

THE CHURCH IN NEW YORK CITY CHILDREN'S MEETING LESSON

DATE: February 1, 2015

SUBJECT: THE TRAVELS OF THE CHOSEN CHILDREN OF ISRAEL: Rebellion Against God's Authority

SCRIPTURE: Numbers 12:1-16; 16:1-50; 17:1-13, 26:9-11; Deuteronomy 11:6

AIM: To show the children that rebellion against God's chosen ones is the same as rebellion against God and brings severe judgment from God. Therefore they should not be rebellious, and separate themselves completely from rebellious ones.

MEMORY VERSES TO CHOOSE FROM: Romans 13:1-2 (v.1 Let every person be subject to the authorities over *him*, for there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are ordained by God. v.2 So then he who resists the authority opposes God's ordination, and those who oppose will receive judgment to themselves.); Hebrews 13:17a (Obey the ones leading you and submit to *them*, ...); Titus 3:1 (Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready unto every good work,)

SUGGESTED SONGS: 5 (Grumblers), 56 (God Sees Us), 65 (We must not forget God's Word); 66 (God's Word in my heart); 1013 (Always Rejoice); 5205 (Obey); 7602 (We have come, we have come); 3722 (Jesus, I am listening); 5502 (We are the Lord's people); 7603 (We love to please our Mom and Dad); 8308 Bible Story Songs Moses Vol. 2 (Do All Things Without Murmuring); 8317 BSS Moses Vol. 2 ("In the ten commandments God gave us")

APPROACH: Ask the children what authority means. [A simple definition is a person who has power or is in charge of others.] Have them name some people who are authorities over them: parents, grandparents, teachers, serving ones, policemen.

BACKGROUND: In the past few lessons, we have seen the many failures of the children of Israel: murmuring, criticism, lust, unbelief.

CONTENT:

This week, we are going to hear about a very serious failure: two separate rebellions against God's chosen authority that caused God to become angry and severely punish those who rebelled. We should listen carefully so we do not make the same mistakes:

Miriam and Aaron speak against Moses (Numbers 12:1-16). Miriam was Moses' older sister (Exodus 2:1-4) and Aaron was Moses' older brother (Exodus 7:7). Even though Moses was younger, Moses was the one God chose as His spokesperson. At the time when the people of Israel were still in the wilderness, Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because he married a Cushite woman. For some reason, they were not happy about Moses marrying the Cushite woman. So Miriam and Aaron said bad things about Moses, questioning whether God only spoke through Moses and not them, "Has Jehovah indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not also spoken through us?" This was very serious, to speak against the person God appointed as His representative. Jehovah heard what Miriam and Aaron said.

In contrast, Moses was very meek, more than anyone else on earth. After Moses' older sister and brother spoke against him, the Lord suddenly spoke to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, "You three come out to the Tent of Meeting." So the three of them came out. There Jehovah came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the tent, and called Aaron and Miriam. And when they had both come forward, He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, Jehovah, will make Myself known to him in a vision; I will speak with him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so; He is faithful in all My house. With him I speak face to face, even openly, and not in riddles; And he beholds the form of Jehovah. **Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses?**" And Jehovah was angry at them, and He departed.

And when the cloud had departed from over the tent, Miriam was leprous, as white as snow. Leprosy is a terrible, infectious disease for which there is no cure. When Aaron saw what happened to Miriam, he realized that he and Miriam had sinned against God. Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my lord, please do not lay *this* sin upon us that we

have so foolishly committed....” Moses then cried to Jehovah for Miriam, saying, “Please heal her, O God, please.” The Lord instructed Moses to have Miriam remain outside the camp for seven days. She did so and was healed.

Korah and his followers rebel against Moses (Numbers 16:1-18). There was a man named Korah from the tribe of Levi. Korah, along with other men named Dathan and Abiram and On (from the tribe of Reuben), went to Moses, with 250 leaders of the people, well-known men. They gathered together against Moses and against Aaron, challenging their authority. Korah and the men said, “You take too much upon yourselves, for all the assembly are holy, every one of them, and Jehovah is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of Jehovah?” When Moses heard this, he fell on his face. He told Korah and his company that in the morning, Jehovah would make known who is God’s and who is holy, and whom God would choose to bring near to Himself. Moses told them to take censers [A censer was a vessel or container made of bronze which had fire in it to burn incense], and put fire and put incense on them before Jehovah the next day; and the man that Jehovah would choose, he shall be holy. He told the sons of Levi that it was they who took too much on themselves. Moses said to Korah, “Hear now, O sons of Levi: Is it a small thing for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the assembly of Israel to bring you near to Himself to do the service of the tabernacle of Jehovah and to stand before the assembly to minister to them?...And do you seek the priesthood also?...” When Moses sent word to call Dathan and Abiram, they said, “We will not come up! Is it not enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to have us die in the wilderness, but must you also lord it over us?...We will not come up!” They refused to listen to Moses. Then Moses became very angry and said to Jehovah, “Do not regard their offering. I have not taken a single donkey from them, nor have I done harm to any of them.” And Moses said to Korah, “You and all your company be present before Jehovah, both you and they along with Aaron, tomorrow. And let each of you take his censer and put incense on them, and each of you present his censer before Jehovah, two hundred fifty censers; you also and Aaron shall each present his censer.” So each took his censer and put fire on them and laid incense on them, and they stood at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting with Moses and Aaron.

God’s Judgment (Numbers 16:19-50). Then Korah gathered all the people against Moses and Aaron at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of Jehovah appeared to the whole assembly. Then Jehovah told Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from among that assembly, so that He could consume them in a moment. But they fell on their faces and said, “O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, will one man sin and You be angry with the whole assembly?” God was about to get rid of all the people there except for Moses and Aaron, but Moses did not want God to do that. Then the Lord told Moses to tell the assembly to get away from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Moses told the assembly, “Depart now from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing which belongs to them, or you will be swept away with all their sins.” So the people and their families got away from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. And Moses said, “By this you shall know that Jehovah has sent me to do all these works, for it is not of myself. If these people die as all human beings die, or if what befalls all human beings befalls them, then Jehovah has not sent me. But if Jehovah brings about a new thing, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they descend alive into Sheol, then you will understand that these men have despised Jehovah.” And as soon as he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them was split open. So the earth opened and swallowed them up, along with their households and everyone who belonged to Korah and all their possessions. And all Israel who were around them began to run saying, “The earth may swallow us up too!” And fire came forth from Jehovah and consumed the 250 men who presented the incense.

The next day the whole assembly of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, “You have caused the people of Jehovah to die.” Instead of blaming Korah and the rebellious people, they blamed Moses and Aaron! This was very serious, and it made God angry. When the people looked toward the Tent of Meeting the cloud was covering it, and the glory of Jehovah appeared. Moses and Aaron came to the front of the Tent of Meeting and Jehovah told Moses to get away from the midst of this assembly so that He might consume them. And Moses said to Aaron, “Take the censer and put fire on it from the altar, and lay incense on it, and carry it quickly to the assembly, and make expiation for them. [Expiation means to satisfy a wrong.] For wrath has gone forth from Jehovah; the plague has begun.” [Plague is a widespread disease or punishment that ends in high

number of deaths.] The people of Israel had angered God and He was about to destroy them. Aaron took the censer as Moses had said and ran into the midst of the assembly and made expiation for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stopped. That day, 14,700 people died by the plague, in addition to those who died because of Korah.

God's Vindication (Numbers 17:1-13). After the plague stopped, God did something special to make clear whom He chose and to stop the remaining people from murmuring. Jehovah told Moses to take 12 rods from all leaders of the children of Israel, one rod for each tribe. He told Moses to write everyone's name on his rod. Aaron's name was written on the rod of Levi. They were all put in the Tent of Meeting before the Ten Commandments in the Ark, where the Lord met with Moses. God said that the rod of the man whom He chose would bud. A dead stick will not bud and have flowers. But the next day, Moses went into the Tent, and Aaron's rod had budded! It had produced blossoms (flowers) and even had ripe almonds on them. Moses brought out all the rods to all the children of Israel, and they saw what happened. Then Jehovah said to Moses, "Put back the rod of Aaron before the testimony to be kept as a sign against the rebels, so that you may put an end to their murmurings against Me, and they not die." And Moses did just as Jehovah commanded him.

SUGGESTED APPLICATIONS: We can see from this story that rebellion is a very serious sin and offense toward God.

- **We need to recognize God's representatives.** Moses was God's representative. Miriam and Aaron were Moses' older siblings. It must have been very easy for them to become jealous and begin to criticize him. Moses never boasted in himself or in the role God put him in. He served God by obeying Him and prayed repeatedly for God's people, especially when God became angry with them. The strong trend today is to rebel against all kinds of authority. We must realize that all authorities are of God. They are there to help us, lead us, guide us and protect us. We can ask the children to name people who are in authority, who are in charge over them. Every parent, teacher, policeman, governor and president is placed by God. To resist and oppose them is to resist and oppose God.
- **We need to be content with what God has given to us.** Korah and his followers were not content with the special service that they had been assigned by the Lord. Korah was among people who were assigned to care for the contents of the tabernacle (Number 3:31), but only Aaron and his sons were allowed to go into the sanctuary, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. But Korah's people wanted to be first; they wanted to be on top. This was the cause of their rebellion. While we should always strive to do our best in whatever we do, we should never aspire to be better than others who may be more popular, smarter, etc.. We should be careful not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think (Romans 12:3).
- **We should separate ourselves from rebellious people.** We should separate ourselves from those who have no regard or respect for rules, regulations or teachers or other authorities. We may see some children talking back to their parents or talking back to their teachers. Some do not treat elderly people well. Others disobey the laws. If we are friends with rebellious people and spend time with them, we can easily be affected by their rebellious attitude and find ourselves rebelling against authority too. We may end up being punished for something they did because we were together with them.

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