

# From the Fall to the Messiah

by G. Campbell Morgan

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*The sermon explores the work of the Holy Spirit from the Fall to the Messiah, highlighting the differences between the old and new dispensations.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:15, Joel 2:28-29, John 1:29, Acts 2:4, Romans 8:9, 2 Corinthians 5:19, Galatians 4:4-6, Ephesians 1:13-14, Hebrews 10:4, 1 Peter 1:10-12

**Topics:** "The Role of the Holy Spirit", "Reconciliation"

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## Description

G. Campbell Morgan explores the journey from humanity's fall into sin to the promise of reconciliation through the Messiah, emphasizing that God's grace was evident even in the moment of rebellion. He explains that the Old Testament sacrificial system foreshadowed the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which was planned from the foundation of the world. Morgan highlights the evolving role of the Holy Spirit, who worked in specific ways throughout history, preparing humanity for the fullness of God's revelation in Christ. The sermon underscores the continuity of God's purpose and the hope that the Spirit brings, culminating in the establishment of the Church after Christ's ascension. Ultimately, Morgan illustrates how the Spirit's work has transitioned from occasional empowerment to a constant indwelling presence in believers today.

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## Transcript

BY an act of willful rebellion man distanced himself from God, and was alienated from the life of God. The grace of the Divine heart immediately announced a reconciliation. No sooner was sin committed than there was declared the purpose of grace and love, not in detail and in fulness, but in a promise that came to be understood more fully as the ages rolled. Speaking to the enemy, God said: It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." Necessarily the process of that reconciliation have been slow, and even yet are not fully and finally accomplished. The Divine love outran in its utterance the actual accomplishment of its purposes. All the arrangements of the old dispensation for the approach of man to God by way of sacrifice were based upon the coming sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of a heifer never took sin away; but they did help men, amid the twilight in which they lived and worshipped, to understand the principle of sacrifice, without which there could be no remission of sins. In the plan of God, the Lamb slain was the way of reconciliation; and although the Son of His love could not be manifested until the fulness of the time, yet for the sake of man, and in the purpose of God, the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world.

The glorious announcement of New Testament ministry is contained in the words, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself;" but He was so in purpose, long before the historical fact was accomplished, upon which the larger, fuller dispensation should depend.

The Fatherhood of God was a fact before the coming of Jesus. He illuminated it for men, so that since His coming they have understood it as never before. Though men had wandered and lost their sense of relationship, God was ever their Father, and His presence their home. Even in those old days, before the full light of the glory of God had shone upon man's pathway in the face of the Christ, there were souls who discovered the fact of the Fatherhood, and passed their days homed in God. The same law of procedure is discoverable also with reference to the work of the Holy Spirit.

The whole being of man was conditioned in the energy and the wisdom of that Spirit. The knowledge of this fact man had lost by reason of his sin; and the Spirit, resisted, was separated from the actualities of human life. From the moment of the Fall a new form of His ministry began, which was partial, occasional, special, and prophetic of the great dispensation to be ushered in, when the true light of sacrifice had made plain the way for the clearer apprehension of Fatherhood.

The present age is pre-eminently the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, in which He has a specific work, differing from that of preceding ages. This work is based upon the work of Christ, and was impossible until He had finished that work and ascended on high.

It must, however, be remembered that in the past the Spirit had not a constant ministry. The differences between then and now are most clearly defined. Until after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, the Spirit is not spoken of as creating a Church by His own abiding indwelling. Neither is He spoken of as the one direct and only Administrator of the affairs of such a body. And yet again, He is not spoken of as a Sanctifier. All the other aspects of the Spirit's work are found--not continually and perpetually, and in an abiding sense, as they are to-day, but as special occasions demanded.

There is also this important distinction between the old, and new dispensations. In the old, the Spirit came upon and filled men for specific work without reference to character. In the new, after the accomplishment of the work of the Cross, this is never so. His filling for service always depends upon His application of the work of the Saviour for cleansing and holiness.

Certain phrases of Old Testament Scripture reveal both the methods and character of the Spirit's work during those long centuries.

He is spoken of as coming upon men, as coming mightily upon men, as abiding in men, and as filling certain men for specific work.

There may be a great many subdivisions of the eighty-eight passages in which the Holy Spirit is directly mentioned in the Old Testament but, broadly stated, the method of the Spirit is marked by these four statements. It is not stated that He came upon, nor that He came mightily upon the whole nation; nor, again, is it affirmed that He abode in or filled the whole nation. In that fact lies the difference between the old dispensation and the new. At Pentecost the Spirit came upon all, He came mightily upon all, He came to abide in all, He came to fill all. There may be many members of the Church of Jesus Christ who have not realized in their own experience all this fourfold work of the Spirit; but that is not to be laid to the charge of the economy of grace, but rather to the failure of such persons to realize the purpose of God.

Dr. Elder Gunning, in his book *Through the Eternal Spirit* has compiled a catena of passages in which the Holy Spirit is directly mentioned in the Bible. In the Old Testament there are eighty-eight passages in all.

The Spirit fell upon Gideon. He had in his own home and family broken down the altar of Baal, in order that he might make a protest against idolatry; and after he had done this the Spirit came upon him.

David was doubtful as to the loyalty of Benjamin and Judah. Then the Spirit came upon Amasai, and he spoke words which convinced David of the loyalty of these tribes.

Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, was raised up to protest against idolatry in the holy places; and, in order that he might do it, the Spirit of God came upon him.

Upon these three men the Spirit came for very different reasons: upon Gideon, after he had broken down the altar of Baal, and in order that he might become the leader of the people to victory; upon Amasai, in order that the loyalty of two tribes might be believed by the king; upon Zechariah, in order that he might utter a protest against idolatry.

The same thought lies within each--the Spirit came upon them. The Hebrew word literally means that the Spirit clothed Himself with them--not that the Spirit fell upon them as an anointing, but the Spirit took hold of them, passed into them, and made them the instruments through which He accomplished His work. The thought conveyed to the mind of the Hebrew reader is, that the Spirit clothed Himself with Gideon, the Spirit clothed Himself with Amasai, the Spirit clothed Himself with Zechariah. Here there is a revelation of one of the methods of the Spirit under that dispensation. For the doing of a special work, for the delivery of a special message, for the announcement of the immediate purpose of God, the Spirit clothed Himself with a man, and the Divine energy moved out in speech and in deed; so that through the man was known the will of God, and seen the power of God. These are three instances out of many in which men became the clothing of the Spirit. The distinction must be observed: it was not that these men were clothed with the Spirit, but that the Spirit clothed Himself with them for the doing of specific work.

Take the second thought. The Spirit of God came mightily upon Samson, and he slew a lion. Saul joined a company of the prophets; the Spirit of God came mightily upon him, and he prophesied. Samuel poured the anointing oil upon David, and the Spirit came mightily upon him.

In these cases an entirely different word is used. It is not said that the Spirit clothed Himself with them, but that the Spirit came upon them; and the thought is that of forcing forward, or pushing. The literal meaning of the word is, that the Spirit attacked these men, came upon them with compulsion, forced them forward to a certain activity. Under the compulsion of the Spirit, Samson slew the lion, Saul joined the prophets and uttered words of prophecy, and David went forward to the work of governing the people. How different is the manifestation of the power!--the slaying of a lion, the uttering of the truth of God, and the governing of the people; but in each case the action was under the impulse of the same Spirit.

There are two passages in the Old Testament where it is said that the Spirit dwelt in men. Pharaoh said that in Joseph there dwelt the Spirit of God, and that therefore he was discreet and wise. When a successor to Moses was needed for the government and leading of the people, Joshua was chosen because in him dwelt the Spirit of God.

Whether Pharaoh understood his own expression may be very doubtful, but it is certainly worthy of note that in each of the cases cited, the Spirit of God created fitness for government; and this fitness consisted,

not in autocratic, tyrannous power, but in discretion, wisdom, gentleness, and beauty of demeanour. Such were the manifestations of the indwelling of the Spirit in these men under the old covenant.

Once again, the Spirit filled certain men; and that expression is only used in connection with the work of the making of the Tabernacle. The Spirit of God filled Bezalel that he might have cunning to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all manner of workmanship. Thus the whole of the work of the Tabernacle, in its exquisite perfection and in its glorious beauty, was the outshining of the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. No man was glorified in that upreared Tabernacle. Perhaps it was otherwise in the times of decadence; but men of spiritual intelligence, who in the early days looked upon the work of the Tabernacle, would not say, See how cunning a workman was Bezalel, but rather, See how wondrously the Spirit of God has wrought through Bezalel, in the accomplishment of the Divine purpose. These illustrations go to show that the Holy Spirit was always interested in and working among men; that He did not abide with them, but that, for special purposes and at special points in their history, He equipped them for whatever the particular moment demanded.

As to the character of the Spirit's work through all these years, there is a wonderful development of revelation concerning the ministry of the Spirit, discoverable in the character of His work as time proceeded: And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all that they chose. There were two distinct ideals of life upon the earth, embodied in the seed of Adam through Cain and through Seth respectively, the seventh generation of the one culminating in Lamech, the man who, having committed murder, composed poetry in defence of his sin; and the seventh generation of the other culminating in Enoch, a man of whom it is written that he walked with God. Much speculation has been rife concerning the intermarriage of the sons of God and the daughters of men. The exposition of the passage that is most probably correct, is that which treats this intermarriage, as having taken place between people who were godly and those who were godless--between the descendants of Seth and those of Cain. Be that as it may, the condition of things upon the earth had reached a point which is revealed in the words: My Spirit shall not strive with man for ever, for that he also is flesh. This is, moreover, a revelation of the work of the Spirit of God in the years from the Fall to the Flood. He was striving with men, convicting them of sin.

Then followed another manifestation of the Spirit in history. The chosen people were being organized for the embodiment of a Divine purpose, and as the medium of a Divine revelation; and the Spirit came upon certain men for the carrying out of all the details necessary to the perfecting of the organization. Then, again, in the passages referred to, concerning Samson, Saul, and David, the Spirit of God is seen manifesting Himself as a Spirit of strength. A period of conflict had come in the history of the chosen people, a race of heroes was needed for the accomplishment of Divine purposes among the nations, and deeds of daring that characterized the period were wrought in the power of the Spirit. Men were raised up to do these deeds of heroism by the Spirit falling mightily upon them.

The prophetic books yield yet another manifestation of the presence and work of the Spirit, and that a most interesting one. Both in Isaiah and in Ezekiel there are fifteen distinct references to the Holy Spirit, which for the most part can only have their fulfilment in the present dispensation or in one which is yet to come. Those days were characterized by the failure of kings and priests to fulfil their several vocations. The kings had become entangled with the idol worship of their heathen neighbours; the priests, smitten with the leprosy of the same unfaithfulness, had been superseded by the prophets. These men, devoted only to the will of God, found nothing amid the decadence of the time to satisfy their hearts and minister to

their spiritual well-being. But they were men of vision; and beyond the clouds and the mists they saw the gleam of another day, and they foretold the coming of the Spirit in plenitude and in power. An instance of these foretellings is the prophecy of Joel, which Peter quoted upon the Day of Pentecost, to emphasize the historic value of what men saw passing around them. Amid the darkness and the gloom which had fallen upon the nation, the Spirit of God became the Spirit of hope; so that the essential principles of life were not forgotten.

The Spirit of God was the Spirit of conviction while sin worked itself out from Fall to Flood; He was a Spirit of detailed service while the people of God were being organized into a nationality; He was a Spirit of strength while the people were fighting for the land, and were casting out those who had deeply sinned; and He became a Spirit of hope when the peculiar people had passed into a condition of apostasy and wandering. He lit the horizon with the glow of approaching day. He spoke to ears that listened, and revealed to eyes that gazed; and thus, though they did not perfectly understand, men had some dim foreshadowing of the glories of these days of fulness of spiritual power.

Such is a very rapid summary of the work of the Spirit in that whole period from the Fall to the Messiah.

No clear view of present-day aspects of the Spirit's ministry is possible apart from a just and clear conception of His place in history. The Spirit Who brooded over chaos, and Who breathed into nature the life which blushes and blooms into beauty in every branch and leaf and flower--that same Spirit has always been interested in the affairs of men. There is, however, a very distinct difference between the method of His work in those bygone days, and the method of His work to-day. In those days there was no Church. To speak of the Israelitish nation as a Church in the sense in which that word is used to-day is to show no true understanding of what the Church really is. Consequently there was no direct, present, actual demonstration of the Spirit to the nation. Most wonderful of all, Old Testament times knew nothing of the Holy Spirit as the Sanctifier of individual lives, in the New Testament sense of cleansing and keeping. Of .course Old Testament saints might have sung as truthfully as the saints of the new covenant:--

A small booklet by my beloved and lamented friend the Rev. G. H. C. Macgregor, M.A., entitled Things of the Spirit, contains the whole of the passages bearing upon this subject, and thus affords a valuable aid to a careful study of the story of the presence of the Spirit of God among men from the Fall to the days of Jesus.

And every virtue we possess,

And every victory won,

And every thought of holiness,

Are His alone.

The measure of His work, however, was very different; and the sanctification which embodies all virtue, ensures perpetual victory, and subjects every thought to the obedience of Christ, which is holiness, was unknown. These wonderful manifestations of His power were reserved for the present dispensation. It is full of delightful interest to trace the work of the Spirit through the centuries, preparing the way for the coming of the Christ, until the great moment came which was the fulness of the time. Over all the movements of men the Spirit brooded still, coming as a Spirit of conviction of sin, and as a Spirit of special

wisdom for definite service, and yet again as a Spirit of strength for conflict, and continually as a Spirit of hope amid decadence. Thus the things of God were made known amid men, in the measure necessary and possible, by that Spirit of God, Who, within the mystery of the Deity, is the Consciousness of God, and the Revealer of that Deity to man.

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