

# Eldad, Medad and the Unexpected Pentecost Moment



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Pentecost Sunday

Numbers 11:24-30

<sup>24</sup> So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD; and he gathered seventy elders of the people, and placed them all around the tent. <sup>25</sup> Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do so again.

<sup>26</sup> Two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the spirit rested on them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. <sup>27</sup> And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." <sup>28</sup> And Joshua son of Nun, the assistant of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, "My lord Moses, stop them!" <sup>29</sup> But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!" <sup>30</sup> And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

**The Word of the Lord.**



"Eldad, Medad and the Unexpected Pentecost Moment"

This is the story of two men named Eldad and Medad. (Here is a picture of what I think these men might have looked like).

Eldad and Medad were two Israelite men that lived in Egypt under the reign of the Pharaoh's. Life was hard for Eldad and Medad as it was for all the Israelite children in Egypt. Their days consisted of hard labor building bricks.

One day word was received by all the Israelite people to prepare themselves for the Passover. Eldad and Medad were among the many people of Israel that had cried and prayed to God for deliverance. Could this be the answer they had prayed for?

The next day they found themselves packing following the instructions of their leader Moses. Eldad and Medad joined the Exodus out of Egypt walking where water had been, amazed and glorifying God every step of the way. Eldad and Medad along with their families were on their way to the land promised them from God.

While in the wilderness, Eldad and Medad were just two men among the 603,550 men of war age that Moses and Aaron enrolled once they were in the wilderness of Sinai and were among the thousands of people who set up their camp with their tribe so that they faced the tent of meeting just as Moses had instructed them to do.

All the Israelites, including Eldad and Medad, were given rules to live together including putting people outside of the camp if they had leprosy and what to do if a person in the camp wronged another person. There was one other special instruction too – they were to listen for the sound of trumpets. When two trumpets were blown at the same time – all the Israelites were to gather at the entrance of the tent of meeting. When only one horn was blown then just the leaders from the tribes were summoned, which of course did not include Eldad or Medad.

Day after day Eldad and Medad watched as people set up the sacred place where the leaders would take their offerings. The Israelite people wanted to stay in relationship with God who was encamped right there with them in the wilderness. The people witnessed the cloud that covered the tabernacle by day and the fire over the tabernacle at night.

When the cloud moved so did the Israelite people. When they set up camp and established their homes in the wilderness, they never knew for how long – it could be a day – it could be thirty days or more. The routine was always the same. Set up camp when the presence of God rested and break camp and move when God's presence moved.

This continued for one year – then two. Eldad and Medad began hearing the people grumble. The grumbling of the people grew louder and louder. People were saying

that they missed the meat and the wonderful vegetables that made their meals so delicious in Egypt. They were tired of the manna. No matter how the manna was prepared it had only one flavor. People were beginning to think that they had it better in Egypt even though the work had been so hard.

Eldad and Medad found themselves complaining too – after all why couldn't God give them more in the wilderness? They both went to the leader of their tribe complaining so loudly that the leaders of their tribe went with all the other leaders of the tribes to Moses. The people were done with breaking camp and moving the camp and living in a wilderness. The excitement of going to a promised land was fading as day by day nothing in the wilderness seemed to change except for their appetites for fresh vegetables and seasonings.

Then one day Eldad and Medad heard just one trumpet blow. Word made its way around the camp – Moses was calling 70 of the elders to meet with him. Eldad and Medad along with all the others wondered what was happening. Why would Moses be calling just 70 of the elders together?

Then it happened – that unexpected Pentecost moment. Both Eldad and Medad felt the Spirit of the Lord descend upon them and when it did, Eldad and Medad could not help but prophesy. Prophecy they did. People in the camp looked at them strangely. The words of these two men sure sounded like the word of God. There was even something different about their appearance. Their shoulders were more squared back, there was a softness in their eyes and was that a tear rolling down Eldad's face as he spoke?

The more Eldad and Medad spoke the more drawn people were to listen to them. There was just something about their words that made everyone want to listen. They spoke with eloquence and wisdom. The people listening began to feel as if they were in God's presence.

How could this be? They were not in the tent of meeting. Eldad and Medad were not priests. Eldad and Medad were not part of the 70 leaders who Moses called to the tent of meeting.

These two men were regular people who traveled with their tribes following Moses. They were followers not leaders and yet God's word was pouring from their hearts, from their minds and their spirits. The two were encouraging first this one then another. Eldad and Medad were resolving disputes, they were providing guidance from the Lord in their part of the camp.

Eldad or Medad neither one could understand what had happened, but they could not hold their tongues as God's Spirit poured out of them.

Several people in the camp could recognize the Spirit of God in Eldad and Medad but many others closed their minds and hearts to the men's words simply because it didn't fit with their understanding. After all wasn't it just Moses and the priestly people who had God's Spirit upon them? Who were these guys anyway?

Well it wasn't long before someone in the camp reported what was happening to their leader Joshua and Joshua reported it to Moses. How could this happen? Eldad and Medad were regular people just like you and me. They were not a Moses or an Aaron, they were not prophets, patriarchs or priests, they were not even considered leaders. They sure were not saints – they were two men that followed God but had fallen in with the crowd whining over the manna. Why in the world would God's Spirit land on them?

Surely this was an unexpected Pentecost moment. God had poured out God's Spirit freely. This was a new understanding for everyone in their camp.

Eldad and Medad along with many of the Israelites learned that day that God was not contained by their wilderness tabernacle. They were beginning to learn that God really was with them as they lived and moved. God was with them even when they felt that they were at the very end of what they could tolerate.

So I am wondering - When have you had an unexpected Pentecost moment? Has there ever been a time when you felt that God's Spirit was not present – only to learn that God was at work all along? When have you been surprised to learn that God can use the most surprising of people?

The book "Medieval Bible Commentaries" is a very early commentary written by a Rabbi that Jewish children still use to this day to understand the Torah. In it one of the Rabbi's said, "The beginning of knowing about God is simply paying attention, being fully present where you are." The Rabbi's said that we need to wake up to the presence of God even in ways that we least expect it. I think this is what happened to Eldad and Medad causing their unexpected Pentecost moment. They were awake to the movement and presence of God.

Pentecost moments happen as we learn to travel in our lives seeing the Spirit of the living God encamped with us in our homes, in our churches and in neighborhoods, but also when we allow God to encamp in our hearts, our spirits and in our minds.

When Joshua's report of Eldad and Medad reached Moses, Moses responded that he would like for God's Spirit to be on everyone in that place. Wouldn't that have been glorious?

Indeed, that is exactly what God's Spirit did on the day we recognize as Pentecost. God's Spirit poured out in ways beyond the people's comprehension. The church understood from that moment on - that God's Spirit cannot be contained by tabernacles, tents or even by people. God's Spirit is with you and with me. Today perhaps we need to be woke to the work God is doing in our midst.

May this day of Pentecost celebration be a day that everyone is awakened to see God encamped with us.

Let us pray:

Come Spirit, come, our hearts control,  
Our spirits long to be made whole.  
Let inward love guide every deed;  
By this we worship, and are freed. Amen  
(Lyrics from "The Gift of Love")