

MIRIAM AND SARAH

Miriam and Sarah were both great women in the Old Testament. Both were anointed of God to become famous leaders, but they had very different endings to their lives. The key to this is shown by their character, which is revealed to us by their names, 1 Sam.25:25.

MIRIAM

Miriam was the sister of Moses and Aaron. She was given great responsibility even as a child, Ex.2:4. She became a prophetess and was one of the leaders over Israel, Ex.15:20-21, Micah 6:4. But Miriam had a natural Adamic weakness in her character. This was shown by her name, which comes from the Hebrew word for "bitterness" or "rebellion". Miriam did not overcome her natural character, and it led to bitterness and rebellion.

Miriam said in Numbers 12:2 "Has the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" Miriam criticized Moses's leadership and lifted herself up in pride. She wanted equal leadership, Is.14:14. Miriam became leprous, and the proud prophetess had to endure the most humiliating disease for 7 days, Num.12:4-15, Prov.29:23.

The scripture is silent about her life after that, she did no more notable works. Miriam died in the wilderness, Num.20:1. Instead of having an honorable testimony after her death, the Lord uses her life as a warning for us, where He said in Deuteronomy 24:9 "Remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam."

SARAI

Sarah was given two names. Her first name given to her at birth (which speaks of her natural character) was Sarai, which means "dominating, head person, captain, ruler". We saw that Miriam did not overcome her natural name, but Sarai did. God later changed her name (and character) to Sarah which means "a female noble, lady, princess, queen".

Genesis 12:5 says "...and Abram took Sarai his wife." It is not recorded that Sarai had a personal revelation from God, but she followed her husband. She had the attitude of Ruth in Ruth 1:16. When Abram went down to Egypt he said to his wife, "say you are my sister", Gen.12:11-13, 20:11-13. So Sarai found herself in the house of a heathen king in Gen.12:15. She didn't fight or argue, she just submitted and went, 1 Pet.3:6. This is the beauty that we see in Sarai, she learned to be a submissive follower, 1 Pet.3:3-5. She was a woman who would not fight for her own rights, comfort, and safety. She did not submit to sin, but she submitted to great suffering and humiliation.

God's response in verse 17 was "The Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife." When Sarai yielded her way, she gave room for the LORD to be her defense. 1 Peter 3:5-6 tells us that her trust was in God, and GOD kept Pharaoh from marrying her! Many times a Christian sister will be faced with great difficulties that she may want to try to rescue herself from, by resisting or opposing the authority that is over her. But if her trust is in the LORD and she submits, even if the authority over her makes a mistake, GOD will be jealous to protect her!

SARAH

In chapter 17, God changed the names of both Abram and Sarai, and a child was promised that year. It is important that the whole family meets the Lord together. Sarah had met with God and was changed from being a dominating, overbearing ruler (Sarai), into being a submissive queen (Sarah).

Then what happened? In Genesis 20:1-2 Abraham journeyed south again, and Abraham said of Sarah, "She is my sister". So King Abimelech took her, and Sarah found herself again in the house of a heathen king! She knew that God was preparing her for motherhood that year, and now she was in the house of a heathen king. What was her response? She yielded her own way and again God fought for her, Gen.20:3-7.

1 Peter 3:6 tells us that each Christian sister who will follow in the path of Sarah will be her spiritual daughter. Then we will find God working in us to change our nature, protect us, and bring us into the fulfillment of all of His promises. We will also be able to impart that godly submissive character to our children (both natural and spiritual) as Sarah did to her son. This is why strong young Isaac submitted to his aged father, when Abraham tied him up and raised the knife to sacrifice him. Isaac had the nature of the Lamb of God (Who submitted to the death of the cross) because his mother Sarah had learned to submit to the work of the cross in her own life!

Abraham made some big mistakes, but Sarah helped him to fulfill God's plan. In doing this, both made it into all of God's purposes and became the spiritual father and mother of our faith, Rom.4:16, Is.51:1-2. May we follow the godly example of Sarah, who allowed her character to be changed. Let us not be content with only having a ministry without a transformed character, like Miriam!

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