

Numbers

Chapter 12

- I. Introduction
 - a. Our previous lesson began a more “meaty” section of the book
 - i. We saw the rebellion of the “*rabble*” and how they influenced the people of Israel to sin against the Lord by complaining
 - ii. We also saw 70 elders appointed which possibly became known as the Sanhedrin
 - b. Today’s chapter is brief but beneficial
- II. Commentary
 - a. **Verses 1-9**
 - i. Miriam and Aaron oppose Moses
 1. Though the previous chapter recorded the rebellion of the lower class of people, this chapter records the rebellion among the leadership
 2. Clearly, they opposed him “*because of the Cushite woman whom he had married*”
 - a. Do not misunderstand, they were opposed to this woman and Moses’ marriage to her
 - b. Some suppose this to be Zipporah, Moses’ first wife
 - i. However, Zipporah was a Midianite and, therefore, a descendant of Abraham (**Genesis 25:1-3**)
 1. Abraham was a descendant of Shem, not Ham
 - a. Since the Cushites were descended from Ham, it seems impossible that this is speaking of Zipporah
 - ii. Also, Moses had been married to Zipporah for quite some time now
 1. Why would they just now be opposing her?
 - iii. Where was Zipporah?
 1. It’s impossible to know for sure but there are a few possibilities
 - a. Dead
 - b. Divorced
 - i. She had called Moses a “*bridegroom of blood*” (**Exodus 4:24-26**)
 - ii. Moses had sent her back home with her father at least once (**Exodus 18:1-5**)

- c. Moses possibly had two wives
 - i. This was common at the time
 - c. This woman was of a more dark skinned ethnicity
 - i. It seems most likely that Miriam and Aaron opposed her due to some racial prejudice
- 3. Miriam is mentioned first and (we will see) she is the only one punished
 - a. It seems she was the leader in this rebellion while Aaron merely followed her
 - i. We saw such a spirit in Aaron at the golden calf incident
- 4. The Lord is displeased with their opposition to Moses
 - a. Perhaps there is more here about racial prejudice but little more is said in the text
- 5. Though their true opposition is his wife, their complaint is *“Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?”*
 - a. Korah will lead a similar rebellion which raises a similar complaint (**Exodus 16**)
 - b. We saw in the previous chapter that Moses did not seem to have a bone of jealousy in his body (**Exodus 11:29**)
 - i. If that wasn’t enough, God Himself here declares, *“Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth” (vs. 3)*
 - 1. Their suggestion of Moses usurping power is invalidated
 - 2. *“...the meek...shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5)*
 - 3. To be “meek” is to be “gentle”
 - a. Jesus is said to have been *“gentle and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:28)*
 - i. Clearly, Moses is an example for us here to follow
- 6. The LORD called Moses, Miriam and Aaron forward to the tabernacle
 - a. God declares that He chooses prophets
 - i. He made Himself known to them through *“a vision” (vs. 6)*
 - b. God declares Moses to have been faithful in the instruction he had been given
 - c. God declares that Moses is greater than the other prophets
 - i. God spoke to Moses *“mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the LORD” (vs. 8)*

1. In **Deuteronomy 18:18**, God said to Moses, *“I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him”*
 - a. This reference to the Messiah and how he would be like Moses is a strong declaration of Moses’ faithful leadership and God’s approval of him

7. God’s anger *“was kindled against”* Miriam and Aaron

b. **Verses 10-16**

- i. *“When the cloud removed from over the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, like show” (vs. 10)*
 1. God takes seriously opposition to leaders He has appointed
 - a. Remember, when the people reject the leader, they are rejecting the LORD himself
 2. Aaron responds to this in repentance
 3. *“And Moses cried to the LORD, ‘O God, please heal her – please”* (vs. 13)
 - a. The forgiving spirit of Moses is far greater than most people
 4. God ordered Miriam to stay out of the camp for 7 days
 - a. The people didn’t move until she was allowed back in
 5. Some believe Aaron wasn’t struck with leprosy because this would have left Israel without a High Priest
 - a. I suppose this is possible
 - i. However, there’s no Scripture which declares this
 - ii. It seems God could have easily replaced him with one of his sons
 1. It seems more likely that Miriam was punished because it was primarily her complaint