



A brief recap of the last chapter – Korah Dathan and Abiram gathered together with 250 princes of the congregation – men of renown, men of reputation, and formed an opposition to Aaron and Moses, protesting against what they saw as central authority. They wanted the responsibility equally shared – not because they wanted to do more for the work of God, but because they wanted more influence and power, and what they saw as glory. Korah Dathan and Abiram were justly punished because they refused to acknowledge the mind of God, and that it was He who had ordained Moses and Aaron to be His intercessors for His people, and mediate for them. Moses and Aaron did not see the roles they performed as glorious at all, - putting up with the constant complaints, and grumbling, and not being able to attend even to their own families, but being on call

every day all day, for a nation that was unbelieving faithless and ungrateful.

The punishment of the rebels was striking in that Moses staked his God given position of authority on the rebels being punished by a “new thing” that the earth would open up and swallow up the rebels, their families and everything that belonged to them. No sooner had Moses uttered these words that God did exactly that in sending an earthquake which sent them all to a sudden early grave. The fire came down from heaven and burnt up the 250 men holding their incense burners. However, the rest of the congregation looking on – were beside themselves with shock, panic and resentment blaming Moses and Aaron saying they had killed “the people of the Lord”.

They rejected the position of Moses and Aaron. They rejected their defence that God had elected them. They rejected the earthquake swallowing up the rebels was a sign of God’s displeasure and anger, rejected the fire miraculously coming down from heaven was from God and rejected that it in anyway endorsed the position of Moses and Aaron. In other words, they could not see the truth when it was right in front of their eyes.

They were being deliberately antagonistic and were refusing to acknowledge that God played any part in it at all and claimed that they in their rebellion and disobedience were somehow instead the true “people of the Lord” assuming that their behaviour was nothing to do with the qualifications that God required, but that God was their right, and they were the people.

But they were wrong. So a plague was sent by God which slew 14700 – of the congregation.

The nation had allowed the 250 men of renown to go from their tents to the rebellion against Moses and Aaron. They consented to their rebellion because they did not stand against them, and allowed these 250 men to trade on their reputation. Then they also sided with the rebels for complaining that Moses and Aaron had killed the “people of the Lord”.

It was time once and for all to establish the matter. God instructed Moses to tell every tribe to put forward the head of each of the tribes, and they had to take a rod or staff, and to write the name of each prince of the tribe upon their staff. Aaron's name was to be written on the rod for the tribe of Levi.

They were all then to be placed carefully in the tabernacle. The rod which would come to life and break out in blossoms would belong to the man God had chosen, so that there would be no more dissent amongst the nation.

The following day after this was done, after Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, the rod belonging to Aaron had not only produced buds and blossoms but had also grown almonds!

This miracle was to be preserved. The rod was to be kept within the tabernacle and was ultimately placed inside the ark of the testimony, in the presence of God as a token, a witness against the rebels – and would be rebels, and remind future generations of the one who God would choose to mediate for them though rejected by his generation would surely stand in His presence to provide a way of salvation.

The sad thing was that many of that generation failed to see the significance of the miracle and were overwhelmed with distress – through lack of understanding and faith because of the recent deaths, that their minds were closed to any form of spiritual comfort or hope.

*And the children of Israel spoke unto Moses, saying, Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish.*

But this is a truth which all mankind faces, but rarely admits until they are on their deathbed. It is a sad fact that with many, only when they have fallen to the very bottom and cannot go down any further, that they can begin to look up. Sadly, for most, by then it is too late.

The admission that we all perish, comes about when we realise we are all by nature rebels.

But a few in Israel were men and women of faith. They would have been very impressed by the rod sending out buds flowers and even nuts – almonds.

They would appreciate that each rod which stood for each tribe represented the power and authority of each leader of the tribe. They knew that the rod was a symbol of authority -why the recent king of England was coronated king with a sceptre. In scripture a sceptre was a symbol of power – an example was when king Ahasuerus extended his sceptre to give permission for someone to seek his attention – Esther 4:11, and Isaiah 14:5 shows how this represents power. The Hebrew word for rod is *matteh*, and means a staff or sceptre.

In the case of all the princes of the tribes, the rods in the tabernacle remained the just inert pieces of wood. Yet the one belonging to the man which God had chosen came to life. In fact, it came back to life, for all the rods had been cut from living trees. All men are cut off and die, no matter how powerful they are. The rulers of the tribes were not chosen. The one God chose came back to life. Not only so but it bore fruit – almonds. The almond in Hebrew is the word *shakeid* which comes from the root to wake or watch. The tree is called the awakening tree, because it is the first tree to blossom in very early spring. Thus the rod coming back to life was a powerful symbol of the resurrection. It showed true power and sovereignty belonged to him who could give life, and not those who just gave death. God selected Aaron who would be His priest for the nation. But he was himself representative of another, whom God would send who would redeem his people, and be cut off for them, but come back to life, and be the first begotten from the dead.

So the Lord Jesus was the one God had in mind, who was also a rebel – but in a different sense. Jesus Christ rebelled against his own inherited sinful nature, and refused to bow down to the great god of Self. The Lord Jesus Christ, like the rod that blossomed which was laid up in the tabernacle, was taken and placed in the presence of

God in heaven, as a witness against the rebels against God. But the time would come when God will entrust the man he has chosen all power and authority – who will rule over the earth with a rod of iron – Psalm 2, the rod of strength who will rule in the midst of his enemies see Psalm 110 and will silence the rebels once and for all for ever.

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