

IV. The presence of the Spirit in the Old and New Covenants

Today we want to turn to a discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit in the Old Covenant in contrast to the role played by the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant.

A. Old Covenant

Prior to Pentecost, which is the hinge of history with regard to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the world, God's Spirit would come upon persons to indwell them to perform some special specific task – some appointed task that God had in mind for them. There are numerous examples of this in the Old Testament. Let's just read about some of these.

Exodus 31:1-3 and then Exodus 35:30-35,

The LORD said to Moses, "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship."

It goes on to describe how God had gifted this man in order to be the designer and constructor of the tabernacle. This is expanded on in Exodus 35:30-35:

And Moses said to the people of Israel, "See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving

wood, for work in every skilled craft. And he has inspired him to teach, both him and Oholiab the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with ability to do every sort of work done by a craftsman or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen, or by a weaver – by any sort of workman or skilled designer.”

Here in a very practical way God had filled with his Spirit these men to do artistic crafts in wood and gems and stone and cloth for the equipping and decoration of the tabernacle. This would be a good example of a specific place where the Spirit was put upon someone to carry out a specific job and giving him the ability to do that.

Now turn over to Numbers 11:16-17, 25. Here Moses needs help in judging the people of Israel in settling their disputes:

And the LORD said to Moses, “Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you. And I will come down and talk with you there; and I will take some of the spirit which is upon you and put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone.” . . . Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was upon him and put it upon the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did so no more.

Here you see how the Spirit of God comes down and anoints the seventy elders to do the same work that God had anointed Moses to do by his Spirit.

During the period of the judges prior to the monarchy in Israel there was a series of judges that would arise in Israel that would serve to deliver the people from their enemies, to bring them back to the true way. These judges were typically anointed by the Spirit of God to do what God had called them to do. So look, for example, at Judges 3:9-10:

But when the people of Israel cried to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who delivered them, Othni-el the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel; he went out to war, and the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim.

So here Othni-el is one of these judges upon whom the Spirit of the Lord came so that he could prevail over the enemies threatening Israel.

Turn over to Judges 6:34 for another example. This is one of the most famous of the judges – Gideon: “But the Spirit of the LORD took possession of Gideon; and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him.” Then it describes the great triumph that Gideon and his small army had over the enemies of Israel. So Gideon was also anointed by the Spirit of the LORD to do what God called him to do – to deliver Israel.

Judges 11:29. This is the case of Jephthah. “Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and

Manasseh, and passed on to Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he passed on to the Ammonites.” Jephthah also defeats the enemies of Israel.

Judges 13:24-25. This is the part of the story of Samson who was also one of the judges.

And the woman bore a son, and called his name Samson; and the boy grew, and the LORD blessed him. And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshta-ol.

Here the Spirit of the Lord comes on Samson to do the great deeds that he was called upon to do. Some of these are described, for example, in Judges 14:5-6.

Then Samson went down with his father and mother to Timnah, and he came to the vineyards of Timnah. And behold, a young lion roared against him; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion asunder as one tears a kid; and he had nothing in his hand.

Here Sampson, barehanded, rips this lion to pieces because the Spirit of the LORD had come upon him to equip him to do that. Then in verse 19 we see again how he conquers the enemies of Israel. Verse 19:

And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty men of the town, and took their spoil and gave the festal garments to those who had told the riddle.

Finally in Judges 15:14-15,

When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and the ropes which were on his arms became as flax that has caught fire, and his bonds melted off his hands. And he found a fresh jawbone of an ass, and put out his hand and seized it, and with it he slew a thousand men.

Here's the famous slaughter with the jawbone of an ass that Samson does because, again, the Spirit of the LORD had come mightily upon him.

This is the pattern in the Old Covenant. The Spirit of the LORD would come upon appointed individuals for a specific task and a limited time to enable them to do that task to which God had called them.

What we will do next time is look more closely at the contrast between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. I think we will see that what corresponds to the temple in the Old Covenant (where the glory of God, the power of God, dwelt most specifically) is in the new covenant the believer's body. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We'll see that contrast next time.