

Numbers 11:26-30

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/num/num-11/numbers-1126-30/>

Verses 26 – 30 speak of two of the elders that did not meet with Moses and the other elders at the tent of meeting. It turned out that the Holy Spirit came upon them even though they were not at the tabernacle. These two men, Eldad and Medad, prophesied just like the other sixty-eight elders, only they did so in the camp. Moses was notified of this, and Joshua urged Moses to stop the two from prophesying. Moses rejects Joshua’s request, and all of them return to the camp of the Israelites.

It happened that *two men had remained in the camp* (v. 26) instead of going to the door of the tabernacle like the other elders (see v. 24). It turned out that *the name of one was Eldad and the name of the other Medad*. It is unknown why these two men did not join the other elders at the tabernacle. In spite of not being there, *the Spirit rested upon them* anyway. These two were truly part of the “seventy” because *they were among those who had been registered*—they simply *had not gone out to the tent* like the other sixty-eight. And like the others, *they prophesied in the camp* in spite of not being at the tabernacle with the others.

The significance of this was that the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the seventy men was an act of the LORD, not Moses. If all seventy had *prophesied* in Moses’ presence, some might have interpreted this as the work of Moses. This was a clear demonstration of God’s working in His people.

As the two men in the camp were prophesying, *a young man ran and told Moses and said, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp”* (v. 27). This *young man* was unnamed, but he might have been *Joshua the son of Nun* (v. 28). This was the same *Joshua* who became *the attendant of Moses from his youth* (Exodus 24:13, 33:11). Joshua urged his master, *“Moses, my lord, restrain them.”* Joshua apparently thought that Eldad and Medad were not authorized to prophesy because they were not at the tabernacle with Moses and the other elders. He also might have thought that their prophesying was a threat to Moses’ authority, and Joshua was dedicated to protecting his master Moses.

Probably gently, *Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake?”* (v. 29). The word “jealous” (Heb. “qānā”) does mean “to be jealous.” However, in certain contexts it could mean “zealous.” What Joshua was “zealous” about is unclear, but he might have been concerned that Moses’ reputation would be compromised. Joshua might have also thought that the two men in the camp engaged in what he perceived as unauthorized “prophesying,” which might have been a challenge to Moses’ authority. Such a challenge happens in chapter 12.

Moses responded in a way that shows that he was not concerned about his authority. Moses understood that God is the true authority. Having witnessed the effect of the Holy Spirit on the other men prompted Moses to say, *would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord*

would put His Spirit upon them! (v. 29). What he saw convinced him that the people of Israel would be much better off if the Spirit (Heb. “ruah”) came upon everyone.

This illustrates Moses’s humility. The next chapter will tell us that Moses was the most humble man in all the earth (Numbers 11:3). Humility is the ability to see things as they are. Moses realized the reality that God was the authority over Israel, and thus was not protective of his power. He simply viewed his position as a matter of stewardship. Moses did not abuse his power to enrich himself, or to elevate himself. Rather he faithfully served the role God appointed him to, to lead His people out of slavery.

After the endowment of the Holy Spirit on the seventy men, *Moses returned to the camp, both he and the elders of Israel* (v. 30).

In the Old Testament, only certain people were anointed with the Holy Spirit, such as prophets, priests, kings, and a few others. This anointing was for special service, and would sometimes come and go, as in the case of Saul (1 Samuel 16:14). In the New Testament, all those who have believed in Jesus for everlasting life are indwelt with the Holy Spirit at the moment of belief (Romans 5:5, 8:15; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 2 Timothy 1:14).

Biblical Text

²⁶ But two men had remained in the camp; the name of one was Eldad and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them (now they were among those who had been registered, but had not gone out to the tent), and they prophesied in the camp. ²⁷ So a young man ran and told Moses and said, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” ²⁸ Then Joshua the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth, said, “Moses, my lord, restrain them.” ²⁹ But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!” ³⁰ Then Moses returned to the camp, *both he and the elders of Israel.*