

“Wilderness Times Show the Good and the Bad”

Numbers 12:1-16

Wednesday, July 27, 2022

Introduction: We are in a Wednesday night series in the book of Numbers seeing things to help us when we find ourselves in wilderness times in life—those hard times we all go through. It is a timely and practical Bible study because all of us from time to time find ourselves in “wilderness times.”

- As the Israelites journeyed in the literal wilderness (desert) from Egypt to the Promised Land they encountered difficulty after difficulty.

Last Wednesday night Jon taught from Numbers chapters 11.

- The Israelites wanted meat rather than manna (11:6,13).
- God sent quail (11:31-32).
- They got what they wanted (11:31).
- The results were not all good (11:33-34).
- Then they moved to Hazeroth (11:35) where our study begins tonight.

Text: Numbers 12:1-16

- In verses 1 and 2 we see a marriage objection and a leadership objection.
- Miriam was the instigator of both objections.
- How do we know Miriam was the instigator?
 1. Miriam is mentioned first followed by Aaron.
 2. The Hebrew verb is in the feminine form. In English, verbs have no gender. In Hebrew, verbs are conjugated by the gender of the subject. The Hebrew verb translated “spoke” is in the feminine form which tells us that Miriam was the instigator.
 3. Miriam alone incurred the judgment of God (12:10).

Why the marriage objection (1:1)?

First, some background:

- Moses had evidently remarried after the death of Zipporah the daughter of Jethro (Reuel) the priest in Midian (Exodus 3:1).

- Remember the story of Moses killing an Egyptian and Pharaoh finding out about it.
- Moses fearing for his life fled to Midian and sat down by a well and to cool himself and get some water and ended up with a wife ((Exodus 2:16).
- They were married 40 years and evidently, and she died, and Moses remarried.

Possible reasons for the marriage objection:

1. That the new wife was not an Israelite. Zipporah was not an Israelite either.
2. Perhaps Miriam feared the new wife would be a threat to her influence over her brother Moses.
3. Perhaps Miriam just did not like her!

Possible reasons for the leadership objection: The answer is in Numbers 12:2 (jealousy).

- Read Numbers 12:3-8.
- God revealed Himself to other prophets through visions and dreams (12:6).
- God revealed Himself to Moses face to face (12:8).
- That is, Moses saw the form of God.
- Moses engaged in direct communication with God.
- Perhaps Miriam feared the authority of the 70 elders would diminish her spiritual authority (11:16-17).
- Miriam was the most celebrated prophetess in Israel (Exodus 15:20). She is the first woman in the Bible given this title. Others are later listed with this title: Deborah in Judges 4:4; Huldah in 2 Kings 22:14; Isaiah's wife in Isaiah 8:3; Anna in Luke 2:36; Philipp's four daughters in Acts 21:9.

Life Lesson: During wilderness times, our spiritual strengths and spiritual weaknesses become obvious.

Miriam's weaknesses:

1. Critical
2. Jealous
3. Delayed God's plan (12:15-16).

Application: The sins of God's people delay all God has planned. True for His church. True for each individual Christian.

Aaron's strengths:

1. Respect for spiritual authority—"O my Lord" (12:11)
2. Admitted their sin (12:11)
3. Compassion for his sister Miriam (12:12)

Moses' strengths:

1. Did not react to the things that Miriam said.

Application: We can control our actions. Sometimes our actions control us revealing our spiritual condition.

2. Humility (12:3)

Illustration: Numbers 12:3 is a statement about God's perspective on Moses' character.

Application: Remember that God is the Author of Scripture. Men were writers (2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21).

3. Faithful (12:7).
4. Cried out to God (12:13).

Conclusion: How we respond to wilderness times in our life is an opportunity to show the difference God makes.