



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: LESSON 229

Given Christ's promise to send the Holy Spirit to His disciples and to baptize them in the Holy Spirit, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon believers at Pentecost, and subsequent outpourings of the Spirit in the book of Acts, a number of questions which inevitably come up with respect to the presence and work of the Holy Spirit are, "What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit?", "When does it occur in the life of the believer?", "Where the disciples not indwelt by the Holy Spirit before Pentecost?", "Did the Holy Spirit indwell Old Testament saints?", and many other similar questions.

Such topics regarding the presence and work of the Holy Spirit have come to much greater focus over the last few decades than ever before in church history due to the growth and influence of Pentecostal and charismatic churches worldwide. Needless to say, there has been a diversity of answers within the church, causing heated debates and complexity, resulting in confusion, false doctrines and practices.

Regarding this there are a number of relevant verses during Christ's ministry and before the day of Pentecost (John 7:37-39; 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 13; 20:21-22); then just before Jesus' ascension (Acts 1:4-5, 8); and then the fulfillment of these on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). Furthermore, there are a number of key verses in the rest of the book of Acts with respect to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit subsequent to Pentecost (Acts 8:5, 12, 14-17; 10:44-48; 19:2-7).

**Did the Holy Spirit indwell Old Testament saints?** With respect to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the majority view in Protestantism is that even though the Spirit was present and working with believers in the Old Testament, He was not in them yet, for they were not personally and permanently indwelt by Him. This, they say, was also the case with the disciples of Christ, who even though were believers, were only indwelt by the Spirit at Pentecost. Even some Reformed theologians either express a similar view or at best do not directly or explicitly deal with this topic in their writings. Nevertheless, there are those who disagree with this view, stating that the Holy Spirit did indwell or live in Old Testament saints, as He did in New Testament believers. I personally hold to the latter view, for although the Old Testament does not talk about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers as clearly and as often as does the New Testament, it does talk about it.

Apart from many Old Testament verses which talk about the Spirit of God coming, resting, or being upon people such as on Moses, the elders, judges, kings, prophets, and priests of Israel (Numbers 11:17, 25; Judges 3:10; 6:34; 13:25; 14:6; 1 Samuel 16:13; 2 Chronicles 15:1; 24:20), there are also numerous verses which specifically state that the Spirit of God was in the people of God in the Old Testament – such as Joshua (Numbers 27:18; Deuteronomy 34:9), David (Psalm 51:11), Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:1-2; 3:24), Daniel (Daniel 4:8-9, 18; 5:11, 14), and Micah (Micah 3:8). Moreover, in Luke 1:15 we read that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit "even from his mother's womb," and in verses 41 and 67 that his parents, Elizabeth and Zechariah, were also filled with the Holy Spirit. These were all before the birth of Christ and well before Pentecost.

Thus, from these and other verses we see that the Holy Spirit indwelt the Old Testament saints as He indwells New Testament believers. The Holy Spirit is not only the author and sustainer of all life, He is not only the giver and restorer of spiritual life to the people of God, but He is also the One who guides, empowers, and sanctifies the people of God. Without the inner presence and work of the Holy Spirit it would be impossible for anyone to live lives that are pleasing and honoring to God (Romans 8:5-9). The lack of verses with respect to the Holy Spirit's indwelling of believers in the Old Testament compared to the New Testament should not surprise us, for divine revelation was unfolding and progressive, with greater and more precise details being disclosed over time. This is true not only with regard to this topic but also regarding the nature of God and His work of redemption.