



Cycle 3: Theological Survey

A Biblical-Theological Survey of Moses, Prophets and the Writings

The Spirit of the Prophets

Rev. Charles R. Biggs, Th.M.

February 2019

Topic: Spirit of the Prophets: *“Not by Might, Nor by Power...”*

I. Introduction/Review

- **Holy Spirit Mediated in Old Covenant through Prophets, Priests, and Kings**
 - The Prophets were Immediately Anointed with the Spirit for the mediation of God’s Word to the People of God
 - The Prophets were God’s Word in Human Form
 - The Prophets were God’s Inspired Penman/Authors for Holy Scripture
- **Biblical Overview of Prophetic Ministry- Five Parts of Bible and the Work of the Spirit:**
 - a. Mission of God- Creation/setting/goal of creation
 - b. Mission of Israel- Covenant People to Nations
 - c. Mission of Servant-King- Covenant Servant-King to Nations
 - d. Mission of Jesus Christ- Son of God/Servant-King to Jews and Nations
 - e. Mission of Church- Spirit-filled Servants to Jews and Nations (“to the end of the world at the end of the ages”; Book of Acts)

II. Spirit as Covenant Witness through the Prophets

- The Spirit is the witness to God’s Covenant in history: Triune God → Adam and Eve → Noah → Abraham → David → Prophets → Jesus Christ → Consummation of Covenant
 - *“For the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.* The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken; who can but prophesy?” (Amos 3:7-8).
 - As Covenant witness, the Spirit sends the prophets to call Israel to obedience to the Covenant God has made with them.

- In every dispensation/age/epoch of the Covenant of Grace, there are promises and warnings, blessings and curses made known by the Holy Spirit through “my servants the prophets” (2 Kings 17:13; Jer. 7:25, 26:5, 29:19; Zech. 1:6)
- Martin Luther wrote that “the Old Testament is the manger in which the baby Jesus is laid. Similarly, Michael Horton wrote: “...The Spirit gave us Jesus in the incarnation. Yet even before preparing the virgin’s womb, He was preparing Israel as His manger through the prophets.”
- The most characteristic gift of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament is to empower and to inspire chosen individuals to perform special tasks. Many of these tasks further God’s redemptive purposes within the wider frame of the history of Israel. Hence, although there are gifts for an individual at a particular moment in time, their ultimate function and purpose relate to the good of the community in a permanent way. These gifts range from wisdom, administration, craftsmanship, and military leadership to prophecy and physical strength” (Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit—In Biblical Teaching, through Centuries, and Today*, pg. 9)

III. The Prophets and God’s Word

A. The Prophets spoke “as they were moved [carried along, “rushing like wind”] by the Holy Ghost” (cf. Acts 2:2)

- 2 Peter 1:20-21: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of 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” (KJV)

B. The Prophet’s Office was to serve as God’s Holy Mouthpiece (Ezek. 3:17; 33:17)

- “O man, says the Lord, I have set you as a leader over the House of Israel. You will therefore hear the word of my mouth, and you will declare it to them from me” (Ezek. 3:17).
- "So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me” (Ezek. 33:7).

C. Israel’s Response to the Prophets: To Hear, Heed, and Honor (Jer. 7:22-23; 11:7; cf. 1 Sam. 15:22-23)

- “Listen to my word. I will be your God and you will be my people, and you will walk in the ways that I will who you” (Jer. 7:22-23)
- “Listen to my word” (Jer. 11:7)

- “For obedience is better than sacrifice, and it is better to listen than to offer the fat of sacrifices” (1 Sam. 15:22-23)

E. Primary Work of Spirit in the Prophets: Jeremiah / Micah (Jer. 23:18, 22, 28; Micah 3:8).

- **To Reveal: Speak, illuminate, direct, anoint preaching:**
 - *“For who among them has stood in the council of the LORD to see and to hear his word, or who has paid attention to his word and listened? ... But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds” / “Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully” (Jeremiah 23:18, 22, 28)*
- **To Anoint and Fill:**
 - *“But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin” (Micah 3:8)*
- **Anointing/Indwelling for representative service of prophets, priests, and kings (Neh. 9:30; John 7:37-39, 14:17)**
 - Mediators of the Old Covenant were anointed and indwelt by the Spirit
 - **The Mediators, Prophets, Priests, and Kings** were indwelt with the fullness of God’s Spirit *on behalf of* the people. This pointed to Christ, who would be full of the Spirit, not merely for Himself, for His Church.
 - God ministered His Spirit through the mediators to His people: *“Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands” (Nehemiah 9:30)*
 - Distinction between God’s Spirit regeneration/sanctification and His indwelling OT believers: We should make a distinction between indwelling and regeneration. OT believers were regenerated and sanctified but not necessarily indwelt (unless called to a special office that pointed to Christ’s Person and Work)
 - God regenerated Old Testament believers

- Not all Old Testament believers were “indwelt” with the Spirit: “...The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:17)
- The Spirit was “with” the people, but not within them (John 14:17)
 - However, the Spirit indwelt prophets, priests, and kings as (1) chosen representative heads that pointed forward to all (Joel 2: “...I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh”; (2) As God’s way of indwelling until the fullness of the times.
 - Hamilton writes: “Indwelling does exist in the Old Covenant, but it is not each individual that is indwelt. In the Old Covenant God indwelt the temple. In the New Covenant the people of God are the temple, and God dwells in them” (*God’s Indwelling Presence*, pg. 160)
 - McKelvey writes: “[In the New Covenant epoch/era] God no longer dwells in a house *with* His people; He dwells *in* them; they are His temple” (*The New Temple*, pg. 180)

F. **“Who’s Who of the Great Prophets”:** Enoch → Noah → Moses → Samuel → Elijah → Elisha → Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel → Hosea, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Obadiah, Malachi, Zechariah, Haggai, etc

- Elijah: “*The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit*” (James 5:16b-18)

G. Highlights of the the Prophets’ Teaching

- a. **King (Messianic Mediator)**: Isaiah 11:1-10; 42:1-4; 59:15b-21; 61:1-3 (cf. Luke 4:18-21): Anointing of Spirit on Messiah, Messiah’s Person and Ministry
- b. **Covenant**: Jeremiah 31:31-34: New Covenant
- c. **Tabernacle/Temple/Dwelling of God**: Ezekiel 16; 36:26-27, 37:1ff: Circumcision of Heart/Regeneration
 - The Spirit clothes the “infant” with Christ and His righteousness (Ezek. 16:4-14)

- “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules” (Ezekiel 36:26-27)
- Ezekiel’s Temple (40-48): Vision of Glorified Humanity as God’s Final-Eschatological Temple where the Holy Spirit dwells
- Zechariah 4: “‘Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD” (Zechariah 4:6)
- Joel 2: “...I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh”: Promise of the Breadth, Depth, Width, Height, and Extension of Pentecost.

H. Prophets Present God’s Truth in “Shadowy Form” (John Calvin)

- a. **Key to Interpreting the Prophets:** Our Father John Calvin wrote clearly and helpfully: “...Whenever the prophets describe the bliss awaiting believers and which appears as but a tiny shadow in this world, let them recall this distinction: *to provide a clearer picture of God’s goodness, the prophets portrayed it figuratively in terms of earthly advantages.* While portraying them this way they nevertheless meant to *lift men’s hearts above the earth, above the elements of this world and above this perishable sphere,* and to lead them *to meditate on the blessedness of the spiritual life*” (*Institutes*, chap. 7).

Memory Verse: “‘Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD” (Zechariah 4:6)

Spirit of Jesus: “*The Baptized and the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit*” / Spirit and the Church: Age of the Spirit: “*From Pentecost to Parousia*” / Spirit of the New Creation: Spirit and the Bride: “*In the Beginning...Again*”

CRB/March 2019