

MIRIAM'S AND AARON'S SIN

BIBLE TEXT : Numbers 12:1-16

LESSON 100 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour" (I Timothy 5:17).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Numbers 12:1-16 (KJV)

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

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Moses' Appointment

The day Moses saw the burning bush in the wilderness of Sinai, God appointed him to return to Egypt to bring his people out of captivity. Many times after that God had witnessed that Moses' appointment was divine, bringing many miracles to pass at his command. Moses had hesitated to take such a great responsibility, saying he did not have the ability to speak before Pharaoh. God had wanted to send him alone, but when he insisted that he could not talk to the king, God said that Aaron might go with him and speak for him. How much greater was the call of Moses than that of Aaron, for God said that Moses alone was to hear His voice, and he would have to tell Aaron what to say. "And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God" (Exodus 4:16). Even after Aaron became the high priest, Moses still had God's authority to tell him what to do.

Miriam a Prophetess

There is no mention in Scripture of God's call of Miriam, but after the Children of Israel had crossed the Red Sea and the Egyptians had been drowned by the returning waters, she is referred to as a prophetess; and she sang the song of triumph: "Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea" (Exodus 15:20, 21). And in Micah 6:4, we read: "For I brought thee lip out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam." So we know that Miriam was also chosen of God. But Moses was still the leader of all Israel, and walked closest to the Lord. He deserved respect of everyone, including his brother and sister.

Pride

One day Aaron and Miriam forgot their place as Moses' helpers. Pride came into their hearts and they criticized their brother Moses because of the woman he had married. God had never spoken anything against it, so why should these two people set themselves to judge the humble man of God? Their excuse was, "Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?"

People often use that excuse when they want to criticize their ministers. Has not God also spoken by us?" "Do we not also have the Word of God?" "Do we have to obey what the ministers tell us?"

They do have the Word of God, and if they would study it

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. ¹³ And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee. 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*. ¹⁵ And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in *again*. ¹⁶ And afterward the people removed from Hazeroth, and pitched in the wilderness of Paran.

carefully their sin would be revealed to them. This is what the Bible says: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief" (Hebrews 13:17); and "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (I Timothy 5:17).

Moses' Humility

Surely Moses had proved by the miracles God had performed through him that he was sent by God. Yet never had he become proud nor claimed any honor for himself. He had been willing to die rather than have the Israelites destroyed. He had left the palace of Pharaoh where he lived as heir apparent to the throne of Egypt, because he wanted to help his people out of slavery. All he had he had given to help others; yet so often the Israelites had murmured against him. Now those nearest to him had set themselves up against him. But Moses never answered back - not one word.

Moses was a meek man, just like another great Prophet who was to come. God told Moses one day: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth" (Deuteronomy 18: 18). Peter confirmed on the Day of Pentecost (**Acts 3:22 (KJV)**) ²² For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you) that Jesus was that Prophet. Can we see a likeness between Moses and Christ in this lesson? This was said of Jesus, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (I Peter 2:23). And as Moses was criticized by his own family, it was prophesied that Jesus, too, would suffer at the hands of those nearest to Him: "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (Psalm 41:9).

God's Listening Ear

Even if Moses did not answer back to Miriam and Aaron, God was listening. He loved the meek and humble Moses. Immediately God called the three of them to the Tabernacle, to the bar of judgment. He told Miriam and Aaron, "My servant Moses . . . is faithful in all mine house." He did not want anyone to speak against him.

God explained to Aaron and Miriam that Moses was more than an ordinary prophet. To the other prophets God spoke in dreams and visions, but to Moses He had spoken as "friend with friend." God had also revealed His glory to Moses more than to any other man. The second time Moses went into the mount to receive the Law, the glory of God was so great upon him that the people could not look at him when he came down, until he veiled his face. They knew all that. Then God asked, "Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

God is watching over His true ministers, and pronounces judgment upon anyone who will in any way dishonor them..

The ministers who honor the Bible with all its teachings are chosen and called of God, and if we murmur against them we are murmuring against God. God holds them accountable for what they teach, and it is up to us to respect their words, and try to help them by our obedience. We are to esteem them in love, "for their work's sake" (I Thessalonians 5:12, 13).

Those who murmur against their leaders will not go unpunished. God's judgment upon Miriam was that she became a leper. What a terrible disease! It would separate her from all those she loved. Death comes very slowly from leprosy, and the poor person who is afflicted with it must stay by himself or with other people who have the disease. When anyone else comes near he must call out, "Unclean, unclean." Was not that a terrible punishment for Miriam's and Aaron's sin of murmuring?

Repentance

They quickly repented, and Aaron begged Moses to pray for her. He humbled himself and called Moses, "My lord." Aaron realized he had done foolishly in thinking he was equal with Moses, and he called upon the man he had dishonored to pray for him.

Moses had the Spirit of Christ in him that was ever merciful. He did not say to Miriam, "You deserve this." But he cried unto the Lord and said, "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee." He prayed earnestly and sincerely, and God answered. Just as soon as we repent of our sins and tell Jesus we are sorry, He washes them all away and we are clean.

It was a terrible sin that Miriam and Aaron had committed; and although God was merciful and did answer the prayer of Moses, He said that she should be shut out of the camp for seven days for being unclean from the leprosy. According to their law, if a father dishonored his daughter just by spitting into her face she should be unclean for seven days. How much greater was this sin that Miriam had committed, and should she not be considered unclean for at least that long? But Miriam was healed, and when that time was over could again take her place in the camp of Israel. Thus was mercy showed to the ones who repented of the wrong that they had done.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Who was the leader of Israel?
- 2 How did he get his appointment?
- 3 What was the position of Aaron and Miriam?
- 4 What was Miriam's and Aaron's sin?
- 5 How does God expect us to treat His ministers?
- 6 What happened to Miriam for her sin?
- 7 Did Moses condemn her? What did he do for her?
- 8 How do we know that Miriam and Aaron repented?