

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT'S MINISTRY UNDER THE OLD AND NEW COVENANTS COMPARED**

Among God's people there is some difference of opinion regarding the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament (OT) period. Some maintain that there is no difference between this work under the Old Covenant (OC) and the New (NC). They reason that God's purposes are uniform, and the working of his grace demands the same work of the Spirit at all times. Others see a distinction in the Spirit's work in the OT and NT times. The following study has been undertaken in an attempt to see what the Scriptures say.

One thing is very clear – the Holy Spirit was active in OT times. Although the doctrine of the Trinity is not clearly defined in the OT, nevertheless the Spirit's activity is unmistakable. In the second verse of the Bible we read that 'the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters' (Gen.1:2). Jewish scholars and other anti-trinitarians have argued that this is simply a general designation for God, and not to be construed as a reference to a distinct divine person. While it may be true that this verse alone cannot be used to construct a doctrine of the Trinity, still the Scriptures as a whole speak in trinitarian terms and therefore there is no reason to doubt that the reference here to the Spirit of God is to him who elsewhere is clearly referred to as distinct from both Father and Son. As Sinclair Ferguson puts it:

The activity of the divine *ruach* is precisely that of extending God's presence into creation in such a way *as to order and complete what has been planned in the mind of God*. This is exactly the role the Spirit characteristically fulfils elsewhere in Scripture.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Holy Spirit's ministry in the OT period**

I think it may be useful at this point to list all relevant references to the Holy Spirit's work in the OT. In a reading of the whole Bible some time ago, I noted every reference to the Holy Spirit, and here I have tried to include every reference to his working experimentally in the lives of men and women. There are of course other references to the Holy Spirit's work in such areas as creation, and references to his attributes in general, but I have confined myself to such passages as refer to his working in the lives of people.

Gen.6:3	God's Spirit contends with men
Gen.41:38	Joseph described as a man in whom the Spirit was.
Ex.31:3	Bezaleel filled with the Spirit for workmanship in the tabernacle – also Ex.35:31.
Num.11:17	God promised to take the Spirit that is on Moses and put it on the 70 - to help Moses .
Num.11:25, 26	Fulfilled. When it happens they prophesy, even Eldad & Medad.
Num.11:29	Moses wishes the Lord would put His Spirit upon all his people.
Num.24:2	The Spirit came upon Balaam – he prophesied.
Num.27:18	Joshua described as a man in whom was the Spirit.
Jud.3:10	The Spirit came upon Othniel - for leadership.
Jud.6:34	The Spirit came upon Gideon - for leadership.
Jud.11:29	The Spirit came upon Jephthah - for leadership and military strength.
Jud.13:25	The Spirit moved Samson – giving great strength- also Jud.14:6, 14:19, 15:14.
1 Sam.10:6,10	The Spirit came upon Saul – he prophesied.
1 Sam.11:6	The Spirit came upon Saul – he was angry (righteously).
1 Sam.16:13	The Spirit came upon David following his anointing.
1 Sam.16:14	The Spirit departed from Saul.

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<sup>1</sup> Contours of Christian Theology – The Holy Spirit p.21

1 Sam. 19:20	The Spirit came upon Saul's messengers – they prophesied.
1 Sam. 19:23	The Spirit came upon Saul – he prophesied.
2 Sam. 23:2	The Spirit spoke by David.
1 Kings 18:12	The Spirit may carry Elijah away.
2 Kings 2:16	Perhaps the Spirit had set Elijah down in some valley.
1 Chron. 12:18	The Spirit came upon Amasai – he prophesied.
1 Chron. 28:12	David had the pattern of the temple by the Spirit.
2 Chron. 15:1	The Spirit came upon Azariah – he prophesied.
2 Chron. 20:14	The Spirit came upon Jahaziel – he prophesied.
2 Chron. 24:20	The Spirit came upon Zechariah – he rebuked the people.
Neh. 9:20	God gave his good Spirit to instruct Israel.
Neh. 9:30	God admonished Israel by his Spirit in the prophets.
Ps. 51:11	David prays - Do not take your Holy Spirit from me.
Ps. 106:33	Israel rebelled against the Spirit of God.
Ps. 143:10	David prays for God's good Spirit to lead him.
Isa. 11:2	The Spirit on Christ.
Isa. 30:1	Woe to those who plan without God's Spirit.
Isa. 32:14, 15	The land will be desolate until the Spirit is poured out.
Isa. 42:1	The Spirit on the servant of the Lord.
Isa. 44:3	God says, I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring.
Isa. 48:16	The Lord has sent me with His Spirit (the servant).
Isa. 59:21	The Spirit shall not depart from the Lord's people (context clearly the gospel age v20)
Isa. 61:1	The Spirit came upon Christ (Lk. 4).
Isa. 63:10	Israel grieved His Spirit.
Isa. 63:11	God set His Spirit among them (Moses' time).
Isa. 63:14	Israel given rest by the Spirit (same context).
Ezek. 2:2	The Spirit came into Ezekiel - also Ez. 3:24.
Ezek. 3:12	The Spirit lifted Ezekiel up - also Ezek. 3:14, 8:3, 11:1, 24, 43:5.
Ezek. 11:5	The Spirit came upon Ezekiel.
Ezek. 36:27	God will put his Spirit in Israel - (gospel age).
Ezek. 37:1	Ezekiel taken by the Spirit.
Ezek. 39:29	God will pour out his Spirit on the house of Israel.
Joel 2:28, 29	God will pour out his Spirit on all people.
Mic. 3:8	Micah was filled with power by the Spirit of the Lord.
Hg. 2:5	God's Spirit remained among Israel.
Zech. 7:12	God's words sent to the people by His Spirit through the prophets.

## Analysis

The endowment of people by the Spirit is variously described as a filling, a moving upon, most commonly as a coming upon them. This endowment was for a variety of reasons:

- To enable them to prophesy or speak the Word of the Lord. This happened to about a dozen different men.
- To give leadership ability. e.g. Joshua, Othniel, Gideon.
- To give physical strength – Samson.
- To give artistic, architectural and practical skills – those constructing the tabernacle; David drawing up plans for the temple.
- The Spirit sometimes caught people up physically – Elijah, Ezekiel.

It is noteworthy that in some of these cases, the people were ungodly, and even heathen – Balaam (Num. 24:2); Saul and his agents who had murderous intentions regarding David (1 Sam. 19:20, 23). Clearly true faith and a saving relationship to God were not prerequisites for

the ministry of the Spirit. The Spirit is said to depart from Saul. David prays that the Spirit will not depart from him.

Joseph and Joshua are described as men in whom the Spirit was, although Joseph was described in this way by Pharaoh and so that may have been a different sense.

There are three references, all in Isaiah, to the Spirit being upon Christ – obviously future (42:1, 48:16, 61:1).

As far as the general work of the Spirit among God's people – the Israelites, there are two references to the Spirit being among them (Isa.63:11, Hg.2:5), but there no references to the Spirit being on the people or within them. Moses expresses the desire that God would put his Spirit on all his people (Num.11:29). The fulfilment of this desire is spoken of several times, all in the context of the gospel age. Notice again these references:

Isa.32:15	The land will be desolate until the Spirit poured out.
Isa.44:3	I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring.
Isa.59:21	The Spirit shall not depart from the Lord's people (context clearly the gospel age v20).
Ez.36:27	I will put my Spirit in you - (gospel age).
Ez.39:29	I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel.
Joel 2:28,29	I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

### **The Gospels (and Acts 1)**

The Gospels represent a time of transition. They refer to a period that must be considered as part of the Old Covenant, but they point to, speak about and eagerly anticipate the New Covenant. The following passages (hopefully exhaustive), speak about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in people during the period of Jesus' life on earth.

Mt.1:18	Mary was found with child by the Holy Spirit.
Mt.1:20	similar to the above
Mt.3:16	The Spirit descended like a dove upon Jesus - also Mk.1:10, Lk.3:22, Jn.1:32.
Mt.4:1	Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert - to be tempted - also Mk.1:12, Lk.4:1.
Mt.10:20	The Spirit will speak through the disciples - in Jesus' time - also Mk.13:11, Lk.12:12.
Mt.12:18	The Spirit put on Jesus (quoting Isa.42).
Mt.12:28	Jesus cast out demons by the Spirit.
Mt.12:31,32	Blasphemy against the Spirit. – also Mk.3:29, Lk.12:10
Mt.22:43	David spoke by the Holy Spirit (O.T) – also Mk.12:36.
Lk.1:15	John the Baptist would be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth (or the womb).
Lk.1:35	The Holy Spirit will come upon Mary - virgin birth.
Lk.1:41	Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.
Lk.1:67	Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit.
Lk.2:25	The Holy Spirit was upon Simeon.
Lk.2:26	It was revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit that he would see the Christ.
Lk.2:27	Simeon came to the temple moved by the Spirit.
Lk.4:1	Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit.
Lk.4:14	Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit.
Lk.4:18	The Spirit of the Lord was upon Jesus - quoting from Isa.61:1.
Lk.10:21	Jesus was full of joy through the Holy Spirit.
Lk.11:13	The Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask - (present or future?).
Jn.3:5,6,8	Need to be born of the Spirit.
Jn.3:34	God gave Jesus the Spirit without limit.

Jn.6:63	The Spirit gives life.
Jn.20:22	Jesus breathed on the disciples - 'Receive the Holy Spirit' - probably prophetic.
Acts 1:2	Jesus gave commandments to the apostles through the Holy Spirit.

### Analysis

The above references correspond generally to the Old Testament references. Certain individuals were said to be full of the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit came upon them. The Spirit's activities in these people include: conception, speaking, leading, revelation, empowering.

As might be expected, many of the references are to the Spirit's ministry in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Passages that seem to break new ground are the following:

- The need of being born of the Spirit (Jn.3).
- The Spirit giving life (Jn.6:63).
- The Father giving the Spirit to those who ask Him (Lk.11:13). This may be considered as future.

### The following passages refer to the future (post-Pentecost) ministry of the Holy Spirit

Mt.3:11	Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit - also Mk.1:8, Lk.3:16, Jn.1:33.
Mt.28:19	Baptism to be in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Lk.11:13	The Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask.
Jn.7:39	(see v.38) The Holy Spirit will be as streams of living water within the believer. This would occur after Jesus was glorified. Up to that time the Holy Spirit had not been given.
Jn.14:16,17	The Counselor will be given to be with them forever. He, the Spirit of truth, lives with you and will be in you
Jn.14:26	The Father will send the Counselor, the Holy Spirit. He will teach the disciples.
Jn.15:26	Christ will send the Counselor.
Jn.16:7	If Christ does not go away, the Counselor will not come. If Jesus goes, he will send him.
Jn.16:12-14	The disciples could not understand much of what Jesus wanted to say, but the Spirit of truth will teach them when he comes. He will glorify Christ.
Acts 1:4	The Holy Spirit is the Father's promised gift.
Acts 1:5	The disciples will be baptized in the Holy Spirit in a few days' time.
Acts 1:8	The disciples will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them - to be witnesses.

### Analysis

Clearly these are references to a radical new age. They correspond to the OT prophecies of the pouring out of the Spirit on all God's people, and of his permanent indwelling – He will be **in** them (Jn.14:17), and with them forever (Jn.14:16). Before this time he had not been given (Jn.&:39). (We will return to this point later.) From now on he will be as streams of water flowing from all God's people (Jn.7:37). It is necessary for Christ to return to the Father so that the Spirit will be sent. If Christ does not return, the Spirit will not come (Jn.16:7). During Jesus' earthly ministry, the disciples were limited in their understanding of Jesus' teaching. When the Spirit, the Counselor comes, they will understand (Jn.16:12,13). The Spirit's coming is described repeatedly as a baptism of the Holy Spirit. There can be no doubt that the initial fulfilment of all these promises is found at Pentecost (Acts2). Jesus said it would be in a 'few days' (Acts 1:8). The outpouring described in Acts 2 occurred ten days after Jesus said this.

## The New Covenant

Before we look more closely at the distinction between the Spirit's ministry in the OC and NC, we will give a sample of the references to the Spirit's activity in NC believers. These are not exhaustive but representative.

Acts 2:4	All the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit.
Acts 2:38	Holy Spirit was promised to all who repent.
Acts 4:8	Peter was again filled with the Holy Spirit.
Acts 4:31	The believers were again filled with the Spirit.
Acts 5:32	Holy Spirit was given to all who obey God.
Acts 15:8	God gave the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles just as he did to the Jews.
Rom.8:9	Every believer possesses the Holy Spirit. If not – he does not belong to Christ.
Rom.8:13	The Spirit enables the believer to mortify sin.
Rom.8:14	The sons of God are led by the Spirit of God.
Rom.8:16	The Spirit witnesses to the believer's adoption.
Rom.8:26	The Spirit makes intercession for the believer.
1 Cor.2:12	We have received the Spirit who is from God.
1 Cor.3:16	The church is the God's temple, indwelt by the Spirit.
1 Cor.6:19	The believer's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.
1 Cor.12:13	All believers baptized in the Spirit.
2 Cor.1:22	Believers are sealed by the Spirit.
2 Cor.3:7-18	The ministry of the Spirit is contrasted with the ministry of the law.
2 Cor.5:5	Believers have the earnest (deposit) of the Spirit.
Gal.3:14	Believers receive the promise of the Spirit by faith. This is in contrast to the law, but is in fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham.
Gal.4:6	Because we are sons of God, he has sent his Spirit into our hearts. Again this is by contrast to those under the bondage of the law.
Gal.5:18	If we are led of the Spirit, we are not under the law.
Eph.5:18	Believers are commanded to be filled with the Spirit.
1 Thes.4:8	The Holy Spirit was given to make us holy.
2 Thes.2:13	Believers are chosen to be saved through sanctification of the Spirit . . . .
Tit.3:5	Believers are saved by the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

## Analysis

It is clear that the ministry of the Holy Spirit represents the touchstone of the believer's experience. Every person who repents and obeys God in the gospel, is given the Spirit (Acts 2:38). Anyone who does not have the Spirit is not a believer (Rom.8:9). Every believer is baptized in the Spirit (1 Cor.12:13); renewed by the Spirit (Tit.3:5); sealed with the Spirit (2 Cor.1:22). The Spirit fills the believer (though this experience needs constant renewing) (Acts 2:4, 4:8, 4:31, Eph.5:18). He leads (Rom.8:14), sanctifies (1 Thes.4:8), enables us to mortify sin (Rom.8:13) and empowers the believer (Acts 1:8.) The Spirit witness to our adoption (Rom.8:16). He intercedes for us (Rom.8:26). Individual believers are viewed as temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor.6:9, but especially is the church corporately viewed as the temple of the Spirit (1 Cor.3:16).

## Conclusions

It would appear then that there are significant differences between the Holy Spirit's ministry under the OC compared to the New. Under the OC the Spirit was operative, but his ministry was not universal among God's people. Some knew his ministry in a powerful way, others did not. Even unbelievers had the Spirit come upon them, while some believers knew little or nothing of his ministry. References to the universal work of the Spirit in God's people all looked to the future. Note the words of Donald Macleod:

In the old dispensation, the Spirit and his gift were distributed only to special individuals within the people of God.<sup>2</sup>

This raises some questions that are not easy to answer. How is it possible that some believers did not have the Spirit within them? Was it possible for people to serve God and live holy lives with the Holy Spirit? Was it possible for people to be regenerated without the work of the Spirit? Human depravity was no less than it is today. The impossibility of doing anything to please God in the natural state had to be as true then as it is now. However, we must beware of assuming that everything was the same when the Scriptures make it clear that there are significant differences between the two eras. We know that OT believers were saved by grace through faith no less than NC believers. Habakkuk 2:4 – 'The righteous will live by his faith', is quoted several times in the NT. Abraham and David are particularly used by Paul in Romans 4 to illustrate that justification is by faith. We can say with confidence that the faith of OT saints was no more derived from themselves than in our own case. We as well as they are saved by grace through faith which is 'not from yourselves, it is the gift of God' (Eph.2:8). Paul's statement that 'those controlled by the sinful nature ('they that are in the flesh' – KJV) cannot please God' (Rom.8:8), must apply equally to those living under the OC; and as several people are said to be pleasing to God (e.g. Noah, David, Daniel), we must assume that these people were not only justified but transformed or regenerated. The next step logically is to conclude that they must have had the Spirit to regenerate and indwell them, but that is going farther than the Bible goes. That there was a divine work to save them is indisputable; that it was specifically the work of the Holy Spirit is not stated. The universality of the Spirit's work is denied in the OT as we have seen. Moses longed for the day when it would be universal (Num.11:29); Joel and others predicted the day when it would be so (Joel 2:28,29).

As we have already noted, the work of the Spirit in OT times was inconsistent. Listen to Sinclair Ferguson:

The Spirit had been active among God's people, but his activity was enigmatic, sporadic, theocentric, selective and in some respects external. The prophets longed for better days. Moses desired, but did not see, a fuller and universally widespread coming of the Spirit on God's people (Num.11:29). By contrast, in the anticipated new covenant, the Spirit would be poured out in a universal manner, dwelling in them personally and permanently (cf. Joel 2:28ff; Ezek.36:24-32).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Spirit of Promise p.3

<sup>3</sup> Ferguson p.30

It is difficult to accept that the difference is simply that the divine work was spoken of in general terms rather than specifically the work of the Spirit, for then the longing of Moses and the prophecies of Joel and others would just be a matter of the activity of a different divine person – the Spirit instead of Yahweh. After all some people did experience a powerful work of the Spirit – David for example, while others did not. It does appear that while we must insist on a divine work for regeneration and divine help for service and holiness, still the work of the Holy Spirit was less than it is under the NC – certainly for many believers. This may explain why the level of holiness seemed to be lower for many OT believers, for example, Lot and Samson. Lot is described as a ‘righteous man’(2 Pet.2:7) yet his conduct in Genesis at times appears shameful. Samson knew the power of the Spirit for physical strength but it seems he did not experience the Spirit’s power as much for holiness.

Abraham Kuyper distinguishes three aspects of the Spirit’s working in the OT:

1. The omnipresence of the Holy Spirit in space: the same in heaven and in hell; among Israel and among the nations.
2. The spiritual operation of the Holy Spirit according to choice, which is not omnipresent: active in heaven, but not in hell; among Israel, but not among the nations.
3. This spiritual operation of the Spirit works either from without, imparting losable gifts, or from within, imparting the unlosable gift of salvation.<sup>4</sup>

While this is helpful it still does not adequately explain the Scriptures that stress the differences between the covenants as far as the Spirit’s work is concerned. We probably cannot do more than accept that under the OC they saw through a glass darkly. That is true of us compared with the eternal age, but we have so much more light and more experience of the power of God than believers in general under the OC. It can be argued that some OT believers did experience God’s power in a mighty way, but what we are saying is that not all believers did – the universal working of God’s Spirit among and within God’s people was reserved for the period of the NC.

### **The differences between the covenants**

Let us now attempt to define exactly how the Spirit’s work was different in the two covenants. It will be generally agreed that Pentecost represents the epochal event that separates the covenantal periods. The OT looks forward to this time. Many of Jesus’ statements come to their fulfilment at this time. That is not to say that the period of Jesus’ earthly ministry was not vital. As we have already said, it was preparatory and looked forward to the time when the Spirit would be given, but it is impossible not to see a new beginning at Pentecost. The NC period can be described as the age of the Spirit. J.I. Packer has called it that. Several points underline this fact:

1. The repeated statements about the baptism of the Spirit.
2. John’s statement that the Spirit was not yet given (Jn7:39) before that time.
3. The OT references to the pouring out of the Spirit that are said to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Joel 2:28-32 – Acts 2:16-21).

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<sup>4</sup> The Work of the Holy Spirit p.119

4. The many statements in the Upper Room discourse – John 14-16, also stress the newness of the soon coming age, and the special ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Counselor, in that age.

Let us consider these four points.

1. We have already noted the statements made by John the Baptist that though he baptized in water, the greater one to come (Jesus) would baptize in the Spirit (Mt.3:11, Mk.1:8, Lk. 3:16, Jn1:33). Jesus himself said that the disciples would be baptized with or in the Holy Spirit ‘in a few days’ (Acts 1:5).

Clearly people before Pentecost were not baptized in the Spirit. It was an experience unknown to OC believers. So we have to ask, what exactly happened to the group of believers on the day when the Holy spirit was poured out upon them? What is the baptism of the Spirit? We read that they were all filled the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4). Under the OC some people were filled with the Spirit for specific tasks, now every believer is filled. This was not an experience that was automatically continuous, because we read later in Acts of People who had originally been filled with the Spirit being filled again (Acts 4:8, 31). There is also the exhortation to be filled with the Spirit (Eph.5:18), which suggests that the filling is not automatic, and that believers have a responsibility to be filled.

Is the baptism of the Spirit then to be equated with the filling? No. Baptism in the Spirit involves a filling, but every filling is not a baptism. It appears that the baptism of the Spirit is a once for all experience. Only two events historically are referred to as baptisms of the Spirit. Acts 2 as we have seen is the main event. The other occasion so described is the outpouring in Acts 10. Peter was preaching in the house of Cornelius when the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles who were listening to him. The evidence of this was their speaking in tongues, so Peter orders them to be baptized as true believers (Acts 10:44-48). When Peter returned to Jerusalem he was challenged for consorting with Gentiles. In explaining the situation, Peter described what happened and then said: ‘I remembered what the Lord had said: John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit’ (Acts 11:16). He reasoned that as God gave the same gift (the Holy Spirit) and sign (speaking in tongues) to the Gentiles as he had given to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, they too had experienced the baptism of the Spirit.

Besides these two occasions, only 1 Corinthians 12:13 refers to the baptism of the Spirit:

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Paul is saying that every believer is baptized by or in the Spirit. In view of the variety of problems in the church at Corinth and the low spiritual condition that prevailed, we must insist that this baptism was not an elitist experience, reserved only for the godliest believers. They had all experienced it, and therefore we can conclude that every believer since the day of Pentecost has experienced the baptism of the Spirit. There are one or two problem passages that seem to associate the imparting of the Spirit with the presence of the apostles (Acts 8:15,16 in particular), but these should be considered as exceptions and not the rule. The believers at that time were still in a transitional state.

What else is involved in the baptism of the Spirit? Some will link it with the gift of tongues, but as with the other phenomena at Pentecost – wind and fire, these were signs given

to show the importance of the occasion and probably to characterize the Spirit's ministry – mysterious, powerful, refining and world-wide. The sign of tongues did occur on two later occasions – with the Gentiles in Cornelius' house (Acts 10), and with John's disciples (Acts 19). It is probable too that it occurred in Samaria – how else would Simon know that the Holy Spirit had been given? (Acts 8:17,18). The imparting of the gift of tongues on these occasions shows that the experience of these other groups matched that of believing Jews.

The exact meaning of the verb 'baptize' is often disputed by our paedobaptist friends, but a strong case can be made for 'dip' or 'immerse', and this would itself suggest something of the character of the experience. When a person is baptized in water they are completely surrounded by that medium. So also when someone is baptized in the Spirit, they are surrounded, or enveloped by the Spirit. They live in the Spirit, or to change the metaphor, they drink the Spirit (1 Cor.12:13); they are filled with the Spirit. Actually the word used for 'drink' is *epotisthemen* which was frequently used for watering plants. It gives us a most appropriate picture – just as plants receive water that permeates every part of their structure, so the believer is refreshed and permeated by the Holy Spirit. It is interesting that one set of metaphors puts the believer in the medium of the Spirit: the other puts the Spirit in the believer. Either way the identification is intimate and the relationship close. The Spirit is our life, the medium in which we live.

One other point might be made regarding the significance of the baptism of the Spirit, and that is its corporate nature. Paul says 'we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body' (1 Cor.12:13). All the recorded occasions of the Spirit being outpoured involved groups of people. Now we are baptized upon conversion, but that baptism is 'into' one body. Believers are part of that one body – Christ's body, the church. This again emphasizes the universal nature of the Spirit's work under the NC.

2. John says that previous to that time the Spirit had not been given (Jn.7:39). That is a statement to make one sit up and take notice. What does John mean 'the Spirit had not been given'? The Greek is even more startling – 'up to that time the Spirit was not'! No one can take that in the literal, absolute sense without rejecting Scripture. We have already seen the many references to the Spirit's work in the OT, so it cannot mean that before Jesus' time the Holy Spirit did not exist. The context must be noted to understand the significance. Jesus is attending the Feast of Tabernacles. Biblical historians tell us that on the final day of the feast there were rituals that involved the pouring out of water. In that context Jesus speaks about thirst. All the ritual in the world cannot quench spiritual thirst. Gallons of water cannot alleviate a longing to know God. For those who sensed their spiritual thirst, there was a permanent quenching of that thirst in Jesus. There is an obvious parallel to John4:14 where Jesus speaks of the believer having a spring of water within him. John interprets the Feast of Tabernacles statement as referring to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's absence up to that point must be taken as an absence in terms of baptism or universal indwelling. Now he is given – in fullness. He indwells every believer: he fills every believer: he flows in and from every believer. The difference is not just one of degree, but of quality, universality, intimacy and power, at such a level that before that time he could be said not to be.

3. As noted earlier, there were many OT prophecies of the outpouring of the Spirit. Joel's being one of the most significant because it is quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost (Joel 2:28,29, Acts 2:16-21). He expressly says that the events of that day were the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy. God said that he would pour out his Spirit on all people (his people of

course); well it had happened. Moses wished that all the Lord's people were prophets and that he would put his Spirit on them (Num.11:29); well now this has taken place. That doesn't have to mean that all were prophets in the official sense, but all spoke God's Word, even as Peter says in quoting Joel:

I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophecy. (Acts 2:17,17).

4. Anyone reading the Upper Room discourse (John 14-16) for the first time with no wider knowledge of Scripture, would conclude that the Counselor was coming when Jesus departed, but was unknown at the time Jesus spoke. Notice again some of the things said concerning the Counselor:

- The Father will give the disciples another Counselor who would be with them forever. The implication is that Jesus is going away and cannot be with them forever, but the Counselor will take Jesus' place (Jn. 14:16).
- The father will send the Counselor in Jesus' name to teach the disciples and remind them of everything Jesus had taught (Jn.14:26).
- Jesus will send the Counselor from the Father. He will testify about Jesus (Jn.15:26).
- The disciples are understandably sad that Jesus is going away, but it is actually for their good, because unless Jesus goes away the Counselor could not come. But if Jesus goes away, he will send him (Jn.16:7).
- When the Counselor comes he will convict the world of guilt (Jn.16:8).
- Much of what the disciples need to hear from Jesus they could not bear as yet, but when the Spirit comes he will guide them into all truth. He will bring glory to Christ and will take of the things of Christ and make them known to the disciples (Jn.16:12-14).

Clearly the Spirit's coming was in the future and was concerned with the departure of Jesus. The disciples would not be so foolish as to imagine the Holy Spirit was unheard of in the OT, but unless words have no meaning, Jesus looks ahead to a new era when the Holy Spirit will be dominant. When Jesus was on earth he was indispensable to the disciples. He taught them, encouraged them, empowered them and was like a father to them. That situation could not continue – at least not in the physical sense. Jesus was going to leave them, but the Counselor would come in Jesus' place to do what Jesus had done for the disciples – and more. He would be with them forever, something that Jesus could not do – again in a physical sense.

These passages while raising the questions we noted about the Spirit's work in the OT earlier, nevertheless give the distinct impression that with the coming of the Holy Spirit, a new age was beginning. His ministry would be very different from what had been known previously.

The link between Jesus' departure and the Spirit's coming is of course vital. Only when Jesus finished the work he was given to do, could the Spirit be given in the NC sense. Only when sin was atoned for, was there a basis for the pouring out of the Spirit upon all God's people. All that went before the cross was 'on credit'. The forgiveness of sins and all blessings imparted to God's people in OT times were given on the basis of Jesus' death. Likewise the Spirit's ministry, to the extent that it was known, was on the basis of Christ's future work of redemption.

Whatever the Holy Spirit's activity was under the OC (and at times that activity was powerful) the overall message was that his coming was in the future. There is a parallel with the coming of Christ. the Bible tells us that no one can see God and live (Ex.33:20). Yet several did see God. We believe that these divine appearances in the OT must have been the second person of the Trinity – the Lord Jesus Christ. we use the word Christophany (appearance of Christ ) to describe these occasions. So Christ did appear in the OT and yet the overall message was that he was coming later. He appeared in a body at Bethlehem. He appeared in the OT and yet these appearances did not contradict the teaching that he did not come until he was born of Mary. So although the Holy Spirit was said to work in some cases, the emphasis is that he will come in the NC era. Before that he had not come (Jn.7:39).

## **APPLICATION**

It is not likely that this study has solved all or even any of the problems regarding the ministry of the Holy Spirit under the OC, or the differences between his ministry in the OC and the New, but as we have been reminded again of his work, we may draw some application for our benefit.

### **1. We should rejoice in our privileges.**

Although Moses himself knew something of the working of God's Spirit (Num.11:17), yet he longed for the day when the Spirit's ministry would be universal. We live in that day. The Spirit has been poured out upon us. We are baptized in the Spirit. The Spirit has given us life. How bless we are!

Probably all of us at some time have wished we could have seen Jesus when he was on earth. That we could, like the disciples have walked with him, talked with him and see his miracles. That would indeed have been wonderful. But we need to reflect on how limited the disciples were in their understanding at that time. There were things Jesus would have liked to teach them, but they couldn't have grasped them (Jn.16:12). They had to wait for Jesus to go and the Spirit to come. We have no such limitations. We have that anointing and know the truth (1 Jn.2:20).

Perhaps we have also envied the Israelites who were led in an unmistakable way by the pillar of cloud and fire, but God is no less concerned that his people be led in the right way today than he was then. We are led by the Spirit (Rom.8:14).

We are rightly wary of placing more emphasis on the Holy Spirit than on Christ, but these truths are important and we have blessings through the Spirit that should cause us to rejoice.

### **2. We must live up to our potential.**

Being blessed and privileged has its obligations. A crippled man is not expected to enter the 100 meters dash. A blind person will not be asked to critique paintings. A lack of certain faculties will lessen our responsibilities. On the other hand having certain faculties brings with it corresponding expectations. We are in the NC age. We are baptized with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit indwells us – permanently, and that carries with it some very clear obligations. Let me suggest some.

**i. We must be holy.**

Surely the first thing we see as we consider his name is that he is the **Holy Spirit**. He is set apart: he is different: he is altogether 'other'. It is customary these days to stress that aspect of the word 'holy', but we must not overlook the fact that it has a clear ethical meaning also. Numerous times in the OT the people were told, 'Be holy because I am holy' (e.g. Lev.11:44). The purpose of God's commandments is to make people holy – like himself. Of course the law can never make people holy. The purpose of God's plan of redemption is to have a people who are holy (Eph.1:4); conformed to the image of his Son (Rom.8:29). With God's Spirit within us we have no excuse for being unholy. Whatever we may think about the godliness of OT believers, whatever excuses they may have had not to be holy, we certainly have none. A most profitable study is that of the Holy Spirit's work in the earthly life and ministry of Jesus. Our Saviour inherited a true human nature with all its potential for sin. He therefore needed the Holy Spirit at every stage of his life. Kuyper writes:

His human nature received (his) gifts, powers and faculties not from the Son by communication from the divine nature, but from the Holy Ghost by communication to the human nature.<sup>5</sup>

The Holy Spirit preserved him from the corruption normally inherited by all who are born, and so his conception was 'by the Holy Spirit' (Mt.1:18). He had to 'learn obedience' (Heb.5:8) and doubtless this was by the Spirit. He was led by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil (Mt.4:1), and was enabled by the Spirit to resist the temptation. Without getting into the often heated debate over the peccability of Jesus, we must insist that the Holy Spirit's power was necessary for Jesus to maintain his perfection. The application to us is obvious – if Jesus needed the Spirit's enabling power for his earthly life, then we certainly cannot do without it.

As preachers we are rightly concerned about sound exegesis. We want to understand the true meaning of our text, and that is good, but are we as concerned for our personal holiness? Do we make an all-out onslaught on sin in our lives? It is by the Spirit that we must put to death the misdeeds of the body (Rom.8:13). It is noteworthy that in the qualifications for overseers laid out in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, far more is said about character and reputation than about gift. Paul exhorts Timothy to watch his life and doctrine closely (1 Ti.,4:16). The old KJV brings out the order well – 'Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine'. Our first desire in seeking the Spirit's help and anointing, should be for Christlikeness rather than for effective preaching. We need to be reminded of the words Robert Murray M'Cheyne – 'A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.'<sup>6</sup>

**ii. We must be fruitful.**

Just as fruit is the evidence of the life and nature of a tree or shrub, so fruit is the evidence of life in the Spirit or to put it in other terms, it is evidence of being Christ's disciples:

This is to my father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (Jn.15:8).

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<sup>5</sup> Kuyper p.94

<sup>6</sup> Memoir and Remains of the Rev. R.M. M'Cheyne, by Andrew Bonar p.246 (Oliphant).

The concept of fruit must not be limited to soul winning though we should long for that, but it is the evidence in our lives that we are Christ's, that we are indwelt by the Spirit. We bear the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace etc. (Gal.5.22,23). In the context of John 15, Jesus is speaking much of the Holy Spirit and we know that there can be no fruitfulness without his work. But we must be fruitful. We must demonstrate that we are Christ's and that our profession is real. As ministers we must demonstrate that we have applied to our own lives first what is being preached to others, and we must demonstrate that we know the anointing of the Spirit of God. Paul could say, 'Our gospel, came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction' (1 Thes.1:5). We should be able to say the same, for every one of us has received the anointing of the Spirit, and we should not be content until that anointing is evident in our lives and ministries.

It was in the late sixties or early seventies that the 'God is dead' theology made headlines in the secular as well as the religious press. I remember hearing someone ask the question, 'If God were dead, how long would it take the average church to discover it?' In many cases it would be business as usual. We might apply that to our own preaching. If the Spirit of God were withdrawn from us, how long would it take us to realize it? Would it be sermons as usual, or would we be unable to carry on without the Spirit's help? Compared to the time we spend in prayer for help in our preparation, how much time do we spend crying out to God for that anointing which alone can make our preaching effective?

### **iii. We must understand the Scriptures.**

The disciples were not ready to receive all that Jesus wanted to teach them (Jn.16:12,13), But clearly Jesus did not blame them for that. They would need the Holy Spirit to remind them of what Jesus had taught. The OT prophets did not always understand what they wrote – they were writing primarily for a future generation (12 Pet.1:10-12). We have no such limitations. We have received 'an anointing from the Holy One' and 'know the truth' (1 Jn.2:20). That is not to say that we have full knowledge of all the mysteries of God, but what we need to know we can know. In our generation there may not be many outstanding men of God from whom we can learn directly, but pastors have at their disposal a vast array of good books ancient and modern. We would be arrogant and foolish to neglect such resources, but is there not a danger in this wealth of literature? We can depend so thoroughly on the work of others that we neglect to study the Scriptures ourselves in any depth. Listening to many preachers today one gets the distinct impression that there is little first hand exegesis, and not much original work. Many prefer the route of following what others have already set out rather than the often tedious and mind stretching work involved in studying the Scriptures and meditating upon them. We do have the promise of the Spirit's help in understanding the Word of God. Perhaps this is a vital resource that we are neglecting.

### **3. We need the filling of the Spirit**

All that we have said in this final section on application can be brought under this one heading, for without the filling of the Holy Spirit our lives and ministries will be barren or at least ordinary. We were all baptized in the Spirit at conversion, but we must not assume that is the end of the matter. In our horror of the errors of some charismatics we go to the other

extreme and ignore the need of a continuous filling of the Spirit. We reject the idea that we need the baptism of the Spirit as a second work of grace, but in throwing out that bathwater we have perhaps thrown out or at least neglected another truth. We do need the filling of the Spirit. In addition to the instances in Acts that we have noted where some who were filled with the Spirit at Pentecost were again filled on subsequent occasions, we have the command in Ephesians 5:18 to be 'filled with the Spirit'. It has often been pointed out that this is a present continuous tense – we are to keep on being filled with the Spirit. It is not a once-for-all experience. We may have been filled with the Spirit at conversion when we were baptized in the Spirit, but that filling can be 'lost'. We can grieve the Spirit and his influence in our lives can diminish. We should be concerned and frequently in prayer for the filling of the Spirit. If we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit then surely that filling is our responsibility. Of course balance is needed here. I suppose there is a parallel with conversion. We are commanded to repent yet we cannot do it of ourselves. Repentance must be granted to us by God. Still it is our responsibility and if we do not repent we are fully accountable for our own damnation. In the case of the filling of the Spirit, we cannot fill ourselves, God must do that, yet we are commanded to be filled. If we are not filled, it is our responsibility. We can at least make sure that nothing hinders the filling of the Spirit. We must remove from our lives those things that would hinder it – namely sin and unbelief. As the gift of the Spirit is now universal among God's people, we can all of us experience that filling. How often do we pray for his filling? How concerned are we that much of life is spent without it? Jesus assured the disciples that the Father will 'give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him' (Lk.11:13). Perhaps we have assumed that as we have the Spirit already, we do not need to ask. We may have the Spirit, but do we have the fullness of the Spirit? We need to be much in prayer about this, both individually and corporately.

In Ephesians 5, the context of the command to be filled with the Spirit is striking, lost somewhat in the NIV. The command is followed by a series of dependent participles covering worship, fellowship, thankfulness and relationships (Eph.5:19 – 6:0). Thus the filling of the Spirit is not for some ecstatic experience but for holiness and right relationships. The filling of the Spirit will affect all of life – family life, church life, employment, our enjoyment of God; and everything related to our ministries will certainly be included in this. To appreciate fully our blessings in Christ, to be holy, to be fruitful and to delight ourselves in the Word of God we need to be filled with the Spirit. May it be our longing, our prayer, but above all, our experience as New Covenant believers!

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