

## **The Work of the Holy Spirit in Relation to Scripture**

The work or ministry of the Holy Spirit does not just involve His work in creation, conviction, restraining or empowering. The Holy Spirit was the driving force in the production of God's Word and is still working at helping us understand God's Word today. Put another way the Holy Spirit was involved in the formation of Scripture and works through Scripture to accomplish God's purposes in believer's lives today. We will focus on the Holy Spirit's involvement in relation to Scripture in three different areas; the areas of revelation, inspiration and illumination. We will examine the Holy Spirit's involvement in revelation and inspiration separately from His involvement in illumination.

### The Holy Spirit's Involvement in Revelation and Inspiration

We will seek to answer two questions in relation to the Holy Spirit's involvement in Revelation and Inspiration:

#### ***(1) What are Revelation and Inspiration?***

Before examining the Holy Spirit's involvement in the processes of revelation and inspiration, it is necessary to briefly explain, what is meant by each of these terms.

A Definition of Revelation: Revelation has been defined in a variety of ways.

- “In its theological usage, the term “revelation” is restricted to the divine act of communicating to man what otherwise man would not know.” [L. S. Chafer, I, p. 48]
- “A supernatural communication from God to man, either oral or written...that act of God by which He communicates to the mind of man truth not known before, and incapable of being discovered by the mind of man unaided.” [Bancroft, p. 35]
- “The act of God whereby he discloses Himself or communicates truth to the mind, whereby He makes manifest to His creatures that which could not be known in any other way.” [Enns, p. 155]

The Hebrew term, QALAH means “to uncover, strip or remove, while the Greek term, APOKALYPSIS means “an uncovering, an unveiling, a laying bare, or disclosure.” A basic definition of Revelation is this: “*Revelation is simply the communication from God to mankind of truth, which man could not discover for himself.*”

The Necessity of Revelation: In order for man to come to any understanding of God, he must have revelation from God for two reasons:

- (1) God is by nature beyond the reach of man's finite knowledge.

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The prophet Isaiah says, in **Isaiah 55:9**, “*For {as} the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.*” (Cf. 1 Timothy 6:15-16; Isaiah 45:15) God is infinite while man is finite. The nature of God is such that man needs revelation from God to come to any understanding of Him.

(2) Man is by nature fallen/depraved and thus unable to think honestly about God.

Paul says in **Ephesians 2:1-3**, “*And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*”

He later says in **Ephesians 4:17-18**, “*This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the **futility of their mind**, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart.*” (Cf. Romans 3:9-18)

The Types of Revelation: All divine revelation can be categorized under two broad headings: (1) *General revelation*, which refers to God's communication of His attributes, eternal power and divine nature through creation (cf. Romans 1:18-20; Psalm 19) and (2) *Special revelation*, which is found today in the Bible.

General revelation is sufficient for condemnation. It proves that there is a God and He is deserving of glory. It should move us to seek Him. Special revelation is necessary for salvation. It provides specific information that is necessary to come to salvation.

Special revelation has come from God through many different ways, including dreams (Genesis 37), visions (Daniel 7), an audible voice (1 Samuel 3), an angel (Genesis 19), miracles (Exodus 3), an object (Exodus 28), an animal (Numbers 22), theophanies (i.e. Exodus 3; 19:1-3; Genesis 31:11-18); the Urim and Thummim (Exodus 28:30), Jesus, the Incarnate Word (John 1:14-18), the prophets and apostles (2 Peter 1:21), and the Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Today, special revelation is only found in Scripture. God has said all that He needs to say in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation.

Now that God's revealed Word, Scripture is complete all the previous means of special revelation are no longer necessary. They were simply used during specific times in Bible History when the Scripture was not yet complete. There were four time periods that saw greater revelatory activity than others: (1) The Time/Ministry of Moses; (2) The Time/Ministry of Samuel; (3) The Time/Ministry of the Old Testament Prophets; and (4) The Time/Ministry of Christ and the New Testament Apostles.

The Difference between Revelation and Inspiration: While revelation is the giving of God's truth (special revelation) in a variety of forms as seen above, inspiration has to do with that truth being recorded by man. Inspiration is the permanent and infallible record of that revealed truth.

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Inspiration simply defined is the Holy Spirit's superintendence of the human authors of Scripture, the result of which was that those writers wrote exactly what God longed and intended for them to write.

It is important to note that inspiration has to do with the original autographs of Scripture. It is those original autographs that are inspired, not all the human copies/translations since and not the human authors who were involved.

So revelation is the revealing of truth from God to mankind and inspiration is the original recording of that truth.

### ***( 2) How was the Holy Spirit involved in the process of Revelation and Inspiration?***

The Holy Spirit was the Agent of revealing and recording God's message to man in both the Old and New Testaments. He worked at revealing God's truth to the human authors and then superintended the human authors so that they spoke and wrote the exact words that God wanted them to write. The Holy Spirit gave special revelation in a variety of forms and then moved the human authors along/carried them along, safeguarding their words from error. The Holy Spirit superintended these human authors by using their own individual personalities, so that they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original autographs. [Enns, p. 256-257]

There are five categories of Scriptural evidence that demonstrate the Spirit's involvement in revelation and inspiration:

1-There are passages that directly state that the Holy Spirit was involved in guiding the human authors to speak forth or write God's Word.

- “**2 Peter 1:21**, “*for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but **men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.**”*
- “**1 Peter 1:10-11**, “As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that {would come} to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time **the Spirit of Christ within them** was indicating as **He** predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.”
- “**Zechariah 7:12**, “And they made their hearts {like} flint so that they could not hear the law and the words **which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets**; therefore great wrath came from the LORD of hosts.”
- “**Nehemiah 9:30**, “*However, Thou didst bear with them for many years, **And admonished them by Thy Spirit through Thy prophets, Yet they would not give ear. Therefore Thou didst give them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.**”*

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2-The prophets were conscious that the Holy Spirit was guiding them in their speaking and writing of God's Word.

- “**David** was conscious of the Spirit's involvement in speaking through him.

It says in **2 Samuel 23:1-2**, “*Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse declares, And the man who was raised on high declares, The anointed of the God of Jacob, And the sweet psalmist of Israel, **The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue.***”

- “**Ezekiel** was conscious of the Spirit's involvement in his prophetic ministry. He mentions the Spirit's involvement in revelation several times:

**Ezekiel 2:2**, “*And as He spoke to me **the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet; and I heard {Him} speaking to me.***” (The Spirit spoke to Ezekiel).

**Ezekiel 8:3**, “*And He stretched out the form of a hand and caught me by a lock of my head; and **the Spirit lifted me up** between earth and heaven and **brought me in the visions of God** to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner {court,} where the seat of the idol of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy, was {located.}*” (The Spirit revealed to Ezekiel through visions).

**Ezekiel 11:1**, “*Moreover, **the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the LORD'S house which faced eastward. And behold, {there were} twenty-five men at the entrance of the gate, and among them I saw Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, leaders of the people.***”

**Ezekiel 11:24-25**, “*And **the Spirit lifted me up and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God to the exiles in Chaldea. So the vision that I had seen left me. Then I told the exiles all the things that the LORD had shown me.***”

- **Micah** was conscious of the Spirit's involvement in His prophetic ministry.

He says in **Micah 3:8**, “*On the other hand I am filled with power - **With the Spirit of the LORD - And with justice and courage To make known to Jacob his rebellious act, Even to Israel his sin.***”

- “Scripture mentions several others who were empowered by the Holy Spirit in their prophetic ministries (Azariah in 2 Chronicles 15:1-2; Jahaziel in 2 Chronicles 20:13-14; Zechariah in 2 Chronicles 24:20; Balaam in Numbers 24:2; Amasai in 1 Chronicles 12:18; and Saul in 1 Samuel 10:6, 9-10).

Very clearly God reveals truth to mankind through the Old Testament prophets, who were guided by the Holy Spirit to speak forth and record God's Word (cf. Amos 3:7).

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3-Jesus Christ affirmed that both the Old and New Testament writers of Scripture either were guided or would be guided by the Holy Spirit.

- When debating the Pharisees, Christ quoted from **Psalm 110**, which He acknowledged was written by David in the Spirit. In other words, the Holy Spirit wrote through David. He says in **Matthew 22:43-44**, “*He said to them, Then how does **David in the Spirit** call Him 'Lord,' saying, **THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET?** If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?*”
- Referring to the same event, Mark records Jesus' words in **Mark 12:36**, “***David himself said in the Holy Spirit, THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET.***” Very clearly David as an author of Old Testament Scripture was merely the human agent of the Holy Spirit's words.
- Christ also predicted that the apostles would be safeguarded in their writing, which enabled them to write without error as they remembered all He had spoken to them. He says in **John 14:26**, “*But the Helper, **the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in My name, **He** will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.*”
- Christ also mentioned that the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth and would disclose that truth to them.

He says in **John 16:13-14**, “*But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.*”

- “Therefore, The Holy Spirit guided the New Testament writers of Scripture in the following ways [Enns, p. 259]:
  - 1) He helped the writers remember the facts of Christ's teaching.
  - 2) He enabled them to understand theologically what they were writing. At the time that Jesus spoke to them they did not grasp the significance of His impending death and resurrection.
  - 3) He guaranteed the completion of the entire New Testament. The “all things” of John 14:26 has reference to all spiritual truth necessary for man and would of necessity imply the completion of the New Testament canon.

4-The Apostles very clearly taught that the Old Testament writers were guided by the Holy Spirit even to the point that the words of the Old Testament writers were the very words of the Holy Spirit.

- “In **Acts 1:16-17**, Peter quoted from Psalm 41 in connection with the replacement for Judas. He said, “*Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, **which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David** concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry.*”

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- “In **Acts 4:25-26**, Peter quotes from Psalm 2 as being given by the Holy Spirit through David. He says, “**who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David** Your servant, said, **WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS? THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.**”
- In **Acts 28:25-27**, Paul quoted from Isaiah 6:9-10 and assigned authorship to the Holy Spirit. He says, “*And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, “**The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet** to your fathers, saying...”*”
- “The author of Hebrews acknowledges the words of the Holy Spirit in two places. In **Hebrews 3:7-11** he affirms that Psalm 95:7-11 were the words of the Holy Spirit and again in **Hebrews 10:15-16** he affirms that Jeremiah 31:31-34 were the words of the Holy Spirit.

5-The New Testament writers also recognized that they were writing the Spirit's words; that they were writing Scripture.

- “Paul affirms that his teaching was through direct revelation. He says in **Galatians 1:12**, “*For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it **through a revelation** of Jesus Christ.*”
- “Paul affirms that his teaching was taught to him by the Holy Spirit. In **1 Corinthians 2:13**, he says, “*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those **taught by the Spirit**, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.*”
- “Paul also affirms that his teaching was God's commandments (1 Corinthians 14:37; 1 Thessalonians 4:2, 15) and his teaching was recognized as God's Word (1 Thessalonians 2:13).
- “The New Testament writers affirmed each other's writings as Scripture: In 1 Timothy 5:18 Paul affirms Luke 10:7 as Scripture. In 2 Peter 3:16 Peter affirms Paul's writing as Scripture.

The Scripture makes it quite clear that the Holy Spirit was actively involved in the revelation and inspiration of Scripture. The Holy Spirit is seen as the very author of Scripture. He was involved in the giving of revelation and then He superintended the human authors in the process of recording Scripture. No wonder both Old and New Testament writers affirm Scripture as, “*the Spirit says.*”

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### The Holy Spirit's Involvement in Illumination

The Holy Spirit is not just involved in the revelation and inspiration of Scripture, but He is also actively involved in the process of Illumination. We will seek to answer three questions in this regard:

- ***“What is Illumination?”***

“There is a tendency to confuse illumination with revelation and inspiration. Revelation relates to the content or material of the Bible, inspiration to the method of recording that material and illumination to the meaning of the record.” [Enns, p. 175]

Illumination can be satisfactorily defined as the ministry of the Holy Spirit in which He enables men, those who are in a right relationship with Him to understand and comprehend truth already revealed and recorded (the written Word of God).

- ***“Why is illumination necessary?”***

Because the Bible is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16) and therefore in an entirely different dimension from other literature, it is necessary that man receives God-given help in understanding the Bible. [Enns, p. 175]

Paul emphasizes this in **1 Corinthians 2:11**, “*For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of a man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.*” In other words, we can only completely understand God's Word through the Holy Spirit.

Again in **1 Corinthians 2:14**, Paul comments, “*But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*” Anyone who is devoid of the Spirit is incapable of accepting, understanding and evaluating the Word of God accurately.

Since only God knows the things of God, and since the Holy Spirit is God very God, then it is essential that we look to the Spirit of God to instruct us and make things clear for us.

- ***“Where is Illumination mentioned in the Scripture?”***

1) The ministry of Illumination is foretold by Christ on the night of His arrest:

He taught in **John 14:26**, “*But the Helper, **the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in My name, **He will teach you all things**, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.*”

He also taught in **John 16:13**, “*But when He, **the Spirit of truth**, comes, **He will guide you into all the truth**; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.*” Very clearly the role of the Holy Spirit is to teach, guide, and disclose truth to believers.

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2) The ministry of Illumination is taught by Paul in **1 Corinthians 2:12-14**.

Paul says, “*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those **taught by the Spirit**, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*” Very clearly the Spirit functions in a teaching role so that we may know what God wants us to know.

3) The ministry of Illumination is illustrated by John in **1 John 2:27**.

John says, “*As for you, **the anointing which you received from Him abides in you**, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as **His anointing teaches you about all things**, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.*” John is not speaking about some emotional or ecstatic experience. The anointing to which he refers is none other than the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit resides in believers and teaches them about all things through God's Word.

### CONCLUSION

Knowing that the Holy Spirit was actively involved in the formation of Scripture through giving of truth (revelation) and the recording of truth (inspiration); and knowing that the Holy Spirit functions today in the role of helping us to understand that truth, which has been revealed and recorded (illumination); we should be driven to spend time reading, memorizing and studying the truth of God's Word.