

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

Why is this study important?

There are certain questions we should consider about those who lived under the Old Covenant, for it helps us understand those today who have not yet experienced the saving sacrifice of Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Saviour of **all** humanity.

- a) Did the Holy Spirit function under the Old Covenant as He does under the New Covenant?
- b) Did the people under the Old Covenant have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them?
- c) Was the benefit of the future sacrifice of Christ appropriated to their lives?

The New Testament makes many claims that the Holy Spirit was active in the days of the Old Testament.

Matthew 22:43-44 [NIV] *“He said to them, “How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him ‘Lord’? For he says, “The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.””*

Jesus confirmed by quoting directly from the psalms that King David was a spokesman of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 4:25-26 [NIV] *“You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: “Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.””*

The early church affirmed the same influence in the life and words of King David.

2 Timothy 3:16 [NIV] *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,”*

The “*all scripture*” that Paul was referring to in this statement was the lives and writing of Moses and others under the Old Covenant.

John 20:22 [NIV] *“And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”*

Scripture being “*God breathed*” indicates the presence and work of the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:20-21 [NIV] *“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*

Peter totally understood that Old Covenant writing was the product of the Holy Spirit and no prophet could claim any copyright on those words.

The Holy Spirit was present and active in creation of this physical universe.

Genesis 1:1-3 [NIV] *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.”*

Within this creation account we have the involvement of all of the Godhead.

The Father is the beginning of all life. His Word [the Son and future Messiah] was the Father's spokesman and the Holy Spirit was the One who performed the commands of the Godhead.

1 Peter 1:10-11 [NIV] *“Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which **the Spirit of Christ in them** was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.”*

The Spirit of the Messiah [Christ] was not only present but was the explanation of what the prophets of the Old Testament were preaching.

Romans 8:9 [NIV] *“You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And **if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.**”*

The Spirit of the Godhead, the Spirit of Christ are both referring to the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead.

Jesus first revealed Himself and His Mission as fulfilment of the words of the prophet Isaiah.

Luke 4:16-22 [NIV] *“He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” they asked.”*

This is a direct quote from the prophecy of **Isaiah 61:1 and part of verse 2. Not all of the prophecy was quoted for Christ was not to fulfil it all at His first coming.**

The writer of Hebrews claims the Holy Spirit was behind both the warning and the swearing of an oath against the rebellion of unbelieving Israel.

Hebrews 3:7-11 [NIV] *“So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’ So I declared on oath in my anger, **‘They shall never enter my rest.’**”*

This is as much a warning for every generation both Jew and Gentile. Our pathway into the very presence of the Holy Creator God we worship was explained by the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 9:8 [NIV] *“The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing.”*

The writer of Hebrews was explaining that the way into the real Holy place where God dwells would not be understood until the first Tabernacle with its physical Holy place had finished being used by Israel.

Hebrews 8:5 [NIV] *“They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”*

The Old Covenant Tabernacle was a “copy”, “shadow” and “pattern” of the real dwelling of God.

The writer of Hebrews goes into great detail of all that people who lived under the Old Covenant did “by faith”. And who because of this faith in what God promised were **commended** for that faith. But perhaps not saved at that time.

Faith is only possible by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and faith is essential for our salvation.

Ephesians 2:6-8 [NIV] *“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”*

We are saved by faith in what God has for us through Jesus the Christ, and that is a gift from God.

John 3:27 [NIV] *“To this John replied, “A man can receive only what is given him from heaven.”*

A person can only in faith return to God in worship what they have already received from God.

Galatians 5:22-23 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

Faith is one of the fruits in our lives that comes as a result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 10:17 [NIV] *“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”*

Faith is linked to our understanding and relying on God’s promises that are made in His Word.

John 14:26 [NIV] *“But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”*

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to teach us God’s Word and to bring them to remembrance as they are needed in our life experiences.

John 6:63 [NIV] *“The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.”*

The words given to us by the Holy Spirit are life, eternal life.

The conclusion is that the Holy Spirit is the only source and explanation of faith, and this is true under both Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

All people who ever lived will come before God in a time of judgement.

2 Corinthians 5:10 [NIV] *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”*

This involves those with the law of God and living under that law, written on tables of stone for them to see and hear.

Jeremiah 31:33 [NIV] *“This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”*

Also those who have received God’s law of love in their hearts, Christians.

John 14:6 [NIV] *“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.”*

Also all who have never heard of the true God or His Son Jesus Christ, Gentiles, [those without the true God].

Hebrews 9:27 [NIV] *“Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,”*

This judgement will come after our death.

1 Corinthians 10:11 [NIV] *“These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come.”*

Those who lived under the Old Covenant were limited in their understanding of salvation to a physical level just as the centre of their worship the Tabernacle was a physical example, shadow and pattern of the real dwelling of God.

The promises offered under the Old Covenant were mainly physical blessings.

Their real judgement comes after death and a resurrection.

Revelation 20:12-13 [NIV] *“And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.”*

At this time the full revelation of God’s plan for salvation will be complete and the full measure of the Holy Spirit will be available to all human beings. Not then limited to a few such as Cain, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, etc.

The faith the vast majority of those who have lived and known God before Jesus Christ was real but embryonic.

Their day of full faith, understanding, and a fully active Holy Spirit within them will come along with all who are yet to know Jesus the Christ and what the One and Only Creator God has done for all humanity through Him.

Joel 2:27-29 [NIV] *“Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the LORD your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed. “And afterwards, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.”*

After what?

The subject of Joel’s prophecy was the coming of God’s Messiah to save Israel and all humanity, and His rule on earth.

At that time the fullness of the Holy Spirit will be available to all humanity.

May that day dawn soon!