

Broadly speaking, there are three divisions of time:

- The period before Christ, from Creation to the Incarnation.
- The period covered by the 33 years of our Lord's earthly life.
- The period of time since Pentecost, the period in which we live.

In each of these, the Holy Spirit is active, but not completely revealed in person or nature. In the Word of God (not outside it) there is a progressive revelation or unfolding of truth. Nothing is completely told at once. The conviction is: first the stalk, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear... (Mark 4:28). In no doctrine is this gradual unfolding of truth more apparent than in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. To understand the Holy Spirit, we identify His role and action in each of these periods beginning in the Old Testament.

1 Samuel 16:13b: "And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward."

- **Grammatical Usage:** "Spirit" or in the Hebrew, "ruach" meaning, "breath"; "rushed" or "tsalach" meaning, "cleave; penetrate; advance."
- **Literal Interpretation:** And the Spirit of the Lord came to, penetrated his being and advanced with David from that day forward.
- **Contextual/Comparison:** God keeps His Word: God continually uses His Word. The Old Testament references to the person and work of the Holy Spirit reveal His activity in the great work of CREATION and in relation to MANKIND:
 1. He is associated with the Father and the Son in CREATION.
 - The creation of the material universe (**Genesis 1-2; Psalm 33:6; Job 26:13**).
 - The creation of man (**Genesis 1:26; Job 33:4**).
 - In each creative case:
 - "Creation is OF the Father; He is the source - by Him will all things have had their being.
 - Creation is THROUGH the Son: He is its medium.
 - And Creation is BY the Spirit: He is the Executive Agent of the Godhead by whom the creative work is done. **Genesis 1:2** speaks of the Spirit "hovering over the waters" and superintending the work of creation. In a similar fashion, the Spirit is responsible for the work of the new creation (**2 Corinthians 5:17**) as He is bringing people into the kingdom of God through regeneration.

Creation is one work, wrought by one God, and yet to give full scriptural account of the divine action, we must say it is OF the Father, THROUGH the Son, and BY the Spirit. The Bible is primarily the history of REDEMPTION rather than CREATION, therefore not much is said about the work of the Holy Spirit in Creation. But enough IS said, and how satisfying is the little we are told!

2. He is actively engaged in relation to MANKIND:

- In Old Testament times it was the exception rather than the rule for the Holy Spirit to come upon men. He came upon comparatively few, even of godly people.
- Then, He only came upon men for the accomplishment of special tasks. The indwelling in the Old Testament was selective and temporary. The Spirit “**came upon**” such Old Testament people as Joshua (**Numbers 27:18**), David (**1 Samuel 16:12-13**) and even Saul (**1 Samuel 10:10**). In the book of Judges, we see the Spirit “**coming upon**” the various judges whom God raised up to deliver Israel from their oppressors.
- The Holy Spirit came upon these individuals for specific tasks. The indwelling was a sign of God’s favor upon that individual (as in the case of David), and if God’s favor left an individual, the Spirit would depart (e.g., in Saul’s case in **1 Samuel 16:14**).
- Finally, the Spirit “**coming upon**” an individual doesn’t always indicate that person’s spiritual condition (e.g., Saul, Samson, and many of the judges). So, while in the New Testament the Spirit only indwells believers and that indwelling is permanent, the Spirit came upon certain Old Testament individuals for a specific task, irrespective of their spiritual condition. Once the task was completed, the Spirit departed from that person.

3. In Old Testament times He came upon all kinds of men, sometimes bad men. The one outstanding example of this is BALAAM (**Numbers 24:2**). How this magnifies the sovereignty of God!

4. In Old Testament times, having fulfilled His purpose in coming upon men, He frequently departed when that purpose was accomplished. It would seem clear that the Holy Spirit’s ‘anointing’ or ‘empowering’ lasted only long enough to enable Bezaleel to finish his work; Eldad and Medad to prophesy; Gideon to blow his trumpet and having achieved His divine purpose He then withdrew.

5. In Old Testament times, SIN drove the Holy Spirit away. This is made very clear from the reference in **1 Samuel 16:14** to Saul, and also by David’s petition in **Psalms 51:11**. Today, sin does not drive Him away from the believing heart, but it grieves Him (**Ephesians 4:30**), and this restricts His operation in and through our lives.

6. The Spirit’s work in the Old Testament is His restraint of sin. **Genesis 6:3** indicates that the Holy Spirit restrains man’s sinfulness, and that restraint can be removed when God’s patience regarding sin reaches a “boiling point.” This thought is echoed in **2 Thessalonians 2:3-8**, when in the end times a growing apostasy will signal the coming of God’s judgment. Until the preordained time when the “**man of lawlessness**” (**v. 3**) will be revealed, the Holy Spirit restrains the power of Satan and will release it only when it suits His purposes to do so.

➤ **Conclusion:** Do you sense the call of the Holy Spirit on your life?