



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Numbers 16: 1-50

“The Gainsaying of Korah”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of the study of the Scriptures and again we pray for the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. May he illumine our minds, may he enable us to understand the Scriptures and profit from them, and also may Lord the things that we learn, that we consider have their proper issue in our daily Christian life.

We pray that by Thy grace Thou wilt make us more fruitful as we seek to represent our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Deliver us from the sin and the worldliness that so often characterizes the life of each of us in this 20th Century in which we live. Enable us Lord to have our priorities properly arranged with the Lord Jesus Christ as the central feature of our concern.

We thank Thee for the exhortations given by the apostles and since our Lord is at the right hand of the Father having completed his work and now continuing his work of advocacy and intercession, we thank Thee Lord in the light of that, that Thou hast exhorted us to keep him as central in our thinking. May the Scriptures that we study tonight help us to adjust to the realities of life that is found in Thy word.

We commit this hour to Thee and we pray Thy blessing upon each one of us for we each have great needs. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

[Message] We are looking at the general theme, From Egypt to Canaan, and we have seen the children of Israel in their early days after they have passed through the Red Sea struggling with the will of God and constantly murmuring, constantly trying the patience of our Great God and Savior, and we have seen them come to Kadesh-Barnea and we have seen them turn back at Kadesh-Barnea, not willing to go into the land which the Lord had promised them and which he had sent to them was a land that was flowing with milk and honey. They had entered into the land. They had observed it. They have seen that it was exactly as God had promised them but in unbelief, they determined that they were not strong enough to go in and that they should not therefore do it.

Then when God announced through Moses the judgment and discipline of other years in the wilderness, then in presumption, they sought to go in and the result was defeat, and now the children of Israel are having to face the discipline of approximately 39 years in the wilderness, designed of course ultimately in the will of God to prepare them for what would lie ahead of them when they finally do enter into the land. So in the next few weeks, we will look at just a few of the incidents that characterize the wilderness journeys and conclude our study in the series from Egypt to Canaan.

Tonight we are turning to Numbers chapter 16 and we are looking at the general title of the gainsaying of Korah. Now in the Old Testament, this character is called Korah but in the New Testament in Jude verse 11, he is referred to in the Authorized Version as Core. And so the title, the Gainsaying of Core is the phrase that Jude uses to describe one of the means by which God admonishes the children of Israel in their experiences in the wilderness.

So Israel now begins the years of wandering, approximately I say about 39 of them, and they form disciplinary judgment for them for their refusal to go into the land. They will fulfill the word spoken in chapter 14 in verse 25, “Now the Amalekites and the

Canaanites dwelt in the valleys; tomorrow turn you and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea.” And so they will learn what it means to be disciplined by God and actually they will lose their lives in the wilderness because this generation of Israel has committed what we would call sin unto physical death.

In chapter 11 in verse 31 the Apostle Paul writing to the Corinthians who were disorderly at the Lord’s Table states, “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But since they did not judge themselves, God now exposes them to discipline,” and in fact the Corinthians are told here as well in the immediately preceding verse, “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” So it is a very serious thing to have clear instructions from the word of God and to refuse to follow them.

We as believers expose ourselves to family discipline. Now that may seem very bad to us, but let us remember most of us are adults. If we had a father who disciplined us, we are now thankful for such a father. And so we can say the same thing with reference to the discipline that we face today as believers. We may not like it just like a little child does not like to be disciplined and we are still little children. We may not like it, but all of these ways by which God deals with us are ways that are ultimately for our good. So the 39 years of wandering might seem to be very bad but it is for their good and it is also for our good as well because these things are written for us.

One of the most striking of the incidents during this 39 years of wandering is the incident of Korah’s rebellion. Now Paul has told us and we have looked at this a number of times that these incidents in the Old Testament are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the age have come. So when we look at the rebellion of Core and we read about it, we should realize that these things are written for our admonition and we are to follow them in our own practice of the Christian life.

Now we are going to look at first of all, the first three verses in which the purpose of Korah and Dathan and Abiram, who were linked up with him in this rebellion, is set forth. Now verse 1 through verse 3 we read,

“Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, so you can see was a member of the tribe of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Paleth, sons of Reuben, took men, and they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown and 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?’”

So this is a clear rebellion against the authority of Moses and Aaron which God had given them in the congregation of Israel. Let us first of all notice who these men were. Korah was a cousin of Moses and Aaron. So he was well acquainted with the place that Moses and Aaron had in the assembly. He was in his own tribe to dwell south of the tabernacle. Now remember in Numbers all of the tribes are set out, some in the north, some in the east, some in the south, some in the west, of the tabernacle and each had its place of dwelling.

So Korah is of the tribe of Levi, a cousin of Moses and Aaron and they dwelt on the south of the Tabernacle. Dathan and Abiram are from the sons of Reuben. They are Reubenites deprived of the birth right that would have normally been theirs by Judah, because remember Reuben was Jacob’s first born but as a result of the determination of Jacob, Judah is the one who is appointed to be the prince of the children of Israel and the Reubenites were deprived of their birth right. They also dwelt on the south of the Tabernacle and so they were acquainted, very well acquainted with the tribe of Levi, also on the south of the Tabernacle. So they had a lot of contact with one another and both of them evidently had their sense of being deprived of something.

Korah evidently wanted to have the priesthood also, and Dathan and Abiram, unhappy because as Reubenites they were deprived of the preeminence that they thought that they might have had. So like disgruntled people they gathered together and evidently that the rebellion is the result of what they had in mind.

Now what they purposed is set out in several statements in this chapter. One of them in verse 3, “ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, everyone of them, and the Lord is among them; wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?”

Now in verse 10 when Moses is speaking to Korah, he says, “And He hath brought Thee near to him, and all Thy brother and the sons of Levi, with Thee? And seek ye the priesthood also? So in verse 40, I perhaps can read also. There we read, “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 he be not as Korah and as his company - as the Lord said to him by the hand of Moses.”

So it seems plain that Korah wanted to have authority to exercise the priesthood. So this is a rebellion then against the plain determination of the Lord God. So they purposed then as a coalition of disgruntled people at the mediatorial rights of Moses who was one who was acting as a king in Israel. That was specifically what is said of him in Exodus chapter 33 and verse 5, but particularly they aimed at a high priesthood which was exercised by Aaron and his family descendants.

I would like for you to notice how this is done because someone who had some scriptural knowledge might not have been fooled by this, but unfortunately, the way in which this is presented is it is presented as something of a half truth, as this so often indicates. We have, if you read in the newspapers this week and you are reading about all the theology that is being propounded here in the city of Dallas, you will find a lot of half truths that are being published in our newspapers. And so here were half truths. Korah came with a half truth.

You see, it is stated in Scripture that all of Israel are priests. They are a priestly nation. They are a royal priesthood. In fact, that was to be the goal of the nation, to be a nation of priests. And so in the sense that God was reached through Israel, because remember if a person came to be a believer and the redeemer to come, he in order to be in right relationship to the Lord had to become a Jewish man, that is, he had to join the congregation of Israel, in that sense, Israel stood as a priestly nation. So he came with a half truth. The half truth is, while it is true, the nation is something of a priestly nation. Within the priestly nation, the right of approach to God was given to Aaron and to his descendants. So it was a half truth.

Furthermore, you will notice that Korah knew very well the power of a biblical doctrine. Now there are people who do not realize the power of biblical doctrine. There are people who think that we can get along pretty well without any kind of doctrine. That of course is a very, very serious error and unfortunately is propagated far and wide. One of easiest ways to see the power of biblical doctrine is just to reflect on the history of Marxism because the Marxists know the value of a doctrine and they adhere steadfastly to their doctrine and their doctrine is held so steadfastly, that is one of the major secrets of their success. Marxism is a coherent system.

Now a coherent system of thought is which embraces all relevant truth and can be applied to all realistic situations. And so the history of a triumph of Marxism in so many of the countries of this world is traceable to their doctrine, their stress upon their doctrine. Now this week, we have got a struggle going on among our friends, the Baptists and it is basically a struggle over doctrine.

Now one side will try to say it is not really a struggle over doctrine because some people are so interested in doctrine that are not interested in people and we should be interested in people and others are saying we should be interested over doctrine, and if we do not hold to these doctrines, then we are bound to have no ultimate ministry to people. But both of these are doctrines. One is a doctrine that doctrine is important.

The other is the doctrine that doctrine is not important and so they are struggling but it is basically a doctrinal issue. That is precisely what it is.

So anybody who studies Christian thought or any thought, for that matter, knows that doctrine is important and when you say it is not important that you are doctrine and that is the struggle again. It is a doctrinal struggle always because our ideas, to use a title of a famous book, our ideas have consequences. They always do. We act in accordance with the way that we think and what we think is our doctrine. So let us not be so immature and so child like as to think that what we think is not important. It is the most important thing about us.

Now Korah new the value of it. I can imagine him raising the cry, equality, and fraternity; the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of Israel. We are all alike. We all belong to the nation. We are a family of priests. Why should Aaron be the high priest and why should Moses be like a king, the one whom through whom the Lord ministers to us. Why should we not share? Share! We all are priests and so you take too much upon you Moses, you take too much upon you Aaron. And you can just see how this kind of murmuring finally became a rebellion of disgruntled people that frequently is the way things develop.

Now you will notice too that Korah is probably the mainspring of this while Dathan and Abiram are linked with him and are surely culpable. Korah evidently is the one who is particularly behind this rebellion and you can understand why because of the tribe from which he came. But in chapter 27 and verse 3 we read, “Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the Lord in the company of Korah,” the daughters of Zelophehad said when they came with a little request. So you will notice they say when they were gathered together against the Lord in the company of Korah, and then as I mentioned previously in Jude verse 11 when Jude refers to this incident, he calls it the gainsaying of Korah. Not the

gainsaying of Korah and Dathan and Abiram, but evidently Korah was the one who took the lead in it.

Now that is what they purposed. They wanted to share the priesthood. God had already said that the only one who could serve in the priesthood was one whom he had appointed. And he had appointed Aaron. And he had said further that Aaron’s descendants would serve in the office of high priest. So the son of Aaron would succeed him and then the son of Aaron’s son would succeed him and so on. It is, as the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews says, a law of a cardinal commandment. That is, a commandment that touches fleshly descent. So they were the ones appointed by the Lord to be the high priests in Israel.

Now what did this mean typically? What does it mean when we read a chapter like this and we are told in the New Testament that this is something that is written for our admonition and we are to learn from it? While I would like to suggest to you that this has its application in the New Testament truth that there is one mediator between God and men, and the one mediator is the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember that Paul in 1 Timothy chapter 2 in verse 5 says, “There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” In other words, God has determined that the only way of approach to him is through the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one mediator.

A great deal of emphasis is given in the Epistle of the Hebrews to show that just as in the Old Testament, the high priest had to be appointed by God from among men, so the Lord Jesus had to be appointed by God from among men. And the writer of the Epistle of Hebrews says there is no question about whether those Old Testament men were men, they died. But in the case of the Lord Jesus, we see that he was a true man because just look at his sufferings in the Garden of Gethsamane. And there, he reveals that he is truly a man, one of us. But at the same time one must be appointed by God, not simply a man, but a man appointed by God.

Now Aaron was a man and he was appointed by God. Read Exodus chapter 28 and 29 and you will see that God said Aaron is the one who is to be the high priest. Now when we come to the Lord Jesus Christ, the anti type, the Scriptures say most plainly. So the writer of the Epistle of Hebrews says that he was appointed of God. For example, the Scriptures say the Lord has sworn and will not repent. “Thou art the priest forever,” according to the order of Melchizedek, a reference to the Lord Jesus as the eternal priest. It also says in Psalms 2, look at the passage specifically at Psalms 2 and about verse 7, where the Psalmist writes, “I will declare the decree, the Lord has said unto me, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.” So this passage, linked with Psalms 110 verse 4, shows that the Lord Jesus is the one who is appointed by the Father as the eternal priest.

Now that means practically, my dear Christian friend, that there is no way of approach to God that God honors except the approach through Jesus Christ. In other words, if a person wishes to come some other way, well our Lord called such thieves and robbers, but if a person seeks to come to God apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, in some other way, he is violating the plain teaching of the word of God.

So when men say, Christianity is tyrannical to affirm that Christ is the one king and Christianity is prejudiced when it says we can only come to God through Christ, they are actually exercising the same attitude of mind and heart that Korah did when he sought to have the priesthood that had been given to Aaron and to his descendants just like the men of our Lord’s day, who said we will not have this man to rule over us.

Now the fact that people say that we do not want to approach God through the Lord Jesus Christ only. They do not realize that this involves two serious errors. In the first place, it is degrading to the dignity of the Lord Jesus Christ. To say if God has appointed him as the Savior and has appointed him as the high priest and appointed him as the one way to God, to say no, he is not the one way. We will grant him maybe A way, A way for gentiles perhaps but not for Jewish people or A way for professing Christians but not the way for others; A way for Christians but not the way for

Mohammedans or not the way for others. When you do that, what do you do? You degrade the dignity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Scriptures set him forth as the one way to God. The preeminence of the Son of God is obvious from the fact that the Scriptures say, he is the way to God. To affirm, he has only A way and for some, as is very true in protestant circles today to say he is not even A way but only someone who gives us some idea of what it is to live in love. That is even more degrading to say that the Lord Jesus is nothing more than an ordinary man and who actually is a man who was wrong on a number of points.

If you do not think that Christian theologians are saying that, then you are not acquainted with what Christian theologians are saying and if you will just pick up any Christian literature sold in our theological seminary book stores and read it carefully, you will find all the evidence that you need that our theological schools are filled with people who do not believe the doctrine that the simple person sitting in the pew thinks that they do believe.

Now I am not speaking of our evangelical schools because most of them hold very firmly to the fundamentals of the Christian faith but after all, there are small minority of theological schools for example. Just to give you a specific illustration, sometimes if you see the little book by Klaas Runia, a Dutch theologian has taught in a theological school in Australia, now teaches at the theological faculty in Kampfen in the Netherlands, it is a little book. It is a simple book. Anyone can understand it but it is up-to-date called something that has to do with recent Christological thought and just read through those pages, there are about 115 pages or 115, I believe, 115 pages in that book, I have used it as little text for some of the students at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School as part of their outside reading assignment and you will find a little survey of Christian theologians today and what they are saying about Jesus Christ, and it is not often that one finds a leading Christian theologian saying orthodox things about Jesus Christ.

So the first thing you do when you say now we should not approach God through Aaron only but through the rest of us who are priests, you are degrading Aaron and the office to which the Lord God had appointed him. And then of course, what usually goes with this and is evidenced in the history of the Christian church is when you say that Jesus Christ is not the way, you very frequently will manufacture another way which will compete with the Lord Jesus. And of course, we have historical evidence of that and the tendencies within the Roman church to exalt the Virgin Mary so that she has become a co-redemptrix in much Catholic thought sharing the right of access to God with the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we are talking in Numbers chapter 16 about things that find their illustration in 1985. So this little rebellion, you see, was something that was rather important. I am not surprised that Jude writing hundreds of years later should mention this as one of the things that was troubling in his day in the first century, even after our Lord and the apostles have come. There is the gainsaying of Korah. There is also Balaam and others as well whose doctrines are still in our midst.

Now the Lord has a happy way of dealing with things that do not agree with his mind and purpose. He destroys them. Now sometimes he destroys them spectacularly. He did this one in a spectacular way. Sometimes, he does it in other ways and one can only look at it afterwards and say, it fell to pieces somehow or other. But this one is rather spectacular. So we will just read through it and when we get to the key points, I will make a few comments.

Beginning at verse 4, And when Moses heard of it, he fell on his face and he spake unto Korah and unto all his company saying, “Even tomorrow, the Lord will show who are His, and who is holy, and will cause him to come near unto Him.” See, it is the Lord who determines who the mediator is. Not men. We do not determine who is acceptable to the Lord God. God determines who is acceptable to him and he has said Christ is the only one who is acceptable to me and only those in him are acceptable to

me. Even him whom he had chosen will he cause to come near unto him, not to come near unto him but cause us to come near in spiritual access like the priest Aaron.

“This do:” Moses says, “Take your censers.” See this is going to be a priestly struggle. The censer was the instrument in which the fire was placed and the incense was burned and it was part of their priestly instruments in carrying out their word. “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 chose he shall be holy.” Now, I love this. They had come to Moses and they said you take too much upon you. So Moses takes their own words and he says you take too much upon you, you sons of Levi.

And Moses said unto Korah, “Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: 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.” See, the sons of Korah performed certain priestly task. They just did not have the right of high priesthood. But they had a special privilege. They had a special place but they were unhappy with the place that God had given them in the congregation. There are lots of people like that in the Christian church today. They are very, very unhappy over the fact that the Lord did not make them an elder or a deacon or a Bible teacher or whatever.

And so frequently just like Korah’s rebellion, they gather some other people who are unhappy too and pretty soon, you have disgruntle group and then you have a rebellion, and then you have a problem and the Lord has to deal with it in discipline. So “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,” they were priestly ministers. “And he hath brought Thee near to him, and all Thy brethren, the sons of Levi with Thee: and seek ye the priesthood also?”

In other words you have a marvelous task of ministry for the Lord. You belong to the serving tribe and you have special privileges but you want to be the high priest itself. You are unhappy with what God has given as your task. You know, it is so important that as Christians, we recognize our place in the church of Jesus Christ. Recognize it and serve in it as unto the Lord. And avoid the kinds of murmurings in disgruntle people that make us unhappy because we have the tendency to do that all of us to be unhappy, and to serve where God has put you. That is the thing that is pleasing to the Lord and that is what really makes a servant. They are some marvelous lessons here in this incident.

“For which cause both thou and all Thy company are gathered together against the Lord: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?” Now the call to Dathan and Abiram follows. As Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: you can see now what spiritual state they were in. Very spiritual people, no doubt, you might think. “The sons of Eliab: which said, We will not come up: Is it a small thing that Thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey.” Wait a minute, I thought they had not got into the land that floweth with milk and honey. But now you see, they are turning around. It is Egypt that flows with milk and honey. The very words that the Lord uses to describe the land into which they will ultimately come are used to describe where they have been.

Think about a person who been marvelously saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and looks back at the old life and says that was the land of milk and honey. How wrong can you be? And you can see that this crowd of disgruntle people are not in right relationship to the Lord at all. So you “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?” Now it was God that made Moses a kind of prince over them. Not Moses.

In fact, Moses, if you remember our early studies, did everything he could to avoid it for a long time, complained about the fact that he could not talk and went off in the wilderness for 40 years. Moreover, “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. 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.”

Now this is so interesting because they have turned us altogether around and Egypt is the land of milk and honey, and then as if to have it both ways, they say Moses you have not brought us into the land that floweth with milk and honey and mind you now, who was it that said let us do not go into the land because they are bigger than we are and which is the crowd that wanted to stone Caleb and Joshua to death? The same people. The same people. They are the ones who think Egypt is the land of milk and honey and then complain that Moses has not brought them into the land that flows with milk and honey when they are the ones who objected and wanted to stone to death those who wanted to take them in. How wrong can you be?

Well, any one who has been around a Christian church for 40 years will think of numerous illustrations of the same kind of thing that happens in our Christian churches because I do not think that we, in 1985, are any different from these murmurs and these disgruntle people. We are just like them, all of us. Now Moses is very angry and by the way this put out your eyes, “wilt Thou put out the eyes of these men,” which they use that expression means to pull the wool over their eyes, so they will not see your failure.

So Moses, are you going to put out the eyes of these men, that is you are going to keep them from seeing reality of things as we see it. Now the Lord then in verse 16 through 21 has something to say and we will just read through these verses, “And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all Thy company before the Lord, thou, and they, and Aaron, tomorrow: 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.” So 250 people in this crowd are going to have their censers and Aaron and Moses, “Each of you has a censer. 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. And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation:” And notice practically, the whole congregation now has gone over to Korah and this crowd.

“And the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation. And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.” Here is a great crowd of people, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and the front 250 princes and men of renown who is going to win this struggle. Moses and Aaron on the other side. Well of course, it so happens to Lord as with Moses and Aaron. So we know how this is going to turn out and we read in verse 22, now Moses had all the reason in the world to be very angry and says he was angry but I want you to notice what he did. This is not the way some of us would act if we were opposed by others when we knew we were right.

They, Moses and Aaron, “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?” It is a beautiful type of the Lord Jesus Christ in this way. First of all, he endures the contradiction of sinners. That is what the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews says about him. He endured the contradiction of sinners and here is Moses and Aaron, they have to stand up with this crowd of disgruntle people and endure the things that they were saying, and notice, a great deal of the blame falls on Moses and Aaron.

Further, instead of condemning them, he prays like the Lord, “Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.” And then also, he is the one who will gain salvation for them by using the word power that they opposed. They opposed the power of Moses with God. So Moses will use the power that they oppose in order to be the means of the salvation, physically, of a great number of them. So he prays.

And now in verse 23 through verse 27, God will give them a command to separate.

“Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and they elders of Israel followed him. 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. 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.”

Now sometimes, the Lord must execute judgment when it seems particularly cruel but which nevertheless is the means of the preserving of truth in order that there is numbers of other people who may be delivered from error. 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. 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.”

So Moses said that these people die a natural death, then you can be sure I am not his representative. “But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open up 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,” not Moses and Aaron but “the Lord.” And then notice, they question his authority. He acts upon the authority that they question.

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

Now I want you to know that was a new thing. In fact, it was so new that so far as I know, it was the first time that there was ever a mass death and burial in one fell swoop. That made quite an impression. That is why Jude talks about the gainsaying of Korah. You see, it is a serious thing to rebel against the authority of the Lord God. It is a very serious thing to get out of step with the teaching of holy Scripture. And it is particularly serious to take a step that involves the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ or the men to whom he has given the office of elder or deacon or whatever it may be.

This I think is a great lesson for all us. It is a lesson for the Christian church. It is one of the great lessons that finds its constant illustration in the history of the Christian church. No doubt down at this very moment there is some Christian church somewhere, I would not be surprised if there were two to three, splitting over the same issue. Different details but the same issue, the question of rebellion ultimately against the Lord God. That is one of the most discouraging things in Christian ministry but it is so easy to be involved in the same kind of thing.

Well our time is up, but I want to just mention the lessons from this incident. I had hoped to finish this chapter, but I am not able to do it. Just these things. The priesthood belong to Aaron, and our modern day, the priesthood belongs to Christ. It is given to him by God. He is the chosen priest for the people of God. There is no acceptance except through him.

Secondly, we should stay in our own place in the assembly where God has put us, recognize our gift, recognize our place, serve there. We will be rewarded according to faithfulness, not whether it is something that everybody knows about, maybe no one will ever know about you but when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, if you had been faithful, you will be highly rewarded by the Lord God and those who had such a visible place before the people of God, you may discover, have not been faithful to the

degree that simple Christians whose names you do not even know. God rewards in stewardship according to faithfulness.

Thirdly, there was grace exercised with reference to Korah’s family. I do not have time to read Psalms 42 through 47 and 84 through 88 but later on you read that Korah’s family did have a responsible place later on in the history of Israel. You can read about them in the Psalms. Only members of Aaron’s family serve as priests but one of the great things that we know today from the New Testament is that all of those who are related to the Lord Jesus Christ are priests of God and have the same, in fact, better access than Aaron in his day had.

Aaron could only enter the presence of the Lord one day out of the year. All of us within the church of Jesus Christ have the privilege of serving as a priest throughout 24 hours of the day. May God help us to be responsive to the teaching of the word of God and to exercise our privileges and avoid the pitfalls that so easily come in the experience of life in the church of Jesus Christ. Let us bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the lessons that we learn from the word of God and from the gainsaying of Korah. Lord deliver us. Enable us as an assembly can serve Thee, to be faithful to Thee, to esteem others better than ourselves, and to truly find the place that Thou would have us to serve in, and to serve as unto Thee. May Lord, we desire no higher title than servant of Jesus Christ. It is in his name we pray. Amen.