

Numbers 12, Part 3 - Thursday, August 19th, 2010

- Tonight we will complete Numbers chapter 12 after having spent the last two weeks studying this most interesting passage of scripture.
- By way of explanation as to why we allocated three weeks for just one chapter, it's because I've sensed the Lord leading me to do this.
- Now, having said that, I'll say this; I'm trusting that you'll have a better understanding of this at the conclusion of our time tonight.
- In other words, this three part teaching is not because it's the hour for the message rather, I believe that it's the message for the hour.

12:1 Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman.2 So they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" And the LORD heard it.3(Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.) 4 Suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!" So the three came out.5 Then the LORD came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward.6 Then He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. 7 Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. 8 I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?" 9 So the anger of the LORD was aroused against them, and He departed.10 And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow. Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was, a leper.11 So Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my lord! Please do not lay this sin on us, in which we have done foolishly and in which we have sinned.12 Please do not let her be as one dead, whose flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother's womb!" 13 So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "Please heal her, O God, I pray!" 14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "If her father had but spit in her face, would she not be shamed seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp seven days, and afterward she may be received again."15 So Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days, and the people did not journey till Miriam was brought in again.16 And afterward the people moved from Hazeroth and camped in the Wilderness of Paran.

- There is so much that is woven into the fabric of these 16 verses, and it's because of this that I would like to look at two profound truths.
- Painted on the canvas of the text before us is personal application, and prophetic information. First, we'll see the personal application.
- I found fourteen invaluable and practical life lessons that we can learn from this chapter by way of personal application to our lives.

1. As with Moses' brother and sister, so too are those closest to us, as our brothers and sisters in Christ, the ones who gossip about us.

Matthew 13:57 And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor." NIV

2. As with Miriam's criticism and racism in gossiping about her brother's bride, so too is our gossiping usually packaged with prejudice.

3. As with Moses' Gentile bride not being the only issue, so too is our gossiping a smoke screen that actually covers the real issue.

4. As with the real issue being their envy and pride, so too do we gossip and become critical because we're full of pride and envy.

- It's so ironic because as one commentator noted; "Miriam and Aaron - as is often the case - were accusing Moses of the very same sin motivating them to make the accusation; "pride."

James 4:1-3 1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. NIV

5. As with their gossiping and backbiting, so too do we devour one another when we seek to exalt ourselves and tear down others.

Galatians 5:13-15 13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! NKJV

6. As with God hearing Miriam and Aaron's gossiping, so too can we be assured that He has heard when one asks; "have you heard?"

Proverbs 18:8 The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts. NIV

Proverbs 20:19 A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much. NIV

Proverbs 16:28 A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends. NIV

Proverbs 11:13 A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret. NIV

A man by the name of J. C. Bays told this story: "One day when I was about eight years old, I was playing by an open window and I heard Mrs. Brown confide in my mother a serious problem concerning her son. When Mrs. Brown was gone, my mother, realizing I had heard everything, said to me, 'If Mrs. Brown had left her purse here today, would we give it to someone else?' 'Of course not,' I replied. Then she continued: 'Mrs. Brown left something far more precious to her than her purse today. That story is not ours to give to anyone else. It's still hers, even though she left it. So we should not give it to anyone else. Do you understand?' I did. And I still understand that when someone leaves a bit of confidence or careless gossip with me, it is his—not mine to give to anyone else."

7. As with God dealing with this "suddenly," so too can we know that God takes this matter seriously, and will deal with it suddenly

8. As with God removing His presence and Miriam being struck with leprosy, so too is it so for me and you, because to gossip is to sin.

9. As with God seemingly judging so harshly, so too do we need to understand that to do what Miriam did was satanic in its very nature.

10. As with Aaron begging Moses to spare Miriam, so too will the leprosy of slander eat away at us, and others, leading to a death.

11. As with Aaron's character flaw, so too are we prone to fall prey to peer pressure and join the crowd to stir up the fires of gossip.

Proverbs 26:20 Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down. NIV

James 3:3-6 3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 4 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. 5 Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. NIV

12. As with Moses crying out to God to heal Miriam, so too should we pray for those who speak evil against us and falsely accuse us.

13. As with Miriam being isolated from the camp, so too does gossiping and slandering others isolate us from God, and God's people.

14. As with the Israelites not moving until Miriam was restored, so too does gossiping and slandering hold others back from moving on.

- Let me hasten to say that right about now we're all feeling just a little it'sy bitsy convicted, just a little! To that, let me say this about that.
- First, this teaching is in no way directed at anyone, or any situation in the church presently, but it can protect us from this in the future.
- It's for this reason I deem it necessary to make this statement: we here at Calvary Chapel Kaneohe are taking ground for the Kingdom.
- As the pastor of this wonderful church, I don't want to be ignorant of Satan's devices but do need to be as shrewd as a serpent.

One commentator said it this way; "Satan is the inventor and initiator of gossip. In the very beginning Satan used slander in an attempt to destroy the reputation of God in the eyes of Eve by accusing God of evil motives (Genesis 3:1-5). He accused Job of weakness before God (Job 1:1). So it's no wonder that he is called "the devil" or "the accuser." Christians who gossip are being used by Satan to destroy the church from within. Knowingly or unknowingly, Christians are pawns of Satan when they accuse brethren and create distrust and disunity within the family of God; they, like puppets, are being manipulated in an attempt to frustrate the mission of Christ. We must recognize the destruction that gossip brings to the church; not only must we keep our own mouths closed, but we must also close the mouths of others. Since Satan uses gossip to destroy a congregation, we must not allow it to go unchecked."

One wrote an interesting parable to illustrate the irreparable damage that gossip and slander can cause someone individually and the church corporately. It goes like this: A young man spread a rumor that later proved to be misleading about an elderly preacher. The rumor split the church and created a scandal. The young man later apologized and asked what he could do to atone for his wrong. The preacher took a feather pillow under his arm and escorted the boy to the top of the church building. The wind tugged at their hair and flapped at their clothing as they looked at the village and the fields below. The preacher handed the young man the pillow and said, "Rip it open." The boy was perplexed, but he did as he was told. Instantly the wind seized the feathers, tossing them in flurries about their heads, then spread far and wide as thousands of feathers began falling beyond the village settling on sidewalks, in hedges, streams, trees, and among deep grass. "Now," said the preacher, "go and collect all the feathers and put them back in the pillow." "All of them?" "All of them!" "But that's impossible," said the young man. Placing his hand on the boy's shoulder, the preacher said kindly, "I know. I wanted you to realize how impossible it is to retrieve a rumor once it is made." Yes, gossip causes irreparable damage.

- Let me explain it and illustrate it this way; it's like an anti-lock braking system on a car, in that it can keep us out of an accident.
- Cars have both active and passive safety features that are designed to keep us out of an accident and protect us if we're in an accident.
- ABS is the active safety feature that keeps us out of one, and the airbags are the passive safety feature that can save us if we're in one.

- Now, here's how this applies to this teaching; we need to activate our anti-lock brakes to keep us from the potential fatality of gossiping.
- In the event that we're in a collision of gossiping, then the airbag needs to be deployed in order to reduce the potential for serious injury.
- Also, when there is a serious accident, our posture needs to be that of a paramedic treating the wounds, not a police citing the fault.

- I want to end on a more edifying note by taking the brush of typology and painting a prophetic portrait of Jesus in Moses.

MOSES A CHRIST-LIKE PORTRAIT OF JESUS

1. Were both blameless in having a gentile bride
2. Were both falsely accused and slandered by the brethren
3. Were both envied by the religious leaders (Prophetess & High Priest – Pharisees & Sadducees)
4. Were both the “only way” “only ones” that God spoke to and God spoke through
5. Were both revealed to and revealed through in “a pillar of cloud” (Mount of Transfiguration)
6. Were both the humblest men who ever walked the face of the earth
7. Were both innocent of the slanderous charges against them
8. Were both persecuted for righteousness
9. Were both more than a Prophet
10. Were both able to pray for the forgiveness of those who sinned against them
11. Were both able to bring restoration and salvation after completing a “7” day-year period
12. Were both able to move on and allow entrance to the “promised land”