

## REBELLING AGAINST GOD

As Israel approached Sinai on the way to Canaan they murmured against Moses and Aaron because of hunger (Exo. 16:1–3). It is important for us to notice that Moses correctly perceived that this murmuring actually represented rebellion against God: “Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord” (v. 8). This is similar to the later rebellion of Aaron and Miriam against Moses (Num. 12). The rebellion of the 250 princes of Israel against Moses and Aaron led by Korah was likewise counted as rebellion against God Himself: “Therefore thou and all thy company are gathered together against Jehovah” (16:11).

Israel demonstrated the same behavior again much later in her history when the people came to Samuel, their judge, and demanded a king. In his depression over their rejection of him and his leadership, the Lord told Samuel, “They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Sam. 8:7). The Jews had a long history of rebellion against and persecution of God’s messengers, the prophets (Mat. 5:10–12). Stephen charged his auditors with “resisting the Holy Spirit” by betraying and murdering the Christ, which is the very treatment their fathers had given the prophets who foretold His coming (Acts 7:51–52). In all of these cases one point is crystal clear: When one opposes God’s chosen leaders or spokesmen, he opposes God himself.

This principle has not changed. God decreed that a plurality of Scripturally qualified men, called “elders,” “bishops,” and “pastors” should be over each congregation. Paul stated to the elders of the church in Ephesus:

Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops [overseers, KJV], to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood (Acts 20:28).

The author of Hebrews added concerning these men:

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you (Heb. 13:17).

Christians who refuse to submit to Scripturally qualified elders who are doing the work God gave them to do are rebelling against God who placed these men over local congregations. Further, those who teach that elders have no authority in the local congregation are following in the steps of Korah who fomented rebellion against God by rejecting the authority of Moses.

Further still, when faithful men preach the Word of God and spiritual pygmies murmur and complain about the messenger and try (sometimes successfully) to run him off, they are crying out against God. It is not really the messenger they oppose, but the message—and the message is from Christ. Those who receive not the Word of Christ reject the Christ Himself (John 12:48). Likewise, Saul of Tarsus learned in dramatic fashion that those who persecute God's faithful servants persecute the Christ Himself (Acts 9:4–5). Such are too cowardly to literally shake their fists in the face of God for all to see, so they simply try to silence His messengers (which amounts to the same thing).

Make no mistake about it—all murmuring and rebellion against the message or the messengers of God is nothing less than murmuring and rebellion against God Himself, regardless of the time or place. God will not open the earth today to swallow such rebels after the manner of Korah and his disciples, but their eternal end will be far worse (2 The. 1:7–9).

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