

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Numbers 16: 23-34

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank God, it's time to read the Bible again. We continue to read Numbers chapter 16. Today we will read from verse 23 to verse 34.

Moses instructed Korah and those who were with him to bring censers the next day and stand before the LORD together with Aaron, asking God to make known who was the priest appointed by God. Dathan and Abiram, the descendants of Reuben, did not heed Moses' summons and remained in the camp. Korah brought the 250 leaders who had joined him in the rebellion. They brought their censers, put incense in them, and kindled the fire. Then they came to the doorway of the Tabernacle and openly challenged Moses and Aaron. Korah also gathered the entire congregation of Israel together at the doorway of the Tabernacle to watch a great spectacle that he himself had staged. As a result, the glory of God appeared. God said to Moses and Aaron, "Separate yourselves from this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment."

Moses immediately fell on his face and interceded for the people of Israel, asking God not to be angry with the entire congregation because of the wrongdoing of one man. This was the second time Moses fell on his face and interceded before God. The first time was for Korah and those who had attacked him. At that time, the glory of God had not yet appeared, and there was still room for them to turn back. However, they refused to repent and continued in their rebellion. The second time was for the congregation of Israel who had gathered to watch the spectacle. This time, God's glory had already been manifested, and judgment could no longer be avoided. Moses asked God to have mercy on these people who had gathered there. Moses specifically called God "the God of the spirits of all flesh." This means that God knows the spirit of every person. Not everyone had a spirit of rebellion. Most of the people had been enticed to come to the doorway of the Tabernacle

because of the difficult circumstances and the suffering they were experiencing in their souls.

Verse 23-24: “So the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the congregation, saying, ‘Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.’”

It is very clear that God listened to Moses’ intercession and had mercy on the entire congregation of Israel. He therefore instructed Moses to tell them to move away from the area surrounding the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. God made it very clear that He was going to deal with the leaders of this rebellion—Korah, Dathan, and Abiram—and that He would deal with them in the area surrounding their tents. When the Israelites camped, they were arranged around the Tabernacle. Korah was from the Kohathite clan of the tribe of Levi, and his tent was located to the south of the Tabernacle. Dathan and Abiram were descendants of Reuben, and their tents were also located to the south of the Tabernacle, immediately next to the place where the Kohathites were camped. Therefore, the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were probably not far from one another.

Verse 25: “Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him.”

As soon as Moses heard God’s command, he knew that this matter could not end peacefully. In order to prevent innocent people from suffering because of the actions of others, Moses immediately set out for the tents of Dathan and Abiram. The elders of Israel also followed Moses, and they hurried to the tents of Dathan and Abiram.

Verse 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.”

Moses instructed the entire congregation of Israel to move away from the tents of these wicked men, because God's judgment was about to come upon them: the wicked men who had openly rebelled against God would be destroyed. Therefore, all the Israelites were to separate themselves from them, and they were not to touch anything that belonged to them, lest they be destroyed together with them. Moses knew that this time God was not merely going to deal with the three men who had taken the lead in the rebellion, but would also destroy everyone and everything associated with them.

Verse 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."

Everyone listened to Moses' command and moved away from the area surrounding the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and they watched from a distance. Dathan and Abiram had disobeyed Moses' command and refused to come to the doorway of the Tabernacle. Perhaps they had already discussed this with Korah beforehand: Korah would act openly, leading the 250 leaders in openly opposing Moses, while Dathan and Abiram would work behind the scenes, spreading negative and discouraging words throughout the camp of Israel.

Now, when Dathan and Abiram saw Moses coming, they brought their wives and children and stood at the doorway of their tent. They had heard Moses instruct everyone to move away from the area surrounding their tents. They did not yet know what was going to happen, but when they heard Moses call theirs the tents of wicked men, they must certainly have been displeased. So they immediately brought their wives and children and stood at the doorway of their tent. On the one hand, they wanted to protect their possessions; on the other hand, they were also challenging Moses, wanting to see exactly what he was going to do.

Saints, please take note: the Holy Spirit has planted a foreshadowing here. The passage specifically mentions only Dathan and Abiram, saying that they stood at the doorway of their tent with their wives and children, but it does not mention

Korah. Hidden within this foreshadowing is a great mystery. We will come back to this matter at the end of the message.

Verse 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. “

This was Moses speaking to the assembled congregation, expressing what was in his heart: “I have not done any of these things according to my own will. I am only a servant of the LORD. Whatever the LORD sends me to do, that is what I do. This group of people who have rebelled against God has questioned my authority as God’s representative and accused me of taking authority upon myself. But God will give you evidence to prove that I have been sent by God, and that everything I have done has been according to God’s will.”

Verse 29-30: “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. 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.”

Moses said to the congregation of Israel that these people had openly, systematically, and deliberately rebelled against God’s command. Now God had sentenced them to death, and the way they would die would be different from the way ordinary people die. This would be a sign to prove to you that I have been sent by God. The LORD God was going to do a new thing: He would cause the earth to open its mouth and swallow them up, together with everything that belonged to them, and they would descend alive into Hades.

Hades is the place that temporarily receives the souls of the dead after a person dies. According to Luke 16:19–31, Hades has two sections, separated by a great chasm. Those on one side cannot cross over to the other side, nor can those on the

other side cross over to this side. One section is a place of suffering in the flames; the other is a place of rest in Abraham's bosom. Abraham is the father of faith. Those who fall asleep in faith, when they enter Hades, will rest in Abraham's bosom, waiting for the time when Christ returns and they will be resurrected together and receive a spiritual body. But those who openly rebel against God will fall into the section of Hades where there is suffering, waiting for the judgment of the Great White Throne.

Here Moses prophesied that God was going to do a new thing: He would cause these rebellious people to experience a new kind of death. They would descend directly into Hades as punishment for their despising of the LORD.

Verse 31-32: "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."

God's judgment was very swift. As soon as Moses finished speaking, God immediately began to act. The ground where the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were located actually opened its mouth and swallowed them up, along with their households, their possessions, and everything that belonged to them. This was something that had never happened before. Once God began to execute judgment, there was absolutely no room for anyone to argue or protest. God is full of mercy and lovingkindness, but God is also righteous and holy. God is able to abundantly extend His lovingkindness, and He is also able to execute severe judgment. Therefore, Paul tells us in Romans 11:22, "Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness." Thank the Lord, we can all choose to remain in God's goodness. In this way, we can be spared from His severe judgment.

Verse 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.”

God executed judgment on the leaders of the rebellion, causing them and everything that belonged to them to descend alive into Hades. Ordinarily, a person goes to Hades only after dying, passing through a transitional stage. Whether a person of faith goes to the paradise of Hades or an unbeliever goes to the place of suffering in Hades, before death there is a conclusion to that person’s life, preparing him or her to enter the next stage. But Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, together with everything that belonged to them, did not pass through death. They entered Hades directly, and specifically the part of Hades where there is suffering.

I believe that the shock, the terror, the fear, and the despair of that moment were far beyond anything human beings could imagine. There was no time left for regret, remorse, or cries of anguish. The opening in the earth closed over them, right above their heads, and they could never be seen again. They were removed from the midst of the congregation of Israel; they all perished.

Verse 34: “Then all Israel who were around them fled at their cry, for they said, ‘Lest the earth swallow us up also!’”

This was truly a shocking lesson for the congregation of Israel. They learned that God is not to be treated lightly. The Israelites who were gathered around them saw what had happened and heard the sharp cries of anguish as they fell into Sheol. They all panicked and fled, afraid that they too would be swallowed up by the earth. As they were running away, they heard the cries suddenly stop, and the earth closed up again. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were no more. They had witnessed that when people collectively and openly rebel against God, it brings God’s swift and severe judgment.

Now that these leaders of the rebellion had been dealt with by God, was the story over? No. Even in the midst of God’s most severe judgment, He still left a small trace of mercy. In Numbers 26:5–11, we find the second census of the Israelites in

the wilderness. When the men of the tribe of Reuben were being counted, Dathan and Abiram were specifically mentioned. Numbers 26:10–11 says, “The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up together with Korah when that company died, when the fire devoured 250 men; and they became a sign. Nevertheless the children of Korah did not die.”

The Holy Spirit adds a very important note here: “Nevertheless the children of Korah did not die.” The Bible does not tell us why, but everyone who has experienced God’s grace knows that this was an expression of God’s mercy. Korah was one of the leaders of the rebellion, yet God did not put his children to death. The Holy Spirit left a foreshadowing here. About 500 years later, a very important figure appeared in the history of Israel: Samuel.

Samuel was a man who changed an era. He brought the Israelites from the period of the judges into the period of the kings. He was not born into a priestly family, yet according to the regulations of the Nazirite vow, he was dedicated to God from childhood. His mother sent him to Shiloh, where he learned to serve God under Eli, the high priest. Later, Samuel became the high priest of Israel. He was also a prophet and the last judge in Israel’s history, bearing the responsibility of governing the Israelites. He carried a threefold ministry of king, prophet, and priest, and thus became a type of Jesus Christ.

In 1 Samuel 1:1, it records that Samuel’s father, Elkanah, was an Ephraimite. However, in 1 Chronicles 6:33–38, the genealogy of the Kohathites is recorded. In 1 Chronicles 6:34, we see that Samuel was the son of Elkanah. Tracing this genealogy all the way back, we come to 1 Chronicles 6:38, “Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, the son of Israel.” Therefore, Samuel’s genealogy can be traced all the way back to Korah, then to Kohath, and then to Jacob. So Samuel was a descendant of Korah—the one who should have died, but who was preserved by God’s mercy. He was one of the descendants of Korah.

1 Chronicles 6:66 also records, “Now some of the families of the sons of Kohath were given cities from the territory of the tribe of Ephraim.” The Levites originally had to be scattered among the various tribes of Israel, and some of the families of

the Kohathites lived in cities belonging to the tribe of Ephraim. Samuel's father, Elkanah, lived in the hill country of Ephraim, but he was a Levite and belonged to the Kohathite clan. Korah wanted to have the priestly ministry, so he took the lead in rebelling against Moses and Aaron. As a result, he was swallowed up by the earth. Yet in God's mercy, Korah's children were preserved. Five hundred years later, one of his descendants took advantage of the way God had opened and, according to the regulations of the Nazirite vow, became a high priest who served God. God also used him as a great man who changed an era.

Not only that, in 1 Chronicles 6:33, we see that Heman was Samuel's grandson, and he was one of those who sang in the temple. In the Book of Psalms, there is a very special group of psalms known as the psalms of the sons of Korah. There are twelve of them in total: Psalms 42–49, 84, 85, 87, and 88. The authors of these psalms originally could have been identified by their own names, but instead, they were willing to be called the descendants of Korah. This group of psalms is therefore called the psalms of the sons of Korah. The name Korah was associated with a notorious figure in the history of Israel, yet his descendants were willing to be called the descendants of Korah. This was to display that even after God's severe judgment, there was still great mercy and abundant grace. God desired to use the mouths of these people who should have died to sing praises to His glory. This group of psalms expresses a deep thanksgiving that can be sung only by those who have experienced tremendous grace, and a supreme praise that can be sung only by those who have experienced such great grace.

I would like to invite the saints to read with me one of the psalms of the sons of Korah, Psalm 84:

“How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts!

My soul longs, yes, even faints For the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

Even the sparrow has found a home, And the swallow a nest for herself, Where she may lay her young— Even Your altars, O LORD of hosts, My King and my God.

Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; They will still be praising You.

Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, Whose heart is set on pilgrimage.

As they pass through the Valley of Baca, They make it a spring; The rain also covers it with pools.

They go from strength to strength; Each one appears before God in Zion.

O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; Give ear, O God of Jacob!

O God, behold our shield, And look upon the face of Your anointed.

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.

For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold From those who walk uprightly.

O LORD of hosts, Blessed is the man who trusts in You!"

In verse 10 it says: "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." The "tents of wickedness" are precisely the words Moses used when he announced God's judgment. In 1 Chronicles 9:19, we see that among the descendants of Korah, some were assigned to guard the doors of the Tabernacle. This verse expresses the thanksgiving in their hearts and the praise in their hearts. The descendants of Korah were a special group of people who were especially full of thanksgiving and praise and who opened their mouths to sing. They understood that although they had been born in the tents of wickedness, because of God's great mercy and grace, they had been saved and had become those who guarded the doors of the Tabernacle. They expressed their heart before God: There may be all kinds of earthly enjoyment in the tents of the wicked, but they did not want to possess those things. They would rather be doorkeepers in the house of God.

Dear brothers and sisters, actually, we are all descendants of Korah. According to what we are in ourselves, we are all wicked people. Yet Christ bore our sins and died on the cross in our place, and only then could we receive redemption. Having received such great grace, how could we remain silent? We should all be like the descendants of Korah and become people who open our mouths to sing praises.

Let us pray together: Lord, yes, we want to be like the descendants of Korah and offer to You the deepest thanksgiving, and also offer to You our highest praise. We are all sinners, dead in our trespasses and sins. Yet You had mercy on us. You rescued us from our sins, gave us a completely new life, and placed us in Your church, where we can learn to serve together with the saints. We also want to say that we do not want to dwell in the tents of the world. We would rather wait and serve as doorkeepers at the entrance of the church, because the church is Your house. Bless the church where You have placed me. We pray in the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ.