



Thanks to Brother Ken, for his introduction. Last law class we were able to see how things that were committed in ignorance or able to be forgiven. We saw too, there was nothing under the law which could provide forgiveness of sins for which had been committed presumptuously. That is sinning deliberately with fore-thought and intent. Recognising how David the king of Israel who was described as being after God's own heart, sinned presumptuously and proceeded to compound the matter further, yet he was forgiven by the grace of God, because the law was weak through the flesh. Yet Israel failed to comprehend the mercy and righteousness of God. As a nation they got up early one morning to the top of the mountain and all committed sin presumptuously. See Numbers 14:40 Yet not all died. God with care and attention spelt out the just condemnation of presumptuous sin, which is effectively taking His name in vain, where only he reserves the right to judge. Sadly, we are well aware that human nature has to learn a lesson several times over before any effect is brought to pass, as we see in this chapter how the behaviour of a few men, where they deliberately ignored the past and

conveniently moulded and manipulated the minds of others to suit their own goal.

Numbers 16 describes a rebellion. The ring leaders were Korah, Dathan, Abiram and On. Korah was in fact Moses' cousin. His name means *ice* or *hail*. He certainly showed little warmth to his cousin Moses. Dathan, a man of some social standing whose name means *belonging to a fountain*, he was the son of Eliab, son of Pallu, second son of Reuben. Abiram also the son of Eliab means *proud* or *father of height*. The fourth man called On, was also a Reubenite and was named after an Egyptian city.

These men gathered a following of 250 leaders of the congregation, described as princes, famous and men of renown. Brother Ken rightly suggests a process of gossiping and persuasion was behind how they "took men". These men were selected for their reputation. Quite what they were famous for we are not told. However, their positions of authority were not to be abused, as Jesus taught in Matthew 23:10-12 *Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*

Although the reputation of these 250 were held in high esteem by men, their characters were flawed it seems, as they supported the ringleaders in their complaint against Moses verse 3...*they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?*

This accusation as Brother Ken showed had elements of truth, but it was not the whole truth. In fact the accusation was unfair, as Moses and Aaron had not elevated themselves, instead God had promoted them to be leaders against their own personal wishes. Korah mentioned first appears to be the spokesman, he could not see why Moses should be elevated above him, were they not from the same

family? Family connections are irrelevant in the Ecclesia of God - see Matthew 12:49 -50 and 2 Corinthians 5:16

The accusation was hypocritical, as Korah and his team, with the 250 backers were doing exactly what they were accusing Moses and Aaron of doing. They claimed all the congregation was holy. There is no record of any repentance or reformation by the congregation since their rebellion charging up the hill to chase the Amalekites in chapter 40, against the Word God. They could only all be holy, if they as a nation obeyed God see Exodus 19:5,6. There had been no atonement or attempt at reconciliation.

The accusation was just a smokescreen to cover for their envy and jealousy. As Hebrews explains 5:4 *And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.* Moses and Aaron most certainly did not take their high positions of leadership to themselves, and their very reluctance is used to teach the example of Jesus Christ, and how that God specifically chose Moses and Aaron to be types and shadows. Somehow, these men failed to see the hand of God at work.

Moses and Aaron were devastated by the accusations. We read that they fell on their faces on the ground. This is a phrase to describe their immediate appeal to God in prayer. What else could they do? Brother Ken emphasised that they refused to stand and argue with them. There was no point, what would it achieve? They arose and responded to Korah, Dathan and Abiram – God will show who is Holy. Let God be the judge. Only God knows the innermost thoughts, and the hearts of men. It is not possible for us to judge the motives and intentions of others, it is only possible to judge actions, even then, we must beware lest we are also guilty. Moses and Aaron did the wise thing here.

Moses then made the suggestion verse 6 *This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all his company; And put fire therein, and put incense in them before the Lord tomorrow: 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.*

In this we notice how Moses responded. He addresses Korah, and not the Reubenites – he holds Korah responsible – and all his company – his family. They had already been given a privileged role in the congregation of being responsible for all the Holy pieces of furniture within the tabernacle, covering, carrying, transporting and reassembling, this would have included the Holy Lampstand and the censers. They did not have enough regard for the Light of the Lord, and the flame of God. Instead they had a fixation – as Brother Ken puts it – with what they didn't have.



Moses attempted to reason with Korah, knowing the grave danger he was in verse 9-11. Did he have no regard that he and his family had been entrusted with the service of the tabernacle and to minister before God. Was it because he wanted to be Priest as well? But Korah and his company decided not to submit to the Will of God.

What of the Reubenites? They seemed to fulfil the prediction of Jacob in Genesis 49:3-4 ...*Unstable as water, you will not excel...* We do not seem to read on the man named On anymore. Maybe he came to his senses and left the rebellion. The rest were very sneering in their response, 12-14: *We will not come up: Is it a small thing that thou*

*hast brought us up out of a land that flows with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except you make yourself altogether a prince over us? ... we will not come up.* Samuel the prophet reminds of the teaching: rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolator.

So Korah and the 250 princes all took their censors and stood in the doorway of the tabernacle. It seems that Korah had skilfully turned the whole congregation against Moses and Aaron v19: *And Korah gathered all the congregation against them ...*

So God commanded Moses and Aaron to step away and separate themselves so He could destroy them ... but the character and kindness of Moses, a very meek man (Numbers 12:3) instead of being pleased that the rebellious would be punished, he was not, he begged God to show them mercy, he prayed for them. *And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and will you be wroth with all the congregation?*

In this Moses and his brother Aaron showed a type and shadow of just one man who would also plead for all people as a Mediator and intercessor between God and man, who laid down his life for his friends. Romans 5:18: *Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.*

Moses and Aaron even went to the very tents of Dathan and Abiram and begged the neighbours and surrounding people to get well away from the tents of these wicked men, lest they too would become punished.

As a sign from God to show if He had truly selected Moses and Aaron to lead the people, then the earth would swallow up the rebellious men *and they go down quick into the pit...* It is no new thing for all men to go down quick into the pit, but what was new, that it happened then and there, as a sign to prove that Moses and Aaron had been chosen by God.

The people all around who saw this ran as fast as possible from this punishment of the rebels, - they had a guilty conscience – had they not also been rebellious against God?

A sudden death also came upon the princes and men of renown, whose fame and reputation among men did not help them now.

A fire then came from the Lord and consumed them.



All the brass censors that they had held in their hands which survived the fire were collected up and God said that these were to be made into broad plates which would then be fitted around the altar, to prevent others easily stealing

the Holy flames and falsely claiming the Spirit of the Lord.

Even these dramatic and traumatic events did not show the people that God was not with them. Still they persisted in their mistaken beliefs and ignorant prejudice against those chosen by God. Even after these obvious and convincing displays of the power and authority of God invested in the Priesthood, so we see the whole congregation in verse 41: they *murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord.* God continued the purge of His people sending a plague, but like the High Priest that God has chosen, - even Jesus Christ His own son, so Moses and Aaron *stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.*

Brother Terry