

Lecture 1 The Spirit in Old Testament Times

Genesis 1. 2; John 1. 32-34.

"Another Comforter"

Thirteen Lectures on the Operations of the Holy Ghost.

by W. T. P. Wolston, M.D.,

Fourth Edition. 1945

Preface to Second Edition.

The exhaustion of a large first edition of this volume evinces a sustained interest in the deeply important subject of which it treats, and renders a second necessary.

No change has been made in the contents; and the little volume is again sent forth with prayer that the Lord may by its pages help "His own" to a fuller apprehension of the truth regarding the Holy Spirit of God.

W. T. P. W.

46 Charlotte Square,

Edinburgh, 1st January 1900.

Preface to First Edition.

The Holy Ghost is the essence of Christianity, and to miss a divine apprehension of His present actings is but to ensure for the soul a spiritual blight, in every way to be deprecated. Hence it is of paramount importance for every child of God to be clear about the subject of the following pages. So important and withal so plain is the truth here outlined, that the Author makes no apology for his little volume, which is only an attempt to help the young in Christ to a better understanding of the Word of God.

The Lectures as delivered were taken down in shorthand, and have been revised for publication. They are now committed to the care of Him of whom they treat, with the hope and prayer, that He may by them lead some souls into a deeper enjoyment of that which is even now their own.

W. T. P. W

46 Charlotte Square,

Edinburgh, 12th September 1892.

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Lecture 1

The Spirit in Old Testament Times

Christ personally is not only the truth, but He is the centre round which all truth circles. From Him all truth radiates, and therefore, no matter what may be the subject in the Word of God we desire to learn, we are certain to learn it more truly, and deeply, and, I believe, more

accurately too, if we view it in its connection with, and relation to, the Person of Christ, rather than by dwelling on the way that truth may affect ourselves, or relate to ourselves. That which I trust, with the Lord's help, to bring before you in these lectures - the testimony of Scripture as to the varied operations of the Holy Spirit of God — is no exception to what I have said. Tonight, the work of the Spirit of God in Old Testament times is our subject, and I shall seek to show how absolutely, and entirely different was the manner of the action of the Holy Ghost then, as compared with what He is now doing.

If we are to learn the action of the Spirit of God at the present time, and His relation to those who are the children of God, we must begin with Christ Himself, as the pattern, and that is why I read these few verses in the first of John. It is indeed truly delightful to the renewed soul to discover that it is the Lord Himself, as Man, who illustrates the nature, and character of the relationship to God, into which Christianity introduces us, and into the enjoyment of which the Spirit of God would now bring our souls. In truth, what the Spirit of God was to Jesus, as Man, He is to us. Before, however, saying anything about this beautiful passage in John's gospel, I would seek, for a few moments, to glance over the Old Testament Scriptures, to learn somewhat therein as to the varied activities of God's blessed Spirit.

We turn first of all to the opening chapter of Scripture — the first of Genesis. There we read (Gen. 1: 2), "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The first place then, in Scripture, where we learn of the existence of God's Spirit is in connection with creation, and not merely creation, as that which came out of the hands of God at the beginning, but that which this second verse presents to us, viz., the earth in a state of chaos, that God was about to put His hand to, in order to fit it for man's dwelling-place. I suppose that every person here knows that the first verse of Genesis, where we read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," carries you back to limitless ages, previous to the moment of which the second verse speaks, and that the interval between verses 1 and 2 admits of that, which geologists demand, namely, almost immeasurable periods of time in which the various strata of the earth's surface were deposited. We find in the second verse that "the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep," and thereafter it is we read, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," and consequently, and immediately, we find God acting, during six days, in infinite goodness, at the end of which, we learn that the earth, as it now is, was prepared, and turned out of the moulding hand of God, fit for the habitation of man. I believe these six days were days of twenty-four hours, as the language, "the evening and the morning were the first day," naturally suggests, and the seventh day proves. In the next chapter, man is put upon the earth to dwell therein, to keep it, and rule over it.

It is in connection, then, with this remodelling of the earth, to be man's dwelling-place, that we get the first indication in Scripture of God's Spirit. He moved on the face of the waters. There is no doubt whatever that what God did, He ever did by the power of His Spirit, although throughout all Scripture, from one end to the other, creation is invariably referred directly to the Son of God, as being the Creator. You will find it is always the Lord Jesus, the Son, who is spoken of as the Creator. I know that man's creed is, "I believe in God the Father, almighty, maker of heaven and earth," but Scripture — when it distinguishes the persons of the Godhead

— never refers to creation as the work of the Father, but invariably as the work of the Son of God. Whether it be the first of John, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1: 3); or the first of Colossians, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth" (Col. 1: 16); or the first of Hebrews, "God . . . hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world" (Heb. 1: 2), it is always and ever the same Person. The Son is the Creator in every instance, though doubtless acting by the Spirit of God. The Holy Ghost without doubt had His part in the creatorial work, as one of the Persons of the triune God, as we learn from these opening words of Genesis.

There is another scripture in the Old Testament to which, in connection with this point, I would have you turn. It is found in the book of Job, where we read, "By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens" (Job 26: 13). While Genesis 1 speaks of the Spirit of God moving on the face of the waters, and having regard to the chaotic condition of the earth, as it thus presented itself to the eye of God, ere He fitted it for man's habitation, the writer of this other scripture turns our attention to the Holy Ghost in relation to heaven, as he says, "By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens." That is, the Spirit of God has His own part in the work. If, upon the one hand, He acts to render the earth fit for man to dwell upon, so, on the other, He garnishes the heavens with beauty, that wherever man has his place here upon earth he may cast up his eyes to heaven, and find them resplendent with a galaxy that shall give him delight to behold. The hand of God is thus seen in a marvellous way, working by His Spirit.

As regards the Holy Ghost, then, we have simply the fact recorded that He displayed His power and work in creation, whether in its earthly, or heavenly side. Little is said about it, because, observe! to know a great deal about creation does not put man in relationship with the Creator. Again, to know what God has done in the way of creation, though very blessed, is not necessary to put the heart in happy communion with Himself. The Bible is not a book of geology, but a revelation of God. But, in order to be in understood relationship with, and in the abiding enjoyment of, God, everything turns upon the possession, the presence, and the indwelling of the Spirit in you, and herein lies the great difference between the saint of the Old Testament, as compared with the believer in the present dispensation. The point for us to inquire, therefore, is this, Did the Spirit of God dwell in the saint in Old Testament times? I think you will find that the Word of God speaks otherwise, and that such was not the case.

Coming now to the sixth of Genesis, we get the first reference to the work of God's Spirit in relation to man as a sinner, fallen, and outside paradise. Man had sinned, and utter ruin had been brought upon the scene that God had made so fair. So terrible was the state of matters, that God was now about to sweep man off the face of the earth. At this juncture we read, "And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always *strive with man*, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years" (Gen. 6: 3). Clearly there had been, ever since the Fall, a great striving of God's Spirit going on with man. Now do you suppose that this is the work that the Holy Ghost delights in — to be striving with man? Oh, no! When we come to look at man as he should be — man walking here on earth as he should walk before God — we do not find "striving," but "sealing." (See John 6: 27).

We find the Spirit descending on, and abiding in, that Man, and leading Him to overcome Satan, and do God's will only and ever. In fact it was by the Holy Ghost, we know, that He did all His works, and uttered all the words that fell from His lips in His pathway here. You may say, That is the Lord Jesus. Quite true! It was none other than He, seen as man here upon earth, walking in dependence upon God, and in the power of the Spirit of God. We get everything that God's heart could desire to see in man on earth, brought out in Christ, in perfection. In this chapter, however, it was a totally different scene God's eye fell on, as His Spirit is seen striving with man — striving that went on, in the marvellous patience of God, for one hundred and twenty years, and then judgment fell.

In the book of Genesis we have no further allusion to the acting of God's Spirit — save the query of Pharaoh to his servants — when in quest of "a man discreet and wise," to be a saviour in a day of coming famine — "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" (Gen. 41: 38.) When we come, however, to the book of Exodus, which is the book of redemption, and you have man upon the ground of redemption, you find more about the Spirit of God. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee; the tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle, and the table and his furniture, and the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering with all his furniture, and the laver and his foot, and the cloths of service, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office, and the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the holy place: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do." You have, summed up there, the whole details of the tabernacle, the place in which God was going to dwell, on the ground of the redemption which He had, by the blood of the paschal lamb, and in power, accomplished. That tabernacle was the figure and type of Christ, in one aspect or another, and it was by the Spirit of God, observe, that Bezaleel and his fellow-workers were empowered to bring it into existence, and manufacture all its various parts, which we now know speak so eloquently, and so beautifully of the personal worth of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not to be wondered at, then, that God filled Bezaleel with His Spirit to that end.

In the book of Leviticus we have no mention of the Holy Ghost, nor, on reflection, is this remarkable. It is a book of types, and a type of the Holy Ghost, without doubt, we find in Leviticus 2, where the "oil" plays so large a part in the meat offering — the holy humanity of Jesus, The type in this book therefore replaces the Spirit personally. The "oil" plays an important part in many of the sacrifices. (See Lev. 5: 11, Lev. 6: 15, 21, Lev. 7: 10, 12, Lev. 8: 10, 12, 30, Lev. 9: 4, Lev. 10: 7, Lev. 14: 10, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, Lev. 21: 10, 12, Lev. 23: 13, Lev. 24: 2. Comp. Matt. 25: 3, 4, 8).

Let us pass on to the book of Numbers. This is the book of the wilderness, where all depends on the action, and guidance of the Spirit. The people are out of Egypt, *i.e.*, the world,

and on their wilderness way to Canaan, i.e., heaven; the tabernacle is reared, and God is in their midst. They are being led on to the pleasant land; but there are difficulties in the way, and the people show their want of confidence in God, as, in chapter 11, we find that they despise both the "light food" and "the pleasant land." They turn away from Christ really, and reject Him in their hearts. Moses is greatly distressed, and he says to the Lord, in the eleventh verse — "Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? And wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the suckling child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness. And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. 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" (Num. 11: 11-17). Moses gained his point, but got no honour by his plaintive attitude that day, nor was he any the better for that which the Lord took from him. I refer to the loss of spiritual power by the Holy Ghost, which till now had rested on him, though we do not learn when, or where, he first received the Spirit of God, here merely called "the Spirit which is *upon* thee." The Holy Ghost is only spoken of here as being "upon" Moses, observe. It does not say it was *dwelling* in him.

A little further on in the chapter, in verse 25, it says, "And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the Spirit that was *upon* him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass that, when the Spirit rested *upon* them, they prophesied, and did not cease. But there remained two of the 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 went not out unto the tabernacle; and they prophesied in the camp. And there ran a young man and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put *his* Spirit *upon* them" (vers. 25-29). That verse makes it perfectly clear who this unnamed Spirit was. It was His Spirit — the Spirit of God; and Moses, in the beautiful generosity of his heart, in no way dejected, or put out by the fact that he would be robbed of the Spirit to the extent of seventy others sharing that which he possessed, is delighted that they should be able to minister the grace that he enjoyed. "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit *upon* them," is a fine utterance at such a moment.

Now this expression "*upon*" is the characteristic term, in the Old Testament, of the relation of the Holy Ghost to those even who were manifestly servants of God, and children of God — that is, born of God. But, nevertheless, you will observe this, that the Spirit of God did not confine His action in this way — particularly in prophesying — to those who were undoubtedly born of God, and were the servants of God. God is sovereign, and in the exercise of this

sovereignty He could, and did use to do His work even those whose history plainly manifested they were none of His.

Turning now to the twenty-fourth chapter of this same book of Numbers, you get the history of Balaam. That Balaam was a man of God, no one, I presume, would dare to affirm. That Balaam was a saint, it would be impossible to conceive. He "loved the wages of unrighteousness," he ranked himself with the avowed enemies of the Lord, and undertook for money to curse the people of God — albeit God turned the curse into a blessing — and you know he died — spite of his prayer, "Let me die the death of the righteous" — pitted against the hosts of the Lord. He died by the sword in the land of Canaan, under the judgment of God (see Joshua 13: 22). Therefore I have no hesitation in saying I do not believe that Balaam was a saint. He was never a converted man, nevertheless - and this is very solemn to consider — God could use him as a vessel to express His thoughts of His people; hence in Numbers 24 we read, "And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments" — he had professed falsely before that he had gone to consult the Lord, but in reality he went and conferred with Satan — "but he set his face towards the wilderness. And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came *upon* him." What he says of the delight of God in His people (vers. 5-9) is not a matter for our inquiry now, although what he does say is remarkably beautiful. The point I want to bring out is this, that the Spirit of God could, and actually did, come upon a godless, unconverted, money-loving man, and act through him. Does He do the same *now*? is the natural query; and, in reply, I venture to affirm that, while He is only given to *dwell* in man after the pattern of Christ, there is no reason now, any more than then, why God should not take up an unconverted man, and make him the vessel of the power of the Spirit. As to this see Mat 7: 22; 1 Cor. 13: 1, 2; and especially Heb. 6: 4, 5, a deeply solemn consideration. He dwells only now in God's children, in those who are before God on the ground of redemption, and in the same relation to Him as the Lord Jesus Himself Nothing is more important than to distinguish between a mere vessel of the power of the Spirit, and the possession of the divine nature, and the *indwelling* Spirit.

Balaam's is not the only case, however, as we read of Othniel that "the Spirit of the Lord came *upon* him" (Judges 3: 10); and that "the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon" (Judges 6: 34); also on Jephthah (Judges 11: 29). Again it says concerning Samson, "The Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times" (Judges 13: 25), and that "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily *upon* him" (Judges 14: 6, Judges 15: 14). We read also that Samuel, in anointing Saul to the throne of Israel, distinctly declares to him that "the Spirit of God will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man" (1 Sam. 10: 6). "And when they came thither to the hill, behold a company of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God came *upon* him, and he prophesied among them" (1 Sam. 10: 10). In the next chapter we have a renewed visitation of Saul by the Holy Ghost, and we read there — "And the Spirit of God came *upon* Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly" (1 Sam. 11: 6). The thought of the Holy Ghost *abiding* is never suggested in Old Testament Scripture. It was merely His coming upon a man in the character of power, and particularly with the view of prophesying. God, as sovereign, used any mouth He liked, and it only made the history, and the eternal future of those men more awful for them, that they were so near the channel of grace, as to have God's

Holy Spirit come upon them, and. they to be His mouthpiece, and yet to miss the real knowledge of the heart, the grace, the love, and the nature of God.

Such was the case with Balaam, and I fear no less in Saul's history is this sad end seen. If we pass on to the eighteenth chapter of this same book, we find that "Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul" (1 Sam. 18: 12). That was a solemn discovery for Saul to make — that the Lord had departed from him. And why had He departed? Because Saul had disobeyed the Lord. He had pursued his own way, and the kingdom was not only taken from him, but God departed from him. He was afraid of David because the Lord was with him. Saul was sensible of this fact, yet the fear of the Lord did not keep him from the dreadful act of attempting to slay David. In the next chapter he twice seeks to slay David, and finally we read that "Saul sent messengers to take David, and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God was *upon* the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied" (1 Sam. 19: 20). Not only does Saul prophesy, but God visits his servants in the same way — as a testimony to Saul's conscience surely. Then it goes on: "And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also. Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that is in Sechu; and he asked and said, Where are Samuel and David? And one said, Behold they be at Naioth in Ramah. And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah; and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah. And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day, and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?" (vers. 21-24). This inconceivable action of a man like Saul the very world uses as a proverb. This only shows what God can do, and what opportunities men can miss. But the end of that man was terrible. In the twenty-eighth chapter and in the sixth verse you read, "When Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets." Then, when he goes to the witch of Endor, who brings up Samuel from the grave, you remember, Samuel said to Saul, "Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and *God is departed from me*, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do" (1 Sam. 28: 15). He had the solemn, awful sense of being truly forsaken of God, and soon after is cut off in his sins (1 Sam. 31: 1-10).

Now the Spirit thus coming upon, and then departing from a man, might seem a very strange and arbitrary action in the eyes of some people, but it is not so. Save in the case of the Lord Jesus personally, the abiding, and permanent indwelling of the Holy Ghost can only be on the ground of redemption, really accomplished. The temple in which God takes up His abode must be clean, and be morally suited to Him who is holy. He dwelt in the Lord Jesus, as man, surely on that very ground, and if He dwell in you and me, on what ground does He dwell there? Because the Saviour's blood has fitted the temple for His occupancy. Hence we read, "The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. 3: 17). This is collective, but also the body of the believer, as an individual, cleansed through the blood of Christ, is "the temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 6: 19). Little wonder therefore is it, if the Spirit of God forsook a man like Saul, in whom there was no holiness at all.

But what about the saints of the Old Testament? Let us now look at a saint in the Old Testament, and in connection with him, it is noticeable that we first of all hear in Scripture about the Holy Spirit. We have had the expression, "The Spirit of God," we have had "His Spirit," and we have also had, "The Spirit of the Lord" abundantly in the early part of Scripture, but not till you reach the Psalm 51, to which I beg you to turn, do you find that title which is so characteristic of God's Spirit, ever used. This lovely term, "Holy Spirit," is not employed, so far as I know, in Old Testament Scripture, more than three times — once here, and twice in the sixty-third of Isaiah, to which we will presently refer.

David, in this Psalm, is passing through the deepest exercise of soul, after his sin with Bathsheba, having been awakened to a true sense of it by the parabolic language of the prophet Nathan. The latter goes to him, and gets from him a righteous, and true judgment on the supposed unrighteous, and mean actions of another man (see 2 Sam. 12). Thereon the prophet, led by the Spirit of God, declares, "Thou art the man!" and then unmasks his wicked course. David, completely roused out of his state of spiritual torpor replies, "I have sinned against the Lord." This confession is met by grace, as he hears, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." But grace and government are two different principles. The former says, "The Lord hath put away thy sin," the latter can only say — "The child also that is born unto thee shall surely die" — for the wheels of God's governmental chariot never stay, and "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6: 17).

What follows is truly touching, as David gets before the Lord in the deepest exercise, and contrition of soul. The feelings of his heart, the writhings of his conscience, and his soul's agonised experiences are given to us in the pathetic, and touching language of the 51st Psalm, where, in the presence of the Lord, he makes a clean breast of all his transgressions, and sins, and lays them down by the side of the multitude of the Lord's tender mercies, with which the Psalm opens. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Then in the tenth verse he says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." I do not doubt he feared as he remembered Saul. Trembling, as he recollected what had been the fate of the king who had preceded him — for well he knew that God's Spirit had been upon Saul — he now prays, in the deepest earnestness possible, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit" (Ps. 51: 10, 11).

Let us here ask, Could the Christian rightly, or intelligently, pray that prayer today? I do not think so! I believe we entirely fail to grasp the spirit, and present privilege of Christianity, if we admit that a child of God now, could rightly pray the prayer that David prayed; because our Lord, in the fourteenth of John, so distinctly brings out this truth, that, consequent upon His death, and His being received into heavenly glory, the Comforter would come, and "abide with you," as He says, "for ever." It was absolutely comely, and strict], suitable for David, to pray as he did, because it was characteristic of the dispensation for the Spirit to depart *from*, as well as come *upon* a saint David lived in the day when the coming and going, the visiting and departing of the Spirit of God was a thing of everyday occurrence, and knowing the blessedness of having that Spirit, resting upon him, and fearing the awful issue of the Spirit leaving him, as a consequence of his terrible sin — sin which might well justify God in visiting him with such

punishment, he rightly enough prayed, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me." He felt how utterly sinful he was, which only made the holy character of God's Spirit the brighter before his eyes, and it was therefore with unfeigned fervency he prayed, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

If you will turn now to Isaiah 63 you will see the true ground on which the Holy Spirit could be with the Lord's people. In the seventh verse it says, "I will mention the loving-kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness towards the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the *multitude of his loving-kindnesses*. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bore them, and carried them all the days of old." That is a lovely recapitulation of the ways of God, as He carried them through the wilderness to the pleasant land. But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he that put his Holy Spirit within him?" There you have the other two places where He is called the Holy Spirit. I have called attention to this passage just to indicate that the Holy Ghost's being with them was on the ground of redemption, and even then His presence was of a transient nature.

We have seen, then, what was the character of the Holy Ghost's working in that day. That He wrought in new birth is unmistakable. That He was the active agent of the new birth in every saint of God, I fully believe, and only by the Word and Spirit of God were they new-born then, as now, because the new birth is a necessity for the kingdom of God, whether in its earthly aspect, which the Jew knew, and looked for, or in its heavenly aspect, which you and I are called to know now. But besides all this, there was the action of God's Spirit in taking up, and using for prophetic testimony certain vessels, whether converted, or unconverted, is not the question, for God is sovereign.

There is yet another action of the Spirit of God visible in the Old Testament, which is exceedingly interesting: and that is, the way by which divine truth and knowledge came. I refer to revelation, and inspiration in prophetic Scripture. God not only unfolded to man His thoughts, but empowered certain vessels to record those thoughts. It is to this that the apostle Peter refers in his second epistle. There we read, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation, for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (1 Peter 1: 20, 21). It is a very remarkable thing, that although we sometimes get the historical record of the Holy Ghost coming upon these men, in order to utter the words of the Lord, there is but little allusion to their recording the same. We read that "holy men of God *spake* as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and then we have that which they spake recorded by the Spirit of God, so that thereby we are furnished with the Old Testament Scripture.

Let us turn now to a passage in the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, to see what the Spirit of God says about the communications which these holy men of God had. We read in the twelfth verse of the second chapter: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which

things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." You have there three things. First, the truth is revealed by the Spirit. "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God: that we might know the things that are freely *given* to us of God" (ver. 12). This is *revelation* — and by the Spirit. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; communicating spiritual things by spiritual means." That is *inspiration* — plenary, verbal inspiration — the words, as well as the truths revealed — are the choice of the Holy Ghost. The truth of God in the words of God. Such is inspiration. Perhaps you say, That passage refers only to the writings of the New Testament prophets. I should not accept that, because I find in the writings of the same apostle: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures" - those clearly are the Old Testament Scriptures" which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3: 14-17). All Scripture is God-breathed.

In these New Testament passages, then, we have a flood of light thrown upon the lives of these holy men of God, who, in Old Testament times, wrote by the Spirit of God. The Holy Ghost having come upon them, they became the vessels, in God's hand, of communicating His mind, and, I need scarcely say, their writings therefore did not come by human will. Taught of God, they spoke by the Holy Ghost, and Paul tells us, for the faith and food of our souls, that "every Scripture is God-breathed," just as Peter informs us that "holy men of God spake in time past as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." If a man says that he does not understand, or that he cannot see with clearness the logical sequence of the varied parts of the Old Testament, and that therefore he does not recognise its inspiration, that man only demonstrates his own blindness. Such misunderstanding and misapprehension is due, not to incompleteness in the book, but to the insufficiency and incompetency of the man who is professing to criticise it. I do not dwell more upon this side of the subject, but merely direct your attention to it. What we have to note is the sovereign action and peculiar wisdom of the Holy Ghost in taking up certain vessels for His purpose. Peter's allusion to it is noteworthy: "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Peter 1: 10- 12). They wrote, by the Holy Ghost, what He revealed and indited, and then they sat down and studied their own writings, to inquire the meaning thereof, just as we would study Scripture today.

We have in our hands, and thank God for it, a book which in every part of it is complete — as given of God, and written in the words which the Holy Ghost chose. I quite admit that the characteristics of the different human vessels are seen. God uses the beautiful, but bold and vehement style of an Isaiah for one object, and the fine but ever-varying moods of the Psalmist for another purpose. What we have recorded is God-breathed. No doubt an immense deal more

might have been related, but God did not see fit to have it recorded. We have all we need, and that *all* in His way, in His words, and by His Spirit. The plenary inspiration of the Scriptures is of vital importance, so let us see to it that we hold to that. In these days of so-called scientific criticism hold fast to every word of the living God, for as sure as you give up one portion Satan will steal a hundred. Revelation and inspiration are like an arch. Take away one stone in the arch, and you know the result; the whole structure comes down about your ears. The Scriptures are one solid concrete whole. Men think they see flaws therein, but the flaws are not in the book they are looking at, but in the perceptive power and spiritual apprehension of those who are looking at that book. What at first sight might seem an inconsistency, when understood, always turns out to be a gem of inspiration, which none but the Holy Spirit could have produced. What we have to do, therefore, is to hold on to Scripture, and if we find difficulties, as we are sure to — for we are finite, and God, and His Book too, are infinite — let us be humble, and look to God for light, and He will assuredly give us it.

Ere I close let me dwell, for a moment, on the scripture which I at first read, in the first chapter of John's gospel (John 1: 29-34). This part of the history of the Lord Jesus is really connected with what I call Old Testament times. We have not as yet come to the moment of the revelation of Christianity. Christ, in His life, is connected with the history of man in responsibility, under law, and being tested both by God and Satan. Christianity is consequent on the death, the resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus to heaven, and the coming down of the Holy Ghost. But the action of the Holy Ghost in relation to Him, as coming into, and living in this world as a man among men, is most blessed and instructive. If you turn for a moment to the first of Matthew's gospel we find Jesus' entry into this world predicted, and narrated. Joseph is thus addressed by the angel of the Lord in verse 20, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived (begotten) in her is of the Holy Ghost."

Again, in the first chapter of Luke's gospel, Mary herself is instructed by God, through the angel Gabriel, who says to her, in Luke 1: 30, "Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God, and, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David." In response to the inquiry of pious ignorance, that Mary puts, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" the angel adds, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." His first entry into this world by the assumption of humanity is carefully guarded by the action of the Holy Ghost. He is begotten of the Holy Ghost, which, of course, I need not say, is miraculous. Though born of a woman, and entering the human family, his humanity is holy. "That holy thing," furthermore, is "the Son of God." It is a miracle, a profound and inscrutable mystery, that no human mind can fathom. But what we cannot fathom, we can receive and enjoy. What we cannot fully apprehend, we can have faith in, and our souls are sweetly fed and sustained by the truths that are altogether beyond our finite comprehension.

We delight therefore to see this absolutely holy Man enter our world in this profoundly, to us, incomprehensible way. In connection with His entrance the Holy Ghost, we see, plays a very large part. In the second chapter of Leviticus we read, "And if thou bring an oblation of a meat offering baken in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour *mingled* with oil, or

unleavened wafers *anointed* with oil." Here we have a lovely type of the holy spotless humanity of the Lord Jesus. I do not doubt that in the first of Matthew, and the first of Luke, we get the antitype, in His blessed person, of the mingling of the fine flour and the oil, *i.e.*, the part which the Holy Ghost takes in His assumption of humanity, and in His birth into this world. When you come to the first of John's gospel it is not the mingling of the oil and the fine flour, for the making of the unleavened cake, *i.e.*, the assumption of sinless, holy, spotless humanity - but it is the *anointing*, of the unleavened wafer with the oil, in view of its presentation to God for His eye. He was anointed with the Holy Ghost (Acts 10: 38).

John sees Jesus coming unto him, and testifies "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me for he was before me." And so he proclaims His eternal being. "He was before me; and I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it *abode* upon him." Mark that word, "It *ABODE* upon him." In former days it had come "*upon*," but often it had left man. Moses partly lost it Balaam lost it. Saul lost it. And David feared to lose it, but here is the only sinless Man, out of Eden, that the world, or God, has seen, and He received the Spirit, and "*it abode upon him*." The abiding Spirit is the Father's testimony to His delight and joy in that perfect Man whom He then, and thereby, owns as His Son. "And I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and *remaining* on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."

Now mark, God whispered into the ears of the Baptist, Here is the man upon whom the Holy Ghost will come, and will not only come, but coming will *abide upon him*. Why? Because He was the sinless, perfect, absolutely Holy Man, One in whom God's heart found all its delight. As you know, it was at His baptism that the Spirit descended. The heaven is opened, and the voice of the Father is heard saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Baptist delightedly adds, "And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." John had his eyes opened to the wonderful truth that that lowly blessed man, who, while praying (see Luke 3: 21) receives the Holy Ghost, as the seal of the Father's delight (but not on the ground of redemption), is Himself the Son of God. He receives the Holy Ghost upon the ground of His own personal perfection, and, in this scene, the Holy Spirit is like the dove sent forth from the ark. It has at length a spot upon which it can find a place to rest — to *abide*. The dove, you remember, went forth from the ark once and again, but returned, as she "found no rest for the sole of her foot," but at last she found a resting-place, she "returned not again any more" (Gen. 8: 9, 12). The heavenly Dove, after 4,000 years of vainly seeking a sinless resting-place in man, has found One to rest on in the first of John. It is on the Person of this sinless Holy Man, who is the delight of the Father's heart.

The Spirit's object in thus coming to Him is given elsewhere, as we read, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath *anointed* me to preach the Gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and receiving of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them which are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. . . . This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4: 18-21). Again, "God *anointed* Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that

were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10: 38). Furthermore, we read, "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure" (John 3: 34). Again, the Lord says to those who were coming after Him, for mere relief from bodily hunger, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you, for him hath God the Father *sealed*" (John 6: 27).

Added to this it is important to notice that, amid the varied testimony in John 1 to the glory of the Person of the Lord Jesus it is brought out, that, besides being the Lamb of God, He it is that *baptizes* with the Holy Ghost, giving, as we shall see, the Spirit from the glory into which He ascends, when His work is done, to bring us, in power, into the whole of the position He takes there as the only measure of our place and blessing as Christians.

Jesus then, ere His public ministry began, is presented as an object of God's infinite favour, and delight, — delight that is manifested when He receives the Holy Ghost as the expression of the Father's unfathomable joy and good pleasure in Him personally. By the Spirit too, as Man, He is furnished for His service. What the Holy Ghost was to Jesus as the sinless Man, He comes now to be to us — only ever guarding the glory of His Person. With Him it was on the ground of His own personal excellency: if He dwell in us, it is on the ground of redemption, accomplished by Christ, and of our sins being cleansed away through the blood of His cross. Christianity as regards the Holy Ghost, which is its very essence, takes its colour and character from Christ, and when you see that the Holy Ghost was first given to Him as man (the only One upon whom He ever rested without blood), you will be able to estimate more fully what it is to receive the same blessed Person to dwell in you, on the ground of the atoning blood of Christ.

Now then, Have you received Him? A very serious question indeed is that put by the apostle Paul to the twelve men at Ephesus, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost, since ye believed?" I likewise would put it to you, Have you received Him? I do not say that every one in whom God has wrought has received Him; but, now that Jesus is glorified, it is a blessing and a privilege that every believer receives the moment he believes the testimony of God to the value of the work upon the ground of which Jesus is glorified. Have I received that Spirit? Thank God, yes! And upon what ground? Not as a sinless being, but as a poor sinner, washed from my sins through the blood of my Saviour. And now, for every believer in Jesus, is it true that the temple is cleansed, into which the Spirit of God can come to dwell, as the witness and seal of redemption, and the expression of the Father's delight, and the Father's favour, not only to Christ the Son, but to those who are saved by Christ, because they believe in Him, who is the only-begotten Son.