
THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

“All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD. Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly. He said: ‘Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: “Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s. Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.” ‘ Jehoshaphat bowed with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the LORD. Then some Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the LORD, the God of Israel, with very loud voice.” (2 Chronicles 20:13-18)

The Holy Spirit was active throughout the Old Testament. He is mentioned 86 times (27 of the 39 books).

Hebrew: רוח *Ruach*= the Spirit [created man partook of the Spirit of Life: Genesis 7:22; Isaiah 17:5]

- 14 times in the books of Moses.
- Exodus = focus on Spirit of Wisdom.
- In Judges the Holy Spirit breathes courage and strength.
- Isaiah and Psalms two emphases: the coming Messiah and His personal qualities.
- Isaiah and Ezekiel: 13 and 15 respectively= 28 references. In Ezekiel the action of the Holy Spirit is shown transporting Ezekiel to places where he was needed.

1. CREATOR

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” (Genesis 1:1, 2)

- personally involved in creation - Genesis 1:2 (“*incubat*”, Latin Vulgate); Job 26:13; Psalm 33:6; 104:30; brought order out of chaos; continues to renew life in living creatures (including man) and the “face of the earth”.
- created and sustains man - Genesis 2:7; Job 33:4. We are sustained by the Spirit (however this does not mean we are “part” of the Spirit, as some New Age teaching suggests);
- we all live by the creative power of the Spirit within us - Daniel 5:23; Acts 17:27, 28.
- the same Spirit is involved in re-creation - John 3:5

2. RELATING TO MAN

Progressively throughout the Old Testament:

- before the flood, strove with fallen man regarding sin - Genesis 6:3 (cf John 16:8);
- led Israel during their wanderings after the exodus from Egypt - Nehemiah 9:20; however, they rebelled and grieved the Holy Spirit, so He became their enemy - Isaiah 63:10;
- after the exile in Babylon, strove with the backslidden Israelites, seeking to draw them back to Himself - Nehemiah 9:30;
- assured the people through Haggai that He was still among them - Haggai 2:5.

3. PRODUCING WORKERS FOR GOD

Joseph	Genesis 41:38-40 - gave wisdom and equipped and anointed for leadership and the salvation of Israel
Bezaleel	Exodus 31:2-5; 35:30, 31 - “filled”, for the crafting of the tabernacle
Eldad and Medad	Numbers 11:26 - Elders who prophesied
Moses and the Elders of Israel	Numbers 11:16, 17, 25 - “rested on them”; cf Isaiah 63:11
Joshua	Numbers 27:18-23- indwelt him as a servant of Moses and a leader of Israel. See also Deuteronomy 34:9
Balaam	Numbers 24:2 - prophesied about Israel
Othniel	Judges 3:9, 10 - delivered Israel
Gideon	Judges 6:34 - came on Gideon to enable him to do exploits; lit. “clothed him”
Jephthah	Judges 11:29 - delivered Israel
Samson	Judges 13:24, 25 - gave great strength
Saul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 Samuel 10:6; 11:6, 7 - as king; - 1 Samuel 19:23, 24 - went among the people prophesying - intermittent; forfeited when he became proud and rebelled against God
David	1 Samuel 16:13 - anointed king of Israel > prayed that God would uphold him with his “free Spirit”; > recognised Holy Spirit’s omnipresence - Psalm 139:7
Azariah	2 Chronicles 15:1, 2 - confronting the King
Zechariah	2 Chronicles 24:20 - “came upon him”

--	--

Anointing Individuals

Anointed *prophets* and *kings*. The anointing of oil they received was a symbol of the Holy Spirit's touch on their lives for service.

Not for life

However, the Holy Spirit did not usually come on people for life.

- David was concerned lest the Holy Spirit be taken away from him because of his adultery with Bathsheba - Psalm 51:11);
- in the case of Samson, the Holy Spirit left him and did not return till the end of his life (Judges 13-16);
- departed from Saul, after his sin (1 Samuel 18:12; 16:14).

4. PRODUCING SPEAKERS FOR GOD

In the OT God used prophets to speak on his behalf - Hebrews 1:1, 2. He anointed them with the Holy Spirit to undertake this task. David (2 Samuel 23:2); pictured in the mantle that passed from Elijah to Elisha (1 Kings 19:19).

Recognised supremacy of the Holy Spirit in spite of human weakness:

- "I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord" - Micah 3:8
- "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit..." - Zechariah 4:6 (cf 12:10b)

Sometimes involved dynamic atypical experiences, eg Ezekiel 2:2; 3:24; 8:1-3; 11:1, 24. (Compare with Philip's translation in Acts 8 and John on Patmos during the recording of the Revelation.)

Gave them revelation, illumination (though not always), words, action, commands, authority (though this did not always protect them from persecution).

Prophets did not prophecy according to their own will, even though the actual words they spoke were their own (they were not merely God's secretaries, but expressed His message with their own vocabulary:

"...holy men of God spake [as they were] moved (φέρω = "moved, conveyed, or carried along") by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter 1:21)

Had to be receptive to the Spirit - 2 Kings 3:15.

5. REGENERATING SPIRIT

Holy Spirit in OT transformed peoples' lives, eg Saul - 1 Samuel 10:6.

Strove with them, to bring them back into relationship - Genesis 6:3. The Holy Spirit had a role, but that men still exercised free will (with consequences).

Joel prophesied an outpouring of the Spirit bringing spiritual restoration to the nation - Joel 2:28

The Holy Spirit was involved in the coming of the Messiah (Isaiah 11:1-2), as the Spirit of:

- wisdom
- understanding
- counsel
- might
- knowledge
- holy fear of the Lord
- holiness

See also Isaiah 61:1 (cited and claimed by Jesus at Nazareth in Luke 4:21).

The same Holy Spirit still wants to give us supernatural wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and reverence for the Lord and make us holy in our daily lives.

In the OT the Holy Spirit was “given” selectively (select individuals, times, tasks). Moses recognized this, wished all God’s people were prophets, that the Lord would “put His Spirit on them” - Numbers 11:29.

Today He is given to all of God’s children - John 14:17.

6. OLD AND NEW “DISPENSATIONS” COMPARED

(a) Similarities

Old Testament	New Testament
limited to certain tasks, at specific times	available for everyone
given to sharpen the skills of workers	given to sharpen skills
limited to certain people	normal for every Christian believer
usually temporary	given for permanent help and teaching
usually externally manifest	outward evidence, but an inward reality
given to provide supernatural wisdom and guidance	provides supernatural wisdom, guidance
-	acts to sanctify the people of God

(b) Differences

Old Testament	New Testament
Mainly chose judges, prophets, kings	(a) Age - “old men/young women” (b) Gender - ”sons and daughters” (c) Class - “servants and handmaidens” (d) Includes - “all flesh”

7. INSPIRER OF THE SCRIPTURES

The Holy Spirit was the Author of the Old Testament, eg

- 1 Peter 1:10, 11 (“the Spirit of Christ who was in them...”)
- Hebrews 3:7 (“even as the Holy Spirit says...”)
- Hebrews 4:3,4 (“even as ... the Holy Spirit... has said...”)
- Hebrews 10:15 (“as the Holy Spirit also bears witness...” quoting Jeremiah)
- Matthew 22:43 (“how then does David in the Spirit call Him Lord?) - Jesus several times confirmed the Holy Spirit’s role in inspiring the Scriptures
- Acts 27:25 (“well spoke the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the prophet...”)
- see also Acts 1:6; 4:25; Ephesians 6:17.

IMPLICATIONS FOR US

Holy Spirit continues to:

- convict sinners;
- give inspiration to speak in His name;
- carry out God’s will in His people (the Church);
- be sensitive to obedience/rebellion, etc.;
- act in power in peoples’ lives;
- fill Christians with power to be effective witnesses;
- be omnipresent - always there;
- give special skills and abilities to fulfil His will;
- give boldness to confront situations and people as He directs;
- give insight into His Word, and other necessary teaching;
- give wisdom and strength to live the Christian life.

Discussion:

What are the practical implications of the Holy Spirit being involved in our lives as the Spirit of:

- wisdom
- understanding
- counsel
- might
- knowledge
- holy fear of the Lord
- holiness