

Numbers Chapter 12 Commentary

1 And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. 2 And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it.

As we continue our study from the previous chapter we see that the same principle of unrest and lust continues. We saw in the previous chapter; the complaining started with the mixed multitude, spilled over into the children of Israel and got to Moses, God's chosen leader for his people, and now in this chapter; we see that this leprous cancer has gotten into the ministry of the priesthood.

We see that in the spirit of lust for power, and pride placing them above over another, that Miriam and Aaron (Moses' brother and sister, his very own family) speak out against Moses, God's called leader. They use the ploy of Moses being married to an Ethiopian woman, but we see in verse 2 "**And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?**" the real subject of their accusations, and the real reason they want to set Moses aside.

Application for us today: **1Ti 5:19 "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witness."** Not only should we not receive an accusation, but we also should not make an accusation. We should only state, and repeat, proven facts and that done only in reason. Most things are best left unsaid because they only gender strife and confusion, unless there is biblical error.

Notice that God heard it. No one had to run tell him. God was present with Moses and heard their complaint. Warning to us today; God not only hears us when we complain and murmur; He knows the intents of our very hearts as seen in: **Heb 4:12 "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."**

As seen in these texts below; we should be praying for our leaders and those who rule over us, instead of finding fault and complaining, and/or lustng for prideful, personal, positions in fleshly pride.

Heb 13:7 "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." We notice here; you are to follow the spoken word; you are not to worship or follow the fleshly man. "**whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.**" We also see that the walks and talks of the minister should be in agreement. If the minister is exercising in faith and preaching the truth, and these agree, follow that conversation that is set forth both by walks and talks.

1Ti 2:1-2; 1 "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." Not only are we instructed here to pray for our spiritual leaders but also for our national/governmental leaders. We should remember that we are first and foremost serving God, and through that service to God we serve one another.

3 (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)

One of the definitions of meek is humble. Thus, we get the picture that Moses is not misusing his position, in which God has placed him, to lord it over anyone. God says here that Moses was the meekest man on earth. This reminds me of some instructional scripture in: **1Co 1:27-29; 27 "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence."** In this text, we see; being called to serve God in any godly position in life should be humbling to us. First and foremost, we are to be humbled, knowing that God himself is speaking to us to accomplish his will in our lives. God makes this plain in: **Heb 13:21 "Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."** It is also obvious who is to get the glory, and it is not the man.

4 And the LORD spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out.

The word suddenly means instantly. This shows the omnipresence of God. He knew what was said, the intent with which it was said, the instant it was said, and He instantly replied. This is a reminder to us; we should keep our tongues and consider well before we speak.

God commanded them to come out from the tabernacle, why? It was not a place that sin could be abided. The very presence of sin had to be removed from the tabernacle at once. Another reason is that God is going to show forth his judicial wrath in front of everyone, to instill the reverent fear of God Almighty in the hearts of all.

Consider this text, which demonstrates in New Testament times the same principle: **1Ti 5:19 "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. 20 Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. 21 I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality."** If sin is indeed present; it should be dealt with speedily and in accordance with the word of God. Notice, the latter clauses and observe; there is to be no lordship among God's people. "**that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.**"

5 And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. 6 And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.

The visible presence of God came down in the pillar of cloud. God called out Aaron and Miriam and set them straight on the voice of their complaint. He tells them, explicitly, how he will announce to any person he is called to be a prophet. This was the reminder to them both that God had not called them to be prophets.

It is a reminder to us that we are all called to serve the plan and purpose of God, not the one we would choose for ourselves. God will certainly make every one that is called to service in a particular office in the church their calling. He demonstrated this in NT scripture in: **Ac 13:2 "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto**

I have called them." and as we have already seen in Numbers, in the appointment of the heads of the tribes of Israel and those set apart to assist Moses; God did the choosing.

7 My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. 8 With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

God tells Aaron and Miriam; He doesn't speak to Moses in visions and dreams as he would to a prophet, but in a more personal and visible manner, because God has not called Moses to be a prophet, God has called Moses to be the spiritual head, and mouthpiece of God to Israel. Moses is one to whom he speaks face to face, not in the parabolic speech of prophesy but in plain language. Moses is God's directed voice to Israel, and this is a privilege shared by no other in Israel at the present time.

God says to Aaron and Miriam; you knew this already, and yet you were not afraid to speak against Moses my servant. You are being presumptuously defiant to me, the God of all the earth. They are fixing to be brought to a new understanding of God's judicial wrath and judgment. I don't think they will soon forget this mistake they have made.

This unique position of Moses, his calling to lead God's people to the Promised Land, and the means of communication with God, is a prophetic picture of the incarnation of Christ, and how God will use Jesus and speak with Jesus incarnate.

It also demonstrates, for us today, how we are to deal with the called and chosen minister of the gospel. Consider these texts in context of what we have already seen in this chapter so far:

- **Mr 10:43 "But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:"** (the meekness of the servant)
- **1Ti 5:19 "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses."** This text tells us; there will always be those who complain against God's true ministers.

It warns us to not believe the whining's of these talebearers, but to search out and know the truth. Once truth is established, then, and only then, are accusations brought to a minister of God, and with at least two, and preferably three witnesses.

9 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed. 10 And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous. 11 And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. 12 Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb.

There is a double lesson here, I believe. We see that God departed from them and two things happened at once.

- Miriam became leprous: This gives us the picture of sin (and I believe the source of this sin) pointing to death, and being driven out from the presence of God and his people. There is much scripture to support this from both the Old and New testaments.
- Aaron, thou he was high priest, was in sin, a state of rejecting and defying God, and God presence being withdrawn; he could not serve in that office until he was made right again. He

was helpless to do anything to help himself, or Miriam. See how he made confession for both of them and begged forgiveness of Moses.

Thus, the only thing to be done was to turn to the one they had falsely accused, who was their intercessor to God, and ask for his prayers for the mercy of God. Now they understand, beyond a shadow of doubt, that they are helpless, and powerless, before God and his chosen servant. They also remember, without doubt, that Moses is God's chosen one, anointed by God himself, to do his bidding.

They understood that with God's departure from them, they could not even plead to God and must turn to the only source of help they knew, the mediator Moses to plead to God for mercy.

This is a picture of the eternal plan of salvation in that when we understand exactly where we are without God; and that without Christ we have nowhere to turn as seen in: ***Joh 6:68 "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."*** May God's merciful presence never be withdrawn from us in time or eternity.

13 And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.

Praise the Lord! There is a "**willing**" mediator on hand, both for Aaron and Miriam, and for us today.

14 And the LORD said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again.

"**If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days?**" God points out to us; the sin of Miriam and Aaron is like spitting in the face of God. We see in this, a picture of what happens, in time today, when someone sins against God, there is God's judicial judgment. For Miriam it was to be leprous and unclean for seven days. Our own sins often bring us into the judicial judgment of God, in time, and we have to suffer the consequence of our sin, here in time, until God's wrath is abated.

We know and understand; if we are God's children, we will ultimately be forgiven all our sins. Notice, God did not cause the earth to open and send them straight to hell as he did in ***Nu 16:30 "But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD."***

God caused great evil to plague them for seven days. Why? Because, they were indeed chosen by God to be saved, or He would have exacted an eternal penalty. The same is true for us in time; God does not exact eternal judgment against us, because Jesus Christ has already paid the eternal penalty. Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!

15 And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.

We see sin sent out of the camp until the time of restitution. We see Israel at a standstill until all of God's people are together in the camp again. This gives us to understand; we should have such love for our fellowship, that we stand still and pray for the restoration of those driven out of the camp.

This gives us the prophetic picture of the end of time, and the final gathering of all God's people into one body to be carried away to their eternal abode.

16 And afterward the people removed from Hazereth, and pitched in the wilderness of Paran.

Hazereth by definition means: *a yard (as inclosed by a fence); also a hamlet (as similarly surrounded with walls).*

Paran by definition means: *to gleam, embellish; to boast; also to explain, make clear oneself; to shake a tree: beautify, boast self, go over the boughs, glorify (self), glory, vaunt self.*

We see in these definitions a picture of future events. Take the definition of Hazereth, the place they were and from whence they went, and see; under the law service, God's people were a chosen group that was kept and protected by the hand of God, as long as they were in obedience to Him. We can also make application of this definition to the Church of Salvation by Grace today.

When did they move? They moved when; the penalty for sin was fulfilled, and God told them to move forward. This shows us that when the purpose of God is fulfilled, in time on earth, it will be time to move from mortality to immortality, and corruptibility to incorruptibility, when the call of the final resurrection comes.

Where did they move to? They went to Paran. They went from darkness into light by the definition of Paran, "**to gleam**". This gives that picture, in time, of the fulfillment of the law service and the introduction of the age of grace as seen in scripture in: **Joh 1:5 "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."** Those, who are called and chosen to be a part of the Church of Salvation by Grace, are filled with the light of Christ. The light of Christ, shining forth from them, boast of the glory of the Lord, and gives praise and glory to the name of God, on earth in time.

In the eternal perspective, it shows the church leaving a place where sin can inhibit our travel, and going to the place of real light, the eternal heaven, the New Jerusalem where Jesus is the Light, as seen in: **Re 21:23 "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."**

Praise God! We will one day be where Jesus is and forever be in the true and living light, the place where no night is. Hallelujah! Praise ye the Lord!