

Lesson 1 – Numbers 15-17

Text: Numbers 15-17

Main Characters: God, Moses, Aaron, Korah, Dathan, Abiram, Israelites

Key Passages:

- Numbers 15:38-40 – God commanded the Israelites to make tassels on their garments in order to help them remember the commandments of the Lord.
- Numbers 17:10-11 – Aaron's budded rod was proof that God had chosen his family as priests.

Main Storyline:

After being driven away from Canaan by the Amalekites and Canaanites, the people began to wander, just as God said they would. At some point, God spoke to Moses and gave him additional instructions regarding sacrifices. God makes a point to emphasize that the laws of the covenant applied equally to everyone, whether they were a native Israelite or a foreigner who had joined them.

One day, while they were wandering, the Israelites found one of their own people gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. This was a clear violation of the law God given regarding the Sabbath (no work was to be done, Exodus 20:8ff). As punishment, the man was brought before the congregation of Israel, and God told Moses that the man needed to be stoned for his sin. Israel did as God instructed, and the man was executed. God did not always inflict this punishment, but He saw it was important to demonstrate the seriousness of sin and its consequences. God went on to instruct Moses to tell the people to attach tassels to their clothing to remind them of His commandments.

During the wandering, four men, Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and On, gathered 250 men together and began to rebel. They rebuked Moses and Aaron for "exalting themselves above the assembly of the Lord." They did not feel that Moses and Aaron should have authority over the rest of the congregation, nor that Aaron's family should be the only priests. Moses challenged them to appear before the Lord the next day, when He would choose who the leaders and priests would be. Further, he rebuked Korah, the leader of the rebellion, because Korah was a Kohathite, which meant that he was in charge of the sacred furnishings of the tabernacle, and yet still was not content with his position of holiness. He also pointed out that since Aaron did not make himself a priest, Korah should not have been angry with him.

The next day, the 250 men gathered at the tabernacle with their censers and incense, as Moses had commanded. Then the Lord appeared to them and told Moses and Aaron to get away from all of the men, for He was about to kill them with fire. Moses and Aaron begged God not to kill all of them, as there was only one man who had sinned by inciting them (Korah). God told Moses to get everyone away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (On apparently had disassociated himself from the rebellion). Moses did so and also prophesied that these men and their families would be killed by God to show that they were rebellious by rising against him and Aaron. Just as Moses said, the earth opened up and swallowed the men and their families into it, killing all of them. The next day, some people complained about what had happened, and God sent a plague on the people, killing 14,700 Israelites.

In order to head off any additional rebellion, God told Moses to get a rod from each of the twelve leaders of the tribes. God said that one of the rods would blossom to show who was chosen to be the priest. Moses obeyed, and added to the 12 rods Aaron's rod. Aaron's rod budded and blossomed overnight, and God told Moses to keep the rod with the ark as a sign against rebellion.

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) Our hearts are inclined to do evil; we must constantly be trained and reminded to serve God.
- 2.) Rebellion against the Lord will not be tolerated; it will be punished severely.