Numbers 16:1-40

- 1 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; 2 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. 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?"
- 4 So when Moses heard it, he fell on his face; 5 and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, "Tomorrow morning the Lord will show who is His and who is holy, and will cause him to come near to Him. That one whom He chooses He will cause to come near to Him. 6 Do this: Take censers, Korah and all your company; 7 put fire in them and put incense in them before the Lord tomorrow, and it shall be that the man whom the Lord chooses is the holy one. You take too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi!"
- 8 Then Moses said to Korah, "Hear now, you sons of Levi: 9 Is it a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the work of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to serve them; 10 and that He has brought you near to Himself, you and all your brethren, the sons of Levi, with you? And are you seeking the priesthood also? 11 Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the Lord. And what is Aaron that you complain against him?"
- 12 And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, but they said, "We will not come up! 13 Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, that you should keep acting like a prince over us? 14 Moreover you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!"
- 15 Then Moses was very angry, and said to the Lord, "Do not respect their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, nor have I hurt one of them." 16 And Moses said to Korah, "Tomorrow, you and all your company be present before the Lord—you and they, as well as Aaron. 17 Let each take his censer and put incense in it, and each of you bring his censer before the Lord, two hundred and fifty censers; both you and Aaron, each with his censer." 18 So every man took his censer, put fire in it, laid incense on it, and stood at the door of the tabernacle of meeting with Moses and Aaron. 19 And Korah gathered all the congregation against them at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to all the congregation.

20 And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 21 "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." 22 Then they fell on their faces, and said, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and You be angry with all the congregation?" 23 So the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 24 "Speak to the congregation, saying, 'Get away from the tents of Korah. Dathan, and Abiram.'"

25 Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. 26 And he spoke to the congregation, saying, "Depart now from the tents of these wicked men! Touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins." 27 So they got away from around the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents, with their wives, their sons, and their little children.

28 And Moses said: "By this you shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of my own will. 29 If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, then the Lord has not sent me. 30 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."

31 Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, 32 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods. 33 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. 34 Then all Israel who were around them fled at their cry, for they said, "Lest the earth swallow us up also!" 35 And a fire came out from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense.

36 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 37 "Tell Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, to pick up the censers out of the blaze, for they are holy, and scatter the fire some distance away. 38 The censers of these men who sinned against their own souls, let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar. Because they presented them before the Lord, therefore they are holy; and they shall be a sign to the children of Israel." 39 So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burned up had presented, and they were hammered out as a covering on the altar, 40 to be a memorial to the children of Israel that no outsider, who is not a descendant of Aaron, should come near to offer incense before the Lord, that he might not become like Korah and his companions, just as the Lord had said to him through Moses.

The Mercy of the Rejected God

Main idea: Without compromising wrath, God shows mercy to rebels through a Mediator

Introduction: holiness is a duty and a privilege, but when we abuse it, a great danger

Rejecting God, v11, 30. The Creator created.

Rejecting ordained ministers, v3, 7. Also attacking the servant himself (v13–15). Dangerous, because rejecting the Lord, and because the Lord Who uses him also listens to him (cp. v15, w/v22).

Rejecting ordained worship, v5–7, 16–19, 35. Forgetting Nadab/Abihu; the reminder of the altar.

Conclusion: how we have rejected God! But how merciful He has been to us! Don't reject Him!

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Number 16, verses 1 through 40. These are God's words. Now, Cora the son of Izhar, the son of kohath, the son of Levi, With death and the berum, the sons of eliab.

And on the son of pellet, sons of Reuben took men And they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, 250 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 Yahweh is among them.

Why then do you exalt yourselves? Above the Assembly of Yahweh. So when Moses heard it, he fell on his face. And he spoke to Cora and to all his companies saying, Tomorrow morning, Yahweh will show, who is? And who is Holy? And will cause him to come near to him.

That one whom he chooses he will cause to come near to him. Do this. Take sensors Cora, and all your company. Put fire in them and put incense in them before Yahweigh tomorrow. And it shall be that the man whom Yahweh chooses is the Holy One. You take too much upon yourselves.

You sons of Levi. Then Moses said to Cora here. Now you sons of Levi Is it a small thing to you? That the god of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel. To bring you near to himself to do the work of the Tabernacle of Yahweh. And to stand before the congregation to serve them.

And that he has brought you near to himself. You and all your brethren, the sons of Levi with you? And are you seeking the priesthood? Also. Therefore, you and all your company are gathered together against Yahweh. And what is Aaron that you complain against him? And Moses sent to call Nathan and abirum, the sons of eliad.

Said, we will not come up. Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness? That you should keep acting like a prince over us. Moreover, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey.

Nor given us inheritance of fields and Vineyards. Will you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up. Then Moses was very angry. And said to Yahweh, Do not respect their offering. I've not taken one donkey from them. Nor have I hurt one of them. And Moses said to Cora.

Tomorrow you and all your company be present before, Yahweh you and they, as well as Aaron. Let each take his sensor and put incense in it. And each of you bring his sensor before Yahweh, 250 sensors. With you and Darren. Each with his sensor. So every man took his sensor.

Put fire in it, laid incense on it, and stood at the door of the Tabernacle of meeting. With Moses and Aaron. And Cora gathered all the congregation against them at the door of the Tabernacle of meeting. Then the glory of Yahweh appeared. To all the congregation. And you always spoke to Moses and Aaron saying, Separate yourselves from among this congregation that I may consume them in a moment.

Then they fell on their faces and said, oh God. The god of the spirits of All Flesh. Saw one man sin and you'd be angry with all the congregation. So, he always spoke to Moses saying. Speak to the congregation saying, get away from the tents of Korah dathan and abirum.

Then Moses Rose and went to Nathan in abirum. The Elders of Israel, followed him. And he spoke to the congregation saying depart now from the tents of these wicked men touched nothing of theirs. Lest you be consumed in all their sins? So, they got away from around the tents of Korra Dayton and abirum.

And Nathan and iberum came out and stood at the door of their tents with their wives, their sons, and their little children, And Moses said by this, you shall know that Yahweh has sent me to do all these works. For I've not done them of my own will. If these men die naturally, like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, then Yahweh has not sent me.

But if Yahweh 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, Yahweh. 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 Korra. With all their goods. So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit. The Earth closed over. And they perished. From among the assembly.

Then all Israel who are around them fled at their cry. For they said lest the Earth swallow us up. Also. And the fire came out from Yahweh and consumed. The 250 men who were offering incense Then Yahweh spoke to Moses saying. Tell Elliotts are the son of Aaron the priest.

To pick up the sensors out of the blaze for they are. Holy. And Scatter. The fire, some distance away. The sensors of these men, who sinned against their own souls. Let them be hammered, sorry, let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar. Because they presented them before Yahweh.

Therefore they are. Holy And they shall be assigned to the children of Israel. So Elliotts are the priest took the bronze sensors, which those who are burned up had presented. And they were hammered out as a covering on the altar. To be a memorial to the children of Israel.

That no Outsider who is not a descendant of Aaron, should come near to offer incense before Yahweh. That he might not become like Korah and his companions. Just as Yahweh. Had said to him. Through Moses. Amen. Thus ends this reading of God. Inspired. And And Aaron twerked. The close of numbers 15 last week's portion, the Lord had commanded them to make these tassels on the corners of the Garment with the blue thread in the middle of the tassel.

And you remember what the blue thread in the middle of the tassel and the tassels themselves, Were a sign of to the people of Israel. They were literally on their corners of their garments, to be able to look down and see a reminder from the Lord that they are.

Holy, To the Lord. Now, Holiness is a great privilege. To be one that the Lord has saved for himself taken for himself. This is great or even than the Forgiveness of our sin is, what we have been forgiven for, to be taken to the Lord, as holy taken, for the Lord, as holy is a great privilege.

And of course it's also therefore a great duty. Because we are holy because the Lord has saved us for himself. We were obligated to obey all of his Commandments. And especially, His Commandments regarding, Um, the worship of him faith in him alone, how we use his name, The keeping of his day holy that he is consecrated to himself.

Those first table Commandments, That spec out for us, the details of what it means to love the Lord. Our God with all our heart soul, mind and strength. And so, Holiness is a great privilege and a great duty. Sadly. However. In our sinfulness, and our remaining sinfulness. We're able even to abuse the idea of Holiness.

We can see this when rather than responding to God's calling us holy and consecrating us to himself. We're amazed at the privilege that he has bestowed upon us and we resolve to walk in a manner that is worthy of those who have been set apart to God as Holy.

Instead, the Envy that remains in our hearts. May respond to what God has said about our Holiness by insisting and being offended at and demanding. That others are not treating us as holy as we think we are. And this is what's behind. Cohad and Nathan and abirum. Other than hearing about this Holiness that is symbolized to them in the tassels rather than resolving that they would not break with their hearts.

The Lord's Sabbath the fourth Commandment the way that that man had broken with his hands, the the fourth Commandment, and the Gathering of the sticks and therefore, had to be executed rather than Stirring themselves up by this instruction, to Devotion, to the Lord, they looked at Moses and Aaron whom the Lord had called in whom.

The Lord had set over them and said, Don't they realize how holy the rest of us are When we abuse. The fact that the Lord has set us apart to himself when we demand positions that the Lord has not called us. When we reject, The offices that the Lord has put in his We are in great danger.

There is a temptation to do this. Of course, one of our Precious doctrines in the scriptures, the priesthood of all believers. That is no longer just Aaron and his family. That Jesus is the great high priest and everyone who is United to him, comes all the way to God, through that new and living way, that is his flesh.

But it probably doesn't surprise you to know that there are some Who take this true doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. And they reject the idea of having Elders. Who governed the church or they reject God's Own stated qualifications for elders. That they should be men that they should be men of particular character and particular conduct.

Or they do the same with the office of Deacon. As if God making all believers. And to those who can come all the way to him in the Lord Jesus, and are not kept at our arm's length, from him automatically invalidates or somehow invalidates the offices that Christ has instituted in his church and the officers Whom the Lord.

Has put into those offices. But in rejecting, Those whom the Lord had set over them and wanting to take upon themselves offices to which they had not been called The men who were involved in this Rebellion. Rejected. God himself. They rejected God's ordained ministers, which was dangerous for them because one of the things that Moses and Aaron both did as a function of their office was intercede for the people, pray for the people.

And so they rejected those who were praying for them to their great Peril. And they rejected God's ordained worship. They forgot that it is not man, who decides who may draw near to God and how it is God, who decides Who may draw near to him and how Even as Moses.

Uh, attempts to remind them here. And they end up with a reminder. That. Uh, terminal. Fatal. For these 250. But a reminder then that would be literally set before the eyes of Israel from that time on. Every time they would come to the Tabernacle and Sea The bronze altar.

So we're not going to go through the entire chapter. Verse by verse and look at all of the Very interesting and helpful plays onwards, we're just going to consider those three things briefly that give you the Contours of the chapter as a whole first, they were rejecting God. Uh, this we have especially in two, key verses first and verse 11 and then in verse 30 Verse 11.

He says, therefore you and all your company are gathered together against Yahweh. And what is Aaron that you complain against him? He's using their own logic. Says, what is Moses? What is Aaron? Aren't all the people. Holy unto. The Lord. Aren't they all made? Holy with the Lord's Holiness and that's true.

The only way anyone is made holy is with the Lord's own Holiness. But why then were they not afraid? To reject the, the office and Ministry of Aaron, as the great, not the great. There's one, the Lord Jesus is the great high priest. Why are they not afraid to reject the office and Ministry of Aaron as God?

Selected high priest? For it was not Aaron that they were rejecting. It was Yahweh himself. And so, that's the first. Key verse in, which he says this, then he says again. Verse 30, if Yahweh does this thing and the Earth opens and swallows them up, then you will understand that these men have rejected.

Yahweh. Not just the Lord's servants. But the Lord himself. The Earth opening up and not just opening and swallowing them, but then what what happened? It also closed over them. So it was not like an accelerated version of the Hopewell sinkhole. This was something. Very new and different unique altogether.

In fact, when it says, if Yahweh creates a new thing there in verse 30, he's using that creation word. There are many words for making things or forming things in the Hebrew. There's one word that means to create out of nothing. That's the word that's used of God in the first first phrase of the Bible.

First Clause of the Bible. Uh, in the beginning he created God, God is the subject of he created. Uh, the heavens and the Earth. And here not only is the verb creates that word. But here what's translated a new thing is actually a Hebrew noun form of the of the word for create.

So if he creates a creation this form of creating that God himself does and he doubles the use of that root to emphasize. If Yahweh does the thing that only Yahweh does in the way that only Yahweh can do. You hear what he's saying? That they are rejecting God himself.

And you must remember this, even if there are popular movements that seem to be very spiritual You know, there are often in every age. There are popular movements for rejecting the institutional. Well. It's an institution of Christ. Christ is the one who came to redeem and to build his Christ is the one who has called and sent those officers whom he has ordained.

Yes, this means. That we must follow the word of God. Uh, having only Elders and deacons and not having this hierarchy of Of offices above the office of Elder, like some Churches have done. Yes. This means that Those whom Who are called and ordained to the office of Elder or the office of Deacon must be called and ordained and qualified.

According to what the word of God says, you can't just have a popularity contest. You can't choose for Elder. Those who seem to be really good at overseeing people and, for Deacon, those who seem to be really good at managing money. Lord gives. Uh, gives those things to them.

Praise God. That's part of Has enabling them to do the duties of the office. But it has to be according to the qualifications that God has said. Because we must not take for ourselves. The position that we have, Moses says, He has not taken these things or done these things.

Uh, by his own will. It's they who are taking these things for themselves. And so rejecting God's institutions, rejecting the offices that he has put into his church and the particular officers whom he has called is dangerous. Because God tells us here that to do so is to reject God himself.

Now, rejecting the ordained minister.

Is also. Very dangerous because the ordained minister is the one whom the Lord has called, especially In both cases here, Moses and Aaron have been intercessors for God's people. Aaron especially as the high priest would literally wear the the names of the tribes of the people upon himself as he went in to make intercession And the Lord has called in the New Testament Church.

We have Jesus as our great high priest who always lives to make intercession for us. But he has given us men. All the men in the church who are to lift up holy hands in prayer, but also the ministry of the Apostles and later of the elders, which is why we have deacons who can attend to those things so that the elders can give themselves to prayer.

Ministry of the word. First, the apostles in Acts 6. And then also, Then that comes down to the elders and that division. Of the ministry of the Apostles in the church. Uh,

In verse 3, the people had challenged Moses. And Aaron saying, why then do you exalt yourselves? And Moses had reminded them. Uh, that the man whom the Lord chooses is the Holy One. He's the one who chooses. For himself, and one of the things, That we Uh, saw Moses immediately do when they say when they challenge Moses in this way, in verse 3 is in verse 4.

It says, when Moses heard it, he fell on his face. Now this is different than in chapter 14. Remember in chapter 14, Moses had fought Moses and Aaron had fallen on their faces before the people because the people had actually just threatened to get rid of Moses and Aaron get themselves new leaders and hightail it back to Egypt.

In this case, Moses falls on his face and the obligation is that he falls in his face to pray to the Lord. And then coming out of his interaction with the Lord verse 5. He spoke to Korah and all his company saying Etc. But when they attack Moses and and you don't just have the attack in the beginning of the chapter, Uh, in verse 12, when Moses calls Nathan and abirum to come up, they say we will not come up, is it a small thing?

And now they start really attacking him that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey. So some more revisionist history of how things were in. Egypt says, you're not taking us to a land flowing, you brought us from a land flowing with milk and honey.

Well, if there was any milk and honey flowing to uh, in the land of Egypt, it was for Egyptians. And on the back of Israelites. But they say you have brought us up out of a land flowing of milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness again, very recent revisionist history.

They were going to die. In the wilderness, God had said this to them, why? It wasn't because of something that Moses and Aaron had done, or that Moses had done is because of their own sin against the Lord refusing, to trust him refusing to go into the land and that you should keep acting like a prince over us.

We know how princes act. We know how kings act because when Israel goes to ask the Lord for a king, like the other nations, what does the Lord? Tell them, I give you a king. He's going to take what you have. He's going to take your goods. He's going to take your children, that's how princes act.

So that's what they're accusing, Moses of doing here. This is why Moses responds by saying, I have not taken one donkey for them. Nor have I hurt one of them. And so not only do they accuse him of having acted as a a prince or given given them inheritance of fields and Vineyards like the Lord had promised.

They now They presume his intentions for telling them to come up. So, will you put out the eyes of these men? Well this also sadly the ancient near East and the Nations around them at the time, this is how a king would respond to those who rebelled against him.

And so, they've accused Moses of all these things. That's very dangerous. Because as we saw back in verse 4 and as we have seen several times Moses intercedes, it's one of the things, the Lord has called him to. Do you remember after the incident with the golden calf? When God said, get away from the people so that I can destroy them and start over with you and Moses had prayed for them.

And then just recently again, The Lord had threatened to destroy the people and start over with and Moses had prayed for them. Well, suddenly verse 15, Moses is not praying for them. Moses is very angry and says to Yahweh, do not respect their offering. And he repeats. Instruction to Cora.

And those who are with him. And Cora now doesn't have just his own congregation. I don't know why verse 6 translates at company. It's the same word as congregation throughout the passage at first Korah in verse six, had his little mini congregation that he had gathered to himself. By the time you get to verse 19, the whole congregation has taken chorus sight watch

against popular movements in the Often popular movements in the church are rejections of the Lord, do not think that because it sounds good.

And because there are many people doing it that somehow, it is right and approved by God. But Moses having prayed what he did in verse 15. The response comes in, verse 20. He always spoke to Moses and Aaron saying, separate yourselves from the from among this congregation that I may consume them in a moment.

Do you see how instrumentally and the way God works? Among his people? What a necessary and important thing it was for them to have Moses praying for them. Aren't you glad that? You have the Lord. Jesus always praying for you. But Moses hears this and Moses and Moses and Aaron hear this and they immediately go back to praying for them.

Verse 22, they fell on their faces and said oh God, the god of the spirits of All Flesh. Shall one man? Sin and you be angry with all the congregation and so at first Lord told Moses and Aaron you get away from these and let me wipe them all out, but Moses and Aaron go back to praying for the people.

And what does God do? He responds. He says, okay, not just Moses and Aaron, but everyone else get away. From the tents of dathan and abearum and Cora. And so, God actually gives The whole of the rest of Israel, the Moses and Aaron treatment in the shift that takes place here on account of the intercession.

Now, Jesus is our great intercessor. But the Lord does appoint men to pray for you. This is one of the things that you can as you pray for laborers. You know, pray not only that they would be faithful in the ministry of the word. Pray, that they would be faithful in the ministry of prayer.

It is a significant thing in Acts chapter 6 that as the problem arose with with the Greek culture widows in the church and taking care of widows is very important to God. We see that throughout the Bible But the Apostle said, we will not leave off what we are doing.

We will give ourselves to prayer. And to the ministry. Of the word. So there's a great danger in rejecting God. There's a great danger interjecting ordained ministers There's a great danger in rejecting ordained worship. They seem to have forgotten nadab and about him. But here the burning up of those offering Strange Fire.

Unauthorized men. With this time. The right pans. And the right fire. And the right incense. But now the wrong men. How do we know that? Well, because the The shovels that were used the bronze shovels that were used are. Designated by God as holy and offered to him. And now, 125 times as many as had died in Leviticus 10.

Are killed again and in the same way. The fire comes out from Yahweh. In verse 35. And so, the Lord commands Eleazar to go and collect the pans and they're hammered out the bronze altars already, the bronze altar, they overlaid it when they built it. But now, whenever the people come the bronze altar, of course, is outside the tent so that people are able to see it.

Never the people come and draw near to the Lord. They will be able to see that. That is not the original bronze. You can imagine a an older child and a family who is just learned this from his Bible, his daddy has been teaching them in the book of numbers.

And he tells very knowingly. His younger younger sister That's not the original bronze on that altar. That bronze comes from the 250 incense shovels. That were used in the rebellion of Korah. Leaders of the people and the fire came out from the Lord. And burned them up. So that we might know.

That you can only come to the Lord in the one whom he is appointed and in the way that he is appointed. And praise God. He has given us not Moses or Aaron to come through and not me or Elder wrenchler or Elder, Patterson, or Elder Mangum to come through.

He has given us Jesus to come through Yes, one of the ways that he is appointed is that the worship would be overseen by the elders. But we come not through the elders, whom he has appointed to oversee, we come through Jesus. But if we reject the elders that Christ has set over us. Then.

We are rejecting not only God and not only the the officers that he has ordained, but even the worship. That he has ordained. As we read passages like this, Uh, we ought to be convicted, we ought to conclude About the many times in our hearts that we have resisted, Or grumbled against the Lord's design for his church or the particular men that he has set over us that we have rejected God.

But behold how merciful he's been to us Because he's given us, not just Moses and Aaron. But the Lord Jesus to pray for us. And the Lord Jesus through whom to draw near to him. Behold, how merciful the Lord has been to you do not continue. To reject him.

Amen, let's pray. Our gracious. God and our heavenly father. We thank you. Forgiving to us. Your son, our Lord Jesus. To be unto us, not only high priest, but also Tabernacle and even the sacrifice itself Give us Lord to study diligently your word. And to submit to your way of operating in your church.

That resting in the Lord Jesus Christ and his intercession for us. We might know that we draw say not draw near to you in safety and that you count us as pleasing to yourself in our Lord. Jesus. Help us Lord, whether in our home, with our parents or in the church with our elders and our deacons.

To give honor to whom honor is Jew. Uh, help us not to take for ourselves offices or roles that don't belong to us. But to trust you that your wisdom as, as Stated in your word is, right. Grant these things. By the ministry of your spirit. We ask in the name of your son, our Lord Jesus.

And his people say, Amen.