

# THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

by Mike Stallard

The possibility of producing clear doctrine on the Holy Spirit of God based upon the Old Testament has been ruled out by some scholars.<sup>1</sup> Even strong conservatives have expressed caution in this area:

There are about one hundred references to the "spirit of God" in the Old Testament. It is difficult to be confident of an exact number, for some of these are unclear as to meaning. The Hebrew word translated "spirit" is the same word that can be translated "breath" or "wind." It is, therefore, somewhat tenuous to establish clear doctrinal positions on these verses. While people in the Old Testament era could not understand the person and the work of the Holy Spirit as we do, that does not mean that the Spirit was not present and at work (cf. Acts 7:51; 2 Peter 1:21). But the emphasis in the Old Testament was on the role of God the Father, rather than on the Son Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

While this counsel must be heeded, it is important not to overlook what actually is taught about the Spirit in the Old Testament. With that in mind the current study presents two aspects to examining Old Testament pneumatology. First, a survey of all Old Testament references to the Holy Spirit is provided. The Hebrew word *ruah* (breath, wind, or spirit) occurs some 394 times. Approximately 25% of those are references to the Spirit of God which form the basis for the Old Testament teaching. Second, a section is provided on special issues in Old Testament pneumatology. Here an attempt is made to synthesize what is found in the Old Testament about the Spirit and to investigate any continuities and discontinuities with the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.

## A Survey of Old Testament Teaching<sup>3</sup>

### Pentateuch

In Genesis the Spirit of God is clearly mentioned twice with a third reference possible. The Spirit of God takes part in creation week by moving on the waters in Gen. 1:2. The idea in this passage, which is hard to take in an impersonal sense, is a hovering or brooding over the waters. In Gen. 6:3, God says "my Spirit will not always strive with man." Here the concept

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<sup>1</sup> F. A. Gosling, "An Unresolved Problem of Old Testament Theology," *The Expository Times* 106 (May 1995): 234-37. Gosling reacts specifically to the charge that there are no insights about the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. Although some exegetical and theological conclusions may be problematic, Gosling's method of beginning with the Old Testament text on its own terms is correct. In this article, I have tried to do the same although integration with New Testament truth cannot be dismissed entirely.

<sup>2</sup> Paul N. Benware, "The Work of the Holy Spirit Today" in *The Fundamentals for the Twenty-First Century: Examining the Crucial Issues of the Christian Faith* edited by Mal Couch, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2000), 312-13.

<sup>3</sup> This survey cannot delve into the exegetical details of each and every mention of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament. However, it can provide the basis for the theological synthesis that will be furnished in a later section of this article. The presentation of this article will be from the dispensational point of view.

appears to be the Spirit contending with men and women during the wicked days prior to the great Flood. This contention appears to be an internal striving of the Spirit against the wicked imaginations of man. The passage also implies that the Spirit's very presence and ministry could be withdrawn from the human race in some sense. The third possible allusion to the Spirit of God in Genesis is the characterization of Joseph by Pharaoh with the question "Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the spirit of God is?" (Gen. 41:38). Pharaoh's understanding is similar to Nebuchadnezzar's description of Daniel as one in whom a spirit of the holy gods (or Holy God) dwells (Dan. 4:8, 9, 18). Although the passage cannot be pressed in light of Pharaoh's pagan perspective, it is clear that Joseph's interpretation of dreams is done by the power and Spirit of God and does not flow from any simple characterization of him as a godly man.

Like Genesis, Exodus only refers to the Spirit of God a handful of times. However, the passages involved all seem to highlight the giving of the Spirit of God to men to give them the capacity to perform natural skills well. In Ex. 28:3, God gives men wisdom in the area of making priestly garments (cp. Ex. 35:35). Although the Spirit of God is not mentioned in this verse, later passages indicate that God filled men such as Bezalel and Oholiab with the Spirit of God for the purpose of artistic design and craftsmanship with regard to the Tabernacle and its instruments (Ex. 31:3, 35:31). This work of the Spirit anticipates the giving of spiritual gifts in the NT although the focus in Exodus seems to be on natural abilities rather than spiritual dimensions.

Leviticus never mentions the Spirit of God, but Numbers highlights the Spirit in three separate chapters. On the occasion when God transferred some of the "spirit" that was upon Moses to the seventy elders, it is clear that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is in view (Num. 11:17, 25, 26). First, all of the elders involved began to prophesy which is an indication of the presence of the Spirit of God in special ministry as seen throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Second, Moses, in answering Joshua's objection, wishes that God would put His Spirit upon all the people so that they could prophesy (11:29). The second chapter in Numbers where the Spirit is cited is Num. 24:2 where God's Spirit comes upon Balaam, the false prophet. This shows that according to the purposes of God, the Spirit can even come upon pagans and that such a moving of the Spirit is not a permanent feature. The final occurrence in Numbers of the Spirit is the more permanent nature of Joshua's infilling by the Spirit of God cited in 27:18.

Deuteronomy, like Leviticus, does not mention the Spirit of God. However, Joshua is said to be filled with the spirit of wisdom which as seen from Exodus gives an implicit reference to the Spirit (34:9; cp. Ex. 35:25). Also, on six occasions, Moses reminds the children of Israel about the history of their experiences by citing the "signs and wonders" that God had done through them and for them (Dt. 4:34, 6:22, 7:19, 26:8, 29:3, 34:11). The reference back to the experience in Egypt (cp. Ex. 7:3) is never clearly described as caused by the Spirit of God although later revelations from God associate signs and wonders with the power of the Spirit (Rom. 15:19).

### **The Historical Books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth**

The historical books of Joshua and Ruth do not refer to the Spirit of God. However, the Book of Judges marks an intensification of the idea of the Holy Spirit coming upon certain individuals to carry out God's divine purpose. Throughout the time of the Judges, it seems that God sends both His Spirit and evil spirits (9:23) upon certain men on specific occasions. God's Spirit throughout is the Spirit of Yahweh rather than the emphasis on the Spirit of Elohim found in the Pentateuch.

The Spirit of Yahweh comes upon Othniel (3:10) as God used him to deliver the children of Israel from Chushan-rishathaim. In perhaps the pivotal section in Judges, the Spirit of Yahweh comes upon Gideon (6:34) as he gathered and led the people against the oppression of the Midianites. The Spirit of Yahweh also comes upon Jephthah (11:29) as he leads the Israelites in victory against the Ammonites.

However, the most instructive section of Judges on the issue of the Holy Spirit is the account of Samson's life and leadership in the nation (13-16). Samson, dedicated as a Nazirite, enjoyed the blessing of the LORD (13:24). The text affirms that the Spirit of Yahweh began to "move" Samson "at times" (13:25). This general statement explicitly teaches that the work of the Spirit in Samson's life was not a continuous, permanent work. The specific examples cited later show that, in fact, the Spirit seems to come upon Samson and leave Samson according to the purposes of God. In 14:6, the Spirit of Yahweh comes upon him to give him strength to slay a lion. In 14:19, the Spirit of Yahweh comes upon him to slay thirty Philistines. An even greater feat is the slaying of a thousand Philistines with a donkey's jawbone, a feat that is caused by the Spirit coming upon him (15:14-15).

What is unique about the Samson story is that God's Spirit comes upon him while he is in the midst of lust and sin. That means that the coming of the Spirit upon a man is not necessarily conditioned upon his holy life. Throughout the passage it is God's sovereign purpose among the people that is in view (14:4, 16:28-30). There is no way in which Samson earned the right for the Spirit to come upon him. It is also true that the Spirit was no longer available to give him strength, a condition he did not realize for a time (16:20). Finally, it is important to know that Samson's strength was entirely of the Spirit. Had he been a strong man physically in comparison to other Israelite men, it is doubtful that the Philistines would have sought the reason for his great power.

### **Historical Books: 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles**

In the history given in 1 & 2 Samuel, the same emphasis continues that was found in the Book of Judges. However, the focus is on Saul and David in the struggles over kingship while at the same time adding the occurrence of prophesying as a major result of the Spirit's presence. During Saul's anointing as king, the prophet Samuel predicts that the Spirit of Yahweh will come upon him and will cause him to prophesy and become a different man (1 Sam. 10:1-7). When the prediction comes true (10:10), the text says that the Spirit of Yahweh came upon Saul so that he prophesied among the prophets. In the next chapter, the Spirit of Yahweh comes upon Saul much like He did on the Judges, as Saul delivers the Israelites from Nahash and the Ammonites (11:1-11). The chronicler also records that the Spirit of God came upon messengers sent from Saul to capture David so that they do not accomplish the evil deed but prophesy instead (19:19-21). The last mention of the Spirit coming upon Saul is in the same chapter after the events involving the messengers. When Saul himself travels to Naoith, where he hopes to find David, the Spirit causes him to prophesy as before (19:23-24).

What is intriguing about this event is that it is after an earlier time when the Spirit was said to have departed from Saul (1 Sam. 16:14). This departure coincides with the anointing of David as king, the coming of the Spirit upon David, and the sending of an evil spirit from God upon Saul (16:14-23, 18:10, 19:9). The evil spirit also seems to come and go in the life of Saul. In David's case, the coming of the Spirit seems to have a more permanent character since it was "from that day forward" (16:13). At the end of his life, David's last words note that "the Spirit of

Yahweh spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2). In this way, the death of David highlights the role of the Spirit in causing men to prophesy.

In 1 Kings 22:24-25, there is an awareness that the Spirit of God is involved in the words of the prophets as shown by the argument between Zedekiah and Micaiah. However, in 1 & 2 Kings, the role of the Holy Spirit centers mostly on the prophet Elijah to whom the word of the Lord would frequently come (1 Ki. 17:2, 8; 18:1, etc.). In none of the statements about the word of the Lord is the Spirit of God ever mentioned. However, Elijah is clearly one of the prophets whose prophesying has previously in the OT canon been the work of the Spirit. Nonetheless, there are two concrete examples where the Spirit of God is mentioned in conjunction with the ministry of Elijah. On one occasion, Elijah tells Obadiah, the governor of the king's house, to tell King Ahab that "Elijah is here." Obadiah fears that he will be killed by Ahab because the Spirit of God may carry Elijah somewhere else before he comes back with Ahab (1 Ki. 18:7-12). The idea appears to be the possibility of transport by the Spirit from one place to another and not simply Elijah being "led by the Spirit" in a kind of subjective guidance. This conclusion is reinforced by the second occasion where the Spirit of God is mentioned in reference to the life and ministry of Elijah. In 2 Kings 2:16, the sons of the prophets tell Elisha that they want to seek for Elijah in case the Spirit of Yahweh has caught Elijah up and placed him on some mountain or in some valley.

Another area of interest concerning the Spirit and Elijah is Elisha's desire to have a double portion of Elijah's "spirit" when Elijah is taken up to heaven by the Lord (2 Ki. 2:9-15). After Elijah's departure, the sons of the prophets recognize that the spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha (2:15). Although this account surely refers to Elisha's keen desire to continue the ministry of Elijah, it probably also indicates the empowerment of Elisha by the Spirit analogous to the elders receiving the spirit that was upon Moses (Num. 11).

In 1 Chronicles there is one mention of the Spirit of God as the Spirit comes upon Amasai to encourage him to join himself and his men to David's band of men (12:19). In 2 Chronicles there are four passages to consider:

1. The Spirit of God comes upon Azariah the prophet to give a message to Asa, king of Judah (15:1);
2. Zedekiah hits Micaiah on the cheek while challenging him about whom the Spirit of God really used to speak (18:23);
3. The Spirit of Yahweh comes upon Jahaziel so that he speaks an encouraging prophecy to Jehoshaphat, Jerusalem, and Judah about an upcoming battle with the Ammonites and Moabites (20:14-22);
4. The Spirit of God comes upon Zechariah to preach against the transgressions of the people (24:20).

In most of these cases, the Spirit speaks through a man to give guidance for God's will.

### **Historical Books: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther**

There are no references to the Spirit of God in Ezra and Esther. However, in Nehemiah the Spirit is mentioned in one passage that cites the prayers of the people as led by the Levites. In 9:20, the people praise Yahweh for the way He gave "His good Spirit" to the children of Israel during the experiences in the wilderness under Moses. Later in the same prayer (v. 30), they

praise Yahweh for his patience in sending His Spirit in the prophets to rebuke the people during that time in the nation's history.

### **Poetic Books: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon**

There are only a few isolated passages in the poetic literature of the Bible which speak explicitly of the Spirit of God. No reference to the Holy Spirit can be found in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. There are two clear references in Job.<sup>4</sup> The first is the statement by Elihu to Job that he was created by the Spirit of God (33:4). The second is Elihu's affirmation that God's Spirit and breath were necessary for men to stay alive (34:14). Although Elihu's advice is not generally wise in the flow of the argument of the book of Job, these two passages show an emphasis upon two functions of the Spirit of God, namely, Creation and Providence, both of which are clearly taught elsewhere in Scripture (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 104:27-30).

The Psalms yield five passages that possibly refer to the Spirit of God. First, Psalm 104:30 in context discusses the role of the Spirit in providential care of the created order (v. 24-30). There is the possibility that "breath" is meant instead of "Spirit" in the passage. However, most translations opt for the more likely rendering of "Spirit." Second, in Psalm 106:33, the psalmist rehearses the disobedience and rebellion of the children of Israel in the wilderness under Moses. This rebellion is described as "against his spirit." The phrase "his spirit" could mean the spirit of Moses in light of the following statement "he spake unadvisably with his lips," an assessment that would not be made of God. However, probably on account of the close relationship between Moses and God throughout the wilderness experience, some modern translations translate the expression as "His Spirit" making reference to the Holy Spirit. A couple of other passages in the Psalms mention the Spirit of God without any question. Psalm 139 speaks of the inability of the psalmist to get away from the Spirit and presence of God (v. 7). Psalm 143 gives the psalmist's faithful acclamation that "thou art my God: thy Spirit is good" (v. 10). In the latter example, the writer prays for God to teach and lead him in uprightness, presumably by means of His good Spirit.

The final and perhaps most significant mention of the Holy Spirit in the Psalms is found in the midst of David's confession in Psalm 51. The structure of the pertinent verses (10-12) yield three doublets, each doublet showing Hebrew parallelism:

- v. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God  
    And renew a right spirit within me
- v. 11 Cast me not away from thy presence  
    And take not thy Holy Spirit from me
- v. 12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation  
    And uphold me with thy free spirit

The clean heart and right spirit (v. 10) refer to David's request for God to purify his inner being. Verse 11 is David's prayer that God's presence would not depart from him. He words this also as a supplication that God's Spirit would not be taken away from him. No doubt David was aware of the declension of his predecessor Saul and the history of the Spirit departing from him (1 Sam.

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<sup>4</sup> Charles Ryrie adds Job 26:13 to the list of passages where *ruah* refers to the Spirit of God (*The Holy Spirit* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1965], 31).

16:14-23). His confession pleads for a repeat not to take place. He longs for the joy of his salvation to return (not the salvation itself) and couples this with a desire to be sustained with a willing spirit. The KJV rendering of "thy free spirit" may lend itself to an understanding of God's Spirit, but the idea is probably God's gracious provision of a willing spirit to the confessing psalmist.

## **Pre-Exilic Prophets**

Among the pre-exilic prophets, the Holy Spirit is never mentioned in Jeremiah (including Lamentations), Obadiah, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Nahum, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk. However, the remaining pre-exilic prophets (Joel, Micah, and Isaiah) have significant references to the Spirit of God.

### **Joel**

Joel 2:28-32 gives the highly important prophecy concerning the Day of the Lord and associated events. Four elements of God's provision according to the prophecy can be summarized: (1) He would pour out His Spirit on all people, (2) He would provide prophecy, dreams, and visions, (3) He would give cosmic signs, and (4) he would deliver a remnant in Jerusalem. This passage will find its fulfillment during the tribulation period, Second Coming of Christ, and the subsequent national restoration of Israel. The ultimate fulfillment of this passage is found in the millennium.

The quotation of this passage by Peter on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17-21) has engendered no small debate. It may be best to see the events of Acts 2 as analogous to the predictions of Joel in light of the fact that the first three elements cited above were not being fulfilled at the time that Peter quotes the passage from Joel. The Spirit had only come upon the twelve apostles, not all the people. The speaking in tongues in the passage apparently needed no interpretation and may not constitute prophecy, dreams, and visions. There were certainly no cosmic signs on the Day of Pentecost. Thus, Joel's prophecy of the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh is yet to be fulfilled. This passage gives what has been called, based upon terminology from Jeremiah 31:31-34, the new covenant that in the latter days will replace the Old Covenant for the nation of Israel. The mention of the day of the Lord in the passage assures that its fulfillment is associated with the end time scenario of tribulation and judgment.

### **Micah**

The prophet Micah mentions the Spirit of God twice. In one passage, false prophets react to Micah's prophecy of divinely caused disaster for the nation with the ingenuous question, "O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the LORD straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" (2:7). The reference to the Spirit is variously debated as either His anger or impatience that is in view.<sup>5</sup> The second reference to the Spirit in Micah is found at 3:8. In verbal battle with the false prophets of his day, Micah defends his own prophetic witness by asserting that "truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to

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<sup>5</sup> The NIV translation asks the question "Is the Spirit of the LORD *angry*?" while the NASB translation queries "is the Spirit of the LORD *impatient*?"

Israel his sin." This is one of the relatively few references to the concept of the fullness of the Spirit found in the Old Testament.

## Isaiah

The Hebrew word *ruah* is a favorite of Isaiah. He speaks of the "spirit" of judgment (4:4, 28:6), burning (4:4), wisdom (11:2), counsel (11:2), knowledge (11:2), deep sleep (29:10), and heaviness (61:3). He further talks about a spirit of the nation Egypt (19:3), a perverse spirit (19:14), the spirit of the humble (57:15), vexation of spirit (65:14), a contrite spirit (66:2), and other various references to wind, breath, and the human spirit. It is not surprising then that the Holy Spirit is mentioned several times (more than any other OT prophet) and that some of the references such as spirit of judgment, wisdom, counsel, and knowledge may apply to the divine Spirit as well.

There are some strongly **Messianic passages** in Isaiah which speak of the Spirit of God. In Isaiah 11, a descendant of David would arise (the Messiah) to fulfill the promises made to David (2 Sam. 7:16ff). Isaiah has already cited the significant ministry of this personage to rule over God's everlasting kingdom (Is. 9:6-7). The Spirit of God would rest upon this Messiah to empower him for his sovereign rule in the coming divine empire (11:2). The highlighting of the spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and the fear of the LORD points to the qualities of this King. In summary, "the attributes of the Holy Spirit would characterize the Messiah."<sup>6</sup> The same concept of the resting of the Spirit upon the Messiah can be found in Isaiah 42:1 where he is described with the term "servant." In both passages, a major outgrowth of the abiding of the Spirit upon the Messiah is righteous judgment.

A third Messianic passage of some significance is Isaiah 61:1 which is quoted at length in Luke 4:18-19. Jesus' instruction on that occasion was that the content of this verse was fulfilled in the hearing of his current audience. Thus, the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him for the purpose of preaching, healing, and deliverance. This correlates well with John's understanding that Christ Jesus possessed the Spirit of God without measure, i.e., in His fullness (John 3:34) as he entered into his First Advent ministry. However, it is interesting that Jesus stops his reading before the statement in Isaiah 61:2: "and the day of vengeance of our God." No doubt Christ knew that fulfillment of such a day awaits His Second Coming.

In addition to Messianic passages which speak of the Spirit, a few of the references to the Spirit highlight the promise of **a new covenant or kingdom blessings** for the nation of Israel (32:15, 44:3, 59:19-21). In Isaiah 32:15, there is a Messianic context (a coming king in verse one) and future blessing on the land of Israel (v. 15-20). Verse 15 states explicitly that this time of blessing will not happen "until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high." The "us" in the verse refers to the nation of Israel. The Spirit's special presence in the nation and land corresponds to a time of righteousness, quiet, and peace (v. 17-18). The time spoken of begins with the millennial reign of Christ. In Isaiah 44:3, another description of this glorious future is described by God's promise to give water to the thirsty, His Spirit upon the seed of Israel, and

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<sup>6</sup> John A. Martin, "Isaiah" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Old Testament Edition, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1056. It is common in dispensational interpretation to see the three doublets in Isaiah 11:2 as relating to the Holy Spirit and to compare this passage with the seven spirits in Revelation 1:4. However, it is not at all clear that the Revelation passage has the Spirit in mind. In Isaiah 11, the Spirit is nonetheless expressly mentioned in a kind of introductory way to the doublets.

blessing upon the offspring of Israel. In Isaiah 59:19-21, the time of future blessing is described as a time when "the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against" the enemy and there exists universal fear of the LORD (v. 19). Furthermore, it is a time when the Redeemer comes to Zion and a remnant of the nation repents of its sin (v. 20). Finally, the kingdom is characterized by a special covenant made with the nation (v. 21). It is implied that it is a new covenant and not the ratification of a previous one. Hence, it corresponds to the statements of Jer. 31, Ez. 36, and Joel 2. Isaiah lists two elements in this covenant, both of which are viewed as permanent: (1) God's Spirit resting upon the people of the nation, (2) the putting of the words of God in their mouths (v. 21). In this way, Isaiah accents the theological intertwining of Word and Spirit that is prominent throughout both testaments.

Other references in Isaiah to the Holy Spirit of God highlight the following:

- A pronouncement of woe is given those in the nation of Israel who do not seek or follow God's will in the matter of foreign alliances. Such a state of affairs according to God is "not of my Spirit" (Is. 30:1);
- God's Spirit will gather all of the wild animals which Isaiah predicts will overrun Edom as an act of divine judgment (Is. 34:16);
- God himself is elevated when one realizes that no man is able to give counsel or direction to God's Spirit (Is. 40:13);
- Isaiah has been sent to Israel along with God's Spirit (probably a reference to the prophecies given through Isaiah) to speak to the children of Israel (Is. 48:16);<sup>7</sup>
- In a section rehearsing the past compassion of God (focusing mostly on Moses and the children of Israel), the text says the children of Israel "rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit" (63:10). His Holy Spirit had been placed among the people (63:11) and eventually gave them rest in that experience (63:14). This passage contains two of the three uses of the term "Holy Spirit" found in the Old Testament.

## **Jeremiah**

Earlier it was noted that the Holy Spirit is not mentioned by the prophet Jeremiah. However, the concept of a new covenant, which is associated in other prophets with the Holy Spirit, is mentioned in Jeremiah 31:31-34. This new covenant with Israel and Judah is characterized by Jeremiah as the forgiveness of sin, the universal knowledge of Yahweh, and God's law put within the people, in fact, written on their hearts. It is also a time when God will be their God and they shall be His people. Theologically, it is not hard to see how the Holy Spirit would be involved in bringing to pass this state of affairs. Joel 2:28-32 and Ezekiel 36:22-38 describe essentially the same features but also include the Holy Spirit's role in leading the children of Israel into a walk of obedience. The time of the fulfillment of all of these predictions begins with the coming millennial kingdom.

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<sup>7</sup> The identification of the speaker in Isa. 48:16b has been highly debated. Martin lists Cyrus, Israel, and the Messiah as other options and prefers to see Messiah speaking the words ("Isaiah," 1102).



## Exilic Prophets

Ezekiel contains several specific references to the Spirit of God while Daniel only contains debatable possibilities concerning the Holy Spirit. The text of Ezekiel yields more than one way of describing the Spirit's activity. For example, the Spirit of God both *lifts up* Ezekiel (3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5) and *enters* Ezekiel (2:2; 3:24). The significance of the former is that the Spirit is involved in giving the prophet a vision. The description of the hand of the Lord moving Ezekiel to the valley of dry bones is essentially the same action although the terminology is different (37:1ff). The use of the latter terminology is intertwined with the former but appears to emphasize the giving of a personal command from God to Ezekiel. Similarly, the idea of the Spirit of Yahweh "falling upon" Ezekiel (11:5) produces a clear prophetic utterance by the prophet.

Another area in which Ezekiel highlights the work of the Spirit of God is the concept of the new covenant. Ezekiel 11:17-20 predicts that at a time when God brings the scattered Jews back to the land, He will "put a new spirit within them" and give them a new heart for the purpose of obedience. Although the Holy Spirit is not directly mentioned, the passage anticipates Ezekiel 36:27 in context where God promises the nation "I will put my Spirit within you." Ezekiel does not use the terminology of a new covenant, but the descriptions match the presentation of Jeremiah 31:31ff. Ezekiel 39:21-29 (esp. v. 29) reinforces the idea that the re-gathering of Israel into the land and the outpouring of the Spirit upon the nation occurs in the end times at the beginning of the kingdom (Ez. 40-48).<sup>8</sup>

The book of Daniel yields no clear references to the Holy Spirit. Daniel is described as possessing an "extraordinary spirit" (5:12, 6:3) but it is doubtful that the Holy Spirit is in view. Rather, the quality of his character may be the outlook. In several verses (4:8, 9, 18; 5:11, 14) the reader receives the king's pagan viewpoint that Daniel is one in whom "a spirit of the holy gods" dwells. From a biblical perspective it is possible to see the correct understanding as the presence of the Holy Spirit, a presence little understood by the king. However, such would be a theological deduction and not a direct statement of the book of Daniel.

## Post-Exilic Prophets

The post-exilic prophets Haggai and Zechariah both allude to the Holy Spirit but teaching about the Spirit of God is not central to their message. The lone mention of the Holy Spirit in Haggai focuses on the presence of the abiding Spirit in the midst of the nation (2:5). This is to be an encouragement to Zerubabel, Joshua the high priest, and the post-exilic remnant (2:4).

In Zechariah, there are three clear references to the Spirit of God. In chapter four, an angel encourages the prophet in the vision of the lampstand with seven channels supplying oil to the lampstand. The angel interprets this picture as a promise from God that the temple would surely be rebuilt but by God's Spirit and not merely by human ability. Hence, the statement is given: "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts" (4:6).

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<sup>8</sup> The first chapter of Ezekiel also has the enigmatic description of four living beings or creatures carrying the throne of God. Throughout the chapter their movement is governed by the direction of the "spirit." It is unclear if this is the Holy Spirit. The reference in 1:21 to the "spirit" of the living beings makes this a problematic identification.

The second mention of the Holy Spirit in the book of Zechariah is 7:12. In this section of Zechariah, God scolds the people of Judah of recent times for their hard hearts, selfishness, and disobedience. Their disobedience is described as a rejection of the words from God “sent by His Spirit through previous prophets.” Thus, the Holy Spirit is the one who gives the message to and through the Old Testament prophets.

The third mention of the Spirit is the pouring out of “the Spirit of grace and supplication” cited in 12:10 when the house of David and those in Jerusalem will mourn when they see the One they pierced (at the Second Coming). While there is some question about identifying *ruah* here as the Holy Spirit of God,<sup>9</sup> the context leaves little doubt. It will be a day when there is cleansing of the nation from sin (13:1) and when the LORD is their God (12:5, 13:9). This corresponds quite well with other prophetic passages concerning the New Covenant (Joel 2:28-32, Jer. 31:31ff, Ez. 36:24-38, 39:29) in which the Holy Spirit plays a prominent role.

The post-exilic book of Malachi may refer to the Holy Spirit in one extremely difficult verse to translate (2:15).<sup>10</sup> In the section on the sin of divorce which the prophet is highlighting, he asks the question: “Has not the LORD made them one?” The answer is “in flesh and spirit they are his” (NIV). The KJV refers to the “residue of the spirit” and the NASB to the “remnant of the Spirit.” One way of taking the passage that sees the Holy Spirit in view has been summarized this way: “Did not God make us one nation by separating us from the other nations? asks this view. Yet this limiting was not done because the Spirit of God had exhausted the fullness of his blessings, which might have been spread more widely among other nations, but it was done specifically so that he might make from the “seed” a repository of his covenant and the stock of his Messiah.”<sup>11</sup> The position that Malachi refers to the Holy Spirit in 2:15 does have the problem of relating the idea in some way to the divorce issue that is the topic under discussion. Consequently, it is best not to derive any ideas in this passage about the Holy Spirit which are not confirmed elsewhere in Scripture.

### Special Issues in Old Testament Pneumatology

In the previous section, a summary of Old Testament passages referring to the Holy Spirit was given. Such a review is often lacking from works on the Holy Spirit although it is foundational to any theological synthesis on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. Below are theological reflections which attempt to integrate actual Old Testament teaching on the Spirit as well as explore the issues of continuity and discontinuity with the New Testament.

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<sup>9</sup> The New International Version translates the word as “a spirit” while giving “the Spirit” as a footnote alternative.

<sup>10</sup> Craig Blaising notes that 2:15 is the most difficult verse to translate in the entire book of Malachi (“Malachi” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Old Testament Edition [Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985], 1581). Joyce Baldwin comments that “it is impossible to make sense of the Hebrew as it stands, and therefore each translation, including the early versions, contains an element of interpretation” (*Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Introduction & Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, gen. ed., D. J. Wiseman, [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972], 240). The issues appear to be the referent of “one,” the translation of “flesh or remnant,” and the idea of “life” or “spirit” (human, national, or divine).

<sup>11</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Malachi: God’s Unchanging Love* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 72-73. Kaiser only summarizes this view and does not hold to it himself.

## Continuity of the Old Testament with the Gospels

One of the most important issues in understanding the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian ministry today is the extent to which there is a change in that role beginning on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. There are several lines of evidence that point to the conclusion that the change that takes place is substantial. One strong reason for seeing a significant shift is the biblical teaching about the baptism of the Spirit (to be discussed below). This baptism is at a time future to the Gospels and apparently entails a new ministry of the Spirit (Matt. 3:11, Acts 1:5).

A second reason for seeing a radical change in the ministry of the Spirit at Pentecost is the pneumatology of John's Gospel. While there is no denial that the Spirit is already present in the world, there is clear teaching that the Holy Spirit will come and perform new ministry. The Upper Room Discourse is especially instructive on this score. The most compelling example is when Jesus tells His disciples that the Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you" (John 14:17 NASB). The transition from *with you* to *in you* highlights a promise and prediction of the Savior of the changing ministry of the Holy Spirit for the sake of the disciples. While the Spirit empowers them at that time, there is coming a day when He will indwell them. The Spirit is pictured as One who will be given (14:16) and sent (14:26) by the Father. Another description is that He is sent "by the Son from the Father" (15:26). There can be little question that these changes as well as others point ahead to the time of Pentecost when the Spirit came in new ministry at the start of the Church Age.

Related to this question is whether the Gospel accounts give a picture of Holy Spirit ministry in the first century that is the same as that of the Old Testament. The Gospels point ahead to the changes alluded to above. However, the experience of the Holy Spirit in the Gospels is essentially unchanged from the Old Testament. For example, the Holy Spirit comes upon some believers to empower them for certain tasks. The Holy Spirit certainly comes upon Jesus early in his ministry (Mt. 3:16-17) although it could be argued that Christ is a special case. However, Jesus sends out the twelve disciples with "authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness" (Mt. 10:1). Nowhere in this particular context is the Holy Spirit mentioned. However, in the debate between Jesus and the Pharisees two chapters later, Jesus essentially tells the representatives of that belligerent sect that He casts out demons by the Spirit of God (Mt. 12:28). Hence, the enablement granted to the disciples to do the same thing also came from the Holy Spirit of God.

It is also true that this ministry of the Spirit in the Gospels is not exactly the same thing as universal and permanent indwelling as is the case with later Christians (1 Cor. 6:19-20; Rom. 8:9). Again, the John 14:17 passage with its prediction of the future indwelling of Christians is near the end of Christ's ministry while the sending out of the twelve is early. Therefore, one cannot look at such work of the Spirit in the same vein as later post-Pentecost developments. Also, in John 20:21-22, Jesus, during a post-resurrection appearance, commissions the disciples and gives them the Holy Spirit. This appears to be an empowerment that falls short of what would begin to take place on the day of Pentecost. It is probably best understood as a pre-cursor to that event and necessary for the disciples during the in-between time from the resurrection of Christ to Pentecost.<sup>12</sup> Blum argues that "This reception of the Spirit was in anticipation of the

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<sup>12</sup> The text of John 20:19-23 actually relates the event to the relationship between the disciples and the forgiveness of sin for others. In this way, it certainly anticipates the ministry of the apostles in unlocking the kingdom for many to come in (see Matt. 16:19; 18:18 and the early chapters of the book of Acts).

day of Pentecost and should be understood as a partial limited gift of knowledge, understanding, and empowerment until Pentecost . . .”<sup>13</sup> In any case, the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Gospels seems to resemble His work in the Old Testament more than it does later Christian understanding.

### **The Personality of the Holy Spirit**

The Bible taken as a whole reveals the Holy Spirit to be a person and not simply a force or power.<sup>14</sup> Walvoord makes the general observation that “In the history of the church, opponents of the personality of the Holy Spirit have found it necessary also to deny the inspiration and accuracy of the Word of God in order to sustain their teaching.”<sup>15</sup> However, the question here is whether the Old Testament understanding by itself is sufficient to arrive at the personality of the Spirit. Wood’s discussion of the matter alludes to over thirty passages but only three are Old Testament references.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, Walvoord’s presentation highlights the same lack of Old Testament passages which lend themselves to the discussion of this issue although he attempts to cite more examples.<sup>17</sup>

In the final analysis, there does appear to be at least a hint in the Old Testament of the personality of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit seems to be involved in the use of *intellect* as implied by Isaiah 11:2, 30:1, 40:13 and 48:16 which could be categorized as references to the guiding capabilities of the Holy Spirit with respect to Messiah and others. The Spirit can also be grieved because of sin according to Isaiah 63:10 (cp. Eph. 4:30) thereby showing *emotion*. The Spirit’s *will* (as well as intellect and emotion) may be implied by his involvement in creation (Gen. 1:2), the empowering of individuals (Zech. 4:6), the restraining of sin (Gen. 6:3, Is. 59:19), and participation in judgment (Is. 34:16). It is highly unlikely that these passages could be written about a mere force. Also, Psalm 51:11 seems to associate the presence of God with the presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>18</sup> This would argue not only for the personality of the Spirit but for His deity as well.

Finally, in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit seems to be sent forth much like the angels are sent forth (cp. Gen. 19:13, Dan. 8:15ff, 9:21-27; Ps. 104:30). If one understands that angels are not mere forces, but personalities, it would be difficult to deny the personality of the Spirit of God as well. Consequently, in spite of the lack of abundant evidence, the Old Testament does add to one’s understanding of the personality of the Spirit of God.

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<sup>13</sup> Edwin A. Blum, “John” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, New Testament Edition, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 343.

<sup>14</sup> The theological discussion of the personality of the Holy Spirit usually presupposes the Greek notion of personality as that which possesses mind, will, and emotion.

<sup>15</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1954; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 5-7.

<sup>16</sup> Leon J. Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 15.

<sup>17</sup> Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, 6.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Ryrie notes that this mention of the Spirit of God means that Spirit can be “reverenced.” See *Holy Spirit*, 13.

## The Deity of the Spirit and Plurality in God

The deity of the Spirit of God and the conclusion that God is triune rests largely on the integration of various biblical texts to produce trinitarianism.<sup>19</sup> In this process, the New Testament is naturally the most decisive. What, if anything, the Old Testament might tell us is limited. Erickson notes concerning the Trinity that

We will not even find a full-fledged and explicit doctrine within the New Testament. Given the nature of progressive revelation, we should not, therefore, expect to find as much in the Old Testament as in the New. Until the incarnation of the Son and the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost, it would be very difficult to reveal much about the second and third persons of the Trinity in a fashion that would be comprehensible to the recipients of that revelation. The help that the Old Testament revelation can be to us is much more modest than that.

What we will be seeking here are indications, hints, of the understanding of God by the Old Testament writers that go beyond the mere or normal understanding of God on a monotheistic model. To put it another way, are there any indications of complexity or the composite character of God in the Old Testament?<sup>20</sup>

Erickson argues for hints of plurality in God based upon several factors: (1) the Hebrew concept of extended personality (Judg. 14:6, 19; 15:4; 1 Sam. 10:10), (2) plural references with respect to God (e.g., Gen. 1:26; 3:22), (3) teachings about the Angel of the LORD (Gen. 31:11-13; Ex. 3:2, 4), and (4) the nature of the unity of God which encompasses diversity (Deut. 6:4).<sup>21</sup> Such facts, as he notes, only show that Old Testament language allows for plurality in God and the deity of the Spirit as the third person of the Godhead. Theologians have also argued that the deity of the Holy Spirit can be established from Old Testament teaching about the Spirit's attributes of omnipresence (Ps. 139:7) and omnipotence as shown by involvement in creation (see below).

New Testament elaboration of Old Testament texts further demonstrates the deity of the Spirit. In Acts 28:25-28 the text records Paul's use and application of Isaiah 6:9-10 to accent the unbelief of many Jews who had come to talk to him. In the Isaiah passage, it is clear that Yahweh (v. 3, 5, 12) or Adonai (v. 1, 8ff) speaks the words of the verses quoted in Acts 28. However, in the Acts passage the Apostle introduces those words with the phrase "the Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers" (NASV). Thus, the deity of the Spirit is established. Also, in Hebrews 10:15-17 the biblical author quotes the New Covenant passage in Jeremiah 31:31-34. In Jeremiah it is clearly Yahweh who makes the promises while in Hebrews 10 the statement is prefaced by the words "and the Holy Spirit bears witness to us"

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<sup>19</sup> The doctrine of the eternal procession of the Spirit of God cannot really be gleaned from the Old Testament text. However, Walvoord points to two aspects of Old Testament teaching that lead in that direction. First, he cites Psalm 104:30 where the Spirit is sent forth by God. Second, he seems to suggest that the phrase "Spirit of God" points to the procession idea by its very nature. See Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, 14. Contrary to the first case, the sending forth of the Spirit is a sending into the world for the purpose of preservation under the providence of God. It does not refer to the eternal workings within the triune Godhead. In the second case, the wording does not automatically convey God the Father as the source of the Spirit as in "Spirit out from God." The language is at best inconclusive. Consequently, the doctrine of the procession of the Spirit is not an Old Testament doctrine.

<sup>20</sup> Millard Erickson, *God in Three Persons: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 159.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 159-74.

(NASV). The equation of the Holy Spirit with Yahweh firmly proves the deity of the Holy Spirit. However, in these two cases cited above, it must be said that the Old Testament text by itself does not direct us to that result. Rather the integration of Old and New Testament texts lead us to that theological conclusion.

### **The Holy Spirit's Role in Creation and Providence**

The Holy Spirit's role in creation is established in Genesis 1:2 where the Spirit of God is said to be hovering over the face of the waters. Davis remarks that

The verb of which the Spirit is the subject is an active participle and means, essentially, "hovering over" (cf. Deut. 32:11). The latter part of verse 2, therefore, describes the Spirit hovering over, protecting, and participating in the creative activity. The same verb in Deuteronomy 32:11 is used of an eagle hovering over its young, and this seems to be the imagery suggested in Genesis 1:2.<sup>22</sup>

Others have been more specific with suggestions about this role such as the idea that the Spirit's work here "must have been anticipatory of the creative work that followed, a kind of impregnation with divine potentialities."<sup>23</sup> Gromacki argues that the "Spirit of God hovered over the created matter of the universe like a dove covering her newly laid eggs. He providentially superintended the waters that surrounded the earth until the triune God finalized the creative design in six days."<sup>24</sup> While this is not explicitly stated, it is plausible based upon the context of the first chapter of Genesis. The statement of the Spirit's work directly precedes the outline of the six days of creation. This reinforces the notion of the Spirit as agency in the days of creation.<sup>25</sup> No matter what the details, the fact that the Spirit has a role in the Creation account in Genesis is clearly spelled out. That such is the case should not be surprising since "the idea of God's Spirit as the active agency of His power is common in the Pentateuch and the rest of Scripture."<sup>26</sup>

There are two other passages that may highlight the work of the Spirit in creation although each is not without questions. Job 33:4 directly states the involvement of the Spirit of God in the creation of human beings. It is true that the passage gives Elihu's understanding which is at times faulty in some areas of thinking as it relates to Job's suffering. However, on this particular issue there is no exegetical or theological reason to ignore his statement as normative for the question of the Spirit's role in the creation of man.

Isaiah 40:13 states "Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has informed Him?" (NASV). The following context suggests that only the Lord understands how to deal with various issues of life like justice and the affairs of the nations. Nothing about creation is strictly cited. However, the previous context (v. 12) asks some leading questions that suggest

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<sup>22</sup> John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), 47.

<sup>23</sup> H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, Vol. I (Grand Rapids: Baker, 50). A similar idea of the Spirit giving life to the unformed earth described in verse two is cited by Lewis Sperry Chafer who uses the metaphor of incubation to describe this ministry of the Spirit (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 6 [Dallas, Texas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948], 27).

<sup>24</sup> Robert Gromacki, *The Holy Spirit* (Nashville: Word, 1999), 64.

<sup>25</sup> Leon Wood, *Holy Spirit in the OT*, 30.

<sup>26</sup> John Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Books, 1996), 112.

that God is the only One who can measure the waters, mark off the heavens, calculate the dust, and weigh the mountains. More than providential care may be in view since only a Creator could do such things. If the Spirit of God is in view, which is likely in light of the next verse, then the passage can thus be seen to support indirectly the role of the Spirit in creation.

The work of the Spirit of God in the preservation of the created order (a work of providence) is clearly indicated in one primary passage. Psalm 104:30 notes that “Thou dost send forth Thy Spirit, they are created; And Thou dost renew the face of the ground” (NASV). The context refers to the created order, naming animals in particular, and their need to be preserved and nourished. The ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit in sustaining life is in this way highlighted by the Psalmist who “speaks the sober truth of God’s maintenance of all life.”<sup>27</sup>

### **The Convicting and Restraining Work of the Holy Spirit**

The New Testament offers a somewhat clear although sketchy picture of the Spirit’s work in convicting or convincing the sinner of his sin (John 16:8-11) and restraining evil (2 Thess. 2:6-7).<sup>28</sup> The Old Testament likewise presents a sketchy view of this ministry of the Holy Spirit. Only one passage speaks to the issue explicitly. In Genesis 6:3, God says “My Spirit will not always strive with man forever” in the context of His dealings with the wicked world before the Flood. Most English translations use the word *strive* (KJV, NASV) or *contend* (NIV). Marginal notes in the NASV include *rule* and *abide in* while a marginal note in the NIV renders it *remain in*. Part of the difficulty comes from the fact that the Hebrew word here only occurs in this one passage.<sup>29</sup> However, it does occur once in noun form in Job 19:29 where it is best translated *judgment*. This understanding adds credence to the contention or striving idea in Genesis 6:3. Thus, the Holy Spirit battles against sin in the world. The statement is a general one and an exact description of what this actually looked like in the world is not revealed. In light of the context, it most likely refers to the Spirit’s internal prodding of the human heart to do right and refrain from evil.

Walvoord considers this teaching in two other Old Testament passages, both in Isaiah.<sup>30</sup> In Isaiah 59:19, God speaking through the prophet says “So they will fear the name of the LORD from the west . . . For He will come like a rushing stream, which the wind of the LORD drives” (NASV). The “wind” of the LORD, if taken as “Spirit” (KJV), might give the impression that the passage is teaching that the Spirit works to bring about the fear of God, certainly an indication of a convicting and restraining influence. However, the metaphor of the rushing stream seems to be muddled if *ruah* is taken as *Spirit*. Therefore, Walvoord is correct when he notes that the text is not clear for those who want to see the restraining work of the Spirit in Isaiah 59:19.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150: A Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 372.

<sup>28</sup> For a standard dispensational way of understanding the “restrainer” in 2 Thess. 6-7, see J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*, Dunham Publishing Co., 1958; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 259-63.

<sup>29</sup> See Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 170-71. The fact that the Hebrew verb for *strive* occurs only in this verse was confirmed by means of software tools.

<sup>30</sup> Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, 114-15.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

Furthermore, the entire context relates to the New Covenant promises to the nation of Israel which will be fulfilled in the future. Consequently, this passage, even if the Spirit were in view, would not teach about the restraining work of the Spirit during the Old Testament times.

More fruitful is the discussion in Isaiah 63:10-11 where the prophet remembers the Spirit's battle against those of God's people in the wilderness during the time of Moses who "rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit" (NASV). Walvoord does an excellent job of framing this verse and summarizing this Old Testament ministry of the Spirit.

Most of the restraining works of the Spirit are revealed as accomplished through various means. The work of the Spirit in revealing truth through the prophets, particularly the warning of judgment to come, and the work of the inspiration of the Scriptures with their power helped to restrain sin. The judgments which followed rejection of His striving against sin (Isa. 63:10-11) had their effect. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit by virtue of His holy character was conducive to restraint of sin. Throughout the Old Testament, then, the power of the Holy Spirit guided human events into the path of divine providence.<sup>32</sup>

In other words, any work which the Spirit performed in the Old Testament tended to limit the expression of sin.<sup>33</sup>

### **The Regeneration of the Spirit**

Walter Kaiser noted that "one of the most important, but yet the most notoriously difficult, aspects of salvation in the Old Testament is to describe the precise work of the Holy Spirit in the individual's experience of regeneration and sanctification in that testament."<sup>34</sup> The idea of the Spirit giving new life to the believer is a clear New Testament teaching (Jn. 3:1-7; Tit. 3:5). Neither the word nor the concept is represented plainly in the Old Testament. Thus, the question can be raised, "Is there a dispensational distinction in the ministry of the Holy Spirit beginning at Pentecost (Acts 2) with respect to regeneration?"

The answer to this specific query appears to be "no" in this case. Earlier we established in a cursory way that there is continuity between the Gospels and the Old Testament concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is thus relatively easy to argue from the teaching of Jesus to

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>33</sup> Related to the convicting and restraining work of the Spirit is the doctrine of illumination. Some theologians discuss this topic in relation to the understandability of the Bible. The reason for this is the belief that the Spirit aids the believer in understanding the biblical text as he reads it. Appeals are mostly made to New Testament passages like 1 Corinthians 2:14. The issue is not a simple one. Other theologians appeal to the broader usage of illumination terminology to discuss the work of the Spirit in helping unbelievers to see the truth of their sin and turn to Christ. In the Old Testament, there are numerous passages that allude to various kinds of enlightenment performed by God. Even the idea of God's help in understanding the Bible may be alluded to in passages like Psalm 119:12, 18. However, any illumination ideas are not tied to the Spirit of God in the Old Testament. The similarity of such ideas with the convicting and restraining work of the Spirit provide a possible theological tie that must be discussed. However, illumination is not an explicit Old Testament teaching and the theological connection is not easily made.

<sup>34</sup> Walter Kaiser, Jr., "The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament" in *Pentecostalism in Context: Essays in Honor of William W. Menzies* edited by Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies, (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 38.



Nicodemus in John 3 for regeneration in Old Testament saints. In that chapter, Jesus informs Nicodemus that everyone who wants to enter the kingdom of God must be "born again" (3:3, 7) or "born of the Spirit" (3:5-6). What strengthens the argument is that Jesus

thought it was altogether reasonable for a person to experience both being born again and the work of regeneration by the Holy Spirit in the process of experiencing the new birth as judged by the writings of the Old Testament--especially since the New Testament had not yet been written and Christ had not yet gone to the cross and been raised from the dead.<sup>35</sup>

Jesus forced such a conclusion with his critical question to Nicodemus: "Are you a teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?" in John 3:10. Consequently, Old Testament saints were regenerate.

Regeneration quite naturally leads to a discussion of the extent of divine empowerment for obedience that was available for Old Testament believers. The active work of the Holy Spirit during Old Testament times included instruction or teaching (Neh. 9:20) and the many other works of the Spirit cited in the earlier survey on Old Testament teaching. Many of those passages highlight the nature of individual change that is produced by the work of the Spirit (e.g., 1 Sam. 10:6).<sup>36</sup> However, it is not at all clear that such experiences were either permanent or universal for all believers during Old Testament days. One cannot argue theologically from the New Testament experience of believers back into the Old without justification. The Old Testament promise of the New Covenant (to be discussed below) with its provision of empowerment for obedience was a promise of universal fulfillment for the future. This automatically entails an understanding of a more limited vision of the Spirit's work in sanctification during the Old Testament days as the saints anticipated the Spirit's great future work.<sup>37</sup> It also raises some questions about the Spirit's indwelling of Old Testament saints.

### **The Indwelling of the Spirit**

The indwelling of the Spirit refers to the continued residence of the Spirit within the believer following regeneration and conversion.<sup>38</sup> There are naturally two major views concerning the indwelling of Old Testament saints by the Holy Spirit: (1) they are indwelt by the Spirit in continuity with Church Age saints, or (2) they are not indwelt by the Spirit in discontinuity with Church Age saints.<sup>39</sup> Each position has strong adherents with traditional

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 38-39.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>37</sup> This conclusion does not necessarily imply a rejection of the Spirit's aid in sanctification for Old Testament saints. The text is just not concerned to yield details on this point. It should also not be taken to mean that the experience of the Church directly fulfills the New Covenant promises to Israel. The future fulfillment of the Old Testament promises of the New Covenant for Israel awaits the Second Coming of Christ. See below.

<sup>38</sup> Wood, *Holy Spirit in the OT*, 69.

<sup>39</sup> Often in such discussions, the dichotomy in views is expressed as Old versus New Testament. This is technically imprecise. I have argued above that there is a continuity with the Gospels which the Old Testament possesses which is not true for the post-Pentecost experience of the Church Age.

dispensationalists often championing the second view and arguing for the uniqueness of the experience of New Testament believers.

The position that Old Testament believers were indwelt by the Spirit just like Church Age believers is usually based upon three arguments. First, the passages that speak of the Spirit coming upon and leaving individuals like Saul (1 Sam. 16:14) and Samson (Judg. 14) refer to the ministry of the Spirit's empowerment for certain tasks. They should not be taken to mean anything with respect to the ministry of the Spirit's presence with respect to the individual's salvation. Daniel Block notes

These passages provide the primary basis for the common misperception that in ancient Israel that the Holy Spirit typically came upon persons, whereas in the New Testament he indwells believers. However, these cases must be seen as exceptional rather than typical or normative, even for the Old Testament, for several reasons. First, in each case the person upon whom the Spirit comes has been singled out to liberate an oppressed people. Second, in each case the Spirit's activity was driven by a concern for the national good, not primarily an individual's relationship with God. Third, in most cases the person chosen was an unlikely candidate for divine employment. Fourth, when the Spirit of Yahweh empowers these men their authority is immediately recognized, as evidenced by the way in which the Israelite forces rally behind them. We may conclude, therefore that the *rûah* functions as the agency / agent through which Yahweh arrests otherwise unqualified and resistant individuals and thrusts them out into his service.<sup>40</sup>

Wood concurs that such passages, in and of themselves, cannot lead to a denying of indwelling for Old Testament saints.<sup>41</sup> To argue that way would be to mix apples and oranges.

The second argument by those who see indwelling for Old Testament believers is a theological deduction from regeneration. Since the giving of life is performed by the Spirit, then the Spirit's presence seems to be a necessary condition for its ongoing reality. It is a small step then to believe in the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit for Old Testament saints. A third argument is related. It is the theological deduction from the necessity of the sealing ministry of the Spirit to guarantee the salvation of the Old Testament saint and the necessity of the indwelling Spirit to guarantee the perseverance of the Old Testament believer. Wood combines these theological arguments in the following way:

On the other hand, a strong argument that Old Testament saints were indwelt may be built on the fact that they were regenerated . . . since they were regenerated, it must have been the Holy Spirit who brought this about. Now it may be argued that, since these Old Testament saints certainly remained in a regenerated condition, it must have been the Holy Spirit who kept them so. The New Testament is clear that the Christian is incapable of keeping himself, any more than he is capable of saving himself . . . One must ask, then, Did the Old Testament saint possess an ability for perseverance not known to the New Testament saint? The answer is clear: They did not possess such an ability and were not able to keep themselves. But, if not, they must have been kept by God, and this means, surely, the Spirit of God.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Daniel Block, "Empowered by the Spirit of God: The Holy Spirit in the Historical Writings of the Old Testament," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 1 (Spring 1997): 45.

<sup>41</sup> Wood, *Holy Spirit in the OT*, 69.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 70. Wood seems to be focusing on the eternal security aspect of perseverance and not necessarily the automatic ongoing development of practical holiness.

Of course, the counter-argument could be made that the divine Spirit is powerful enough to do such things without necessarily indwelling the believer. Wood would answer that the only example of how it is done is the indwelling of the Spirit found in the New Testament (Church Age). Therefore, it is reasonable to believe the same for Old Testament saints.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the argument assumes a kind of unity between the Testaments.

On the other side are those who believe that Old Testament saints were not universally and permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit. They argue, first of all, that the argument from the distinction between the coming and going of the Spirit upon individuals in the Old Testament in contrast to the post-Pentecost New Testament indwelling cannot be so easily dismissed as the confusing of apples and oranges. The continuity of the Gospels with the Old Testament in the area of the ministry of the Spirit was established earlier. Its significance for this question is that passages such as John 14:17 show that the New Testament makes the exact distinction that those who want to accept Old Testament indwelling refuse to accept. The Gospels speak of the Spirit coming upon Christ and through Him to the disciples in the same way that He operated in the Old Testament. The Spirit was "with them" but would be "in them," an indwelling to begin later at Pentecost.<sup>44</sup>

In addition, the promise of a New Covenant given in the Old Testament highlights the distinction between the Old Testament experience of the Spirit's presence and that of New Testament saints. The Church in some way experiences the blessings of the New Covenant (1 Cor. 11:25). The content of the New Covenant will be discussed below, but for now, its significance lies in the empowerment for obedience that is promised to those receiving the blessings of that covenant (see Jer. 31:33-34; Ez. 36:26-27). It must be noted that this was a prediction in those Old Testament passages with respect to the nation of Israel. If the universal and permanent indwelling of the Spirit were true of Old Testament saints, then the promise of the covenant for future fulfillment would not be much of a promise since all Old Testament saints would already possess what was promised.

Finally, those who do not see Old Testament indwelling would point to biblical examples that show the ability of spirit beings to affect humans to great extents without indwelling them. Thus, it would not be necessary to argue for the indwelling of the Spirit in order to produce regeneration, sealing, and perseverance. One such example is Satan's influence on Job (Job 1-2). Another example is Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). Satan, the unholy spirit, leads them into lying disobedience. There is no mention in the passage that he entered them in any way. If this is so for Satan, how much more will the divine Spirit be able to produce the desired effects in individual believers without indwelling. In light of this and the preceding arguments, it seems best to reject the belief that the Holy Spirit indwells Old Testament believers.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Contrast Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament*, 85-87. There is the issue in John 14:17 and context of the pronouns that are used ("with" and "in"). Wood suggests that the Greek usage and construction (including the related verb *dwells*) lead to another possible conclusion: "Christ was saying that the Spirit had been 'with' believers in the senses that have been noted (regenerating, indwelling, sealing, filling, empowering), but that the time was near when He would additionally baptize them and then empower them in a new way for gospel proclamation" (87). In this interpretation the wording has nothing to do with indwelling. My own conclusion is that the Upper Room Discourse focus on discontinuity supports the conclusion of Walvoord that I have essentially followed here (*The Holy Spirit*, 72-73). However, these are important issues to wrestle with in dispensational interpretation.

One extremely significant passage in this debate is Psalm 51:10-13.<sup>45</sup> David prays in verse 11 "Do not cast me away from Thy presence, And do not take Thy Holy Spirit from me." What does he mean by the prayer? Kaiser rejects the notion that David is simply asking not to lose the gift of government given to him at his anointing from the Holy Spirit (1 Sam. 16:13-14).<sup>46</sup> Instead, he sees the prior context (v. 10) with its focus on the renewed heart as informing the prayer with a practical individual bent rather than a kingly thrust. However, there may be no need to divorce those two ideas. Saul had lost his kingdom due to a heart that turned away from God. Consequently, David senses the need to restore his fellowship with God but also may see his need to keep his kingdom.<sup>47</sup> If this is so, David's focus on the kingdom does not cheapen the heart-felt individual longing to make things right with God. What does all of this have to do with indwelling? David's experience is typical of Old Testament pneumatology. The Spirit comes upon individuals and leaves them, sometimes due to their sin. David's prayer taken that way is consistent with the whole tenor of the Old Testament record. It is also quite different from the New Testament experience of permanent indwelling even for carnal Christians (1 Cor. 6:18-20). Therefore, this example from the sweet Psalmist of Israel shows that Old Testament saints were not permanently indwelt by the Spirit of God.

### **The Baptism of the Spirit**

Did the Holy Spirit have a baptizing ministry in the Old Testament? Were Old Testament saints baptized by the Holy Spirit, and if so, what did that mean in Old Testament days? These questions may be among the easiest to answer in Old Testament pneumatology although there has been disagreement on the topic.

First, it is plain that the baptism of the Spirit is something new beginning in Acts 2. The baptism of the Spirit is predicted in Matt. 3:11 by John the Baptist and by Jesus in Acts 1:5. That the baptizing ministry of the Spirit started in Acts 2 is clearly stated by Peter in Acts 11:15-16. These facts are sufficient to suggest that the baptizing ministry did not exist prior to Pentecost and therefore did not happen in the Old Testament.

Second, the Pauline definition of the baptism of the Spirit relates to Paul's understanding of the universal body of Christ which he calls the church (1 Cor. 12:13, Eph. 1:22). Paul told the Corinthians that every believer is baptized into one body (the church) by the Spirit. What does that mean? It means that every believer, the moment he or she is saved, is identified and united with Christ and every other believer. The body metaphor that Paul uses highlights the unity of all believers under the headship of Christ as they minister to each other and the world with the divinely sanctioned gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4, Rom. 12).

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<sup>45</sup> John Goldingay refers to this passage in the debate in connection with the problem of reading later Christian conceptions back into the Old Testament. However, he goes on to say, "But at some stage we may rightly consider statements in the OT in terms of Christian theological categories as part of seeking a theological understanding which will enable us to interpret God's activity in the world and the church today" ("Was the Holy Spirit Active in the Old Testament," *Ex Auditu* 12 [1996]: 17).

<sup>46</sup> Kaiser, "Holy Spirit in the Old Testament," 40.

<sup>47</sup> Allen Ross, "Psalms" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Old Testament Edition, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 832-33.

What is the significance of this for Old Testament understanding? Paul understands the church to be something new on the day of Pentecost. It is the unique putting together of Jew and Gentile into one new man (Eph. 2). It is the mystery unrevealed in the Old Testament but now made known (Eph. 3). It is a clear dispensational distinction separating the work of the Spirit in the Old from that in the New.

## Spiritual Gifts

The Spirit's work in empowering Old Testament saints to do certain tasks appears on the surface to be similar to the New Testament concept of spiritual gifts. Certainly there are some differences in the scriptural presentation of such ministry. The Hebrew words for *grace* and *gift* in the Old Testament text are normally not used to describe the enablement of individuals for certain tasks. The Greek word *charisma*, which usually means "grace gift" in the New Testament, is almost a synonym for *grace* or *mercy* in the Old Testament.<sup>48</sup> It is never used in connection with the empowering of the Spirit in the LXX.<sup>49</sup> In addition, the Pauline concept of spiritual gifts is always tied to the "body of Christ" metaphor for the Church (Rom. 12, Eph. 4, 1 Cor. 12).<sup>50</sup> Such a concept is foreign to the Old Testament. The uniqueness and newness of the Church apparently casts the gifting work of the Spirit in a different light.

However, there are at least three threads of similarity with the New Testament that can be traced with respect to the Old Testament concept of what might be called the giving of gifts. First, Old Testament people are sometimes referred to as gifts given by God (Num. 8:19; 18:6). In the Numbers passages, God declares the Levites to be a gift to Aaron and his sons for the purpose of serving as priests to the nation. However, nothing is said about *how* God has gifted them as individuals. The Holy Spirit is not mentioned. They are merely separated unto the task of priestly service. However, the idea of people as gifts is used by Paul in his teaching about spiritual gifts in Eph. 4:8 where he quotes from Psalm 68:18, "When he ascended on high, he led captive a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men" (NASV). In the context of Ephesians, the Holy Spirit, the body of Christ (Church), and the giving of grace to individuals are all in view (4:1-7). Paul's analogous application of the Psalm passage lists the men given as gifts to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers (4:11). None of these are specifically in view in the Old Testament passage. Paul's appropriation of the idea, however, shows there is a similarity in the Spirit's work in relation to the giving of men as gifts to the people of God.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> H.-H. Esser, "Grace, Spiritual Gifts" in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 2, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 115-24.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>50</sup> Almost all New Testament uses of *charisma* and *pneumatikos* for spiritual gifts are Pauline with the exception of Peter's use of them in 1 Pet. 4:10 and 1 Pet. 2:5 respectively. Peter does not invoke the body metaphor for the church in conjunction with these presentations, but his teaching is consistent with Paul's model.

<sup>51</sup> Ross, "Psalms," 843. Ross concurs that Paul's use is analogous. Furthermore, he points out that Paul borrows the imagery of the Psalm indirectly through the Jewish Targums rather than quoting the Old Testament directly.

Second, there are several Old Testament examples of God's Spirit coming upon Old Testament saints to empower them to carry out specific tasks.<sup>52</sup> For example, the Holy Spirit is said to come upon various men in the book of Judges such as Othniel (3:10), Gideon (6:34), Jephthah (11:29), Samson (13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14). The Spirit apparently endows each leader with abilities to lead the tribes against various oppressors like the Midianites and Philistines. For each man, the particular empowerment of the Spirit, while involving leadership, may be somewhat different. In the case of Othniel and Jephthah, the references are general with no specifics cited. In Gideon's life the Spirit may have given courage that went beyond his normal human ability. The Samson account yields the most detail as the Spirit comes upon him to give him supernatural physical strength. At least in Samson's case, this is not a permanent ongoing ability but one that comes and goes. Eventually, it is taken away by God due to Samson's wickedness.

Likewise, the Spirit of God comes upon certain men to grant extra insight and ability in the area of building. In Exodus 31:3-6 Bezalel and others were filled with the Spirit of God for the purpose of possessing wisdom, knowledge, and skill in craftsmanship as the Tabernacle, its furniture, garments, and utensils were to be made.<sup>53</sup> Here the Spirit energizes natural skills with a specific event as the focus rather than ongoing living.

In addition, the Spirit of God is said to come upon men who have an administrative or kingly function to assist them in that function. Examples would be the leadership of Moses (Num. 11:17; Isa. 63:10-12) and Joshua (Num. 27:18; Deut. 34:9) as well as the reigns of King David (1 Sam. 16:13) and King Saul (1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 11:16; 16:14).<sup>54</sup> In these cases the ministry of the Spirit appears to be an ongoing day by day enablement for each individual's purpose in God's plan. In this it may differ from the example of the Judges. However, the example of Saul's declension and loss of the Spirit in this capacity shows the potentially temporary nature of this work of the Spirit (1 Sam. 16:14). While the empowerment shown is similar to later Church operations, the permanence of the Spirit's presence in the latter case contrasts with this Old Testament example (see discussion above concerning the indwelling of the Spirit).

Another area in which the Spirit comes upon certain men in the Old Testament is prophecy. The Holy Spirit comes upon several named individuals such as Azariah (2 Chron. 15:1-7), Jahaziel (2 Chron. 20:1-23), Zechariah (2 Chron. 24:20), and Amassai (1 Chron. 12:18) to produce prophetic utterances. Even the false prophet Balaam, in a unique situation, experienced the coming of the Holy Spirit to give a prophetic message through him (Deut. 23:4).

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<sup>52</sup> One of the best surveys relative to the work of the Spirit in these kinds of ways can be found in Leon Wood, *Holy Spirit in the OT*, 53-63.

<sup>53</sup> Leon Wood includes in this category the Spirit's empowerment of David (1 Chron. 28:11, 12) and Hiram (1 Kings 7:13, 14; 2 Chron. 2:7, 13, 14) for the building of the Temple (*Holy Spirit in the OT*, 55-56). However, there is nothing clearly spelled out in these texts to differentiate the working of the Spirit from basic natural skills. It is possible that the Holy Spirit did empower these men with respect to the Temple, but we simply do not know that from these particular texts. These passages do not discuss the events in pneumatological terms.

<sup>54</sup> Again, depending upon how one understands the pagan perspective of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel could be added as an example of the spirit coming upon or indwelling an individual for the purpose of assisting him in administrative duties. See Daniel 5:11ff for a specific example. It must be understood that in such passages the Spirit does more than just reveal things to Daniel prophetically but that the pagan rulers seemed to understand an ongoing presence of a spirit with the individual.

In all of these instances, it appears that the Holy Spirit comes upon or fills the person temporarily for the sake of giving the prophecy.

However, Wood argues that other examples show the Spirit's work in the prophet in a more continuous way. He mentions teachings from the three books of Micah, Nehemiah, and Ezekiel.<sup>55</sup> Micah declares that he is "filled with power--with the Spirit of the Lord" for the purpose of preaching the truth to Israel about its sin (Micah 3:8). This contrasts in the context with the situation of the false prophets who were leading the nation astray (3:1-7). In Nehemiah 9:30, the Levites reminded the congregation of Israel that in Moses' day God gave His "good Spirit to instruct them."<sup>56</sup> In Ezekiel 11:5-12, the Spirit of the Lord falls upon the prophet to produce a prophetic utterance. In Ezekiel 2:2, the Spirit had certainly entered into the prophet as kind of an introduction to this prophetic ministry recorded in the rest of the book. In all of these examples, Wood concludes, the language supports a more continuous filling or empowerment of the men involved in comparison to the earlier examples of prophets, administrators, craftsmen, and judges.

However, the language may be inconclusive, but some important questions are raised by these observations. In Old Testament cases where the Spirit comes upon prophets to grant an utterance of some kind, there appears to be a similarity to the New Testament spiritual gift of prophecy. In fact, the New Testament gift appears to be no different than that in the Old Testament. God usually gives the individual a message to speak. Only the context of the Church as opposed to Israel and the nations is new. To say otherwise implies that the narrative of the book of Acts, with its review of many prophets from the Old Testament (e.g., Acts 3:25; 7:37; 11:27) and its own first century prophets (e.g., Acts 11:27), would present perhaps a different view of the prophets than that found in the epistles that were written throughout the history of Acts itself.<sup>57</sup>

A further issue is the terminology of the *filling of the Spirit* that is used in many of the examples cited in the above discussion (see especially Micah 3:8 and Exodus 31:3, 35:31). It is difficult, however, to force a similarity across the board to New Testament concepts. Some uses of the idea in the New Testament imply the control of the believer by the Holy Spirit without any mention of miraculous events or spiritual gifts (see Eph. 5:18-21).

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<sup>55</sup> Wood, *Holy Spirit in the OT*, 58-59.

<sup>56</sup> There seems to be a parallel between the context of Nehemiah 9:20 and the context of Nehemiah 9:14 which assures the conclusion that the passage is talking about the Spirit being given to Moses for the benefit of the people.

<sup>57</sup> This understanding of the issue is different than that advanced by Wayne Grudem in several writings including *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 1049-61. He argues that the New Testament counterpart to Old Testament prophets were the apostles and not New Testament prophets. Compare Richard B. Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost: Studies in New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979). It is beyond the scope of this article to address the precise nature of the gift of prophecy. Our concern here is the relationship of the Holy Spirit to it. It is not obvious that the Spirit's role is necessarily governed by the nature of the gift itself. In the case of the specific spiritual gift of prophecy, it is possible that there exists in the New Testament record more than one meaning of the term. The context of prophecy in Romans 12:6 may be governed by the descriptive list that follows wherein it may be described in terms of exhortation against evil (12:9). However, such association would be the only such occurrence within Paul's letters.

A third area that highlights possible Old and New Testament similarities involving the Spirit's role in spiritual gifts is the mention of signs and wonders. The concept of *signs and wonders* occurs evenly between the Old and New Testaments.<sup>58</sup> In Exodus 7:3, God performs the signs and wonders during the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh. Several passages from Deuteronomy remember those same miraculous signs (Deut. 4:34, 6:22, 26:8, 29:3, 34:11). Nehemiah 9:10 also refers to the Exodus miracles in this way as does Psalm 135:9 and Jeremiah 32:20.<sup>59</sup> The pagan Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar viewed God's supernatural working in his life as signs and wonders (Dan. 4:2). Darius the Persian king likewise acknowledged the signs and wonders done by God when Daniel was spared from the lions (Dan. 6:27).

What is characteristically true about all of these Old Testament passages is the absence of any mention of the Spirit of God. It is God doing the signs and wonders by His power. Thus, the Old Testament emphasis is distinguished from the New Testament focus on the Spirit's association with the granting of signs and wonders. For example, many New Testament references to the signs and wonders refer to the apostles as the doers of such signs (Acts 5:12, 14:3, 15:12, 2 Cor. 12:12). Other passages affirm that such actions by the apostles were due to the empowering of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:18, Heb. 2:4). The Hebrews 2:4 passage is especially instructive since it not only ties the miracles done by the apostles to the Holy Spirit but refers to the "distribution by the Spirit" or, in other words, the giving of miraculous gifts. This key concept appears especially in 1 Corinthians 12:7, "But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good," and 12:11, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills."

## **New Covenant**

Several Old Testament passages reveal the promise and prediction by God of a New Covenant with Israel that would be instituted one day. It would replace the Old Covenant, that is, the Mosaic Covenant, made with Israel at Sinai. The major biblical passages giving these promises from God are Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:26-38, Joel 2:28-32, and Isaiah 32:15, 44:3, 59:19-21). There are several threads to the overall covenantal promise. Not every passage possesses all of them. However, the following points emerge as the thrust of the New Covenant as given in these promises:

1. God will give a new heart, new spirit, or law on the heart.
2. God will be God in the life of Israel and Judah.
3. There will be personal knowledge of God.
4. There will be forgiveness and cleansing from sin.
5. There will be a universal pouring out of the Spirit to provide enablement for obedience.

The main point of the covenant appears to be the last one mentioned above, the pouring out of the Spirit for divine enablement of individual saints in the nation. In most of these texts, the nation is presupposed as in the land. Ezekiel, the exilic prophet, intensely describes the effects of

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<sup>58</sup> For a comprehensive study of the issue of signs and wonders, one would have to go beyond a study of this particular phrase. In the present discussion, the phrase is studied as representative of the issues involved.

<sup>59</sup> Isaiah considered himself along with his children to be signs and wonders for the nation (Is. 8:18). However, this account does not generally fit the concept under consideration.



this covenant on the land itself (36:33-38). The Ezekiel passage in context highlights the time frame as it relates to a future re-gathering of the nation (Ez. 37) and future kingdom temple with its associated organization of the nation (Ez. 40-48). In other words, the time of fulfillment, based upon Old Testament texts is the coming messianic earthly kingdom. That means from a New Testament perspective, Israel will begin to receive the fulfillment of these promises at the Second Coming of Christ.

Based on the Old Testament texts alone, it is clear that the basis of the New Covenant is God's own holiness expressed as His desire to demonstrate His faithfulness to His Word (Ez. 36:22-23), particularly His earlier promises (e.g., Abrahamic Covenant, Gen. 12:1-3). The New Covenant is in no way a reward to Israel for its obedience but becomes the means whereby God graciously empowers the individual saint as he lives in the nation. Consequently, although regeneration is implied in the fulfillment of the covenant, the chief thrust is sanctification for the believing nation in the messianic kingdom.

Dispensational interpreters are fairly united in their understanding of the New Covenant based upon the Old Testament text alone. However, when the Old Testament teaching is integrated with New Testament passages, there has been a great deal of divergence among dispensationalists.<sup>60</sup> It is beyond the scope of this article to address in detail the various views of New Testament fulfillment of the New Covenant promises. However, it is important at this juncture to recognize the significance of maintaining the literal interpretation of the Old Testament while synthesizing it with New Testament allusions to the New Covenant. In particular, the relationship of the Church to the New Covenant should not be used to unravel any of the specific promises of the Old Testament to Israel. In other words, dispensationalists have been careful not to allow any replacement of Israel by the Church although the Church in some way can enjoy the benefits of the Old Testament promises to the nation.

One particular discussion that illustrates this concern involves the interpretation of Peter's quotation of Joel 2:28-32 in Acts 2:16-21. Peter refers to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit in the Joel passage as proof that what was happening on the day of Pentecost was not drunkenness, but a work of God. To what extent, however, is the Joel passage actually fulfilled in Acts 2? Furthermore, how is Joel using fulfillment terminology when he prefaces the quotation with the words "this is that?" A wooden literalism might suggest absolute and direct fulfillment. However, many dispensationalists have argued for analogous fulfillment in which Peter is saying that the occurrence in the Acts passage suggests an analogy to the Joel prediction.<sup>61</sup> Such dispensationalists would point to the details of the Old Testament text such as the time frame of the day of the Lord (Joel 2:31) to show that Acts 2 does not give direct fulfillment of the prophecy. Other concerns based upon the Old Testament text would be the fulfillment of cosmic signs, the context of the restoration of the nation of Israel (Joel 3:1-2), and the universal pouring out of the Spirit, none of which were fulfilled in the Acts 2 context. Consequently, fulfillment in the "last days," that is, in the days related to the coming tribulation period and ensuing kingdom would likely be in view. To be sure, not all dispensationalists have

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<sup>60</sup> For a good summary of the major dispensational approaches to the integration of OT and NT passages on the New Covenant, see Rod Decker, "New Covenant, Dispensational View of" in the *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, gen. ed., Mal Couch, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 280-83.

<sup>61</sup> See Arno C. Gaebelin, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Exposition* (New York: Publication Office "Our Hope," 1912; reprint ed., Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1961), 53-54.

argued in this way.<sup>62</sup> However, dispensationalists, due to their commitment to literal interpretation of the Old Testament, have been careful to prevent the diminishing of the future fulfillment of the New Covenant promises for a national, ethnic Israel.

### **The Holy Spirit as Author of the Old Testament**

The Holy Spirit is the divine Author of the Old Testament. Two lines of evidence point to this close relationship between the divine Spirit and the written Word. First, the New Testament biblical authors understood the Holy Spirit to be the divine Author behind the human authors of Old Testament passages. Several examples can be cited. In Acts 1:16-20, Peter rises to discuss a replacement for Judas. In doing so Luke, the author of the Book of Acts, prefaces Peter's use of Psalms 69:25 and 109:8 in verse 20 with the words "Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas" (v. 16). Thus, the individual authorship of David is affirmed for those two Psalms but the Holy Spirit's influence upon David is also acknowledged. The reference in verse 20 to the entire book of Psalms may hint at the writer's understanding of the whole collection of Psalms and not just the two used in this example.

The writer to the Hebrews refers to the Holy Spirit's authorship of Old Testament passages more than any other New Testament writer (3:7, 9:8, 10:15). In 3:7-11, he quotes from Psalm 95:7-11 while stating that these verses were said by the Holy Spirit. In 9:8 there is no specific quotation but a general reference to the establishing of the Tabernacle regulations in Moses' day (v. 1-7). Such regulations were a way that the Holy Spirit was showing or signifying that individual believers could not yet approach God directly as they can after Jesus had come.<sup>63</sup> In 10:16-17 the writer quotes from parts of the New Covenant passage Jeremiah 31:31-34. These Old Testament verses are sayings of the Holy Spirit as He testifies to the reader (v. 15). In light of these examples, the writer to the Hebrews teaches that the Holy Spirit authors each of the main parts of the Old Testament: the Law (Pentateuch), the Psalms, and the Prophets. It would be hard to limit the intention of New Testament authors to just those passages cited. Instead, they viewed Holy Spirit authorship in the broad sense and applied it directly to the passages that were used.

A second line of evidence pursues the question, "What about the Old Testament's self-understanding in this matter?" Although the Old Testament does not often speak specifically of the Holy Spirit's role in its own deliverance, there is reason to believe that such was the belief among the Old Testament saints. For example, in 2 Samuel 23:1-2 David's last words indicate in the context of his writing the Psalms that "The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue." God's words were thus associated with the work of the Spirit at least for the Davidic psalms. One would be hard pressed to limit the conclusion to just those particular psalms. The entire tenor of the Old Testament shows the close correlation between the prophets and the word of God. In some instances, the prophet speaks as the Holy Spirit comes upon him (e.g., Num. 11:25, 1 Sam. 10:10). It is perfectly reasonable in light of this dynamic to view the

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<sup>62</sup> See Craig Blasing and Darrell Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993): 174-211.

<sup>63</sup> It is possible that the signification by the Spirit in Hebrews 9:8 refers to the practice of the Tabernacle regulations and not the original giving of them. If such were the case, then the passage could speak of the Spirit's work of illumination. However, any practice is based upon the given design that leads to the signification. It is better to see the passage as referring to the original giving of the words of Scripture found in the Exodus account.

word of the Lord written down (oftentimes coming through prophets) as produced by the work of the Holy Spirit using human instruments. Although the exact nature of this superintending work by the Spirit is not laid out for the reader, the original Old Testament readers would have understood this role of the Spirit as the New Testament later clarifies (2 Pet. 1:19-21).

### **Conclusion**

The previous survey of Old Testament information on the Holy Spirit plus the discussion of theological issues above leads one to the conclusion that the Old Testament has much to say about God's Spirit. Certainly in many respects such as the Spirit's involvement in creation, the restraining of evil, and providential care, the data is somewhat sketchy. Not all of the individual books in the Old Testament refer to the Spirit. Some books seem to mention the Spirit only incidentally. The doctrine of the Trinity is not explicitly expounded although the language allows for the Spirit of God as the third person of the Trinity.

However, in spite of these limitations, the snapshot of the Spirit given in the Old Testament does yield enough information to portray a divine personality (not a force) who is actively involved in the affairs of the world and of men (both believers and unbelievers). Continuity with the Gospels of the New Testament aids in understanding that Old Testament saints were regenerated just like Church Age saints and that the Spirit empowered men and women for various tasks. Discontinuity between the Spirit's labor in the Old Testament and His ministry in the Church Age can be seen in the much debated absence in the Old Testament of the universal indwelling of the Spirit as argued for above. In addition, the baptism of the Spirit does not exist in the Old Testament, is predicted in the Gospels, but does not begin until Pentecost. The ministry of the Spirit in providing divine enablement under the New Covenant is anticipated in the Old, reflected in the Church's participation in its blessings today, and fulfilled for Israel in the coming messianic kingdom.

Perhaps the most important factor governing discussions about the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament is the need to let the Old Testament text speak on its own. One implication is that literal interpretation (grammatical-historical) should be the approach to the reading of the sacred words. While integration with the New Testament is necessary and enlightening, its instruction cannot veto any clear teaching of the Old Testament, a text given to us by the divine Spirit Himself.