

The Holy Spirit and the Old Testament

by Denis Lyle

The Holy Spirit is present and active from the beginning of creation, and is the source of inspiration, illumination, and control in the lives of believers.

Scripture: Genesis 1:2, Job 33:4, Ezekiel 37:9, John 3:6, John 14:26, 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Old Testament"

Description

Denis Lyle preaches about the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, emphasizing that the Holy Spirit has always been active on earth, even before Pentecost. He explains how the Spirit of God was involved in creation, giving universal, physical, and spiritual life. Lyle also delves into the inspiration of Scripture by the Holy Spirit, highlighting the importance of understanding that the Bible is God-breathed and how the Spirit enables believers to comprehend its truths. Furthermore, he discusses how the Holy Spirit controlled various individuals in the Old Testament, empowering statesmen, spokesmen, skilled men, sinful men, and strong men for specific tasks.

Transcript

Reading: 2 Peter 1:16-21

2. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

Some people don't there is a Holy Spirit because they cannot see the Holy Spirit. I heard about a cynic who was talking to a Christian one time about this. He said,

" I don't believe there is a Holy Spirit. I can't see any Holy Spirit". He then said to the Christian, "Have you ever seen the Holy Spirit" The Christian said, "No."

" Have you ever tasted the Holy Spirit "" No."

" Have you ever smelled the Holy Spirit" "No."

Then he said, "Then how do you know there is a Holy Spirit" The Christian said to the sceptic, "Well, have you ever seen your brain " The sceptic said, "No."

" Have you ever tasted your brain" "No". "Have you ever smelled your brain " "No". "Then, how do you know you have a brain" My, we cannot see the Holy Spirit, but this is not a reason to deny His existence.

Now sometimes we get the idea that the Holy Spirit was not present in the world until He came to live in the lives of the early disciples on the day of Pentecost. We know of course that the Father had promised the Holy Spirit would come. (Acts 1:4) Do you recall that in our Lord's conversations with the disciples in the upper room He had talked about the promise of the Father. He had said, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter". (Jn 14:16) There would be a time when the Holy Spirit would be given in a special and unusual way. That time came on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit of God came and baptised those believers into the body of Christ. (1 Cor 12:13) Now this might lead you to think that the Holy Spirit did not appear or do any work on the earth until the day of Pentecost. But a careful study of the Bible makes it clear that the Spirit of God was present and active from the very beginning of the earth's existence. The Holy Spirit has always been present and active on the earth.

He's been a part of people's lives.

The Old Testament has much to say about the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is mentioned eighty-eight times in the Old Testament. He is mentioned in twenty two of the thirty nine Old Testament books! Today, of course the Holy Spirit deals differently with Christian believers.

John Walvoord former president of Dallas Theological Seminary says and I quote, "In the dispensation of grace the Holy Spirit undertakes to indwell every Christian from the moment of regeneration. It is one of the testimonies to God's grace that the Holy Spirit thus makes the bodies of saved men His holy temple. Throughout the entire Old Testament period up to the Day of Pentecost no such universal indwelling of the Holy Spirit is observed. While it was not in the program of God for this feature of the ministry of the Holy Spirit to become universal among believers prior to the age of grace, nevertheless God in His sovereign will and according to His own purposes selected

individuals in the Old Testament to whom was given the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit."

You see, in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit could come upon individuals but His presence could be withdrawn. King Saul had an experience like this. The Spirit of the Lord did come upon Him, but when Saul disobeyed and displeased the Lord, the Spirit of the Lord departed from him. (1 Sam 16:14) In the same way when David confessed his sin of marital infidelity, he pleaded with the Lord, " Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me". (Ps 51:11) Now you and I need never pray that prayer in this age. Today, the Spirit of God lives in the hearts of believers and He stays there forever. When you receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, the Holy Spirit comes into your heart to live there as part of your life. (Rom 8:9) He can never be withdrawn. Money can be withdrawn from your bank account, but the Holy Spirit will never withdraw from your heart. Do you recall the words of Christ, "And I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever". (Jn 14:16)

Now we may be quench the Holy Spirit. We may refuse to let Him use us in the Lord's service. We may grieve the Holy Spirit. We may say or do things that hurt Him.

But the Spirit of God will never be withdrawn from believers! He abides... He lives within us ... forever!

If you are saved you have the indwelling of the blessed Holy Spirit of God! So there is a contrast between the Old Testament and the New Testament in relation to the Spirit of God. To quote John Walvoord again, "The presence of the indwelling Spirit in the Old Testament must, therefore be regarded as sovereign, a rare rather than a usual gift, and often associated with some specific task for which enablement was necessary."

Now having said all that I want us to note this... the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit in OT times.

(1) THE HOLY SPIRIT CREATED A WORLD

The Holy Spirit acted in the creation of the world. Now when we think of creation, for example we usually think of the Father, and not of the Son, or the Holy Spirit! When we think of crucifixion, we think of the Son, and not the Father, nor the Holy Spirit. When we think of conversion and sanctification we think of the Holy Spirit, not the Father, nor the Son. Yet, at the same time there is a sense in which we may not separate the three Persons. Indeed, when we turn to the Scriptures Creation is attributed to the Father (Acts 4:24) and to the Son (Jn 1:1) and to the Holy Spirit. (Ps 104:30)

So the Godhead is seen operating in UNITY. But while there is UNITY there is also DIVERSITY and we're thinking of the creative work of the Holy Spirit! You see, we can trace:

(a) UNIVERSAL LIFE:

To the Holy Spirit! Look at (Gen 1:1-2) The Spirit of God moved. The Hebrew word can be translated as

" brooded". Can you picture a mother bird brooding or hovering over the nest of her young Well, the Spirit of God "brooded", over primeval chaos and transformed into an ordered cosmos. Out of chaos came order and beauty.

Here He is, creating a world on which man will live and to which one day Christ will come in the flesh. Do you recall that I said creation is attributed to the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit That seems to be sustained by two words that appear in the Genesis record! "Let us", did you notice (1:26) "And God said, let US make man in our image". To whom was the Lord referring Many believe the reference is to the Trinity. "Let us, "God the Father. "Let us", God the Son. "Let us," God the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God was present at the creation of this universe working with the Father and the Son. The psalmist says, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth". (Ps 33:6) The word for

" breath", is the same word translated "Spirit", in

(Gen 1:2) In other words, all the host of heaven were made by the Holy Spirit! Job bears testimony to the same fact. He says, "By His Spirit he hath garnished the heavens, His hand hath formed the crooked serpent". (Job 26:13)

Job believed that the Holy Spirit had garnished or decorated the heavens and formed the order and beauty of the stars. My, do you ever wonder at the beauty and vastness of this universe which the Spirit of God took part in creating Do you ever think of all the stars and their beauty We are just beginning to learn the true scope of the stars. A century and a half before the Lord Jesus, the Greek philosopher Hipparchus estimated there were 1,022 stars. Two centuries after, the Lord Jesus Christ, Ptolemy had the number up a little higher... 1,026 stars. Three hundred years ago, with the invention of the telescope, Galileo estimated there might be millions of stars. Then, in 1921, one astronomer estimated there were three hundred billion.

The stars are innumerable. No one is able to count them all. One astronomer said that the stars in the universe are more numerous than all the grains of sand on all the seashores on all the earth! Man is unable to number all the stars, not even Patrick Moore knows them all, but God does.

The psalmist says, " He telleth the number of the stars: He calleth them all by their names." (Ps 147:4) Isn't that amazing The Lord not only knows their Number, He knows their Name! And all of this comes as a result of the creativity of the Spirit of God! There is universal life when the Spirit of God begins to move. We can also trace:

(b) PHYSICAL LIFE:

To the Spirit of God. " And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul".

(Gen 2:7) The Bible declares that man's body was a distinct and separate creation of God, making untenable the theory of evolution. Job testifies, "The Spirit of God hath made me and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life". (Job 33:4) The life giving Spirit of God brought life into existence! My, our very existence is due to the life-giving work of the Holy Spirit. (a) (b)

(c) SPIRITUAL LIFE:

To the Spirit of God. Our spiritual birth, as well as our physical birth is due to the Spirit of God. Do you recall what the Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit... the wind bloweth... born of the Spirit". (Jn 3:6-8) The Lord Jesus was using the physical wind as an illustration. My, the physical wind can't be seen, but its effects are visible. Think of the wind and what it can destroy in a hurricane! But while hurricane wind works destructively, " Spirit", wind works creatively! The actual conception of the new life in Christ may be as unseen as the wind, but the changed life as result is seen. The drug user becomes clean. The wife abuser becomes gentle. My, at the moment of our new birth in Christ, we are made partakers of the Divine Nature. (2 Pet 1:4) The Spirit of God moves in, and seeks to conform us to the image of Christ. (1)

(2) THE HOLY SPIRIT COMPOSED A BOOK

Have you ever watched an athlete or musician give an

" inspired performance", Have you heard some preacher preach what might called " an inspired message" Have you ever read some great book of literature which has been "inspired" Maybe its been

Milton's Paradise Lost or Bunyan's Pilgrim Progress!

Most of us have heard the word " inspired", used in these ways. Yet in the NT the term " inspiration", is reserved solely for God's Word. The Bible was written by special men, under special conditions and the canon of Scripture is closed. There are really no songs, no books, no poems, no sermons that are inspired today.

You see,

(a) INSPIRATION IS BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD:

1. The Old Testament is Inspired by the Holy Spirit:

Look at Peters TESTIMONY: (2 Pet 2:19-21) Now I want you to notice several things here about the Scripture. Notice:

A. The SUPERIORITY of Scripture:

" We have also a more sure word of prophecy". (2:19)

More sure than what Experience ! Was Peter a Charismatic After all he spoke in tongues, healed people and he had some fantastic experiences, one of which he mentions in this very passage! Peter was an eye-witness to Christ's transfiguration. (1:16-18) That experience left him stunned! It was incredible, he had seen the Lord in all His glory. What could be more authentic The Scriptures! For though he had seen the Lord in all His glory, Peter was certain that the Word of God recorded by holy men moved by the Holy Spirit was a more solid foundation for what he believed.

Is this not the very issue that so many charismatics fail to understand Listen: All experiences must be tested by the sure Word of Scripture! An ex-charismatic told why he had grown frustrated in the charismatic movement. He said, "You spend the rest of your life trying to find another experience". (A)

B. The SOURCE of Scripture:

* Negatively, Scripture does not come from MAN:

Looking at (1:20) Now Peter was not prohibiting the private study of the Bible. Some religious groups have taught that only the "spiritual leaders", may interpret Scripture, and they have used this verse as their defence. But Peter is not referring here to the interpretation of Scripture but to the origin of Scripture.

The Bible did not come by the will of man. *

* Positively, Scripture comes from God:

Look at (1:21) The most important word here is

" moved", which speaks of being carried along by the Holy Spirit, as a ship is carried by the wind. My ... the writers of Scripture "were carried along, borne along, under the control and direction of the Holy Spirit of God. They wrote as the Spirit directed them to write. They were born along by Him so that what they wrote was exactly what the Holy Spirit intended should be there. What they wrote was, in a very real sense, not their words, it was the very Word of God". (Thomas)

C. The STYLE in Scripture:

" Holy men of God spake ... "(1:21) You see, while God is the true source of Scripture he employed human instruments to write it down! That's why the various books bear the stamp of individuality in their style. The personalities of the human instruments are very evident in the writing... the pathos of Jeremiah, the logic of Paul, the love of John. You see, as you read, you become aware of a Divine Author, who inspired the writers to say what He wanted said! My ... the Holy Spirit of God has composed a book for us. It is the Bible... the Word of God.

Look at Paul's TESTIMONY:

2 Tim 3:16 While Paul may not be quite as specific as Peter in relating the inspiration of Scripture to the Holy Spirit his teaching leads to the same conclusion. Now there are three words here that deserve our attention.

A. INSPIRATION:

What does inspiration mean Our word inspired comes from a Latin root meaning "to breathe into". But the concept of "breathing in", is not found in this passage. Some have assumed that God breathed some kind of divine life into the words of those who penned the original documents of Scripture. But the Greek term for

" inspiration", here (theopneustos) means "God breathed". Literally, the verse says, is, Scripture is not the words of men into which God puffed Divine life. It is the very breath of God. Scripture is God Himself speaking. Inspiration does not mean men wrote God's Truth in their own words.

It does not mean God merely assisted the writers. It means that the words of the Bible are the words of God Himself. Every Scripture was breathed out by God.

You see, when the Scripture speaks, God speaks.

(Gal 3:8) In every sense, when you pick up the Word and read it, you're hearing God's voice.

That's exciting. God is the Author of this book. The Bible is the very Word of God. But now the question arises, "How much of Scripture is God-breathed" Some, most, or all. That brings me to the second word in (2 Tim 3:16)

B. ALL

" All Scripture ... " the word "all", can be translated

" every". So we see that ALL Scripture and EVERY Scripture is inspired. Let me illustrate. Listen to this statement. All ducks waddle. Does that mean that only ducks of the past waddle No! Ducks still waddle today. What about future ducks Future ducks will also waddle. In other words, in whatever period of history ducks live, ducks waddle. Now here is the point, to say that Scripture is God-breathed means ALL Scripture, regardless of WHEN it was written, is God-breathed.

The Lord meant that all that had been written, all that was being written, and all that would be written. All Scripture is God-breathed. Scholars refer to this as the Plenary Inspiration of the Bible. But note the 3rd word:

C. SCRIPTURE:

" All SCRIPTURE ... " The word Paul uses here means

" writing", (graphe) Did Paul mean that all kinds of writing was inspired Obviously not. (3:15) So Paul is talking here about the Holy Scriptures. It is the Holy Scripture that is God breathed. Theologians call all of this the Plenary Verbal Inspiration of Scripture. Plenary means all. Nothing is missing. Verbal means very word.

So every word in the Bible is God-breathed! (a)

(b) The New Testament is Inspired by the Holy Spirit:

The same infallible Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of the Old Testament, which bears all the hallmarks of plenary and verbal inspiration, inspired the writing of the New Testament, which also bears all the hallmarks of plenary and verbal inspiration. The Holy Spirit:

1. Inspired the GOSPELS:

Have a look at (Jn 14:26) How is that the Gospel writers could remember every Christ said and record it in the Scriptures. The Lord said the Holy Spirit would bring it all to their remembrance. So the Gospels were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

2. Inspired the Book of Acts:

Look at (Jn 15:26-27) So Acts was inspired.

3. Inspired the Epistles:

Look at (Jn 16:12-13)

4. Inspired the Book of Revelation:

Look at (Jn 16:13) You see, inspiration is by the Spirit of God. But then,

(b) ILLUMINATION IS BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD:

You see, the same Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures is the Holy Spirit who enables us to read and understand the Scriptures. My, we can't understand the Bible apart from the Holy Spirit. The Bible is a spiritual book, and we have to have spiritual help in order to understand it. That's why Paul says, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned".

(1 Cor 2:14) That's why the Bible is a closed book to the unsaved man. A sceptical professor in a classroom was making fun of the Bible. He said, "I've read the Bible and I can't make any sense out of it. That's why I don't believe the Bible is the Word of God. I don't understand it". A Christian student had about as much as he could stand. "Well, sir", he said, "that's what you get for reading somebody else's mail."

You see, the Bible is a book inspired by the Spirit of God for the people of God. My, the Holy Spirit provides the Text... the Bible. He also provides the Teacher... Himself. You say, you can't understand the Bible. Let me ask you a question, how motivated are

you A teenage boy gets his eye on a girl in his class. She's so cute and he thinks he would like to get to know her a little more. One day after school she tells him,

" We're having a little party at my house Friday night and I'd like you to come. Here's a map to my house". He takes the map and opens it up and it's upside down. What's he going to do Because he doesn't understand it, will he drop it No. He will turn it around. He may see some streets and parks he's never seen before. He will find where those parks are Why Why is he interested in understanding that map Why, a cute young thing has motivated him. My, can I motivate you about understanding the Bible. If you are willing to allow the Holy Spirit to put you in his school, He will teach you the Word of God. (1) (2)

(3) THE HOLY SPIRIT CONTROLLED A PEOPLE

Now while we must bear in mind the contrast, between the Old and New Testaments in relation to the ministry of the Spirit, we recognise that in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came upon different people, equipping them for different purposes with different kinds of power.

For example the Holy Spirit:

(a) CONTROLLED STATESMEN:

Do you recall Joseph He was recognised by Pharaoh as possessing more than human attainments

(Gen 41:38-40) Do you remember Daniel Nebuchadnezzar testified concerning him, "the spirit of the holy gods is in thee". (Dan 4:18 5:11) The Holy Spirit gave Daniel political wisdom. These were men who were able to display wisdom, prudence and courage! Do we not need such leaders today Men who instead of hitting the headlines for their wickedness will be know for their wisdom.

(b) CONTROLLED SPOKESMEN:

For what were the prophets of the Old Testament

But God's spokesmen bringing God's message by the power of the Holy Spirit! Micah could testify " But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord."

(Micah 3:8 Num 11:25 Neh 9:30) My, is the desperate need of the hour not men, God's men, God's spokesmen, controlled by the Spirit of God There is a dearth of preachers in the land, pastors in the pulpit possibly a sign of Gods judgement (Prov 29:18 Amos 8:11 Ps 74:9) Do you see how low we've got Churches are now started to advertise in denominational magazines for pastors, so much for the exercise of elders Its interesting to notice that the Holy Spirit:

(c) CONTROLLED SKILLED MEN:

Do you recall the workmen that God chose to build the tabernacle Bezaleel was described as being filled with the Spirit of God in wisdom and understanding.

(Exod 31:3) The Holy Spirit of God:

(d) CONTROLLED SINFUL MEN:

Balaam under the influence of Balak, king of Moab tried to do something that Hitler, Saddam Hussein, and many others have sought to do since. Curse Israel! Jack Straw watch out! For God says, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee".

(Gen 12:3) Do you know what happened when Balaam was about to speak "the Spirit of God came upon him". (Num 24:2 Jn 11:51) The Holy Spirit also:

(e) CONTROLLED STRONG MEN:

We think of men like Gideon (Judges 6:34) and Samson (13:25) who knew the enabling power of the Spirit of God in their ministry! What victories were gained when Spirit of God was in complete control!

My, our land is in desperate need of Christ! Our churches for all their programmes and organisation are just valleys of dry bones. (Ezek 37:9) We need the Breath of God... we need the Spirit of God to be in control of the people of God, and all for the glory of God. Do you suppose that you and I could make a beginning?

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