

Date : 3 May 2026
Theme : The Work of Holy Spirit in our sanctification and service
Topic : The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament
Passage : Nehemiah 9:20
Key Verse : *You gave your good Spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold your manna from their mouths, and you gave them water for their thirst.*

The Holy Spirit is active throughout Old Testament as the presence of God, preparing a covenant people - a specific family to work out God's salvation story. As such, the Holy Spirit uses human history in the Old Testament as the unfolding stage for God's plan of redemption.

From creation to fulfilment, a progressive thread is discernible — moving from giving life, to empowering individuals, to calling a nation back to God, and ultimately pointing forward to a greater promise. All who truly served God effectively did so through the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This partnership of the Holy Spirit with individuals transforms ordinary people into effective instruments to serve God's plan effectively.

1. Who is the Holy Spirit?

i. The Holy Spirit is God

- God is described as *Elohim* Genesis 1:1:
"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."
 - *Elohim* is plural in form, pointing to the triune nature of God.
- The Holy Spirit is fully God - the third person of the Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

ii. The Holy Spirit is a Person

- The Holy Spirit is invisible, eternal and not limited by space or form.
- He is a Person who:
 - Speaks, leads, teaches, and has emotions.
 - Can be grieved and quenched *Ephesians 4:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:19*

As we take a bird's eye-view of the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament, we will see that:

- The Holy Spirit is NOT:
 - a force or a spiritual energy (like electricity)
 - an "it" or object
 - emotion
 - dove, fire, or wind in literal form. These symbols represent both His nature as well as to help believers understand how the Spirit works in their lives.

2. The Holy Spirit is active throughout the Old Testament

1) The Spirit's Life-Giving Presence *Genesis 1:2, Psalm 104:30, Job 33:4*

The Spirit is the **source of life**, creating and sustaining life. *Genesis 1:2*

- In **creation**, the Spirit brings form, life and order out of what is empty and lifeless.
(The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.) Genesis 1:2
- He is the breath of life - *"The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life."* *Job 33:4*. Without Him, there is no life.
- He is the life-force behind all creatures - *When You send your Spirit, they are created.* *Psalm 104:30*. He continually renews all creation.

2) The Spirit's Protecting Presence

In **Exodus**, despite Pharaoh's mandate to drown Hebrew boys, the Spirit protected the seed against annihilation, enabled a population explosion, and acted to save the specific

descendants destined to inherit the Promise. The promise to make Abraham a great nation ensured that the Promise survived the oppressive, life-threatening conditions of Egypt, thereby sustaining the line from Adam to the Messiah.

In the wilderness journey out of **Exodus**, The Holy Spirit acts as a teacher, instructing the nation in the wilderness, a critical time in forming their covenantal relationship with God.

- **To guide or lead** *Exodus 13:21*
God led Israel by the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night...
... *You did not abandon them in the desert...*
... *You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them Nehemiah 9:19,20*
- **For Spirit-equipped leadership**
 - **Moses** to carry the burden of leadership. *Numbers 11:17*
 - **70 elders** under Moses' leadership, one of assistance, not independent leadership. *Numbers 11:25*
 - **Bezalel** with wisdom and skill to build the tabernacle, providing a place for God to dwell among His people. *Exodus 31:3*

3) The Spirit's Empowering Presence in Crisis for Deliverance

Judges Period - A Dark Age (1400-1050 BC)

In a time of spiritual darkness, the Spirit **intervenes with power**, enabling individuals to perform beyond their individual capacity; to protect Israel from being destroyed by enemies. The era of Judges was marked by continual spiritual decline and moral chaos.

Everyone did what was right in their own eyes. *Judges 21:25*. God's people repeatedly turned away, fell into sin, and came under oppression. Yet in their distress, when they **cried out to God**, He responded with mercy, and raised up deliverers:

- **Gideon** - The Spirit turned a fearful man into a bold leader *Judges 6:34*
- **Samson** - The Spirit gave supernatural strength in moments of crisis. *Judges 14:6*

In the darkest times, the Spirit empowered ordinary people to do extraordinary things for God, far beyond their limitations and fears.

4) The Spirit's Preserving Presence

a) Early Kings Period (around 1000 BC)

The Spirit works to preserve the covenantal line and lineage in establishing leadership to preserve a remnant for God.

- **Saul** *1 Samuel 10:6, 16:14*
 - The Spirit came upon Saul, empowering him to lead, but departed when he disobeyed God.
 - Giftings cannot replace a right heart.
 - Obedience invites His presence; disobedience grieves Him.
- **David** *1 Samuel 16:13*
 - The Spirit came upon David at his anointing, strengthened him to fight the Lord's battles, preserving the nation that would bring forth the Messiah.
 - The Spirit guided him, strengthened and sustained him in his calling.
 - The Spirit upholds a heart that is rightly aligned with God, not just ability.

b) Divided Kingdom and Exile (930-538BC)

As Israel and Judah decline, the Spirit's convicting voice speaks through prophets to confront sin, call for repentance, and return to the covenant path.

Northern Kingdom (Israel) – fell to Assyria (722 BC)

- When the nation fell into idolatry (*under kings like **Ahab and Jeroboam***), the Spirit spoke through prophets:
 - **Elijah** — served in Spirit and power to restore true worship among the covenant people, often through powerful demonstrations of God’s power. He confronted Ahab and the prophets of Baal. *1 Kings 18*
 - **Elisha** — requested a double portion of Elijah’s Spirit to continue the task of restoring God’ people.
 - **Amos** — prophesied the restored kingdom would include all nations.
Amos 9:12, Acts 15:17
 - **Hosea** — revealed God’s broken heart over Israel’s unfaithfulness and focused on God’s loving and husband-like role in restoring His people, these actions represent the work of the Spirit of God.

Southern Kingdom (Judah) – fell to Babylon (586 BC)

- God’s Spirit was a restraining Spirit as His prophets showed people their sin when Judah repeatedly fell into sin and false worship.
 - **Isaiah** — said the Spirit would anoint God’s servant to preach the good news. *Isaiah 61:1*
 - **Micah** — was filled with the Spirit of the Lord to confront corruption and injustice, enabling him to declare Jacob’s transgression and Israel’s sin. *Micah 3:8*
 - **Jeremiah** — prophesied that the Spirit would write God’s law upon their hearts and minds, making obedience a desire rather than an external obligation. *Jeremiah 31:31-34*
 - **Ezekiel** — prophesied that God would put His Spirit within His people to cause them to walk in His statutes. *Ezekiel 36:26-29*

c) Promise – The Spirit points forward to the New Covenant

In the midst of judgment, the Spirit reveals **future hope**, inner renewal and universal access. This period occurs during the decline and exile of Israel and Judah. Through prophets Joel and Ezekiel, the Holy Spirit points forward to God’s coming work of renewal and reveals a greater promise. A coming day when:

- The Spirit will be poured out on **all people**, not just a few leaders. *Joel 2:28*
- God will give **new hearts. The Spirit will dwell within** bringing **inner transformation, not mere outward obedience.** *Ezekiel 36:26–27*

5) The Holy Spirit’s fulfilment of God’s redemption plan (AD 33 onwards)

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit’s power reaches its full expression in the New Covenant through Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension—fulfilling what the prophets had promised from the beginning. What was once given in part—upon selected people for specific tasks—is now poured out on all believers, so that the fullness of the Spirit’ power remains available to the Church today.

God uses symbols (pictures) to help us understand the work of His Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit is active though unseen, these symbols reveal how He works in clear and meaningful ways. Each symbol highlights a different aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit:

- **Dove**
 - Signifying a new beginning after the flood, as in Noah’s ark. *Genesis 8:8-12*
 - Representing the tender and gentle nature of God. Marking a new creation and peace with God and man, as at Jesus’ baptism. *Matthew 3:16*

- **Fire**
 - In the Old Testament, fire represents God’s presence (burning bush, *Exodus 3* and pillar of fire, *Exodus 13:21-22*). At Pentecost, the fire of the Holy Spirit signifies that the same God who led Israel now dwells in every believer (rested on each of them). *Acts 2:3*
 - Fire represents the zeal of God, indwelling individual believers, and prompting bold witness.
- **Breath (Wind)**
 - invisible, sovereign, and unpredictable. The Spirit moves freely. His presence validated by undeniable transformative effects on human lives. *John 3:8*
 - Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit on His disciples. *John 20:22*
- **Oil**
 - Anointing prophets, priests and kings for service. *Leviticus 8:30, 1 Samuel 16:13*
 - As a healing act accompanying the prayer of faith. *James 5:14*
- **Indwelling – The Holy Spirit now lives within every believer to bring life, transformation, and power within.**
 - The Spirit is no longer only “with” God’s people, but **in God’s people**.
 - Every believer becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit *1 Corinthians 6:19*
 - The Spirit is now personal and intimate.
- **Full Outpouring – Power for all believers**
 - Joel’s prophecy is fulfilled at Pentecost: “*I will pour out My Spirit on all people.*”
 - The Spirit empowers every believer, not just selected leaders, for life and service.
 - The Spirit now works in a fuller measure, greater work and power:
 - **Gives new life** (regeneration)
 - **Transforms hearts from within** (sanctification)
 - **Empowers for daily living, holiness, witnessing, and service.**

Applications

1. How do I understand the Holy Spirit today? How does my view of Him need to be corrected?
2. The symbols of the Holy Spirit show that He wants to be an active and dynamic Person in your life, not abstract and absent.

Tick what you desire the Holy Spirit for your life.

Talk with your cell leader what next

- Fire – fire consumes, purifies
– ignites zeal for God

How? Be a living sacrifice, set apart for God’s service and holiness.

- Wind – invisible, unpredictable, yet powerful to bring transformation.
How? Consistent time in the Word and prayer, waiting on God daily.
I will be in prayer with God’s people to desire His Presence. *Acts 2:3*

- Breath – imparting life, breathing life into dryness.
How? I desire and ask Holy Spirit to breathe life in my witness, my sharing of the gospel.

- Oil – set apart to serve God.
How? I will serve with my leaders to receive their impartation.