

XX. The Holy Spirit in Biblical Perspective

Led by the Spirit

“The Holy Spirit and the Old Testament”

Ezekiel 36:22–28

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We will start by looking at Ezekiel 36 which is this glorious prophecy used throughout the New Testament to affirm the New Covenant. The New Covenant or the New Testament is prophesied in Jeremiah 31, Joel 2 and right here in Ezekiel 36. Ezekiel 36:22–27 says [22] *“Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. [23] And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. [24] I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. [25] I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. [26] And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. [27] And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Our ministry theme this year has come from Romans 8:14 which says [14] *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.* What does it mean to be led by the Spirit of God? First of all, if you are not led by the Spirit of God then you are not a son of God so if you’re a son of God then you are led by the Spirit of God. For 20 sermons we have taken the time to examine two magisterial texts on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God’s people. Text number one that we have focused upon in Romans 8 and then text number two is the Upper Room Discourse, the last sermon Jesus preached, in which He focuses on the ministry of the Holy Spirit – the Helper, Counselor, Teacher, Comforter, and the other Helper. As He develops this He tells His Disciples that it is better for Him to go away because when He goes away that means He has won the victory and He will pour forth His Spirit upon them. You’ll do greater things because this work of the Spirit in you will send you out to do great things because of what I have done victoriously at the cross.

After going through 20 sermons on this the number one question I receive almost every Sunday after doing a sermon on the Holy Spirit is, what about the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament? Usually when I’m asked that question they already have the answer which generally comes right behind it. They will say ‘I know He wasn’t in anyone like He is now. So can you explain this?’ So in this study I will try and answer this question, not exhaustively but pointedly from this text in Ezekiel and from one other text. I understand the question and I would expect this question. I think it is appropriate and accurate because I just read a passage that is the prophecy of the New Covenant from Ezekiel 36. In Joel 2 it says ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon your sons and daughters’ and Jeremiah 31 says the same thing but this passage from Ezekiel is quoted in the New Testament to affirm the New Covenant, the fulfillment of all of God’s promises in Jesus Christ.

In this description He says ‘Israel you have profaned My Name before the nations and among the nations where My discipline has sent you but I’m not through yet for I have a new Israel that I am going to bring from all the nations. I’m going to gather this Israel into My Kingdom and they won’t be marked out by a covenant sign of circumcision but they will be marked out by a New Covenant sign – baptism where I will sprinkle clean water upon them. I will cut out their heart of stone and give them a new heart. I will remove their sins, their uncleanness from them and more than that I will put My Spirit within them. The result will be that they will be careful to observe My Word because of their love for Me and the Spirit of God within them.’

So it begs the question – if that is what He is going to do in the New Covenant in a new Israel from all the nations, then what was He doing bringing His elect from the old Israel? Did they not have a new heart, a new record or the Spirit of God within them? They must not have because He says He is going to do it there or did they? Then to compound it Jesus makes a statement in John 7 which is another key text on this. Here there is the last day of the great feast and it ended by the priests bringing the waters up by the pool of Siloam. With great fanfare, procession and parade they would stop at the altar and pour it out at the temple mount. Now something happens that had never happened before on this day.

John 7:37–39 says [37] *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. [38] Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” [39] Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

So what about the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament? In the New Testament we know that when Jesus is glorified He is going to pour out His Spirit at Pentecost and upon believers, baptized, sealed, and led by the Spirit, along with the fruits and gifts of the Spirit, but what about the Old Testament? That is the question and the assumption is that the Holy Spirit was in the Old Testament because He was mentioned but that He was not personally present within the lives of believers. He would perhaps prompt them to conversion and then they would live by faith. At various seasons and events in life He would show up but this presence of the Holy Spirit given to them that seems to be New Testament.

What is different in the New Testament is not the giving of the Holy Spirit, not the personal presence of the Holy Spirit but what is new is what is given from the risen, ascended, glorified Christ and all that is attended to that. I believe the Holy Spirit was in the Old Testament, in believers in the Old Testament and dwelling within them. The Old Testament tells me that. The answer is that the ministry of the Holy Spirit comes from the victorious, ascended Christ so He is called the Spirit of Christ and He now comes from the victory of Christ. The New Testament reveals to us all that He was doing, is doing and will be doing that was in the Old Testament, affirmed and prophesied through types and shadows.

For instance, Isaiah 55 speaks of the Holy Spirit as water. Jesus brings clarity in John 7 that the Living Water is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Ezekiel says that from the temple will pour forth a river of life and will change everything that is around it. Jesus is now making clear that the river flowing from that temple is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In other words, we get the affirmation of the victory of Christ in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and clarity in God’s Word of the content, intent and the extent of the Holy Spirit. I believe the Spirit was working in the Old Testament He just had not been sent in the name of the glorified Christ. Jesus said, ‘You have not received Him from Me for I have not yet been glorified’ (John 7:39). That doesn’t

mean they hadn't received Him or that He hadn't been at work in the Old Testament. So how do I know that?

Do you believe that people put their trust in God for salvation in the Old Testament? You ought to because this isn't a trick question and 'yes' is the answer. You can hear it in this passage that is quoted time and time again in the New Testament in Galatians 3:6 which says, [6] *just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."* This was quoted from the Old Testament in Genesis 15:6. What righteousness did Abraham receive? He received the righteousness of Christ. Did he know about Jesus yet or that He was going to die on the cross? No, but it was Jesus' righteousness that saved him. How did Abraham come to saving faith in the promises of God and the Promised One would save him by His righteousness? He did that by faith and faith comes from the work of the Spirit of God. You have to be born again.

Do you believe you were born dead in your sins? Yes, you were born dead in your sins. How did you come to Christ? You came to Christ by faith. You were born again. Do you think the Old Testament believers didn't have to be born again? They did not have the clarity you have of the promises 'yes' and 'amen' in Christ but they had the promises, believed God and it was credited to them as righteousness. How did they believe if they were dead in their sins? They were born again by the Spirit also. How did they stay in Christ? Are you glad the Holy Spirit is in you? I'm glad He is in me because I got from my depravity, this residue called the old man, a remnant of my sin nature and that old man is a lot more powerful than me so I need the Holy Spirit to keep killing him every day so I can confess my sins, grow in Christ, kill sin and pursue Jesus. Do you think they didn't have an old man in them? Do you think they needed the Holy Spirit? So we know the Holy Spirit was at work but He was at work and understood through types, shadows and prophecies.

How do we know the Spirit is there? There are many ways that we know this. We hear Moses talking about those who came to work on the temple that were 'gifted' by the Spirit. Gifts of the Spirit didn't just start in I Corinthians for they are all the way back in the Old Testament. Is the Spirit of God present? Psalm 139:7-8 says [7] *Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?* [8] *If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!* The ever present presence of the Holy Spirit was understood by the writer of the Psalms.

Here is an Old Testament saint that was living when Jesus was born whose name was Simeon. Luke 2:25-26 says [25] *Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. [26] And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.* In Hebrews 11 it tells us that these Old Testament saints lived by faith and died by faith. So how can you believe if you are dead in your sins? You can believe because you have been made alive by power of the Spirit and then you believe in the promises of God as an Old Testament saint. The Spirit of God seals you into the promises of God that are yet to be fulfilled in the Promised One, Jesus Christ and then He is within you. So you live by faith for He didn't just prompt you but He lived in you so that you lived by faith and then you died in faith because He sees it through all the way to the end.

That is why Jesus would say to Nicodemus, 'You must be born again.' Then it says in John 3:4-10, [4] *Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"* [5] *Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. [6] That*

which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” [7] Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ [8] The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” [9] Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” [10] Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?”

Jesus expected Nicodemus to have already known the work of regeneration in the Spirit. This wasn't something new in the New Testament for it was clearer in the New Testament but not new. Its implications expanded in the New Testament but it wasn't new. Nicodemus should have already known this.

One of my favorite examples of this is David. Was David a great king? Yes he was a great king but he was also a great sinner and a great repentor. Those who don't know Christ tend to cover up their wrong doings. When Christians hear the Gospel and that you're saved from your sins not by from what you do but from what He did, now you're free to fess up. In Psalm 51 when we hear David's repentance he says 'God, don't take Your presence from me. Don't cast me away from Your presence.' What does it mean to be cast away from His presence? Do not take Your Spirit from me. David is telling us here that he can't confess, kill, be changed or pursue obedience with repentance without the Holy Spirit and he is confessing something else. He knows he has the Spirit because why would he says 'please don't take Your Spirit from me'? He is also in him as he says 'don't take Him from me.'

So the Holy Spirit wasn't some force hovering simply in the holy of holies for the Shekinah glory. He was at work in the lives of men and women bringing them from death unto life, from sin to their Savior. He is bringing them to put their trust in the Lord so that they believe in God as Abraham did and then it was credited to him as righteousness. It was this alien righteousness that wasn't there was taken for it was the righteousness of Christ that was imputed to them. It was the Spirit of life that kept them in the One who is life. So the answer is that the Holy Spirit is in the Old Testament doing His work, bringing sinners from death unto life, keeping them in the life giving grace of God that is found in Christ alone. That is what is happening there.

So what is new? I think the answer is found in the John 7 passage. John 7:37–38 says *[37] On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. [38] Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”* So here they are at the great feast and they had come to this last day where this ceremony had taken place year after year after year.

On the day of the New Covenant whether it's Joel 2 or Ezekiel 36 or 47 or Jeremiah 31, they understood that something definitive was going to happen in the outpouring of the Spirit of God and the saving work of God on behalf of His people so to commemorate it the priests would take these pitchers of water from the pool of Siloam and follow them all the way up to the temple mount singing the songs of ascent. As they arrived there the priest would pour it over the altar looking for that great day of fulfillment but what an unbelievable thing that happened on this day. While they are pouring it Jesus stands and says, *“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”* And John says He is talking about the Holy Spirit.

I want to give you five things about what He has said. The first thing He says is come to Me and drink of Me. He doesn't just say come. This deserves more treatment than I can give this right now but I think we're making a big mistake in our evangelism ministry when we just say to people 'come.' When Jesus evangelizes He says 'come and follow Me.' Here, notice He

doesn't say 'come to drink' but He says 'come to Me and drink.' The Holy Spirit can only come from Christ. In the New Covenant there is the full affirmation of what the Old Covenant anticipated – the triumphant work of Christ who when glorified would pour forth His Spirit. Then He would come to you to bring you to Him and when you come you come to drink.

The second thing is drinking and believing are the same things or believing and drinking are the same things. John 7:38 says [38] *Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'* To come and drink is to believe in Him and to believe in Him is not simply to nod you're a sinner. When you come to Christ by faith you come to Him to drink, meaning you are absorbing Him and He is transforming you. What do you drink of Him? You drink living water. What is the living water? It is the Holy Spirit.

The third thing is when you come to Him to drink of Him you don't just get satisfied you overflow. Does your heart not see that He is the satisfaction of your life in all that you do? Men and women want to drink and they are drinking from the cesspools that are polluting and killing them but you have living water, so much of it. It wasn't given just to satisfy you but it was given to overflow from your innermost being. Is Jesus satisfying? Yes He is with living water, not cesspools but when you drink it's not simply to be satisfied. He has designed the Spirit of God to go to your soul for no one can satisfy me but Christ and it's not just for you to get satisfied but for you to become an instrument. In other words, He didn't save me to be a reservoir but He saved me to be a river. He didn't save me for it come in and fill me up but He saved me to fill me up to overflowing.

He says from our innermost being will flow rivers of living water. A river of living water will begin to flow upward in worship. A river of living water will flow outward in evangelism. A river of living water will flow inward as we love one another. A river of living water will flow downward as we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. So, rivers of living water begin to flow from us because of the Living Water sent to us.

The fourth one becomes obvious because you are blessed to be a blessing. He has blessed you when you come to Him in order to be a blessing. So with the Living Water I will bless the Lord O my soul in worship. I will bless my friends with the Gospel. I will bless one another with the love of Christ and then the blessing in my own life as I grow in Christ. This is so crucial because you have been blessed to be a blessing so when you start the classrooms or go to the office or see your neighbor or are on that team or in that classroom, you go into a place where you bring rivers of living water. By the water cooler you tell them about the water you have where they will never thirst again. So not only does it satisfy but from you will flow rivers of living water so you are flowing where you go.

I'm not talking about having obnoxious conversations with someone you just met, like saying 'hey turn or burn.' I'm talking about really establishing relationships so that conversationally from you is flowing what is filling you and if He is filling you it will flow from you because a man speaks from what fills his heart (Matthew 15:18). God, please let us who have been blessed be a blessing.

So where is Jesus when He makes this statement in John 7? He is in the temple but the temple is there to point Him. In Ezekiel it says that from the temple will flow a trickle that will become a stream, that will become a river that will change everything and all the nations. So by Him standing in that temple Jesus says 'you think it will come from this altar but it is going to come from Me when I go to that cross and lay down My life for I am the Temple.' Then it will flow into you and then you will become a temple and it will flow rivers from you.

That is why Paul says in I Corinthians 3:16–17, [16] *Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?* [17] *If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.* Wherever you go marshes are brought to life. Dead seas become living seas because of the Holy Spirit who is in you who came from Christ to flow to you and then from you.

Here is the takeaway. The distinction (difference) of the Holy Spirit's ministry in the Old and New Testament is not one of personal presence, but one of clarity, content, intent and extent. The Holy Spirit poured out now is coming from Christ glorified for Jesus said 'I will send the promise of the Father to you when I'm glorified.' When He is glorified it is the victory that all of the promises have been fulfilled by Him. All of the promises are yes and amen in Jesus Christ. When Christ ascends that is the shout that everything is fulfilled in Jesus! So all I need is Jesus.

That is not all He is going to bring to me or entrust to me but I need Him in order to handle everything else and know what to do with everything else. Now we see the Holy Spirit in its content and in regeneration of being born again. We see the Holy Spirit in adoption. We understand we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the holy places because I have been sealed by the Holy Spirit. I am being changed by the Holy Spirit. I am being gifted by the Holy Spirit through the fruits of the Spirit and the gifts He has given to each one of us. I have been moved to worship by the Spirit, in Spirit and in truth. I have clarity and content not only from Jesus shouting the victory but also declaring the completion of Scripture.

I'm not just walking around in the Old Testament which is kind of like a living room that is dimly lit. I can see the furniture but I keep stumbling around but in the New Covenant the lights are cut on. Wow! Look at the furniture. Now I see it. The room hasn't changed but now you see it for the risen Savior has won the victory and cuts on the switch. Now you can see what He has done.

I want to illustrate it this way. Abraham is saved by the righteousness of Jesus but he didn't understand that. In the Old Testament it was there in prophecy, types and shadows but he believed the promises of God and that was credited to him as righteousness. They are living by the Spirit but don't understand the Spirit so you understand the fulfillment of the promises in Christ, the Promised One. You understand the work of the Spirit so Scripture is a progressive revelation. The fact that the clarity comes in the New Testament does not mean the essence wasn't there in the Old Testament.

We have the clarity of the content of His ministry which is regeneration and bringing you to Christ for justification. We understand adoption, sanctification and when the Spirit of God takes you into glory. Now we have clarity of intent, what God is doing in the Holy Spirit. Those who are Spirit filled can't stop talking about Jesus because Jesus sent the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit brought them to Jesus for that's when they come to Christ. The Spirit of God fills with the Spirit of Christ. There is the new title for the Spirit. In other words, the same Holy Spirit that was with Jesus from embryo to birth to childhood to baptism to teaching to rejection to the cross to the tomb to His ascension victorious to glory, is the same Spirit Jesus sends to you. Now you know Him as the Spirit of Christ who has come from Christ to bring you to Christ so that you'll be like Christ and from you, you will go forward for Christ.

So now what do we know from the New Testament? One, the Holy Spirit works inside out from your innermost being, your heart. Number, two He works throughout the whole world in your life and across the globe. He has already showed through Abraham that all the nations of the earth are going to be blessed but now He sends His Spirit who will convict the world of sin,

righteousness and judgment. He will empower you through His Spirit and He will be with you so that you will make disciples of all the nations. So we now have extent as He through the Spirit inside takes our whole life with the whole Christ through us to the whole world. That is what comes abundantly clear for us in the New Covenant in Christ.

Three it is the Spirit of Christ who comes from Christ to bring you to Christ to bring Christ at work within you to make you like Christ and then to send you out to declare Christ into this world. Number four is the binding of Satan. Jesus has won the victory for He has bound the strong man and he is falling like lightning. Now He is sending the Holy Spirit who will “restrain him” as Paul says so that you can take the Gospel to all the nations. What about closed nations? There are none if by the Spirit we’re willing to die for Christ. Lastly, He is doing all this powerfully. He is at work saving your life, transforming your life and empowering you so that where you are damming up the river of life and it’s not flowing, He’ll start blowing up those dams. He will show you where you need to be filled up. He will be at work in your life with adversity, prosperity, difficulties, challenges, tests and all of these things so that through the power of the Spirit you will become the sworn assassin of sin and by God’s grace the relentless follower of Jesus. That is what He is doing in your life.

That’s why as members we take vows and also through baptismal vows where we say in humble reliance upon Divine grace and the power of the Holy Spirit I will endeavor. This isn’t just hoping that God will show up. No, from the inside out God, make my strivings Your work of grace in the power of the Holy Spirit. As you go forth and declare that, now you know why we read in Isaiah 55:1, [1] “*Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat*” the water of life. I don’t have anything to buy it. Don’t worry He paid for it. He is ascended, the Victor. Jesus says in Matthew 11:28–30, [28] “*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. [29] Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [30] For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*” Come and drink of Him.

So where are we? We are right where we began. We come O Christ by the Spirit to You who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Let the Holy Spirit speak to your heart. As the Spirit is speaking to you if you have never yet come to drink please come and drink. I’m not asking you to come to Briarwood. Jesus says, ‘come to Me and drink and you will find rest for your soul.’ Not only will you be satisfied but you’ll be overflowing. You will no longer be a reservoir but living as a river. If you would like to pray with someone please contact me at (205) 776-5200 for it would be an enormous privilege to pray with you. Father, I ask now for Your people that they might know the glorious clarity of completion of Scripture, the ascended victory of Christ and now understand the content, intent and extent of the Spirit’s work in their life so that lives are changed and the world is reached for Jesus, in whose Name I pray, Amen.

Power Point

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD AND NEW

THE QUESTION

THE ASSUMPTION

THE ANSWER

LIFE TAKEAWAY

The distinction of the Holy Spirit's ministry in the Old and New Testaments is not one of a new personal presence, but one of clarity in content, intent and extent—affirming the victory of Christ and the completion of Scripture.

1. *Inside out*
2. *World wide*
3. *The Spirit of Christ (From-to-brings)*
4. *Binding of Satan*
5. *Powerful—Saving and Life-changing*