

TAKE-HOME • SESSION 2

The Spirit on the Few

What We Found

In the old covenant the Spirit's conspicuous task-gifts, prophetic, royal, military, came to a few, suddenly, for a mission, and could be withdrawn; God's grace was truly at work among His faithful all along, but these public endowments were another matter. He rested on the seventy elders chosen to help Moses carry the people, and even found Eldad and Medad out in the camp. He clothed Himself with Gideon, wearing a frightened farmer like a garment until an army rallied. He rushed on David from that day forward, and departed from Saul in the very next verse. And in the middle of it all, Moses said out loud the thing the whole Old Testament is waiting for: would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them. Then, centuries later, Jesus appointed seventy and sent them out ahead of Him (Luke 10:1), and Christians have long heard Moses' echo in it.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose of Milan (*On the Holy Spirit, Book I, prologue*)

St. Ambrose read Gideon's fleece as a picture of the Spirit's story. First the dew fell on the fleece alone while all the ground stayed dry: the Spirit resting on a chosen few. Then the dew fell on all the ground: the Spirit poured out on all the nations.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae II-II, q. 171*)

St. Thomas taught that the light of prophecy was given as a passing impression, not a permanent possession. A prophet could not prophesy whenever he wished; the gift came when God sent it and was not at his disposal. Thomas is describing prophecy's mode, not denying God's grace in the holy ones of old.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catechetical Lectures, Lecture 16*)

Teaching candidates preparing for the sacraments, St. Cyril lingered on Numbers 11: the Spirit that rested on Moses was shared with the seventy elders, and even reached Eldad and Medad in the camp. The Spirit you are preparing to receive is not a novelty; He has been at work among God's people for a very long time.

Live It This Week

Parent and candidate together. Once a day, each of you prays Moses' wish over the other, by name and out loud: "Lord, put Your Spirit on N." Six seconds, once a day, in the car or the kitchen or the doorway. Praying it for the other person, rather than for yourself, is the point; that is what Moses did.

Memory Verse

"Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:29)

Table Talk

One question for the drive home or the dinner table: Moses wished the Spirit onto everybody. Who is one person you would wish the Spirit onto this week, and why?

Before Next Session

Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13, slowly. We stopped at verse 14 tonight. This week, read the whole scene from the beginning, and pay attention to the thing Samuel carries with him to Bethlehem. Bring your noticing next week.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 687, 702, 1287.