

Often it is wise to meet disaffection head on and seek a settlement. Moses calls upon Korah and his followers to appear before the Lord, together with Aaron, in order that God Himself may decide who is in the right (4~~x~~-11). Moses also summoned Dathan and Abiram (12), but, filled with bitter hatred, they reviled him and refused to appear (12-14). Moses declared to the Lord that he never had wronged them in any way (15).

Korah and his followers were summoned to appear at the tabernacle with incense in their censers (16-17). When they came (18) they brought the whole congregation with them as partisans (19). The Lord threatened to destroy the entire congregation except for Moses and Aaron (20-21), who fell on their faces and besought Him not to do so (22). Then the Lord told Moses to order the congregation to go up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (23-23). Moses went to Dathan and Abiram, followed by the elders of Israel (25), and called on the people to depart from the tents of these wicked men (26). After they had gone up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan and Abiram on every side, Dathan and Abiram and their entire families came out and stood in the door of their tents (27). Moses declared that it would be proof that God had really sent him if the earth were to open its mouth and swallow up the men and their possessions (28-30). This happened as he predicted (31-34); also fire came from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense (35).

This running summary will help in gaining a clear idea of the events described in this section. There is only one point needing further explanation, the references to the tabernacle of the offenders in verses 24 and 27. The word used here is mishkan, which is translated 'tabernacle' 119 times, and which in all but three of these refers to God's tabernacle. However, the literal meaning of the word is 'swelling place,' and it is translated 'dwelling' six times, 'swelling place' six times, and 'tent' once (Ct.1.8, 'beside the shepherds' tents'). In all thirteen of these instances it refers to ordinary dwellings, and has no reference to a place of worship. It would avoid confusion if it were translated 'swelling place'