

II. WERE OLD TESTAMENT BELIEVERS INDWELT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT?

If Old Testament believers were regenerated (and they were); and if indwelling is the Holy Spirit's continuance of that new relationship and ministry begun in regeneration; then it would seem to follow that Old Testament believers were indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Since we can't make ourselves spiritually alive, and since we can't keep ourselves spiritually alive, and since it is the Holy Spirit who gives and sustains spiritual life, then spiritual life, whether at its beginning (regeneration) or its continuance (indwelling), must be communicated and sustained by the Spirit of God.

Generally speaking, however, Bible scholars during the first part of the twentieth century denied Old Testament indwelling by contrasting the Spirit's ministry in the Old Testament period with His ministry during the present age.

To illustrate this denial, let me quote two well-known Bible teachers from the early part of this century.

Quotation #1

In an admirable work on the Spirit, the distinction between the former and the present relation of the Spirit is thus stated: "In the old dispensation the Holy Spirit wrought upon believers, but did not in his person dwell in believers and abide permanently in them. He appeared unto men; he did not incarnate himself in man. His action was intermittent; he went and came like the dove which Noah sent forth from the ark, and which went to and fro, finding no rest; while in the new dispensation he dwells, he abides in the heart as the dove, his emblem!" [A. J. Gordon]

Quotation #2

The Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, is to abide with God's children for ever. This also is new. In the Old Testament the Spirit of God was with those who believed in the coming of the Messiah, who trusted the Lord. But He was not known as the abiding Spirit. There was no assurance given that He would remain. That is why David prayed in his penitential psalm, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me" (Psalm 51:11). No believer in the New Testament needs to pray this prayer. [Arno C. Gaebelein]

Notice the three emphases in these quotations, taken together:

- (1) In the Old Testament the Spirit was upon believers; now He is in them.
- (2) In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit did not abide, He came and went, there was no assurance that He would remain; now He abides for ever.