

a study of the *Holy Spirit*

Lesson 3: The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

1. To many it may seem unusual to discuss the Holy Spirit in relation to the Old Testament. Most will associate Him with the New Testament, never knowing the mighty things He accomplished in the Old Testament. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament is not as prominent as in the New Testament but it is there.
 - a. He is specifically mentioned over eighty times in over seventy verses in the ASV. (*See list at end of lesson*)
 - b. The Holy Spirit is found in over half of the Old Testament books, but it is not mentioned at all in sixteen.
 - c. The Holy Spirit is known by these names in the Old Testament: The Spirit; the Spirit of God, of Jehovah, of the Lord; and the Holy Spirit (only three times in the Old Testament – Psalm 51:11; Isaiah 63:10, 11).
 - d. The Holy Spirit is identified as a separate Person of the Godhead in the Old Testament (Isaiah 48:12-16):

¹²Hearken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel my called: I am he; **I am the first, I also am the last.** ¹³Yea, my hand hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spread out the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together. ¹⁴Assemble yourselves, all ye, and hear; who among them hath declared these things? He whom Jehovah loveth shall perform his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans. ¹⁵I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him; I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous. ¹⁶Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; from the beginning I have not spoken in secret; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the **Lord Jehovah** hath sent me, and **his Spirit**. (ASV)

Here all three members of the Godhead seem to be discussed in one verse. The "Lord Jehovah" refers to God the Father, the "first and last" refers to God the Son, and "His Spirit" refers to God the Holy Spirit.

2. The scarce mention of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament and the abundant mention of Him in the New Testament is easily explained by considering the "Dispensations of the Godhead." (Boles, 55ff).
 - a. There are three Persons in the Godhead and each member has a dispensation with man on earth.

- b. "Dispensation" — an epoch of time well marked with certain events; a system of principles, promises, rules that are ordained and administered for a period of time.
 - c. The dispensation of each member of the Godhead –
 - 1) **God the Father**—dispensation was from the creation to the coming of Christ (Hebrews 1:1). He used means to communicate the divine will to man so that man would know and understand righteousness. The Father was prominent and dominant during this period.
 - 2) **God the Son**—dispensation began when the Word became flesh and ended with His ascension. During this time Christ's work was prominent. This does not mean the Father or Spirit had nothing to do during this time—they were just not as conspicuous as Christ.
 - 3) **God the Spirit**—dispensation began on Acts 2 and continues until today. During this time the Holy Spirit is executing the power of the Godhead on earth. The Holy Spirit is presently carrying out the work which Christ left and will bring it to its final consummation. The Spirit's dispensation is the last dispensation for earth!
 - d. Each Person of the Godhead has now been on earth with man. The three cooperated through all three dispensations but only one was dominant. The other two were equal in authority and working, but were out of prominent focus. Such explains why the Holy Spirit occupies a lesser focus in the Old Testament than in the New Testament.
3. From the Scripture, we are able to observe that the following are specifically listed as works performed by the Holy Spirit during Old Testament times.
- a. **Creation** (Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13; Psalm 104:30).

This is the first recorded work of the Holy Spirit. It seems that in creation every member of the Godhead had a role—the Father planned, the Son produced, and the Spirit finished or organized. The Spirit's role is evident in...

- 1) Genesis 1:2—"moved" – "to be anxious over" which indicates that the Holy Spirit was anxious to bring order from the chaotic.
- 2) Job 26:13—"garnished" – to adorn, decorate, to set in order.
- 3) Psalm 104:24-30—"created" – here we learn that the Holy Spirit had something to do with the creation of animals for the Holy Spirit gave them "life" (vs. 29).

Creation of man (Genesis 1:26; Job 33:4). The Holy Spirit had a part in creating man for the plural "God" and "Us" is found. Paul calls the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of life" (Romans 8:2) and thus the reference in Job 33 is understood—the work of the Holy Spirit was to give life to Adam's body (Genesis 2:7).

- b. **Protected Scripture** (Nehemiah 9:30; 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16).

Jesus gave David credit for writing the Psalms as the Spirit had moved him (Matthew 22:43, 44). The Old Testament prophets spoke as they were "moved"—superintended—by the Holy Spirit. Hence we have a clear reference to the purity of Holy Scripture. There are no errors...no contradictions! All of this is because the Holy Spirit guided and guarded the writing.

- c. **Revealed the unknowable** (Genesis 41:16-38; Daniel 2:28; 4:8). Not only did the Holy Spirit reveal the unknowable regarding princes, kingdoms and nations, and natural calamities, but the Holy Spirit revealed future events about the Messiah (Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:16-21).

- d. **Guided speakers** (2 Samuel 23:2; Acts 4:25, 26; Isaiah 61:1; Nehemiah 9:30). The "prophets" of the Old Testament spoke for God. They were God's mouthpiece to the people. The Holy Spirit made sure they spoke the right things. Peter represents Christ, in the pre-flesh state, as preaching by the Holy Spirit to the sinners while the Ark was being built. In actuality it was Noah, inspired by the Holy Spirit speaking the Word (1 Peter 3:18-22; 2 Peter 2:5).

- e. **Enabled talents** (Exodus 31:1-5; 35:31; 1 Samuel 10:10; 11:6; 2 Peter 2:5). The Holy Spirit gave aid to certain people who had duties that affected Israel's faith. Their abilities were enhanced so they could accomplish great things for God.

- f. **Strengthened leaders** (Judges 3:10; 6:34, 35; 11:29; 13:25; 2 Samuel 23:2; 1 Samuel 16:13). When the duty of judging Israel became too great for Moses, God sent the Holy Spirit to strengthen seventy others (Numbers 11:10-25). Joshua, the Judges, David, Saul, and a host of other leaders were strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

- g. **Stimulated courage** (2 Chronicles 24:20, 21; Ezekiel 11:1, 5, 24; Micah 3:8; Zechariah 7:12). It was not easy to stand and rebuke an entire nation. The Holy Spirit knew those whose hearts were courageous enough to do it and He stirred up that courage with in them.

4. From the Old Testament we are able to observe two important points about the Holy Spirit.

- a. **Not all possessed the Holy Spirit.**

The Holy Spirit was given to a few select persons in Old Testament times. These were endowed with a supernatural measure of the Spirit's power for the purpose of fulfilling a divine purpose. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit is mentioned only in this

miraculous measure. In contrast, the New Testament presents the Holy Spirit in two measures – the miraculous and the "ordinary" (Acts 2:38; 19:2). The Holy Spirit is promised to all saints in the ordinary measure while only a select number received Him in the supernatural measure.

b. Some, who had the Holy Spirit, lost the Holy Spirit.

Even though the Holy Spirit had guided, assisted, and aided them, He was taken away because of sin in their lives (Judges 16:20; 1 Samuel 10:10; 16:14; Psalm 51:11, 13). This same tragedy is possible in New Testament times.

5. A summary observation about the mission of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.

- a. His primary mission was to bring order to God's creation and ultimately to man. He was working to make earthly life pleasant—this is the goal of all three Persons in the Godhead.
- b. The orderliness of the Holy Spirit is most evident in Job 26:13 where "garnished" is found.¹
- c. The progression of the Holy Spirit's ordering of creation is found in three steps:
 - 1) He began in organizing the chaos of the newly created material universe (Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13). In some fashion, He formed the wasteless void into the beauty of earth.
 - 2) He took society and ordered its relationships (Genesis 6:3). Through the Holy Spirit man was entreated to do right so his world would not become corrupt and wicked.
 - 3) He took the individual man and ordered his character. The ethical qualities which bring joy and happiness are offered by the Holy Spirit (Nehemiah 9:20).
- d. This progressive mission of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament is remarkable and evidences His great work.
 - 1) "The work of the Spirit upon the material universe makes it a fit dwelling place for man. His work upon society makes man fit to dwell in the universe, and his work upon the individual character makes man fit for a righteous and holy fellowship with similar characters" (Z.T. Sweeney, *The Spirit And The Word*, p. 14).
 - 2) "The steps of his work appear to advance from the general confusion and disorder of matter to the narrow or more restricted field of humanity, and finally to the still more narrow field of individual character" (Boles, 54).

¹ The word translated as "garnished" in the ASV, KJV and other translations derives from a Hebrew word that literally means "to glisten, to make fair." Other translations, such as ESV, use this literal definition instead.

Old Testament Scriptures Mentioning the Spirit

(from the ASV)

1. Gen 1:2 - And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the **Spirit** of God moved upon the face of the waters.
2. Exo 31:3 - and I have filled him with the **Spirit** of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,
3. Exo 35:31 - And he hath filled him with the **Spirit** of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship;
4. Num 11:17 - And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the **Spirit** which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.
5. Num 11:25 - And Jehovah came down in the cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the **Spirit** that was upon him, and put it upon the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the **Spirit** rested upon them, they prophesied, but they did so no more.
6. Num 11:26 - But there remained two men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the **Spirit** rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but had not gone out unto the Tent; and they prophesied in the camp.
7. Num 11:29 - And Moses said unto him, Art thou jealous for my sake? would that all Jehovah's people were prophets, that Jehovah would put his **Spirit** upon them!
8. Num 24:2 - And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel dwelling according to their tribes; and the **Spirit** of God came upon him.
9. Num 27:18 - And Jehovah said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the **Spirit**, and lay thy hand upon him;
10. Jdg 3:10 - And the **Spirit** of Jehovah came upon him, and he judged Israel; and he went out to war, and Jehovah delivered Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand: and his hand prevailed against Cushan-rishathaim.
11. Jdg 6:34 - But the **Spirit** of Jehovah came upon Gideon; and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered together after him.
12. Jdg 11:29 - Then the **Spirit** of Jehovah came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon.
13. Jdg 13:25 - And the **Spirit** of Jehovah began to move him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

14. Jdg 14:6 - And the **Spirit** of Jehovah came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid; and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.
15. Jdg 14:19 - And the **Spirit** of Jehovah came mightily upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and smote thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave the changes of raiment unto them that declared the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house.
16. Jdg 15:14 - When he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted as they met him: and the **Spirit** of Jehovah came mightily upon him, and the ropes that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands dropped from off his hands.
17. 1Sa 10:6 - and the **Spirit** of Jehovah will come mightily upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.
18. 1Sa 10:10 - And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a band of prophets met him; and the **Spirit** of God came mightily upon him, and he prophesied among them.
19. 1Sa 11:6 - And the **Spirit** of God came mightily upon Saul when he heard those words, and his anger was kindled greatly.
20. 1Sa 16:13 - Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the **Spirit** of Jehovah came mightily upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.
21. 1Sa 16:14 - Now the **Spirit** of Jehovah departed from Saul, and an evil **Spirit** from Jehovah troubled him.
22. 1Sa 19:20 - And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as head over them, the **Spirit** of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied.
23. 1Sa 19:23 - And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the **Spirit** of God came upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah.
24. 2Sa 23:2 - The **Spirit** of Jehovah spake by me, And his word was upon my tongue.
25. 1Ki 18:12 - And it will come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the **Spirit** of Jehovah will carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he will slay me: but I thy servant fear Jehovah from my youth.
26. 1Ki 22:24 - Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the **Spirit** of Jehovah from me to speak unto thee?
27. 2Ki 2:16 - And they said unto him, Behold now, there are with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master, lest the **Spirit** of Jehovah hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send.
28. 1Ch 12:18 - Then the **Spirit** came upon Amasai, who was chief of the thirty, and he said, Thine are

we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thy helpers; for thy God helpeth thee. Then David received them, and made them captains of the band.

29. 1Ch 28:12 - and the pattern of all that he had by the **Spirit**, for the courts of the house of Jehovah, and for all the chambers round about, for the treasuries of the house of God, and for the treasuries of the dedicated things;
30. 2Ch 15:1 - And the **Spirit** of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded:
31. 2Ch 18:23 - Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near, and smote Micaiah upon the cheek, and said, Which way went the **Spirit** of Jehovah from me to speak unto thee?
32. 2Ch 20:14 - Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, the Levite, of the sons of Asaph, came the **Spirit** of Jehovah in the midst of the assembly;
33. 2Ch 24:20 - And the **Spirit** of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest; and he stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of Jehovah, so that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken Jehovah, he hath also forsaken you.
34. Neh 9:20 - Thou gavest also thy good **Spirit** to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst.
35. Neh 9:30 - Yet many years didst thou bear with them, and testifiedst against them by thy **Spirit** through thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.
36. Job 26:13 - By his **Spirit** the heavens are garnished; His hand hath pierced the swift serpent.
37. Job 33:4 - The **Spirit** of God hath made me, And the breath of the Almighty giveth me life.
38. Psa 104:30 - Thou sendest forth thy **Spirit**, they are created; And thou renewest the face of the ground.
39. Psa 139:7 - Whither shall I go from thy **Spirit**? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
40. Psa 143:10 - Teach me to do thy will; For thou art my God: Thy **Spirit** is good; Lead me in the land of uprightness.
41. Isa 11:2 - And the **Spirit** of Jehovah shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah.
42. Isa 30:1 - Woe to the rebellious children, saith Jehovah, that take counsel, but not of me; and that make a league, but not of my **Spirit**, that they may add sin to sin,
43. Isa 32:15 - until the **Spirit** be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be esteemed as a forest.
44. Isa 34:16 - Seek ye out of the book of Jehovah, and read: no one of these shall be missing, none

shall want her mate; for my mouth, it hath commanded, and his **Spirit**, it hath gathered them.

45. Isa 40:13 - Who hath directed the **Spirit** of Jehovah, or being his counsellor hath taught him?
46. Isa 42:1 - Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my **Spirit** upon him; he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.
47. Isa 44:3 - For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and streams upon the dry ground; I will pour my **Spirit** upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:
48. Isa 48:16 - Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; from the beginning I have not spoken in secret; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord Jehovah hath sent me, and his **Spirit**.
49. Isa 59:21 - And as for me, this is my covenant with them, saith Jehovah: my **Spirit** that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith Jehovah, from henceforth and for ever.
50. Isa 61:1 - The **Spirit** of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;
51. Isa 63:10 - But they rebelled, and grieved his holy **Spirit**: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them.
52. Isa 63:11 - Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? where is he that put his holy **Spirit** in the midst of them?
53. Isa 63:14 - As the cattle that go down into the valley, the **Spirit** of Jehovah caused them to rest; so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.
54. Eze 2:2 - And the **Spirit** entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet; and I heard him that spake unto me.
55. Eze 3:12 - Then the **Spirit** lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of Jehovah from his place.
56. Eze 3:14 - So the **Spirit** lifted me up, and took me away; and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; and the hand of Jehovah was strong upon me.
57. Eze 3:24 - Then the **Spirit** entered into me, and set me upon my feet; and he spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thy house.
58. Eze 8:3 - And he put forth the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head; and the **Spirit** lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the gate of the inner court that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy.

59. Eze 11:1 - Moreover the **Spirit** lifted me up, and brought me unto the east gate of Jehovah's house, which looketh eastward: and behold, at the door of the gate five and twenty men; and I saw in the midst of them Jaazaniah the son of Azzur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people.
60. Eze 11:5 - And the **Spirit** of Jehovah fell upon me, and he said unto me, Speak, Thus saith Jehovah: Thus have ye said, O house of Israel; for I know the things that come into your mind.
61. Eze 11:24 - And the **Spirit** lifted me up, and brought me in the vision by the **Spirit** of God into Chaldea, to them of the captivity. So the vision that I had seen went up from me.
62. Eze 36:27 - And I will put my **Spirit** within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep mine ordinances, and do them.
63. Eze 37:1 - The hand of Jehovah was upon me, and he brought me out in the **Spirit** of Jehovah, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones.
64. Eze 37:14 - And I will put my **Spirit** in you, and ye shall live, and I will place you in your own land: and ye shall know that I, Jehovah, have spoken it and performed it, saith Jehovah.
65. Eze 39:29 - neither will I hide my face any more from them; for I have poured out my **Spirit** upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah.
66. Eze 43:5 - And the **Spirit** took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of Jehovah filled the house.
67. Joe 2:28 - And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my **Spirit** upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:
68. Joe 2:29 - and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my **Spirit**.
69. Mic 2:7 - Shall it be said, O house of Jacob, Is the **Spirit** of Jehovah straitened? are these his doings? Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?
70. Mic 3:8 - But as for me, I am full of power by the **Spirit** of Jehovah, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.
71. Hag 2:5 - according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, and my **Spirit** abode among you: fear ye not.
72. Zec 4:6 - Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of Jehovah unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my **Spirit**, saith Jehovah of hosts.
73. Zec 7:12 - Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which Jehovah of hosts had sent by his **Spirit** by the former prophets: therefore there came great wrath from Jehovah of hosts.

74. Mal 2:15 - And did he not make one, although he had the residue of the **Spirit**? And wherefore one? He sought a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.

Looking Back Over Lesson Three:

Review the material presented in this lesson and answer the questions below.

1. Why is there scarce mention of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament but ample references to Him in the New Testament?

2. List and explain the eight specific works associated with the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.

3. How does Job 26:13 describe the work of the Holy Spirit?

4. What was the three-step process the Holy Spirit used to bring order into creation?
