. The power unleashed by such a movement from the core of the earth or at least the upper mantle would have been immense and far above that required in the execution of a few sinners. God is at liberty to use a large scale for effect as very much seems to be the case in this context. This seems to underline the importance of what took place then.

In verse 41-48 there is yet another rebellion, when the population at large accused Moses and Aaron of having killed the people of

the LORD. God replied by saying *“get you up from among this congregation that I may consume them as in a moment”*. Clearly, they deserved this divine condemnation, wrath had gone out from the LORD, but it was Aaron acting on the command of Moses who interceded on behalf of the sinners, and made an atonement for the people, although undeserving. He stood between the dead and the living. Another 14,700 of the congregation of Israel died in that plague about the matter of Korah. This is a salutary lesson about the dangerous effects move malicious gossip, and personal character attacks against those whose desire was to rise up to the responsibilities which had been placed upon them by their appointment. It is something which we should be aware of, in order that we might avoid the gainsaying of corruption.

It should be noted that Aaron when he went into the congregation with only the protection of incense, that he was vulnerable to this plague, but that he feared not but acted in faith, to his possible personal detriment. However, he was not afraid, because he trusted that God was in the matter, and so it proved to be! This is an additional element to the parallels which his actions have with those of the Lord Jesus Christ, the high priest greater than Aaron.

Let us ensure that we learn these lessons for ourselves in this day of small things.

A Voice from the Altar

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