

The Story of the Spirit: Creator and Redeemer

I. Creator

- “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” “God” refers to Father, Son, and Spirit: all three together act as creator.
 - The Father is speaker; the Son is Word (John 1:1).
 - The Spirit is the one who enacts the word: Gen 1:2 “The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”
 - Psalm 104:30 “When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.” (see also Ps 33:6)
 - One example in the creation of man: Gen 2:7 “then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” (cf. Job 27:3; 33:4).
- WCF 4.1 “It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good.”
- Implications:
 - God the Holy Spirit is the one who created *you*, and who presently upholds your life by his almighty power.
 - You are made in the image of God: you bear the image of the Spirit.
 - The Spirit remains the power that upholds the creation and every human being. Every time a non-Christian does something that reflects God’s goodness, the Holy Spirit deserves credit. The Holy Spirit is not just the power of redemption. He also powers what we call “common grace,” the grace God gives to everyone so that non-Christians are held back from evil.

II. Redeemer

- Creation sets the pattern for redemption. Redemption is the fulfillment of God’s creation purposes; redemption is a *new creation*.
 - Bavinck: “grace restores nature.”
- The Spirit hovering: the same Spirit who powers the universe powers redemption:
 - Over Israel as they came out of Egypt, and at Mt. Sinai (Exod 13:21; 19:28; Isa 63:11). Deuteronomy 32:10 “[YHWH] found [Israel] in a desert land, and in the howling waste [same word as “void” in Gen 1:2] of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters [same word as “hovering” in Gen 1:2] over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions, the LORD alone guided him, no foreign god was with him.”
 - Over the tabernacle and temple at their inauguration (Exod 40:34; 1 Kgs 8:10–11).
 - Over Jesus at his baptism (Matt 3:16).
 - Over the disciples on Pentecost (Acts 2:3).
 - In each of these, the Spirit is about to do a redemptive work.

III. The Spirit's redeeming work in the OT

- The great works of redemption in the OT are all the work of God's Spirit.
 - Isa 63:14: The Spirit led them through the wilderness to rest in the land.
 - See above regarding exodus, tabernacle, temple.
 - Heb 2:4: All the signs and wonders of the OT were by the Spirit.
 - Isa 63:10; Acts 7:51: When the people sinned against God, they were resisting and grieving the Spirit.
 - Hag 2:5: Even after exile, God's Spirit remained in their midst to help.
- Sometimes God used a human to do his redemptive work. This was always by the Spirit. The Spirit came upon individuals to equip them for unique redemptive tasks:
 - Joseph being able to interpret dreams (Gen 40:8; 41:38).
 - Bezalel being able to make the tabernacle (Exod 31:3; 35:31).
 - Moses and the seventy elders being able to judge Israel (Num 11:16–17).
 - Prophets being able to prophesy (Num 24:2; 2 Sam 23:2; 2 Chr 20:14; 24:20; Neh 9:30; Ezek 2:2; Mic 3:8; Zech 7:12).
 - Joshua being able to lead (Num 27:18; Deut 34:9).
 - The judges being able to deliver and lead (Judg 3:10; 6:34; etc.).
- The Spirit would come intermittently. He would sometimes leave people (not in the sense of them losing their salvation, but losing their special equipping for a unique task):
 - The seventy elders prophesied once, but not again (Num 11:25).
 - The Spirit only came on Samson at times of need (Judg 14:6, 19; etc.).
 - Saul prophesied and had power to rule, but then the Spirit left him (1 Sam 10:10; 11:6). 1 Sam 16:14: "Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him."
 - Hence David prays in Ps 51:11: "take not your Holy Spirit from me."
- We know that faith is a gift of God (Eph 2:8). Thus the faith God gave to OT saints was by the Spirit.

IV. The need for more of the Spirit

- Yet OT saints only had a limited experience of the Spirit. The reason why the OT ended in tragedy was because Israel did not have the Spirit in the way the church does today.
- As a people, Israel was under the power of sin:
 - Their hearts were uncircumcised (Lev 26:41; Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4; 9:26).
 - They were unable to repent (Ezra-Nehemiah) or to listen (Jer 6:10).
 - Their hearts were hard and stony (Ezek 36:26).
 - They were, in Paul's category, still "in the flesh" (i.e., bondage to their sin nature; Rom 7:5; 8:3, 7–8; Gal 4:24).
- Although God's law was not unreasonable (Deut 30:11–14), yet Israel could not keep it because sin's power was too great (Deut 31:29).
- Isolated OT individuals surely received the Spirit, had true faith (and therefore circumcised hearts). But as a people, they lacked the Spirit, and so the OT *had* to end in judgment and exile.
- Next time: God's promise of a great outpouring of the Spirit.