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The Woman Miriam

Families can be the greatest delight or the greatest nightmare and more so when God calls several people in one family to serve Him, the enemy is ever present to cause envy, strife and all other forms of carnal conduct to disrupt the work of God.

Miriam the sister of Moses and Aaron, must have been an incredible woman, yet with great privilege there are pit falls.

Miriam does not occupy much material in Scripture, but what is recorded about her is very insightful and beneficial for our lives.

We want to look at Miriam from three descriptions of her in the record of Scripture.

I. Miriam the watcher.

II. Miriam the worshipper.

III. Miriam the warrior.

I. Miriam the watcher.

A. Miriam was the agent of faith. Ex. 2:4-6

1. Miriam was God's sentinel to see what would be done to Moses, "And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him." vs. 4

- a. The decree had gone out to cast every male infant into the river. Ex. 1:22
- b. The danger of being caught trying to secure the safety of any of these children had to have been equally decreed.
- c. The daughter of Amram and Jochebed was the fruit of a godly home dedicated to God. Num. 26:59; 1Chron. 6:3
 - 1) The name of Miriam is listed last in both of the listings, yet she was older than Moses, we are not told if she was older than Aaron, but she could have been the oldest of the three?
 - 2) The name Miriam appears thirteen times in the Old Testament, twelve of those thirteen refer to Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, yet not one time in the New Testament.
- d. The young girl stood afar off in great anticipation and I am sure great fear of what might happen.
 - 1) She was acting in full knowledge of God's revelation, even that Pharaoh's daughter would rescue Moses.
 - 2) The New Testament commentary confirms the obedience in faith to God's revelation regarding baby Moses, "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw *he was* a beautiful child; and they were not

- afraid of the king's command.” Heb. 11:23
2. Miriam as God’s sentinel watched the faithfulness of God, “Then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river. And her maidens walked along the riverside; and when she saw the ark among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it.” vs. 5
 - a. God is all knowing and sovereignly works all things out for the good of His people and His glory without violating man’s free-will or partaking of evil, but simply using it for good. Rom. 8:28
 - b. God led Ruth into the fields of Boaz and recorded, “It happened that she came to the parts of the fields of Boaz”. Ruth 2:3
 - c. God often told David whether he should go up against the enemy or not when he asked, no coincidence.
 3. Miriam saw the hand of God move on the heart of her enemy, “And when she had opened *it*, she saw the child, and behold, the baby wept. So she had compassion on him, and said, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children.” vs. 6
 - a. Abraham thought all the kings were going to come against him after he rescued Lot and all the spoils from Sodom and Gamorrah, so God spoke to him in a vision told him to stop being

- afraid, “I am your shield, your exceeding great reward.” Gen. 15:1
- b. Jacob feared his brother Esau and expected him to fall upon him as he returned, but instead he fell on Jacob’s neck with tears, kissed him and wept. Gen. 33:4
 - * “There are many plans in a man’s heart, Nevertheless the LORD’S counsel--that will stand.” Prov.19:21
 - c. Jacob also when Simeon and Levi slew Shechem, his son and all the men on the third day of their circumcision for the defiling of their sister Dinah declared to them, “You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among them...; and since I am few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and kill me. I shall be destroyed, my household and I shall be destroyed, my household and I”, yet he was not!. Gen. 34:30
 - * “When a man’s ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” Prov. 16:7
- B. Miriam was the agent of hope. Ex. 2:7-8**
1. The daughter of Amram and Jochebed offered Pharaoh’s daughter hope to fulfill her desire of keeping the child by a sensible suggestion to her problem, “Then his sister

said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?" vs. 7

* "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God." Ps 43:5

2. The daughter of Pharaoh gave to Miriam the assurance of hope,, "And Pharaoh's daughter said her, "Go." So the maid went and call the child's mother." vs. 8
 - a. Jochebed nursed her own son, Moses.
 - b. "For in You, O LORD, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God. Ps. 38:15

C. Miriam was the agent of love. Ex. 2:9

1. As she saw the face of her mother Jochebed filled with love for little Moses, "Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me". vs. 9a-b
2. As she heard how God would provide for the family financially, "and I will give you your wages." vs. 9c

* "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to

your flesh, And strength to your bones." Prov. 3:5-8

3. As she saw her mother speak to little Moses about God and His promises so that he would respond to God regarding His future plan for Israel as "So the woman took the child and nursed him". vs. 9d

* "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love." 1Cor. 13:13

Illustration

When Pompeii was destroyed by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius there were many persons buried in the ruins who were afterward found in very different positions.

There were some found in deep vaults, as if they had gone there for security. There were some found in lofty chambers. But where did they find the Roman sentinel?

They found him standing at the city gate where he had been placed by the captain, with his hands still grasping the weapon. There, while the earth shook beneath him; there, while the floods of ashes and cinders overwhelmed him, he had stood at his post. and there, after a thousand years, he was found.

So let Christians stand by their duty in the post at which their Captain places them. # 7236

Miriam was the watcher of faith, hope and love!

II. Miriam the worshipper.

- A. Miriam led worship as a prophetess. Ex. 15:20
1. The setting is the leading of Miriam in response to the song Moses and as the children of Israel sang after God destroyed the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. vs. 1-19
 2. The position of Miriam is identified, “Then Miriam as a prophetess, the sister of Aaron.” vs 20a-b
 - a. One who was the instrument of God by His choice and not by her own merit.
 - b. One who spoke forth the word of God in for people could know the mind of God.
 - c. One who stood in a dangerous place, being used of God, self exaltation was always possible.
 3. The posture of Miriam was one of celebration, “took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.” vs. 20c-d
 - a. Miriam took the timbrel for music and dance.
 - b. Miriam led the women of Israel in the same fashion.
 - 1) David danced before the Lord with all his might, but we would be hard pressed to find teaching or the practice of dance in the New Testament church in worship!

- 2) This does not mean that there cannot be any dance in a play or skits, nor that if you feel free to do so in your own private devotion and worship, but we certainly have no teaching or practice in the New Testament church!
 - 3) The New Testament says nothing about dance, but much about song. 1Cor. 14:15, Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16, Heb. 2:12, Rev. 5:9, 15:3
 * “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name.” Heb. 13:15
- B. Miriam led worship to the Lord for what He had done. Ex. 15:21
1. Miriam declared to sing unto the Lord, not Moses or Aaron, “And Miriam answered them: “Sing to the LORD.” vs. 21a-b
 - a. The dangers of attributing man with the victories of God are ever present.
 - b. There must be a constant reminder that man is but a vessel, not the one doing the work.
 - * “Who is Paul and who is Apollos but instruments through whom you believed, as the Lord gave each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God

gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, no he who waters, but God who gives the increase.” 1Cor. 3:5-7

2. Miriam declared God’s victory, “For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!” vs. 21c-d
 - a. The phrase describes God’s actions from the aspect of rising up to defeat the Egyptians and to exalt Himself above them.
 - 1) Paul tells the Corinthians that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption--that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD." 1Cor. 1:29-31
 - 2) The Seraphim say, “And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth *is* full of His glory!” Is. 6:3
 - b. The chorus of Miriam the prophetess and the women focuses on the power of God.
 - 1) The horse and its rider of the Egyptian army, the very might of Egypt could not stop God from delivering His people.
 - * “In as much then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He

Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.” Heb. 2:14

- 2) The horse and the rider have been thrown into the sea, the instrument of His destruction was itself more powerful than the Egyptians, yet God was even greater than the sea by His control of it!
 - * “Give unto the LORD the **glory** due to His name; Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.” Ps. 29:2

Illustration

When Queen Victoria had just ascended her throne she went, as is the custom of Royalty, to hear “The Messiah” rendered. She had been instructed as to her conduct by those who knew, and was told that she must not rise when the others stood at the singing of the Hallelujah Chorus. When that magnificent chorus was being sung and the singers were shouting “Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” she sat with great difficulty.

It seemed as if she would rise up in spite of the custom of kings and queens, but finally when they came to that part of the chorus where with a shout they proclaim Him King of Kings suddenly the young queen rose and stood with bowed head, as if she would take her own crown from off her head and cast it at His feet. #7587

Miriam was a worshipper of the Lord for all He had done, as a prophetess!

III. Miriam the warrior.

A. Miriam contended against Moses and added to Aaron's hurt. Num. 12:1

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

- a. The word spoke means to criticized.
- b. The intrusion of an outsider was an offense to Miriam.
- c. The possibility is that his wife was a mere simple woman and not anointed and gifted as Moses, Aaron and herself, could have been motive enough to despise her.
- d. The possibilities are countless, but the only thing we can be sure of is his marriage to an Ethiopian woman, which could very well be prejudice due to her darker color of skin?
- e. The Ethiopian woman is not identified for us in any other way.
 - 1) She is believed to be Zipporah by some, his wife, the Medianite. Ex. 18:2

2) She probably was from Ethiopia from the east of Babylon, the area of Cush. Gen. 10:8

2. Aaron is not the primary culprit, but a mere follower of evil, "Miriam and Aaron."

a. Miriam is the one who brought the attack on Moses.

- 1) She is mentioned by name first before Aaron's.
- 2) She alone is punished by God.
- 3) The feminine verb is used, removing all doubt.

b. Aaron had already gotten himself in trouble with the golden calf and if not for Moses interceding for him, God would have killed Aaron.

- 1) Aaron is not a leader, but a follower.
- 2) Aaron was not strong in character, but weak, his will was shaped by people and pressure.
- 3) Aaron's strength was only in being submissive to Moses, apart from him, he was too weak to do right.

B. Miriam contended out of pride. Num. 12:2

1. Miriam and Aaron rebuked Moses their younger brother, "So they said, "Has the Lord in deed spoken only through Moses?" vs. 2a-b

a. Miriam used her disfavor of his wife to vent her jealousy and envy of Moses.

- b. Miriam forgotten so quickly what God almost did to Aaron for leading the people by the golden calf.
 - c. Miriam had come to a place and a time in her life in which she no longer saw Moses as God's deliverer but as an equal to themselves before the people.
 - d. Miriam was accusing Moses of self exaltation and monopolizing the leadership, forgetting the privilege of her own calling, a prophetess.
 - * This was to be the sin of Korah and his 250 friends later in the journey! Num. 16
2. Miriam and Aaron compared themselves against Moses, "Has He not spoken through us also?" vs. 2c
- a. Miriam had deceived herself thinking she could appoint herself, apart from God.
 - * "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before the fall." Prov. 16:18
 - b. Miriam was giving the impression that it was a majority rule, instead of anointing and calling.
 - c. Miriam had ignored the privileged place Moses had on the mount and in the past.
 - * "Let him who stands take heed lest he fall!" 1Cor. 10:12
3. Miriam and Aaron had forgotten God hears everything, "And the LORD heard it." vs. 2d

- a. God is all present.
- b. God is all knowing.
- c. God is all powerful.
- d. God does not be present geographically in a location to know, hear or do.
 - * "Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard *them*; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name." Mal. 3:16

C. Miriam and Aaron contended against God.

Num. 12:3-16

1. God declared His assesment of Moses, "(Now the man Moses *was* very humble, more than all men who *were* on the face of the earth.)" vs. 3
2. God confronted the three of themm "Suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!" So the three came out." vs. 4
3. God confronted the two culprits, "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." vs. 5
3. God revealed the special place Moses had with Him. vs. 6-8

- a. God told them about His prophets, “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.” vs. 6; Deut. 18:18; Jer. 23:25-29
 * Visions while being awake, dreams while being asleep, but always confirmed by His word!
- b. God told them Moses was an exception, “Not so with My servant Moses; He *is* faithful in all My house.” vs. 7
 *
- c. God told them how He spoke to Moses, “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?” vs. 8a-d
 * This does not mean that Moses saw what God looks like, but a theophany, something visible appearance that veiled His glory and Holiness or he could not live, for He dwells in an unapproachable light. 1Tim. 6:16; Ex. 20:23; 33:11; Deut. 34:10
4. God executed His vengeance on Miriam. Num. 12:9-16
- a. Justice was imparted, “So the anger of the LORD was aroused against them, and He departed. 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.” vs. 9-10
- b. Aaron confesses their sin and acknowledges their foolishness, “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.” vs. 11
- c. Aaron then pleads that Moses intercede for Miriam so that she not be left as one dead, “Please do not let her be as one dead, whose flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother’s womb!” vs. 12
- d. Moses interceded in accord with his humility and God heard him. vs. 13-14
- 1) The man Moses interceded out of love for his sister as he did for Aaron, “So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, “Please heal her, O God, I pray!” vs. 13
- 2) The Lord conceded to the request of Moses with mercy, “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*.” vs. 14

- e. Miriam was humbled by God. vs. 15-16 and pleads for her
 - 1) She was considered unclean by God for her arrogance against God and Moses, “So Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days, and the people did not journey till Miriam was brought in *again*.” vs. 15
 - 2) She was allowed in again, And afterward the people moved from Hazeroth and camped in the Wilderness of Paran.” vs. 16
- 5. God would have us to learn from Miriam many things.
 - a. How each of us can be used as agents of faith, hope and love in a way that we have no idea how God will use that person to affect His people or the world and then one day oppose the same person out of envy or jealousy.
 - b. How God can use us is beyond our ability and our worthiness, but it is always to point people to God and give Him the worship and glory He deserves.
 - c. How we are dealt with by God will always have to do with the measure of light we have received and the measure of responsibility we have been vested.
 - d. The name Miriam “Miryam” means rebellion, fitting to her sin.

- 1) The Rabies interpret her name to mean “bitterness”.
- 2) Jerome interpreted to mean “star of the Sea”.
- e. The woman was the sister of two of the most important men in the history of the nation and she is called a prophetess.
- e. The woman Miriam is not mentioned again till her death in the Wilderness of Zin while they stayed at Kadesh and she was buried. Num. 20:1
- * Miriam is used by God as a warning to all who would presume upon their authority and have a critical spirit of those God calls and uses, “Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam on the way when you came out of Egypt.” Deut. 24:9

Illustration

There is a fable wherein the devil once was crossing the Libyan desert and met a group of friends tempting a holy hermit. They tried seductions of the flesh, used doubts and fears, etc. But to no avail. The holy man was unmoved. The Devil then stepped forward: “Your methods are too crude. Permit me one moment.” Going to the hermit, he said, “Your brother has been made the Bishop of Alexandria.”

According to the fable, a scowl of malignant jealousy clouded the serene face of the holy man.

#2669

Miriam warred not against Moses, but against God!

Conclusion

The woman Miriam has been described for us from these three events recorded about her.

- I.** Miriam was the watcher of faith, hope and love!
- II.** Miriam was a worshipper of the Lord for all He had done, as a prophetess!
- III.** Miriam warred not against Moses, but against God!