

Sedition in the Camp
Numbers 16
February 21, 2021

Numbers 16:1-3

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 action, and they rose up before Moses, together with some of the sons of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, chosen in the assembly, men of renown. They assembled together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You have gone far enough, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"

It begs the question: Why do we challenge authority and leadership?

Exodus 19:5-6a

Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Numbers 15:37-40

The LORD also spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and tell them that they shall make for themselves tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and that they shall put on the tassel of each corner a cord of blue. "It shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot, so that you may remember to do all My commandments and be holy to your God.

Context

The tassels are reminders not to follow your own heart or your own eyes so that you remember to do all my commandments and be holy to your God! Korah says, "look, I've got my tassels, I am holy to God. I am just as holy as the high priest Aaron! In Exodus 28:31 we read that the robe of Aaron, the one and only high priest was to be all blue! At least one thread in in each tassel was to be blue! Is Korah making something out of this?

Numbers 16:8–10

Moses also said to Korah, “Now listen, you Levites! Isn’t it enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the rest of the Israelite community and brought you near himself to do the work at the LORD’s tabernacle and to stand before the community and minister to them? He has brought you and all your fellow Levites near himself, but now you are trying to get the priesthood too.

Numbers 16:11

The LORD is the one you and your followers are really revolting against! For who is Aaron that you are complaining about him?”

Numbers 16:12–14

Then Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, but they replied, “We refuse to come before you! Isn’t it enough that you brought us out of Egypt, a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us here in this wilderness, and that you now treat us like your subjects? What’s more, you haven’t brought us into another land flowing with milk and honey. You haven’t given us a new homeland with fields and vineyards. Are you trying to fool these men? We will not come.”

Earth swallowed all of them! Then fire from the Lord consumed the 250 big shots who were swinging their incense before the Lord. And guess what? People still rebelled the next day vs 41:

Numbers 16:41

But the very next morning the whole community of Israel began muttering again against Moses and Aaron, saying, “You have killed the LORD’s people!”

Leadership is especially hard right now—always has been! Go back to question in the beginning: Why do we challenge authority and leadership? It’s in our DNA going all the way back to the Garden of Eden!

C.S. Lewis said

“Your choice is not between authority and egalitarianism.” If you will not have authority, you will have tyranny. (When people begin to tear down every legitimate vestige of authority, the strongest bullies win with brute force!)
Jesus always submits 1 Corinthians 15:28

In the end Romans 13:1 puts it well: there is no authority except that which comes from God; and Jesus himself tells us his authority comes from the Father Jesus revolutionized the concept of authority.

Mark 10:42-45

So Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."