

The Leading and Empowering of the Holy Spirit

By Don Bartel

Preview: Old Testament Illustrations

Throughout the history of the Old Testament we see the Spirit coming “upon” people empowering them to do everything from artistic craftsmanship (Ex. 31:1-5) to prophecy and revelation (Num. 11:25; 24:2-3; II Chron. 24:20; I Sam 10:6, 10; 16:13) to heroic acts in battle (Jud. 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14). Nehemiah also reveals that the Spirit was given to instruct and admonish (Neh. 9:20, 30).

Modeled by Jesus: Gospels

“When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit *descended on him* in bodily form like a dove... (Lk. 3:21-22) “Jesus, *full of the Holy Spirit*, returned from the Jordan and was *led* by the Spirit in the desert.... Jesus returned to Galilee in the *power* of the Spirit.... All spoke well of him and were amazed at the *gracious words* that came from his lips... They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had *authority*... All the people were amazed [at his] *authority and power*... (Lk. 4:1, 14, 22, 31, 36). “You know...how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and *power* and how he went around *doing good and healing* all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.” (Acts 10:34-39)

Anticipation and Fulfillment: Gospels and Acts 1-2

What the Old Testament predicted (Ezek. 36:24-27; Joel 2:28-29) and Jesus modeled in his life and communicated through his teaching became the much anticipated promise for his disciples (Jn. 7:37-39; 14:15-27; 15:26-27; 16:5-16; 20:19-23; Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:8). This promise was eventually fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2, see especially verses 4, 17-18, 33, 38-39).

Full Expression: Acts

The Holy Spirit was the prime agent in the advance of the Gospel in the early church. When the Spirit came, he empowered people to speak in other languages (Acts 2:4), to speak the word of God boldly (Acts 4: 31), to minister with great power and much grace (Acts 4:33), to perform great wonders and miraculous signs (Acts 6:1-11), to bring many people to the Lord (Acts 10:22-24). In addition, the Spirit led people very specifically in words, dreams, and visions (Acts 8:26-40; 10:1-23; 13:1-4; 16:6-10) and brought spiritual consensus (Acts 15:28).

Clear Exposition: Epistles

Paul’s prayer in Eph.3:16 is very instructive. He asks God, the Father, to strengthen the Ephesians with power through his Spirit [agent] in their inner being [locus of activity], so that Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith [purpose]. The Amplified says, “...strengthened and reinforced with mighty power...” This kind of strength suggests firmness of mind or spirit, unyielding courage or resolution, staying power, fortitude, and stamina. From this inner strength, the Spirit produces spiritual life (Rom. 8:1-27; Gal. 3:1-3; Tit. 3:3-8), reveals the deep things of God (I Cor. 2:6-16), supplies spiritual gifts (I Cor. 12:1-11), and leads us in holy living (Gal. 5:16-26).

Caution:

Although we have such a great resource in the person of the Holy Spirit, we must be careful not to grieve (Eph. 4:30; Is. 63:10), quench (I Thes. 5:19), or resist (Acts 7:51) him as he leads us and empowers us for service and holy living.