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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

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Korah, Dathan and Abiram Rebel.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

When the people of ancient Israel refused to believe that God would conquer the giants living in the land that God had promised them, God turned these people back into the desert so that all those over 20 years of age would die a natural death. How extremely disappointed some of the Israelites were! Rather than miss out, they said they'd go into Canaan anyway. But Moses warned them that God wasn't with them and that they would be defeated. The people paid no heed to him and it happened as he said: the people living in that area chased the Israelites back.

Some time after the Israelites' refusal to enter the Promised Land, a new rebellion arose against God and His special servants, Moses and Aaron. This time, the rebellion was led by Korah, a Levite, and he was joined by 2 men from the tribe of Reuben and 250 community leaders of Israel.

Some of the most important leaders were challenging Moses and Aaron out of jealousy. Korah wanted Aaron's authority and to be a priest as well.

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In Numbers, Chapter 16, Korah incited the other community leaders to hold a rebellion against Moses and Aaron. Their plan was to retire Moses and Aaron and take over their jobs. Korah's false argument for this rebellion was that all Israelites were equally holy so therefore, why should Moses and Aaron be singled out for spiritual leadership above the others? However, God had ordained that all Israelites were not equal in spiritual authority and responsibility. As such, Korah was opposing God's order for Israel. It really wasn't Moses and Aaron that he was opposing so much as it was God Himself.

The Israelite nation at this stage of their history was a theocracy. That means that they were ruled by God Himself. In many nations around the world today, people live in a form of democracy, where the adults vote every few years for representatives in different political parties to represent them in government. But Israel's governance was different to this, because they were living in a covenant relationship with God. They were God's special ambassadors among the surrounding nations. But Korah didn't accept that he couldn't rise up in the ranks to be a leader.

Sadly, the temptation to promote one's own name and authority is found among Christian leaders too. Such leaders seek to build up their own little kingdom rather than the Lord's kingdom. They promote their own ministry at the expense of other Christians' ministries and become spiritual descendants of Korah.

Moses cast himself on the Lord and challenged Korah to submit to a test. Korah and his followers who sought to be priests were to bring censers with fire and incense before the Lord. Burning incense before the Lord was a sign of coming before the Lord to receive His approval. The Lord would cause those He approved of to come close to Him. In this way it would be shown whether Korah and his followers were approved by the Lord.

When the test started, Korah and his 250 followers took their censers to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. Then the glory of the Lord appeared in judgment. The Lord told Moses and Aaron to move away so that they wouldn't be destroyed with the whole grumbling rebellious assembly. When Moses and Aaron realised that the Lord was going to destroy all the Israelites, they once again prayed that He might spare the nation from total destruction. They wanted only the guilty to be punished.

Once again, the Lord responded to the leaders' prayer. He agreed to destroy only those who were leading the rebellion. He told the rest of the assembly to move away so they wouldn't be harmed. The first judgment came upon Korah, Dathan and Abiram and their families. Moses wanted their punishment to be unusual so that the people would be convinced that they had been punished by the direct hand of God rather than by natural causes. So God swallowed them up in an earthquake. This meant that there would be no dispute about God giving the punishment.

Why, we wonder, did God punish the wives and children of those wicked men too, instead of just the men themselves? In Deuteronomy, Chapter 24, God says that each person will be responsible only for his or her own sin. Then why in this case were the 'innocent' punished along with guilty? God sees what's in a person's heart and what's in a person's future. God must have known that the family members were already guilty or that they would become guilty. God is always just in His judgments. In Numbers, Chapter 26, we read that "the children of Korah did not die."

The Lord's second judgment was against the 250 leaders who brought censers containing fire and incense. These men who had taken to themselves the priestly duty were themselves destroyed by fire from the Lord. Anything presented before the Lord was considered holy; even though the censers had been presented by false priests, they were still to be set apart as holy objects. The Lord commanded that Eleazar, Aaron's oldest surviving son, should collect the censers, hammer them into shape and use them to overlay the altar of burnt offering. By doing that, the censers would be an ongoing reminder that only the descendants of Aaron were authorised to burn incense before the Lord.

Even after such extraordinary signs of the Lord's judgment, the whole Israelite community continued to grumble against Moses and Aaron for killing the evil doers. They didn't understand what had happened or that their lives had been saved by the prayers of Moses and Aaron. This only goes to prove that no amount of punishment or judgment can change the human heart; only God's grace can do that.

What can believers in the Lord Jesus learn from these sad chapters of Israelite history? In 2 Timothy, Chapter 3, it says: "All Scripture is inspired by God, and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults and giving instruction for right living, so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed."

The first thing to learn from this is that worldliness opposes God. In 40 days God had moved the Israelites out of Egypt, a symbol of idol worship and self-interests, but it took 40 years to get 'Egypt' out of the Israelites' hearts and minds. The attractions of the world are subtle but a constant temptation for Christians. The Apostle John said in 1 John, Chapter 2: "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

The second thing we need to watch is to walk consistently and faithfully before the Lord. The Israelites started out well. They promised: "We will do everything the Lord has said." But when the day came to prepare for entering the Promised Land, where they would receive God's richest blessings, they held back in fear and looked only at the obstacles; not at God's powerful help for them.

Once a person has decided to call on the Lord Jesus for His forgiveness and salvation from sin, there's new freedom in the Holy Spirit. However, many people hold back from continuing to fully trust in Jesus or fully yield themselves to Him. This results in a lack of God's blessings and fellowship as they struggle to move forward in their Christian life. How can this be cured? The Christian must go back to the time when he first lost faith in Jesus, confess the sin of unbelief that arose and return to a life of obedience and surrender so the presence of the Lord in his life can be restored.

Another problem in the assembly of the Israelites was the hidden sins that grew from small thoughts that weren't considered wrong or were in need of being confessed and forsaken. Such things as jealousy, ambition, bitterness and discontent with one's status in life, grew and they became more obvious through grumbling, challenging the leaders and dissatisfaction with God's decisions for their lives. This led the people into open disobedience and rebellion; and God wasn't going to ignore these disturbances in the camp.

Many young people have a strong desire to be a sporting champion, or a movie star or a successful business owner. It's not until they accept that God chooses what is best for them to do in life that they understand God has protected them from a choice that would possibly would exclude Him from having any part in their lives. We have to be aware of any sin that goes unrecognised and pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal all our hidden sins. For it is certain that unconfessed sin grows and grows. If it's not dealt with, it'll keep us from God's blessings and in the end, will lead to death.

If you are walking in close fellowship with God, and His Word is at home in your heart, then you will pray for things that bring God glory. If you're only praying for self-indulgent things, then it is doubtful that you're maintaining a living communion with Him or that His Word is at home in your hearts and minds. Prayer in God's Spirit aligns our will with the will of God.

In Psalm 32, Verse 1, it says: "Happy is the person whose sins are forgiven, whose wrongs are pardoned." Let us rejoice in the Lord in this fact. And may we seek God for the best that He has for us; not the best that we think that we should have.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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