

THE HOLY SPIRIT Chapter 6 The Holy Spirit During the Old Testament Ages

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Transcript

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Chapter 6

The Holy Spirit During the Old Testament Ages

Much ignorance prevails today concerning this aspect of our subject. The crudest ideas are now entertained as to the relation between the Third Person of the Godhead and the Old Testament saints. Yet this is scarcely to be wondered at in view of the fearful confusion which obtains respecting their salvation, many supposing that they were saved in an entirely different way from what we are now. Nor need we be surprised at that, for this, in turn, is only another of the evil effects produced by the misguided efforts of those who have been so eager to draw as many contrasts as possible between the present dispensation and those which preceded it, to the disparaging of the earlier members of God's family. The Old Testament saints had far more in common with the New Testament saints than is generally supposed. A verse which has been grossly perverted by many of our moderns is John 7:39, "The Holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." It seems passing strange that with the Old Testament in their hands, some men should place the construction which they do upon those words. The words "was not yet given" can no more be understood absolutely than "Enoch was not" (Gen. 5:24); they simply mean that the Spirit had not yet been given in His full administrative authority. He was not yet publicly manifested here on earth. All believers, in every age, had been sanctified and comforted by Him, but the "ministration of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:8) was not at that time fully introduced; the outpouring of the Spirit, in the plenitude of His miraculous gifts, had not then taken place. In Relation to Creation Let us first consider, though very briefly, the work of the Spirit in connection with the old or material creation. Before the worlds were framed by the Word of God, and things which are seen were made out of things which do not appear (Heb. 11:3), when the whole mass of inanimate matter lay in one undistinguished chaos, "without form and void," we are told that, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2). There are other passages which ascribe the work of creation (in common with the Father and the Son), to His immediate agency. For example, we are told, "by His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens" (Job 26:13). Job was moved to confess, "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life" (33:4). "Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created: and Thou renewest the face of the earth" (Ps. 104:30). In Relation to Adam Let us next contemplate the Holy Spirit in relation to Adam. As so much darkness now surrounds this subject, we must enter into it in greater detail. "Three things were

required to render man fit unto that life to God for which he was made. First, an ability to discern the mind and wisdom of God with respect unto all the duty and obedience that God requires of him; as also for to know the nature and properties of God, as to believe Him the only proper object of all acts and duties of religious obedience, and an all-sufficient satisfaction and reward in this world, and to eternity. Secondly, a free, uncontrolled, unentangled, disposition to every duty of the law of his creation for living unto God. Thirdly, an ability of mind and will, with a readiness of compliance in his affections, for a regular performance of all duties and abstinence from all sin. These things belonged unto the integrity of his nature, with the uprightness of the state and condition wherein he was made. And all these things were the peculiar effects of the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit. "Thus Adam may be said to have had the Spirit of God in his innocence. He had Him in these peculiar effects of His power and goodness, and he had Him according to the tenor of that covenant, whereby it was possible that he should utterly lose Him, as accordingly it came to pass. He had Him not by especial inhabitation, for the whole world was then the temple of God. In the Covenant of Grace, founded in the Person and on the mediation of Christ, it is otherwise. On whomsoever the Spirit of God is bestowed for the renovation of the image of God in him, He abides with him forever" (J. Owen, 1680). The three things mentioned above by that eminent Puritan constituted the principal part of that "image of God" wherein man was created by the Spirit. Proof of this is seen in the fact that at regeneration the Holy Spirit restores those abilities in the souls of God's elect: "And hath put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of Him that created him" (Col. 3:10): that is, the spiritual knowledge which man lost at the Fall is, potentially, restored at the new birth; but it could not be restored or "renewed" if man had never possessed it! The "knowledge" with which the Holy Spirit endowed Adam was great indeed. Clear exemplification of this is seen in Genesis 2:19. Still, more conclusive evidence is found in Genesis 2:21-23: God put Adam into a deep sleep, took a rib out of his side, formed it into a woman, and then set her before him. On sight of her Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." He knew who she was and her origin, and forthwith gave her a suitable name; and he could only have known all this by the Spirit of revelation and understanding. That Adam was, originally, made a partaker of the Holy Spirit is quite evident to the writer from Genesis 2:7, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." If those words were interpreted in the light of the Analogy of Faith, they can mean nothing less than that the Triune God imparted the Holy Spirit unto the first man. In Ezekiel 37 we have a vivid parabolic picture of the regenerating of spiritual Israel. There we are told, "Prophesy unto the Wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the Wind, Thus saith the LORD God, Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the Breath came unto them, and they lived" (vv. 9, 10). Again, we find the Savior, after His resurrection, "Breathed on them (the Apostles), and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22): that was the counterpart of Genesis 2:7: the one the original gift, the other the restoration of what was lost. Rightly has it been said that "The doctrine that man was originally, though mutably, replenished with the Spirit, may be termed the deep fundamental thought of the Scripture doctrine of man. If the first and second Adam are so related that the first man was the analogue or figure of the second, as all admit on the authority of Scripture (Rom. 5:12-14), it is clear that, unless the first man possessed the Spirit, the last man, the Healer or Restorer of the forfeited inheritance, would not have been the medium of giving the Spirit, who was withdrawn on account of sin, and who could be restored only on account of the everlasting righteousness which Christ (Rom. 8:10) brought in" (G. Smeaton, 1880). In Relation to the Nation Israel Let us next observe the relation of the Holy Spirit unto the nation of Israel. A very striking and comprehensive statement was made by Nehemiah, when he reviewed the Lord's dealings with His people of old: "Thou gavest also Thy good Spirit to instruct them" (Neh. 8:20). He was, until quenched, upon the members of the Sanhedrin (Num.

11:16, 17). He came upon the judges (Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 15:14), upon the kings (1 Sam. 11:6; 16:13), and the Prophets. But note it is a great mistake to say, as many have done, that the Holy Spirit was never in any believer before Pentecost: Numbers 27:18, Nehemiah 9:30, 1 Peter 1:11 clearly prove otherwise. But alas, Israel "rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit" (Isa. 63:10), as Stephen declared, "Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51). That the Holy Spirit indwelt saints under the Legal economy is clear from many considerations: how otherwise could they have been regenerated, had faith, been enabled to perform works acceptable to God? The Spirit prompted true prayer, inspired spiritual worship, produced His fruit in the lives of believers then (see Zech. 4:6) as much as He does now. We have "the same Spirit of faith" (2 Cor. 4:13) as they had. All the spiritual good which has ever been wrought in and through men must be ascribed unto the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was given to the Old Testament saints prospectively, as pardon of sin was given in view of the satisfaction which Christ was to render unto God.

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