

Moses, Aaron and Miriam; Numbers 12; Heb. 3:1-6; I. The Uniqueness of Moses II. The One Greater than Moses

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, Moses is one of those people that almost everyone knows something about. In fact, he is mentioned 767 times in the OT alone! His place is of central importance- specifically as the LORD used him to write the first 5 Books of the OT. Moses is so unique- and his place of prominence is bar none. We might even forget that Moses was not an only child- in fact he was the youngest of 3 kids. Miriam was 7 years older and Aaron was 3 years older than Moses. So this evening we will see the sibling rivalry of these 3 individuals- Moses, Aaron and Miriam. But I hope there are no surprises here- as Moses is going to be elevated above his siblings. But there is another Israelite who will be even greater than Moses in the house the LORD. So this evening we consider this theme: Jesus Christ is the prophet greater than Moses as He is elevated as a son in the house of God.

I. The Uniqueness of Moses

In our first point we are going to look at the family dynamics of these three siblings. Now too be fair, what we read in Numbers 12 is not the only information we have concerning Aaron and Miriam. The drawback in focussing on one event is that these siblings are cast in a rather negative light. Lets not forget what faith and boldness Miriam has displayed before. It was the 8-year-old Miriam who offered to watch over her baby brother Moses who was floating in the Nile- it was Miriam who offered to get a nurse to raise her brother as well. So Miriam was a loving and protective older sibling already back in Exodus 1. Miriam also led the Israelites in singing back in Ex. 15 after the crossing of the Red Sea. It was Miriam with tambourine in hand that led in the singing of the horse and rider thrown into the sea by the LORD our God- who has become our salvation. And Aaron- Moses' elder by 3 years- he was the one that went out into the wilderness to meet with Moses back in Ex. 4. Aaron would be the mouthpiece of Moses- strong and well spoken in the presence of Pharaoh. It was by Aaron's hand that miracles would be performed- and rebuke to Pharaoh offered. Aaron stood by his brother's side through it all- defending him when the people attacked. But as important as Aaron and Miriam were- and even though God did speak to them and work through them- there was something

different and special about Moses. And this fact brings us to Number 12. In Numbers 12 we have a family in conflict. In 12:1 we find that Miriam and Aaron are speaking out against Moses- they are complaining and criticizing Moses because he had taken a foreigner to be his wife. A Cushite is not an Israelite. But the real issue is not the nationality of Moses' wife- rather it was the position of their brother Moses. Moses was above reproach- he was untouchable- and his position was one of complete dominance in the eyes of Aaron and Miriam. It was not fair that Moses has all the authority since the LORD had indeed spoken through his siblings as well. Now this was not only a challenge to Moses' authority, it was also questioning God. We are just as important as he is, they were saying. He needs to be held to the same standard as we are. Now in this complaint of v. 1 we find that Miriam's name is listed first- and she receives the most severe punishment in v. 10- so it seems that Miriam was the instigator of this complaint and accusation. Really it was Moses' sister complaining about Moses' wife- and that Miriam had the same authority as Moses himself had. Now the LORD directly intervenes and calls for a meeting in v. 4. And the consequence of this meeting is 2fold. First, the authority of Moses is defended. Moses is a prophet like none other- v. 7. Moses is faithful in all of God's house. Now children, remember this statement, "faithful in all of God's house" as we will hear about the house of God in our second point. Now the LORD spoke to Moses face to face- not in parables or visions or dreams. But clearly and openly. So the first consequence is that Moses' position is defended. There is no other prophet in Israel like him. The second consequence is that Moses' siblings are rebuked. God is angry with them in v. 9 and Miriam is struck with leprosy in v. 10. So even though it was true that God had used Aaron and Miriam, they were nothing compared to the power and priority of Moses. Who were they to talk back to God? So what we find in our first point is that Moses is unique in all of the OT. He was a prophet like no other. Speaking to God and for God as a man speaks with a friend. He is also identified as a mediator in Ex. 34 and in our passage as well. In v. 13 Moses intercedes for his sister and in answer to his prayer, Miriam is healed after 7 days. Moses was also a judge who executed righteousness in Israel and vengeance on the wicked. As the Egyptians would taste the plagues from his hand- Moses comes to be seen as the instrument of God's wrath. But as great as Moses was, his position was not without his failing. Moses would not always obey nor was he always as bold

as he should be. He was a timid man who sometimes shirked from his duties. And in Number 20 he struck the rock in anger and thus sinned against the LORD. For this reason Moses would lead the people to the Promised Land but never into the Promised Land as he died at the age of 120 on the border of Canaan. And it is his death that moves us to consider One that is greater than Moses.

II. The One Greater than Moses

In our second reading from Heb. 3, we have Moses being compared to Jesus. Although Moses was greater than his siblings, there is one who was greater than Moses! In Dt. 18:15, Moses foretold a time when the LORD would raise up another prophet after himself. And when Jesus begins His ministry, John the Baptist asks in John 1; are you the prophet or should we expect another? Jesus answers by saying- my words and my actions prove that I am He! So Jesus is clearly identified as the greater than Moses prophet- or as Heb. 1 puts it- in the past God spoke in various ways and at various times, but in these last days God speaks to by way of His Son. So the application should be clear- since the Israelites were judged when they did not listen to Moses- and Jesus is a prophet greater than Moses- what do you think will happen to those who do not listen to Him? In other words, listen to Jesus! As the Father said, this is my Son, listen to Him! Heb. 3:15 says, today if you hear His voice do not harden your hearts! So the application is clear- listen to Jesus! So our passage from Heb. 3 is going to compare and contrast these two prophets- from Moses to Jesus- from the lesser to the greater. Remember what I said a few minutes ago, children? Back in Numbers 12 we read of Moses being faithful in the house of God. Note that in Heb. 3:2 we read these same words- Moses was faithful in all God's house. But someone greater than the house has come. So we get this comparison- the house compared to the builder of the house. Moses received the plans to build the temple, but the house in Heb. 3 is a reference to the people of God. As a leader of Israel, Moses served when the house was being built. But did Moses build the house? No, the builder of the house is Jesus. In other words, Jesus was building His church in the OT and in the NT- one church being built by Jesus. So who is greater- the house which is the church- or Jesus who is building the church? It is for this reason that the glory of Jesus is so much greater than the glory of Moses or the glory of the church as v. 3 states. Remember that after Moses met with God, his face would glow. The glory of God

was reflected in the face of Moses- but that glory faded over time as the shine would fade. But not so with Jesus- as on the mountain of transfiguration and again in Rev. 1- His face shines like the sun in full strength! Jesus is the radiance of the glory of God as Heb. 1:3 says. So Moses remains inferior to Jesus in glory, honor and power! Moses and Jesus are compared again in v. 5. Moses was faithful in God's house as a servant, Jesus was faithful as a son. So who is greater- the servant or the son? The one who works as steward, or the one to whom all things belong as the heir? Moses was a part of the household, but Jesus rules over the household. Moses was faithful in passing on the directions he received, Jesus is faithful in making the decisions! Who is greater, the one who gives the Law or the one who fulfills it? So once again, Moses and his ministry remains a shadow of the good things to come. Jesus is not just a second Moses, but one that is so much greater and better than the first! But don't forget the benefit and blessing contained in v. 6. This passage is not a dispassionate comparison between two men- one greater than the other. No, the greater one is still working! Moses died, but Jesus is still speaking as the prophet and He is still building as the son! You are His house- as v. 6 says. Jesus is continuing to build His church today- He is building the house of God even now! Moses was a part of it- the Hebrew Christians were- and you are as well! You are being gathered into the fold by the Good Shepherd! This is your confidence and your hope- your boasting for the future is found in the greatness of your savior and the work of Thee builder! So your hope and comfort are to be found in the greatness of God's Son and builder of His house!

As we close, much more could be said about the greatest prophet and how Jesus fulfills the ministry of Moses. From the giving of bread from heaven and the feeding of His people- or as it is made evident in the leading His people out of bondage to the giving of the Law and inscribing His Word on our hearts- even to the water that flows from the rock- there are many parallels and shadows that Jesus fulfills. But of particular focus today is the prophetic roll of Moses and Jesus. Who is the final word of God and to whom must we listen? Jesus Christ is the prophet greater than Moses as He is elevated as a son in the house of God. So may we rejoice in the fulfilling work of Christ who is the Word of Truth- the prophet of God who reveals the will of God concerning our deliverance.