

# *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament*

by  
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## Chapter 13 "Summary Statements"

The following are summary statements of conclusions reached in the preceding discussion relative to the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.

### **A. Creation**

1. The Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Trinity had a definite part in creation, along with the Father and the Son.
2. His part was to bring about ("flutter over") the creative work of the six days, thus bringing the universe to its final state of order and design. This work did not involve the formation of substance *ex nihilo*, but to take of both substance and the principle of life (previously brought to existence *ex nihilo* by the Son) and fashion these into all the forms designed from the first by the Father. The crowning aspect in this work was the fashioning of man and woman, making them in the image of God.

### **B. Empowerment of Old Testament Saints**

1. The Old Testament speaks frequently of the Spirit's empowering important people for divinely assigned tasks. These people fall into four groups: judges, craftsmen, prophets (temporary and regular), and civil leaders. The tasks involved were of major significance and each required special abilities above what was normal for the people concerned.
2. Every time the Spirit is mentioned in the Old Testament as coming on or leaving a person, it is this manner of empowerment that is involved. At no time does a reference of this kind concern the spiritual salvation of an individual.

### **C. Regeneration, Indwelling, Sealing, and Filling in the Old Testament**

1. Since every instance of such a mention of the Spirit concerns empowerment, the question of whether or not the Spirit also regenerated, indwelt, sealed, and filled Old Testament saints must be settled on the basis of other evidence.
2. Evidence that Old Testament people did experience spiritual renewal exists in two directions. One is the exemplary lives of Old Testament saints, explainable only as the result of spiritual renewal. The other is logical deduction on the basis of New Testament truth, which runs as follows: Every man is born lost and the only way of salvation is by faith in Christ. Old Testament people must be included under this truth (since they lived after

man's fall in Adam), and therefore they too had to be saved by faith, just as New Testament people. Though their faith in Christ could not be expressed in quite the same way, because they lived before Christ died, they could exercise faith in all that God had revealed, as did Abraham, and have this counted to them for righteousness (Rom. 4:3). Still a third type of evidence exists in the considerable effort Christ put forth to lead people of his day--which was still before His death and the founding of the church--to a saving knowledge of Himself.

3. Evidence that this spiritual renewal included regeneration, indwelling, sealing, and filling exists again in the lives of Old Testament saints. They did experience regeneration, for this is what spiritual renewal means. They must have been indwelt by the Spirit, because they remained children of God all their life (Noah, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, and the rest), and the New Testament is clear that this is made possible only by the continued indwelling of God's Holy Spirit. Then they surely experienced sealing, since sealing has reference to this preservation. And they must have understood the idea of filling, for the Old Testament is replete with admonitions to follow close to God and be occupied with doing His will.

4. The reason why the Old Testament does not speak of these truths as such is that they were to be elaborated and explained in the New Testament. This should not be thought strange, for many truths are treated similarly in the Bible. The fact of the truths being in operation, however, is unmistakably illustrated in the lives depicted.

5. The one work which began for the first time at Pentecost was the baptism of the Spirit. With the gospel provision then made available, there was need for an organism to carry its message to the lost world. This organism was the church, but to become such an organism, a definite act of joining its members into a unity was necessary; this was accomplished by the act of baptism when the Spirit came in power on Pentecost. Since that time, individual believers are baptized into that body then begun. This baptism carries with it an aspect of empowerment: an ability, given to all believers in variant degrees, for evangelizing the world with the gospel message. This baptism along with its resulting empowerment, is the subject of biblical passages that speak of a new coming of the Holy Spirit in New Testament time.

#### **D. Israel's Prophets Were Not Ecstatics**

1. Three main passages (Num. 11:25-29; 1 Sam. 10:1-13; 19:18-24) and six supporting passages are cited by many liberal scholars as biblical evidence that Israel's early prophets were ecstatics, like people in Canaan and elsewhere.

2. One evidence taken from the three main passages is that in each case the persons involved are said to have had the Spirit come on them, and this is taken to mean an ecstatic state. Other evidence is taken from a comparison of Israel with other peoples of the day: from the fact that a Canaanite-type high place was involved in one instance, from the playing of musical instruments on the same occasion (music was often used in the rites of ecstaticism), and from the fact that Saul lay in a trance-like stupor for many hours after another instance.

3. An answer was noted for all these arguments, however, as follows: (a) that the Spirit's coming on people had nothing to do with ecstatic frenzy but with a supernatural

empowerment for a task; (b) that Israel cannot be compared with contemporary peoples on such a matter, for her basic Law had been supernaturally revealed at Mt. Sinai even before Israel's entrance into Canaan; (c) that the Canaanite-type high place during the time of Samuel, Saul, and David, (when the ark was away from the tabernacle and the temple was not yet built) was approved by God, since even Samuel sacrificed at one; (d) that the musical instruments were not played in a manner suggesting the prolonged, rhythmic tunes necessary to bring on ecstasy; and (e) that Saul's unusual stupor is better explained as a fit of despair on seeing David in the approving company of the honored Samuel.

4. Three positive arguments against ecstaticism also were noted. First, the basic meaning of prophecy taken by ecstatic adherents to mean "to become ecstatic," was found to be "to speak for God"; and the few times of use in an emotional sense were found to add only the idea of "ferventness" to this basic idea. Second, Israel's remarkable resistance to Canaanite influence, in comparison to what is normal in history for comparable situations, can only be accounted for on the basis of strong resistance factors among the people, and prophetism must have been one. If so it could hardly have been Canaanite in origin itself. And third, the meaning of *prophecy* in the main passages used by ecstatic adherents was found to be a "praising" activity. Evidence that this was a possible meaning for the word was taken from 1 Chronicles 25:1-3, and the idea was seen to fit well in the three key passages involved.

### **E. The Holy Spirit and the Prophetic Experience**

1. The work of the Holy Spirit in the three so-called ecstatic passages was identified. Regarding the seventy in the wilderness, it was empowerment of the seventy to serve as Moses' assistants, with their prophecy of praise as a natural accompanying outburst of thanksgiving. Regarding Saul, on meeting the company of prophets, it was an empowerment for a changed personality, from being timid to having a sense of confidence, with again the prophecy of praise being a natural accompaniment. Regarding Saul, on coming to his three messenger groups all praising along with Samuel's prophets, it was empowerment to praise, so that Saul's attitude was changed from wanting to arrest and kill David, to becoming filled with despair that David clearly was the choice of both Samuel and God.

2. An examination of the prophetic experience in revelation showed that no ecstatic-type factors were existent in any instance. It was observed, however, that the revelation occasion was more than a natural use of a prophet's mind. It involved a proper attitude on his part, a heightened mental ability, and especially a supernatural impartation of knowledge by the Holy Spirit, so that the prophet suddenly knew information that he had not known before. This was found to be an *ab extra* factor, but of a totally different kind from ecstasy.

3. An examination of the prophetic experience in declaration was found to involve empowerment further by the Holy Spirit, as He gave special ability for proclaiming God's message to the people.

### **F. Saul and Evil Spirits**

1. The evil spirit that came on Saul, following the departure of the Holy Spirit's

empowerment for kingship, was an emissary sent by Satan to influence Saul to wrong actions. A comparison of verbs and prepositions used regarding this demon's work with those used regarding the Holy Spirit's work, revealed that the demon did not possess Saul by working from within and through his personality, but from without.

2. The nature of the demon's work was to keep Saul in a state of fear, due especially to a sense of insecurity on his throne. This made Saul suspicious of others, and this came to the fore most strongly in his opposition to David, whom he saw as a rival. Before this attitude toward David developed, the music of the young man could cause the demon to leave Saul; but, when it had developed, the demon could use this extra advantage to influence Saul to try and kill the young player and so rid itself of the detested music in this way.

3. A climaxing feature of the demon's work was his influence on Saul to visit the woman of Endor, who was probably possessed of another demon called an *'ob*. Saul wanted to speak with Samuel, who had died sometime earlier, but, when Samuel appeared, it was not the woman or her *'ob* that brought this about, but God--specifically the Holy Spirit--working supernaturally. No biblical support for spiritism, therefore, can be taken from this occasion. Satan had wanted Saul to consult this woman, as his own satanic source of information--since God had refused to answer Saul by any divine source, dreams, Urim, or prophets--but God thwarted Satan's strategy by taking over that source and bringing His own dire message of doom to Saul through the raised Samuel.

## **G. General Statement**

1. All this means that the Holy Spirit's work in the Old Testament was not greatly different from that in the New Testament, except on one important count. That is His work of baptizing believers into the church. There is no reason for denying His work of regenerating, indwelling, sealing, and filling Old Testament saints. All these manifestations of grace were needed by them just as much as by New Testament saints, and there is nothing characteristically New Testament about them. However, there is something that is definitely New Testament in kind about baptism, for this has to do with the church, God's instrument to propagate the gospel. The church could not exist until there was a gospel message made complete and ready for proclamation; therefore, baptism into that church was impossible and its accompanying empowerment for preaching was unnecessary until that time.

Even in respect to empowerment for service generally, there is really no change. Such empowerment existed in the Old Testament and it still continues today. Every servant of God knows the reality of the special power of the Holy Spirit in his life, especially in crucial times. This is empowerment for service, like that enjoyed by a Bezaleel, a Gideon, a David, or an Elijah, so long ago.

2. There is no change either in respect to the Holy Spirit and ecstasism. He has always been a Person and not a mere manifestation of ecstatic fervor (as ecstatic adherents believe); and He was a God of order and reason in His work with prophets and others in the Old Testament, as He continues to be in New Testament time (see 1 Cor. 14:32).

3. And there is no change in respect to the Holy Spirit and evil spirits. In Old Testament time, evil spirits were Satan's emissaries to hinder the work of the Holy Spirit with God's people, and the same continues true today. The specialized efforts of demons with spiritists, which are opposed to all that the Holy Spirit desires, remain basically the same in this age as then.