

Topic : **Rebellion of Korah**
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INTRODUCTION



Numbers 16:1-3: Now **Korah** the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with **Dathan** and **Abiram** the sons of Eliab, and on the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, **took men**; and they **rose up** before Moses with some of the children of Israel, **two hundred and fifty leaders** of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown. They **gathered together against Moses and Aaron**, and said to them, “You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?”

Jude 1:11: Woe to **them!** For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the **rebellion of Korah.**

Exodus 6:21: The sons of Izhar were Korah, Nepheg and Zikri.

Incident in Numbers 16

The incident of the rebellion of Korah was recorded in Numbers 16. And as we see in Scriptures from Jude 1:11, that consequence of this rebellion was that they perished as they went under into the ground in an earthquake. What gave Korah, Dathan and Abiram the audacity to come against Moses and Aaron? It was familiarity as they were from the tribe of Levi. Korah was the cousin of Aaron and hence did not respect Moses as the leader.

Deuteronomy 11:6: and what He did to **Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben:** how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, their households, their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel

Genesis 49:3-4: Reuben, you are my firstborn, my strength, the child of my vigorous youth. You are first in rank and first in power. But you are as **unruly as a flood**, and you will be first no longer. For you went to bed with my wife; you defiled my marriage couch.

From the above 2 verses, we see Dathan and Abiram, as descendants of Reuben, inheriting the generational iniquity of rebelliousness found in Reuben. Reuben had rebelliously slept with the concubine of Jacob and was cursed by him to be “as unruly as a flood”, destructive and unable to be contained. This same rebellious behavior continued down the generational line in David’s son, Absalom, who slept with David’s concubine.

Numbers 16:3: They **gathered together against Moses and Aaron**, and said to them, “You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?”

Numbers 3:10: **Appoint Aaron and his sons to serve as priests**; anyone else who approaches the sanctuary is to be put to death.”

Korah presented a deceptive accusation in Numbers 16:3 that the entire congregation is holy. He did not take account that it was God who appointed Aaron and his sons only to serve as priests. The priesthood of all believers is not the eldership of all believers. The church is not a democracy, it is a theocracy. God is our King who rules and appoints accordingly those in authority.

Numbers 4:4: This is the **work of the Kohathites** at the tent of meeting: the **care of the most holy things**.

Numbers 4:17-19: The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “**See that the Kohathite tribal clans are not destroyed** from among the Levites. So that they **may live and not die when they come near the most holy things**, do this for them: Aaron and his sons are to go into the sanctuary and **assign to each man his work and what he is to carry**.”

When the Kohathites stuck to their portion and calling, under the covering of God’s authority, they had a special protection and grace, and they would not die when they come near the holy things. Hence it is also one of our BTC core values to serve according to our calling, gifting and portion. When we step out of our portion and begin murmuring and complaining, it will be the beginning of the spirit of rebellion.

Leviticus 10:1-2: Aaron’s sons **Nadab and Abihu** took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered **unauthorized fire** before the Lord, **contrary to his command**. So **fire** came out from the presence of the Lord and **consumed** them, and they **died** before the Lord.

Even for Aaron and his sons who were chosen to serve as priests, there is a special prescribed order in the carrying out of their priestly duties. In Leviticus 10:1-2, when Nadab and Abihu failed to follow this prescribed order, we were told that fire consumed them. God is particular about His church. While we live in a period of grace where consequences are deferred, it is only a matter of time before the consequences of our sins catch up with us if we continually violate His commandments.

1. **God alone has absolute authority.**

Matthew 28:18: *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “**All authority** has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*

2. **There is no authority except from God. He has set up 4 authority structures of which we are to submit under.**

i. **Government**

Romans 13:1-7: *Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is **no authority except from God**, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is **God’s minister** to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is **God’s minister**, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must **be subject**, not only because of wrath but also **for conscience’ sake**. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are **God’s ministers** attending continually to this very thing. **Render** therefore to all **their due: taxes** to whom taxes are due, **customs** to whom customs, **fear** to whom fear, **honor** to whom honor.*

We need to submit to the government which enact laws to protect us, our possessions and our lives. About 6 years ago, BBTC had to submit to the government when we were building our new church building. While we calculated we had to pay \$400,000 for the development charge, we were asked by the URA to pay \$720,000. We submitted and paid the full development charge but also appealed to URA, praying and committing the matter to God. The final outcome was that the development charge was fully waived and we were fully refunded. Our request to exceed certain requirements of ceiling height and gross floor area were also approved. We were able to have all these because of the favour which came as we submitted to the government as unto the Lord.

ii. **Employer - Bosses**

Ephesians 6:5-8: ***Bondservants**, **be obedient** to those who are your **masters** according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, **as to Christ**; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, **as to the Lord**, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.*

Colossians 3:22-24: *Bondservants, **obey** in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but **in sincerity of heart, fearing God**. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.*

What do our bosses expect of us? Basically, they expect us to do our share of work and contribute to the bottom-line of the company. In this case, rebellion would be when we fail to do our jobs, when we steal time, resources from the company. For different jobs, we need to render accordingly what our jobs require of us.

iii. In the Home

1 Corinthians 11:3: *But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the **head of woman is man**, and the head of Christ is God.*

Ephesians 6:1: *Children, **obey your parents in the Lord**, for this is right. “**Honor your father and mother**,” which is the first commandment with promise: “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”*

Senior Pastor has observed that it common among young adult unmarried couples to be co-habiting or go on holidays alone. SP exhorts them as their spiritual father that this is a form of rebellion as the bible instructs us to flee sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18-20).

Senior Pastor encourages all parents in BBTC to bring their children up in the fear and knowledge of the Lord. He shared the example of a leader in BBTC who is intentionally imparting kingdom values to his 11 year old son, to be led by these values instead of by his peers or values of the world.

iv. In the Church

Hebrews 13:17: ***Obey those who rule over you**, and **be submissive**, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.*

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13: *And we urge you, brethren, to **recognize those who labor among you**, and **are over you in the Lord and admonish you**, and to **esteem them very highly in love** for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves.*

SP exhorts us to esteem and love our leaders. There is a godly order where we are all under authority of someone above us. We are also to be at peace among fellow believers and not shoot friendly fire; our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ are not our enemies. We are also to avoid being judgemental or critical of leaders of other churches. God will be the ultimate judge of whom these leaders will account to. In the church, there is a place to engage in constructive feedback. However we need to guard against a spirit of rebellion. Below are some of the characteristics of rebellion in church:

- Disrupting the leader’s ability to effectively lead.
- Grumbling
- Causing dissension or division among the flock.
- A spirit of defiance.

- Spiritual blessing and activity of the Holy Spirit seems to be missing.
- Suggesting that a leader is not needed or is unworthy to lead.
- Enticing others to follow rebellious suggestions.
- Counselling contrary doctrines opposed to the Word.

3A. We are to **submit to authority over us at all times.**

***Numbers 16: 11:** Therefore you and all your company are gathered together **against the Lord**. And what is Aaron that you **complain against him?**"*

***Romans 13:2:** Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and **those who resist will bring judgment on themselves**.*

3B. When we rebel against authority, we are rebelling against the Lord himself.

We need to guard against this spirit for our own good as we will be bringing judgment upon ourselves.

3C. The only time we do not submit is when the authority requires us to **break the Law of God.**

***Acts 5:29:** But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to **obey God rather than men**.*

The exceptions where we do not submit would be when the authority above us expect us to break the law or when we are under persecution in our family to compromise our faith.

4A. The spirit of rebellion is the spirit of **anti-Christ.**

***Isaiah 14:12-14:** How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: '**I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.**'*

The verse tells us the origin of Satan whose former name is Lucifer. He was in an exalted position, in the glory of the Lord leading in worship until pride got into his heart - He wanted to be like God himself. The result was that Satan fell (Luke 10:18). Satan did not know his place; we need to know our place.

Senior Pastor recently received an article on the perversity of the youth culture in the US. While not going into the gory details, there is a close correlation between rebellion, religion and sexual immorality. This is what is described in Isaiah 5:20: "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil". There is a perversion of values.

An example of this close correlation between rebellion, religion and sexual immorality is seen in Solomon who had about 300 wives and 700 concubines. These wives and

concubines eventually led him to worship idols. Another example is Canaan. They had temple prostitutes and even male prostitutes for men and female prostitutes for women. In Roman 1, when we do not regard God as God, our thinking will become futile and depraved where we will give up natural desires for unnatural ones. The result is perversion.

4B. Rebellion is not just outward behaviour, it is an **attitude problem, a **heart** issue.**

Numbers 11 - discontent led to **complaining**.

Numbers 12 - jealousy led to **criticism**.

Numbers 13 & 14 - unbelief led to **compromise**.

Numbers 16 - rebellion led to **contempt**.

We can see that there were already attitude and heart issues among the Israelites before the rebellion of Korah. Hence we need to guard our hearts against discontent which can lead to complaining, criticism, compromise and contempt.

4C. Rebellion is likened to **witchcraft.**

1 Samuel 15:23: *For **rebellion** is as the **sin of witchcraft**, and **stubbornness** is as **iniquity** and **idolatry**. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king."*

Witchcraft and idolatry gives ground for the demonic spirit to come in. Similarly when we rebel, we give the devil a foothold or doorway to come in to wreak havoc.

5A. The spirit of anti-Christ is in the world and manifests as **lawlessness.**

5B. Lawlessness i.e. the spirit of rebellion is **contagious.**

Numbers 16:1-3: *Now **Korah** ... **Dathan** ... **Abiram** ... **took men**; ... **rose up** ... **two hundred and fifty leaders** ... **gathered together against Moses and Aaron** ...*

Korah, Dathan and Abiram were able to convince 250 thinking leaders to join in the rebellion. Subsequently the rebellion spread to the whole congregation. Rebellion is contagious and will lead to division, conflict and contempt for those in authority.

5C. When we fail to **honor authority, we are guilty of lawlessness.**

5D. Rebellion brings **consequences upon us.**

Romans 13:1-2: *Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority **resists the ordinance of God**, and those who resist will **bring judgment on themselves***

6. God will always **vindicate His chosen ones whom He place in authority**

Numbers 16:30 -33: *But if the Lord creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the Lord.* Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods. So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly.

Numbers 16:35: And a fire came out from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense.

Isaiah 54:17: No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me," says the Lord.

Isa 54:17 is a promise for all those serving God that no weapons and accusations formed against us will prevail and that we have right standing before Him. Senior Pastor encourages all leaders facing accusations not to be in a hurry to prove ourselves right – Just pray and God will vindicate at the right time. Secondly if we have made mistakes, let go of the past and bring it under the redeeming blood of Christ. Lastly, take care of our emotional well-being. Self-care is not selfishness. Protect and strengthen our physical, emotional and spiritual capacities in order to finish well.

7. There is always hope and blessing for those who learn from the rebellion of Korah.

Numbers 26:10: and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up together with Korah when that company died, when the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men; and they became a sign ...

Numbers 26:11: Nevertheless the children of Korah did not die.

The incident became a sign and warning to all of us not to make the mistakes of those who participated in the rebellion of Korah. The children of Korah did not die and they learnt the lessons of their father as evident in the 12 psalms they wrote in the book of Psalms. They have learnt to know their place

Psalms 84:10: For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

1 Chronicles 9:19 Shallum son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, and his fellow gatekeepers from his family (the Korahites) were responsible for guarding the thresholds of the tent just as their ancestors had been responsible for guarding the entrance to the dwelling of the Lord.

We need to guard the snare of the devil which is to compare. That is why we have a BBTC Core Value of “No comparison and no competition”. We just need to know our

portion and be faithful in the roles that God has given to us. We need to learn from the lessons and mistakes of those who participated in the rebellion of Korah.

CONCLUSION

Romans 1:21: *...although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools...*

Romans 1:28: *And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.*

When we start rebelling against God, it is the beginning of the futility of our thinking. Conversely, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Satan has come to steal, kill and destroy and to drag more down with him. We need to guard against this anti-Christ spirit because we will be the ultimate losers if we don't, bringing judgment upon ourselves. This spirit can be seen in our attitudes towards joining a CG, punctuality for church services, attitude towards our leaders or an attitude of following the crowd in the world.

BOTTOM-LINE

We need to repent of the spirit of rebellion and adopt the spirit of humility and submission.

End

