

THE CHURCH IN NEW YORK CITY CHILDREN'S MEETING LESSON

LESSON #19

DATE: January 26, 2020

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 should separate themselves completely from rebellious ones.

MEMORY VERSES TO CHOOSE FROM: Romans 13:1-2 (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. 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); 3722 (Jesus, I am listening); 5502 (We are the Lord's people); 7603 (We love to please our Mom and Dad); 8308 BSS Moses Vol. 2, #8 (Do All Things Without Murmuring); 8317 BSS Moses Vol. 2, #17 (In the ten commandments); 2829 (Honor and Respect for Authority)

CRAFT IDEA: Use yarn, glitter glue, pipe cleaners, dried pasta or other materials to spell out O-B-E-Y.

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. Ask the children what **rebellion** means. A simple definition is the action of resisting authority or control.

CONTENT: In the past few lessons, we heard about the many failures of the children of Israel, including murmuring, criticism, lust and unbelief. In this lesson, 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. *For younger children, we can choose to tell just one of the stories instead of both.*

Miriam and Aaron speak against Moses. Miriam was Moses' older sister (Exo. 2:1-4) and Aaron was Moses' older brother (Exo. 7:7). Even though Moses was younger, he 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. 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, and after that, she was healed.

Korah and his followers rebel against Moses. There was another rebellion which involved a man named Korah from the tribe of Levi, three other men named Dathan and Abiram and On (from the tribe of Reuben) and 250 leaders of the people. They went to Moses and Aaron, challenging their authority saying that all the assembly are holy, and why do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of Jehovah? When Moses heard this, he fell on his face. He told the sons of Levi that it was they who took too much on themselves. Moses asked Korah, “Is it a small thing that God has separated you from the assembly of Israel 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.

God’s Judgment. 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, 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 warn the assembly to get away from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and not even to touch anything which belongs to them. So the people and their families did. And Moses said, “By this you shall know that Jehovah has sent me to do all these works, if Jehovah brings about a new thing, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, then you will understand that these men have despised Jehovah.” And as soon as he finished speaking, the ground that was under them split open, and the earth swallowed them up, along with their households 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 leaders of the people.

The next day 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. The people of Israel had angered God and He was about to destroy them. A plague began to destroy the people until Aaron took the censer as Moses had commanded him and ran into the midst of the assembly and made expiation for the people. [Expiation means to satisfy a wrong.] 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. 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: *Please do not try to cover all the applications. Depending on the age group of the children, just one or two applications may be sufficient.*

- **We need to recognize God’s representatives.** We can see from this story that rebellion is a very serious sin and offense toward God. 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 by talking back to them or by not obeying them. 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 be careful to want more than what God has allowed for us. 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.

Adapted from the Church in New York City Children’s Meeting lessons: 11/27/88; 2/4/96; 2/1/04, 2/7/10; 2/1/15