

Miriam

Introduction:

1. Miriam was the daughter of Amram and Jochebed and the sister of Moses and Aaron (Num. 26:59; 1 Chron. 6:3).
2. The Bible describes four major events in her life, if you consider the mention of her death as the final event. She died in the wilderness of Zin at Kadesh and was buried there (Num. 20:1).
3. She is described as a prophetess (Ex. 15:20) and one sent by God along with Moses and Aaron to go before the people from the land of Egypt (Micah 6:4).
4. In this study we will look at the major events in her life and compare with our own, not to be critical of her, but to evaluate ourselves, our temptations as well as our place in the provision that God makes for His people.

Discussion:

- I. Our first encounter with Miriam occurs in Ex. 2:1-10.
 - A. Read and review the event.
 - B. In this episode Miriam serves as part of the provision that God is making for His people.
 1. Ultimately, He is going to use Moses to deliver the people from Egyptian bondage.
 2. But where would Moses and the people be without Miriam?
 3. Miriam is obviously older than Moses.
 4. She is concerned about what is going to happen to him.
 5. She intervenes to preserve his life and obviously, like Pharaoh's daughter, has pity on the baby Moses.
 6. It is interesting to observe how her interest to preserve the life of Moses expands to the preservation of the life of Israel and ultimately to the preservation of our lives through the nation of Israel.
 7. As you look at your own life do not discount what may seem to you as a "small" thing. God often takes "small" things and turns them into "big" things.
 8. Understand that Miriam is probably not all that old when she acts in this capacity to preserve life. Careful that you do not diminish the things you can do in your youth that will have long term consequences as God uses you in His plan.
- II. The next we hear of Miriam is in Ex. 15 after the crossing of the Red Sea.
 - A. Acts 7:23 says that Moses was 40 when he left Egypt. Verse 30 indicates that forty years had passed when he was commissioned by God to go back to Egypt.

That makes Moses in his 80's when God delivers Israel. Miriam is, of course, older than Moses. So, the events we read about in Ex. 15 probably occurred when she was in her 80's.

- B. It is probable that Miriam is the author of the song of Ex. 15. Verse 20 identifies her as a prophetess. This song, if she wrote it, reflects her work as a prophetess.
 - 1. She sees God as the Deliverer (1-2).
 - 2. Praise is her response to what He has done (1-2). Without seeing what God has done for you it is not possible to praise Him.
 - 3. She sees God as real and active (1-2).
 - 4. She sees God as powerful (6).
 - 5. She sees God as just in overthrowing those who rise up against Him (4-10).
 - 6. She sees God as unique (11).
 - 7. She sees God as gracious to His people (13).
 - 8. She sees God as a guide (13).
 - 9. She sees Him as creating fear in the surrounding nations (14).
 - 10. She sees Him as reigning forever (18).
 - 11. It is interesting that she sings, "The horse and his rider He has hurled into the sea." The horse and riders were symbols of military power, but they were rendered impotent before the power of God.
 - 12. The preservation of this song means that Miriam continues to teach who God is and to call on all to praise Him for His mighty deeds of deliverance and the preservation of life. She reminds us that the Lord is in control and cares for His people.

- III. The next mention of Miriam is in Num. 12. Here she attacked the leadership of Moses, God's servant.
 - A. Since Miriam is mentioned first and receives the greater condemnation it is likely that she is the leader in speaking against Moses rather than Aaron.
 - B. The text says they spoke against Moses on account of the Cushite woman he had married. It adds that they said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?"
 - 1. Perhaps this Cushite woman, as Moses' wife, was honored by the people above Miriam.
 - 2. Jealousy is an unsettling sin. It is poison to relationships. When you feel that someone is getting something that you deserve it is hard for you to feel kindly toward them, so Miriam protests!
 - C. It is striking that the text identifies Moses as "very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth." He certainly stands in stark contrast to Miriam.
 - D. Have you ever said something that you didn't mean for everyone to hear? I still remember the last spanking I got. I said something I really didn't intend for my dad to hear. Miriam said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken to us as well?" AND THE LORD HEARD IT!

- E. “Suddenly the Lord said to Moses and Aaron and to Miriam, ‘You three come out to the tent of meeting.’” I generally don’t like meetings. I especially dislike those like this one! Miriam was about to be humbled!
- F. Sometimes even though God has exalted us and is using us in His work our feelings of insufficiency lead us into sin.
 - 1. Miriam is evidently feeling less than.
 - 2. She is elevating herself.
 - 3. Which results in her being humbled.
 - 4. Moses is very humble.
 - 5. God exalts Him.
 - 6. Miriam is temporarily stricken with leprosy, separated outside the camp for seven days and humbled.
 - 7. Moses prays for her that she might be healed.
 - 8. The only other mention of Miriam is in Num. 20:1. The people were at Kadesh. “Now Miriam died there and was buried there.” Her death is mentioned in recognition of her contribution to the work of God, but nothing more is said of her.
 - 9. Her life was rich with many grand experiences but marred by jealousy.

Conclusion:

- 1. As you compare your life with hers do you see God using you in His provision for His people? Do you see Him using you to preserve life and to bring life to others?
- 2. Are you given to praising Him for the great things He has done? Do you remember what He has done and remind others of what He has done in song?
- 3. How do you feel about yourself? Are you jealous of others, while reminding people of how God has used you in His plan?