

Numbers 12:1-8, Part 1 - Thursday, August 5th, 2010

- This chapter is perhaps one of the most practical and prophetic passages in Numbers and the Old Testament related to us as a church.
- The reason I say this is that it deals with practical principles of leadership within the church, and a future prophetic picture of the church.
- We'll deal mainly with the practical application, then, we'll see how it's ever so beautifully woven into the fabric of prophetic information.
- In chapter 11 we saw the catastrophic consequences of complaining against the Lord by the mixed multitudes and the children of Israel.
- If chapter 11 was about the catastrophic consequences of complaining, then chapter 12 is about the gross consequences of gossiping.

1 Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman.

- It's interesting to take note of the fact that Moses' older sister Miriam's name is listed first before Moses' older brother Aaron.
- The reason for this as some have suggested is that Miriam took the lead in speaking against and gossiping about her brother Moses.
- Also, notice that she started gossiping about how her brother had married an "Ethiopian" wife, because she was not an Israelite.
- One has suggested that her gossiping was riddled with racism and prejudice in that Moses' wife was not of their race as a Gentile bride.

2a So they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?"

- Now we get down and dirty with the nitty gritty of what this is really about. In other words, Moses' Gentile bride wasn't the only issue.
- It seems that the real issue had as much to do with Moses and his leadership, as it did with Moses and his bride. Both were rejected.
- Miriam is accusing Moses of being proud and arrogant because he fashions himself as being the only one that God speaks through.

- Now this is where it gets interesting because they basically say; God doesn't only speak through Moses, He speaks through them to.
- This really exposes the root of most slander and gossip. At the core you'll usually find the exalting of self by tearing down another.
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- Gossipers accuse anyone of everything to bring them to nothing so they themselves will have anything to feel like they're something.
- The reason for this is envy! Envy differs from jealousy. Envy wants what others have, jealousy doesn't want to lose what it already has.

"[Envy] of his power was at the bottom of their complaining. How good a man Moses must have been when even those who knew him best could find no fault with him except that he had married a foreign lady, against whom they had nothing to allege but that she was an Ethiopian....Moses must have felt the jealousy of his brother and sister very keenly, but he did not fight his own battle, he left the matter to God, who observed with indignation the wanton envy of the ungenerous pair."

Charles Spurgeon

- It's important to understand how their envious slander of their brother Moses was fueled by a desire to be the only one instead of him.

"Every now and then we hear some simpleton or other talking against a 'one-man ministry,' when it has been a one-man ministry from the commencement of the world to the present day; and whenever you try to have any other form of ministry, and doing it thoroughly and heartily and independently and bravely in the sight of God, you very soon run upon quicksands."

Charles Spurgeon

2b ...And the LORD heard it.

- Notice that we're not told if Moses himself heard it. We're only told that the Lord heard it, perhaps because that's all that really matters.
- I would suggest as Spurgeon commented, that Moses had "caught wind of it." We can usually tell when others covet what we have.
- Be that as it may, the lesson here is quite clear; a gossip will never go to the person, they will only gossip to others about the person.

3(Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)

- Notice that this has been parenthetically included in the text so as to allow us a better understanding of who and how Moses was.
- We're told that Moses was a very humble man, in so much that he was more humble than any man who was on the face of the earth.
- Now, some would ask since Moses, under the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote the Pentateuch, did he in fact write this? No!
- It's been suggested that this verse was recorded subsequent to Moses' death, which makes it possible that it could have been Joshua.

"Some other hand has inserted this verse under divine direction. Moses would not have said it of himself, but the Lord took care that somebody else should record it, for He honors those who honor Him. As Moses was meek he did not strive for himself, and therefore the Lord became his champion."

Charles Spurgeon

- Suffice it to say; regardless of when, or by whom it was added in the text, we need to know this about Moses, given the accusations.
- Now, having said that let me say this; it has also been suggested that this may be describing Moses' condition as well as his character.

"I think the word is not rightly understood; "anav," which we translate meek, comes from "anah," to act upon, to humble, depress, afflict, and is translated so in many places in the Old Testament; and in this sense it should be understood here: 'Now this man Moses was depressed or afflicted more than any man of that land.'"

Adam Clarke

4 Suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!" So the three came out.
- Yikes! You know that this can't be good! Obviously, we can see that the Lord took this very seriously, thus He dealt with this suddenly.
- It's interesting to note both how and even why God dealt with this in this way and took this so seriously and dealt with it so suddenly.

- First, notice how God deals with it. He has all three of them come out of the Tabernacle so Moses can face his red-faced accusers.
- We can't be sure what Miriam and Aaron are thinking at this point, however, one commentator brought up an interesting thought.
- They may have been so full of themselves as to think that God was actually going to set Moses straight for thinking so highly of himself.
- The reason I call them red-faced accusers, was because they may have either been red-faced because of remorse, or anger, or both.

- That may be "how" God deals with this, but why does God deal with this in this way. I believe it's because of how much God hates this.

Proverbs 6:16-19 16 There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: 17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, 18 a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, 19 a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers. NIV

- The reason why God hates this so much is because of what this does to His people. It's for this same reason that God hates divorce.

"The suddenness of the interference marks the importance of the matter, and the Lord's anger concerning it." Charles Spurgeon

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?"

- Get em God!!! I love it when God defends us like He does here for Moses. Keep in mind that everything they accuse Moses of is false!
- These verses could be a teaching unto themselves because it's packed with so much as it relates to those who God chooses and uses.
- In the interest of time, I'll just list a few of them for your perusal in your own personal study, it's who and why God sees Moses like this.

1. Moses was a humble man after being humbled by God
2. Moses was a reluctant man when he was called by God
3. Moses was a faithful man when he was spoken to by God
4. Moses was a teachable man and was thus chosen by God
5. Moses was a gracious man when he was defended by God