

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Systematic Theology Series

PNEUMATOLOGY

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

UNIT 3: THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Lesson 8

The Promise of the Spirit

Old Testament Anticipation of Pentecost

The New Covenant Promise of a Universal, Permanent, Indwelling Spirit

Key Texts: Numbers 11:29; Isaiah 32:15; 44:3; Ezekiel 36:25–27; 37:1–14; Joel 2:28–29; Jeremiah 31:31–34

“I Will Put My Spirit Within You”

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Series Verse

*“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.”*

John 16:13, NASB 1995

Introduction

With Lesson 8 we arrive at the theological summit of Unit 3 and at one of the most exhilarating vistas in all of Old Testament pneumatology. The previous two lessons have established the foundation: Lesson 6 showed the Spirit as the Creator-Spirit whose presence pervades the cosmos and sustains every living creature; Lesson 7 showed the Spirit as the selective, temporary, task-specific Equipper of Israel's leaders, prophets, and artisans. Both lessons ended with the same forward pressure: this is not enough, and the Old Testament knows it. The Spirit's creation ministry is universal but impersonal — it sustains every living thing but does not transform the inner life of the creature. The Spirit's Old Covenant ministry is personal but selective — it equips specific individuals for specific tasks but does not reach the whole community.

Something more is needed. The Old Testament not only acknowledges this inadequacy; it promises its resolution with extraordinary theological richness and prophetic passion. Beginning with Moses' longing in Numbers 11:29 and building through Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Joel to the precipice of New Covenant fulfillment, the Old Testament's pneumatological promises constitute one of the most coherent and most magnificent trajectories in the whole of biblical theology. These are not isolated verses scattered across the prophetic corpus; they are a sustained, cumulative, mutually reinforcing prophetic vision of the day when the Spirit would be poured out universally, when His indwelling would be permanent rather than withdrawable, when the law would be written on the heart rather than carved in stone, and when every member of the covenant community — not merely its appointed leaders — would know the Lord.

This lesson surveys five major Old Testament pneumatological promises, attending to each one with exegetical care before drawing them together under the framework of progressive covenantal pneumatology that governs Unit 3. These promises are: Moses' longing (Numbers 11:29), the Isaianic promises of transformative outpouring (Isaiah 32:15; 44:3), the Jeremican New Covenant promise of the internalized law (Jeremiah 31:31–34), the Ezekielian promises of the new heart and new Spirit and the valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 36:25–27; 37:1–14), and the Joelian promise of universal prophetic empowerment (Joel 2:28–29). Each promise is, in its own way, a divine declaration that the Old Covenant's pneumatological limitations will not stand forever — that a day is coming when God Himself will do what the law could not do, will accomplish internally what the Sinai covenant could only demand externally, will put His Spirit within His people and transform them from the inside out.

Lesson 8 is also the lesson that stands at the threshold between Units 3 and 4: it is the Old Testament looking forward to what Unit 4 will show us from the New Testament perspective — the Spirit and the life of Christ, the Spirit at Pentecost, and the Spirit in the individual believer's life. Understanding these Old Testament promises is essential for understanding both the magnitude of what Pentecost accomplished and the theological continuity that links the Spirit's Old Covenant work to His New Covenant ministry. Pentecost is not a theological surprise; it is a

theological resolution — the day when every Old Testament pneumatological promise reached the moment of its long-awaited fulfillment.

I. The Mosaic Longing: A Pastor's Prayer for What the Old Covenant Cannot Provide

Numbers 11:29 as the Old Testament's Opening Pneumatological Cry

The pneumatological promises of the Old Testament begin not with a prophet but with a pastor — or rather, with the greatest pastor in the Old Testament's history. Numbers 11 presents Moses in a moment of exhaustion, complaint, and genuine intercession for the people he has been given to lead. The burden of Israel's leadership has become more than Moses can bear alone, and God's response is to take of the Spirit who is upon Moses and distribute a portion of that Spirit among seventy elders, so that they might share the burden of leadership with him. The result is dramatic: "When the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do it again" (Numbers 11:25, NASB 1995). The prophesying is a one-time, publicly visible sign of the Spirit's authentication of the elders' new role — selective, temporary, and purpose-specific.

When Eldad and Medad prophesy in the camp rather than at the tent of meeting, Joshua protests to Moses: "My lord Moses, restrain them." Moses' response is one of the most pneumatologically luminous statements in the entire Old Testament: "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:29, NASB 1995). The longing is transparent and theologically precise. Moses does not wish that the Spirit would be distributed more widely among Israel's selected leadership; he wishes that all of God's people were prophets — that every Israelite, without regard to tribe or office or gender or age, would be Spirit-empowered for the prophetic ministry of speaking God's word. This is the eschatological vision of Joel 2:28–29, centuries before Joel articulates it, expressed from the wearied pastoral heart of the man who knows most intimately what the Old Covenant's pneumatological limitations cost the people of God.

The theological significance of Moses' longing is that it comes from within the Old Covenant by its most faithful and most gifted servant. Moses is not a discontented critic of the Old Covenant; he is its greatest mediator. And yet from within the Old Covenant itself, from the deepest pastoral wisdom of its greatest prophet, comes the recognition that the Old Covenant's pneumatological arrangement is inadequate to the ultimate purposes of God for His people. The Old Covenant knows its own limits. It is pregnant with a longing that it cannot itself satisfy — a longing that only the New Covenant's universal, permanent, comprehensive Spirit-ministry can resolve.

II. The Isaianic Promises: The Spirit Poured Out from on High

Isaiah 32:15 and 44:3 — Wilderness Transformed, Thirst Satisfied

A. Isaiah 32:15 — The Spirit Transforming the Wilderness

Isaiah 32 presents one of the most vivid pneumatological images in the prophetic corpus. The chapter opens with the vision of a righteous king and just princes (vv. 1–8) — a messianic anticipation of the one truly just ruler who is to come — and then pivots to a description of the complacency of the women of Jerusalem (vv. 9–14), who are warned that their ease will be shattered by a coming desolation in which the productive land will become a wilderness. But the desolation is not the final word. Verse 15 introduces the pneumatological reversal with the characteristic prophetic formula: “Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field is counted as a forest.”

Three features of this verse demand attention. First, the verb: “poured out” (*yira’eh*) is the language of abundance and universality — not a selective empowerment of specific individuals but a comprehensive flooding of the land with the Spirit’s presence. The Spirit is not distributed in measured portions to appointed vessels; He is poured out, as rain is poured out, covering the whole landscape without restriction. Second, the direction: “from on high” (*mimārom*) — the Spirit descends from the divine height to the human low, from the transcendent God to the created order, bridging the infinite qualitative distance between Creator and creature by the sovereign initiative of the God who pours Himself out. Third, the effect: the wilderness becomes a fertile field. The image is pneumatological in the deepest sense: it is the Spirit’s outpouring that transforms barrenness into fruitfulness, desolation into flourishing, the cursed wasteland of covenant unfaithfulness into the productive garden of covenant blessing.

The Isaiah 32:15 image of the wilderness transformed into a fertile field is theologically crucial for understanding the nature of the Spirit’s New Covenant ministry. The Spirit does not arrive as an external improvement upon an already functioning system; He arrives as the transformative power that converts what is by nature unproductive into what is by grace productive. The new birth is not an improvement upon the old life; it is the transformation of the spiritual wilderness of the fallen human heart into the fertile field of the new creation. And this transformation is, in the deepest sense, the Spirit’s work — the pouring out from on high that changes everything.

B. Isaiah 44:3 — The Spirit as the Water of Life

Isaiah 44:3 intensifies and personalizes the promise of 32:15: “For I will pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring and My blessing on your descendants” (NASB 1995). The verse presents two parallel promises: the physical promise of water for thirsty land, and the pneumatological promise of the Spirit for God’s offspring. The parallelism is not merely stylistic; it is theologically purposive. As water is to the dry ground — the difference between death and life, between barrenness and fruitfulness, between desert and garden — so the Spirit is to the spiritually thirsty people of God.

The image of the Spirit as the divine water poured out on the thirsty anticipates Jesus’ pneumatological language in John 7:37–39, where He stands on the last day of the Feast of Booths and cries out: “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive.” Jesus is invoking the

Isaiah pneumatological tradition — the promise of the Spirit as the water that satisfies the thirst of God’s people — and announcing its fulfillment in Himself. The promise of Isaiah 44:3 is not merely the promise of divine blessing in general; it is the promise of the Spirit in particular, the specific, personal, life-giving presence of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity poured out upon the descendants of God’s covenant people.

*“Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high” | “I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring” |
“Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets!”*

Isaiah 32:15; 44:3; Numbers 11:29, NASB 1995

III. The Jeremianic Promise: The Law Written on the Heart

Jeremiah 31:31–34 and the Spirit as the Agent of Internalized Obedience

Jeremiah 31:31–34 is the most explicit New Covenant promise in the Old Testament — so explicit that it is the only Old Testament text to use the phrase “new covenant” (*berīt chadāshāh*) directly. The New Testament’s citation and exposition of this passage, particularly in Hebrews 8–10, treats it as the definitive Old Testament theological warrant for the entire New Covenant economy of grace. Understanding this text’s pneumatological dimension is therefore essential for understanding both Old Testament eschatology and New Testament soteriology.

The promise of Jeremiah 31:31–34 is structured as a set of divine declarations: God will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and Judah (v. 31); this covenant will not be like the Mosaic covenant, which Israel broke (v. 32); the content of the new covenant is threefold — the law written on the heart (v. 33a), a personal covenant relationship between God and His people (v. 33b), and universal knowledge of God within the covenant community (v. 34a); and the ground of this new covenant is the divine forgiveness of sin (v. 34b). The pneumatological content of the promise is concentrated in verse 33: “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

The pneumatological agent of this internalizing and inscribing work is the Spirit of God. Jeremiah 31:31–34 does not name the Spirit explicitly, but Ezekiel 36:26–27 — which develops the same promise in more explicitly pneumatological terms — makes the identification: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes.” The Spirit is the agent of the law’s internalization. What Jeremiah describes as the divine writing of the law on the heart, Ezekiel identifies as the Spirit’s indwelling and transforming work. The two promises are the same promise from two perspectives: the external, legal perspective of the covenant’s content (Jeremiah) and the internal, pneumatological perspective of the covenant’s execution (Ezekiel).

The theological significance of the Jeremican New Covenant promise for pneumatology cannot be overstated. It establishes that the fundamental problem with the Old Covenant was not its content but its location: the law was good, holy, and just (Romans 7:12), but it was written on stone tablets rather than on human hearts, and therefore it could command but not enable, it could expose sin but not remove it, it could reveal the standard but not produce the conformity. The New Covenant's solution is not a different law but a different locus: the same divine will that was carved in stone will be written on the heart by the Spirit's transforming work. The New Covenant believer is not lawless — he is inwardly law-inhabited, conformed to the divine will not by external coercion but by internal transformation through the Spirit's indwelling.

IV. The Ezekielian Promises: New Heart, New Spirit, New Life

Ezekiel 36:25–27 and 37:1–14 — The Spirit of Restoration and Resurrection

A. Ezekiel 36:25–27 — The Promise of the New Heart and the Indwelling Spirit

The Ezekielian New Covenant promise of Ezekiel 36:25–27 is the most explicitly pneumatological of all the Old Testament's anticipatory texts, and it is perhaps the most important single passage in the entire Old Testament for understanding the nature of regeneration and sanctification. The context is the great restoration oracle of Ezekiel 36, in which God promises to restore Israel from exile not for Israel's sake but for the sake of His own holy name (vv. 22–23), which Israel's unfaithfulness had profaned among the nations. The restoration will vindicate divine holiness precisely by accomplishing what Israel's unfaithfulness had demonstrated she could not accomplish on her own: covenant faithfulness.

The specific promises of verses 25–27 are three. First, cleansing: “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.” The imagery is drawn from the Levitical purity rituals, but it is now applied to the moral and spiritual condition of the heart — God Himself will perform the cleansing that the ritual washings of the Old Covenant had symbolized but could not achieve. Second, the new heart: “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.” The replacement of the heart of stone with a heart of flesh is the most vivid image of regeneration in the Old Testament — the divine surgery that replaces the hardened, unresponsive, covenant-refusing heart with a soft, responsive, covenant-embracing one. This is not human spiritual improvement; it is divine sovereign transformation.

Third, and most explicitly pneumatological: “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.” (v. 27, NASB 1995). The Spirit's indwelling is here described as the divine enabling of covenant obedience: the Spirit is put within the covenant people, and the result is that they walk in God's statutes — not because they are compelled from without but because the Spirit transforms the inner life so that the will that God requires becomes the will that the believer desires. This is the New

Covenant's resolution of the Old Covenant's fundamental problem: the law could command, but only the Spirit can enable. Ezekiel 36:27 is the Old Testament's most explicit promise of the Spirit as the agent of sanctification — the One who works within the believer to produce the obedience that the covenant demands and that the Spirit alone can effect.

B. Ezekiel 37:1–14 — The Valley of Dry Bones and the Spirit of Resurrection Life

The vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1–14) is the most dramatic and most visually arresting pneumatological narrative in the Old Testament. Ezekiel is brought by the Spirit to a valley filled with bones — very many, very dry — and asked: “Son of man, can these bones live?” (v. 3). He prophesies to the bones at God's command, and they come together: “The bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and behold, sinews were on them, and flesh grew and skin covered them; but there was no breath in them” (vv. 7–8). The form is complete but the life is absent. Then God commands Ezekiel to prophesy to the breath (*ruach*): “Thus says the Lord God, ‘Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.’” (v. 9). And the *ruach* comes, the breath enters the bodies, and they stand — an exceedingly great army.

The divine interpretation of the vision confirms its referent: the bones are the house of Israel, exiled and despairing, saying “Our hope has perished. We are completely cut off” (v. 11). The promise that follows is the eschatological restoration of the nation: God will open the graves, bring the people up from their graves, bring them into the land, put His Spirit within them, and they will live (vv. 12–14). The primary reference is to the national restoration of Israel from Babylonian exile — but the imagery so deliberately echoes the creation account of Genesis 2:7 (the Spirit-breath that animates lifeless matter into living being) that the passage cannot be confined to the merely political and historical restoration of a displaced people. It is a picture of new creation, of life from the dead, of the Spirit as the power of resurrection.

The apostle Paul sees in Ezekiel's vision an anticipation of the eschatological resurrection of the body (cf. 1 Corinthians 15) and the Spirit's role in that resurrection (Romans 8:11): “If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.” The Spirit who breathes life into the dry bones of Ezekiel's vision is the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead and who will raise the bodies of all who are in Christ at the last day. Ezekiel 37 is therefore not merely a promise of national restoration; it is the Old Testament's most comprehensive pneumatological vision of the Spirit as the source of all life — present, eschatological, and eternal — for the people of God. The valley of dry bones anticipates the resurrection, and the resurrection anticipates the new creation, and at the center of all three is the life-giving *ruach* of the living God.

V. The Joelian Promise: Universal Pneumatological Empowerment

Joel 2:28–29 — The Promise Fulfilled at Pentecost

Joel 2:28–29 has already been examined briefly in Lesson 7 as the Old Testament’s most comprehensive pneumatological promise. Here we give it the fuller treatment it deserves as the climactic Old Testament pneumatological text, whose fulfillment at Pentecost (Acts 2:16–21) represents the decisive New Covenant resolution of everything that the Old Testament’s pneumatological promises had been anticipating.

The promise in its fullness: “It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28–29, NASB 1995). The pouring-out language (*shaphak*) is the same language Isaiah uses in 32:15 and 44:3 — the language of abundance, universality, and divine initiative. And the comprehensive scope of the promise is underscored by every category it names: sons and daughters (gender), old men and young men (age), male and female servants (social status). Every social distinction that might restrict or qualify the Old Covenant’s selective pneumatological ministry is explicitly overcome.

The phrase “all mankind” (*kol-bāsār*, literally “all flesh”) is the most expansive statement of the Spirit’s new covenant scope in the entire Old Testament. The Spirit will not be poured out on all of Israel only (though that would already be a vast expansion of the Old Covenant’s selective pattern), but on all flesh — a universal scope that Peter’s Pentecost sermon will begin to fill out and that the subsequent narrative of Acts will progressively realize as the gospel moves from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). The Joelian promise is the pneumatological charter of the church’s universal mission.

Peter’s application of Joel 2:28–29 in Acts 2:16–21 is the most important piece of pneumatological biblical theology in the New Testament. Confronted with the perplexing phenomenon of the Spirit’s outpouring — the sound of the mighty wind, the tongues of fire, the speaking in foreign languages — Peter does not reach for a theological novelty; he reaches for the Old Testament. “This is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel.” The events of Pentecost are the fulfillment of Joel’s promise — not a surprise but a resolution, not an interruption of the Old Testament’s pneumatological trajectory but its fulfillment. The entire accumulation of pneumatological longing and expectation that we have traced across Lessons 6, 7, and 8 — from the Spirit hovering over the waters to Moses’ pastoral cry to Isaiah’s transforming outpouring to Jeremiah’s new heart to Ezekiel’s dry bones to Joel’s universal promise — reaches its promised resolution on that Pentecost morning in Jerusalem.

*“I will put My Spirit within you
and cause you to walk in My statutes,
and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”*

Ezekiel 36:27, NASB 1995

VI. The Progressive Covenantal Framework: Reading the Promises Together

How the Old Testament's Pneumatological Trajectory Builds toward Pentecost

A. The Internal Logic of the Old Testament's Pneumatological Promises

The five pneumatological promises surveyed in this lesson are not isolated texts that happen to share a common subject. They form a coherent, mutually illuminating, progressively deepening theological trajectory that runs from the wilderness of the Sinai period (Numbers 11:29) through the pre-exilic prophets (Isaiah) and the exilic prophets (Jeremiah and Ezekiel) to the post-exilic prophet (Joel), building in intensity and in scope as the redemptive-historical drama approaches its New Covenant climax. Understanding their internal logic — the way each promise builds on those that precede it and anticipates those that follow — is essential for a mature pneumatological reading of the Old Testament.

Moses' longing establishes the pneumatological aspiration: would that all God's people were prophets. The Isaiah promises establish the mode: the Spirit will be poured out from on high, as rain on thirsty ground, transforming barrenness into fruitfulness. The Jeremican promise establishes the content: the law will be written on the heart, the covenant will be internalized, universal knowledge of God will characterize the covenant community. The Ezekielian promises establish the mechanism and the power: God will replace the heart of stone with a heart of flesh, put His Spirit within His people to enable obedience, and breathe resurrection life into the spiritually dead. The Joelian promise establishes the scope: all flesh, without distinction of gender, age, or social status. Each successive promise adds a dimension, deepens the understanding, or broadens the scope of what the Spirit's New Covenant ministry will accomplish.

B. What the Promises Collectively Teach about the New Covenant's Spirit

Drawing the five promises together, we can articulate what the Old Testament collectively anticipates about the Spirit's New Covenant ministry. First, the Spirit's New Covenant ministry will be universal in scope: not selective (a few appointed leaders) but comprehensive (all flesh, all of God's people). Second, it will be permanent rather than temporary: not withdrawable (as from Saul) but secured (as Ezekiel's promise of an indwelling Spirit to cause covenant walking implies). Third, it will be internal rather than primarily external: not the law on stone (requiring external coercion) but the law on the heart (enabling internal transformation). Fourth, it will be vivifying rather than merely equipping: not merely empowering specific acts of service (the judges) but imparting new life (the dry bones brought to life). Fifth, it will be eschatologically final: the pouring out from on high (Isaiah 32:15) announces not a temporary blessing but the inaugurating of the age of covenantal fulfillment.

All five of these characteristics — universal, permanent, internal, vivifying, eschatologically final — are what Pentecost delivers. The New Covenant Spirit whom Jesus pours out at Pentecost is received by all who repent and are baptized, regardless of gender, age, or social status (Acts 2:38–39; cf. Joel 2:28–29). He is the Spirit of promise who seals the believer until the day of redemption (Ephesians 1:13–14; 4:30). He writes the law on the heart (2 Corinthians 3:3;

Hebrews 8:10–12; 10:15–17). He gives life to the spiritually dead (John 3:5–8; Titus 3:5; Romans 8:11). And His outpouring marks the eschatological “last days” in which the church has lived since Pentecost (Acts 2:17 — “in the last days,” Peter’s interpretive modification of Joel’s “after this”). The Old Testament’s pneumatological promises are not merely historical curiosities; they are the scriptural warrant for every aspect of the New Covenant believer’s pneumatological experience.

VII. The Practical Significance: Living in the Fulfillment of the Promises

We Are the Answer to the Old Testament’s Greatest Pneumatological Prayers

There is a pastoral and devotional implication of this lesson that is so large it is easy to miss precisely because of its size. Every Old Testament pneumatological promise examined in this lesson — Moses’ longing, Isaiah’s outpouring, Jeremiah’s internalized law, Ezekiel’s new heart and dry-bones resurrection, Joel’s universal prophetic empowerment — is addressed to God’s people as a promise of what God will one day do. None of these texts addresses New Covenant believers. They address the people of the Old Covenant — people who lived and died without seeing the fulfillment of what they were promised. They are the men and women of Hebrews 11:39–40: “And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.”

The “better thing” that God provided for us, which the Old Testament saints did not live to receive, is the New Covenant’s pneumatological reality: the universal, permanent, internal, vivifying, eschatologically final indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Moses longed for it and was not given it. Isaiah proclaimed it and did not see it. Jeremiah promised it and wept through an entire ministry without its coming. Ezekiel envisioned it in a valley of bones and then prophesied through the darkest years of Israel’s exile. Joel announced it and then the centuries fell silent. And then, on a Pentecost morning in Jerusalem, it came. And it has not stopped coming. Every New Covenant believer who has received the Spirit since Pentecost is the living fulfillment of what these great saints of God prayed and promised and longed for across centuries of Old Covenant ministry.

The practical implication is not merely theological gratitude, though it is certainly that. It is a fundamental reorientation of the New Covenant believer’s self-understanding and of his or her understanding of the Spirit’s indwelling. You are not a spiritual consumer trying to access a divine resource. You are the answer to Moses’ prayer in Numbers 11:29. You are the fulfillment of Joel’s promise in Joel 2:28–29. You are the living instantiation of Ezekiel’s new heart and new spirit (Ezekiel 36:26). You are the one upon whom the Spirit has been poured out from on high (Isaiah 32:15), the dry bones that have been breathed into life by the ruach of the living God (Ezekiel 37:5–14). To take the Spirit’s indwelling for granted, or to treat it as a routine spiritual amenity rather than the extraordinary eschatological gift that it is, is not merely ingratitude; it is a failure of pneumatological imagination so profound that it dishonors both the Spirit who has been given and the saints who longed for His coming.

Theological Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
New Covenant	The covenant established by Jesus Christ through His blood (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25), fulfilling and superseding the Old (Mosaic) Covenant. Explicitly promised in Jeremiah 31:31–34 as a covenant marked by the internalization of the law (written on the heart rather than on stone), universal knowledge of God within the covenant community, and the complete forgiveness of sins. The New Covenant’s defining pneumatological characteristic is the universal, permanent, transforming indwelling of the Holy Spirit, promised in Ezekiel 36:26–27 and fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2:38–39). The New Covenant is not a different gospel but the same gospel in its eschatological fullness.
Shaphak	Hebrew: to pour out. The verb used in Joel 2:28–29 (“I will pour out My Spirit”) and echoed in the Isaiah promises (Isaiah 32:15; 44:3) to describe the Spirit’s New Covenant outpouring. Shaphak conveys abundance, universality, and divine initiative: the Spirit is not distributed in measured portions to appointed individuals but poured out comprehensively, like rain on parched ground, covering the whole people of God without the restrictions of the Old Covenant’s selective pneumatological ministry. Peter quotes Joel 2:28–29 in Acts 2:17 using the equivalent Greek verb <i>ekcheō</i> (to pour out).
Kol-Basar	Hebrew: “all flesh,” “all mankind.” The phrase in Joel 2:28 that defines the universality of the Spirit’s New Covenant outpouring. While the Old Covenant’s pneumatological ministry was selective (specific individuals, specific tasks), the New Covenant’s Spirit is poured out on “all flesh” — every believer without distinction of gender (sons and daughters), age (old men and young men), or social status (male and female servants). Peter’s application in Acts 2:17 begins to fill out the meaning of “all flesh,” and the subsequent narrative of Acts traces its progressive realization as the gospel reaches Gentiles as well as Jews.
Heart of Stone / Heart of Flesh	The contrasting images in Ezekiel 36:26 describing the Old Covenant and New Covenant conditions of the human heart. The heart of stone (<i>lev ha-even</i>) is the hardened, unresponsive, covenant-refusing human heart that the law could expose but not transform. The heart of flesh (<i>lev bāsār</i>) is the soft, responsive, covenant-embracing heart that the Spirit creates through the sovereign regenerating work promised in Ezekiel 36:26–27. The replacement of the heart of stone with the heart of flesh is the Old Testament’s most vivid image of regeneration: not human moral improvement but divine surgical transformation.

Term	Definition
Internalized Law	The defining characteristic of the New Covenant's ethical dimension as promised in Jeremiah 31:33 ("I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it"). In the Old Covenant, the law was written on stone tablets — external, demanding from without, commanding without enabling. In the New Covenant, the Spirit writes the same divine will on the heart, so that the covenant people's desires, affections, and motivations are transformed from within. The internalized law is the pneumatological execution of what Jeremiah promises and Ezekiel develops: "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes" (Ezekiel 36:27).
Valley of Dry Bones	The visionary narrative of Ezekiel 37:1–14, in which Ezekiel is brought by the Spirit to a valley of very many, very dry bones, representing the house of Israel in exile. At God's command, Ezekiel prophesies to the bones (they assemble and are covered with flesh) and then to the ruach (the breath/Spirit enters the bodies and they live). The primary reference is to the national restoration of Israel, but the imagery deliberately echoes Genesis 2:7 (the Spirit-breath animating lifeless matter) and anticipates the eschatological resurrection (Romans 8:11). The valley of dry bones is the Old Testament's most comprehensive pneumatological vision of the Spirit as the source of all life for God's people.
Covenant Internalization	The process by which the Spirit transforms the covenant relationship from one of external command and legal demand to one of internal transformation and willing obedience. Promised in Jeremiah 31:33 ("I will put My law within them") and Ezekiel 36:27 ("I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes"), covenant internalization is the New Covenant's resolution of the Old Covenant's fundamental problem: Israel could not keep the law not because the law was defective but because the human heart was not transformed. The Spirit's indwelling overcomes this by conforming the will to the law's demands from within, so that obedience flows from transformed desire rather than external coercion.
Ekcheō	Greek: to pour out. The New Testament equivalent of the Hebrew shaphak, used in Acts 2:17–18 (Peter's citation of Joel 2:28–29) and in Acts 2:33 ("He has poured out this which you both see and hear") to describe the Spirit's Pentecostal outpouring. The language of pouring out (both in Hebrew and in Greek) conveys the abundance, generosity, and comprehensive scope of the Spirit's New Covenant ministry: He is not distributed sparingly or selectively but poured out lavishly upon all who believe. Romans 5:5 uses the same verb: "the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."
Eschatological Fulfillment	The category that describes the relationship between Old Testament promise and New Covenant reality: the Old Testament's pneumatological promises are not merely historical predictions but eschatological commitments — promises that the age of final, decisive, covenantal blessing has arrived. Peter's key interpretive move in Acts 2:17 is the substitution of

Term	Definition
	Joel's "after this" with "in the last days" (Isaiah 2:2 language), indicating that Pentecost is not merely the fulfillment of one prophecy but the inauguration of the eschatological age. The New Covenant's Spirit is the Spirit of the age of consummation, the arrabōn of the final inheritance, the firstfruits of the new creation.
Firstfruits of the Spirit	Paul's designation in Romans 8:23 for the Spirit's present indwelling of believers: "even we ourselves who have the firstfruits of the Spirit" (aparachēn tou pneumatos). The firstfruits were the first portion of the harvest, offered to God as a pledge and anticipation of the full harvest to come. The Spirit's present indwelling is the firstfruits of the full eschatological redemption: the regeneration and indwelling of the inner person now are the pledge and anticipation of the redemption of the body at the resurrection (Romans 8:11, 23). The Spirit is both the fulfillment of the Old Testament's pneumatological promises and the firstfruits of an even greater eschatological fullness yet to come.

Practical Application

A. For the Mind: *What Must We Believe?*

We must believe that the Old Testament's pneumatological promises are not background material for the New Testament's more important theological foreground but are themselves constitutive of the theological understanding that makes the New Testament's pneumatology intelligible. Without Numbers 11:29, Pentecost is a religious enthusiasm. Without Isaiah 32:15 and 44:3, the Spirit's outpouring lacks its Old Testament warrant. Without Jeremiah 31:31–34 and Ezekiel 36:25–27, the New Covenant's moral and transformative dimensions are ungrounded in the Old Testament's promise. Without Ezekiel 37, the Spirit's vivifying work lacks its most powerful Old Testament image. And without Joel 2:28–29, Peter's Pentecost sermon is incoherent. These texts are not dispensable — they are the scriptural infrastructure of New Covenant pneumatology.

We must also believe that the progressive character of the Old Testament's pneumatological promises is itself a hermeneutical gift. The promises build on one another, each adding a dimension, each deepening the expectation, until by the time Joel announces the universal outpouring, the entire theological vocabulary of the New Covenant's Spirit is in place: universality (Joel), permanence (Ezekiel 36), internalization (Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36), vivification (Ezekiel 37), transformation (Isaiah 32). The student of Scripture who has traced this trajectory will approach the New Testament's pneumatological teaching not as a collection of isolated doctrinal assertions but as the long-awaited and richly anticipated resolution of one of the Bible's great theological storylines.

B. For the Heart: *What Must We Feel and Desire?*

Let the lesson's closing reflection land with its full pastoral weight: you are the living fulfillment of the Old Testament's greatest pneumatological prayers. Moses longed for what you have. Isaiah promised what you experience. Jeremiah wept through his ministry without seeing what is your daily New Covenant reality. Ezekiel envisioned in a valley of dry bones what the Spirit has accomplished in you through regeneration. Joel announced universally what you participate in personally. The Spirit of God dwells within you — not occasionally, not withdrawably, not task-specifically — but permanently, transformingly, eschatologically, as the down payment of your final inheritance and the firstfruits of your coming resurrection.

If this does not produce in you a sense of extraordinary privilege, it is because familiarity has blunted the theological imagination. The Old Testament saints read these promises and wept for what they could not yet have. The New Testament saints received what those saints had longed for and were astonished. We are the recipients of the astonishing gift; let the study of the Old Testament's pneumatological longing restore the astonishment that familiarity has dimmed. Desire, above all, to live as one who inhabits the age of fulfillment rather than the age of anticipation — not looking forward to a Spirit who may one day come, but living in the reality of the Spirit who has come, who dwells within, who is actively transforming from the inside out.

C. For the Hands: *What Must We Do?*

- Read all five key texts of this lesson in a single sitting, in sequence, as a sustained act of biblical-theological meditation: Numbers 11:24–29 → Isaiah 32:13–15 → Isaiah 44:1–5 → Jeremiah 31:31–34 → Ezekiel 36:22–27 → Ezekiel 37:1–14 → Joel 2:28–29. After reading, write three sentences about the trajectory you observe: how does each text build on the preceding? What cumulative vision of the Spirit’s New Covenant ministry emerges? What is gained by reading these texts together that would be lost by reading each in isolation?
- Read Acts 2:1–21 as the fulfillment text, immediately after completing the above reading of the promises. Note Peter’s explicit quotation of Joel 2:28–32 and his interpretive modification (“in the last days” rather than “after this”). How does the experience of Pentecost — the sound of the mighty wind, the tongues of fire, the speaking in languages — correspond to or exceed the Old Testament’s pneumatological promises? In what ways is Pentecost the resolution of everything the promises had anticipated?
- Memorize Ezekiel 36:26–27 in its entirety: “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.” This is the most comprehensive Old Testament statement of what the Spirit’s New Covenant ministry will accomplish: new heart, removed stone, Spirit within, walking in the statutes. Meditate on each element as a description of your own present New Covenant experience.
- Trace the Jeremiah 31:31–34 promise through the New Testament: read Hebrews 8:7–13 (the author’s extended citation of Jeremiah 31 as the Old Testament’s warrant for the supersession of the Mosaic covenant), Hebrews 10:15–17 (the Spirit’s testimony through Jeremiah’s words), and 2 Corinthians 3:1–6 (“written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts”). How does the New Testament develop the Jeremianic promise? What does each New Testament passage add to the understanding of what the Spirit’s internalization of the law accomplishes?
- Reflect specifically on Ezekiel’s promise that the Spirit will “cause you to walk in My statutes” (Ezekiel 36:27). This is the Old Testament’s promise of sanctification — not merely the enabling of initial obedience but the ongoing Spirit-produced walking in the ways of God. In what specific areas of your life do you most need this Spirit-caused walking — where obedience has been most difficult, where the heart of stone seems most persistent? Bring those specific areas to God in prayer, asking Him to fulfill in them the promise He made through Ezekiel: that the Spirit within you will cause you to walk where you have struggled to walk.

Study and Discussion Questions

Opening Question

1. Hebrews 11:39–40 says that the Old Testament saints “did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.” The “something better” includes the Spirit’s New Covenant indwelling that this lesson has traced through the Old Testament’s promises. What is your instinctive sense of the proportion between the Old Testament saints’ pneumatological longing and your own pneumatological gratitude? Are you as grateful as they were eager? What does the discrepancy, if there is one, suggest about your practical pneumatology?

Observation Questions (What Do the Texts Say?)

2. Read Numbers 11:24–29 carefully. Moses’ longing in verse 29 is introduced by a rebuke of Joshua’s protectiveness: “Are you jealous for my sake?” What does Moses’ response reveal about his understanding of the Spirit’s Old Covenant limitations? What specifically does he long for — is it more prophesying among the elders, or something qualitatively different? How does the phrase “would that all the Lord’s people were prophets” anticipate the Joelian promise of universal Spirit-empowerment?
3. Read Isaiah 32:13–15. The Spirit’s outpouring in verse 15 is introduced by the word “until.” What is the “until” structure of the passage telling us about the relationship between the present desolation (vv. 13–14) and the future outpouring (v. 15)? What does the wilderness-to-fertile-field image specifically convey about the nature of the Spirit’s transforming work? Then read Isaiah 44:1–5: what does the parallelism between water for thirsty ground and the Spirit for God’s offspring suggest about the Spirit’s necessity for the covenant people’s life and fruitfulness?
4. Read Jeremiah 31:31–34 and Ezekiel 36:25–27 side by side. Jeremiah describes the New Covenant in terms of what God will do: put the law within them, write it on the heart, be their God, ensure universal knowledge of Himself, forgive sin. Ezekiel describes the same reality in explicitly pneumatological terms: sprinkle clean water, give a new heart, remove the heart of stone, give a heart of flesh, put His Spirit within to cause walking in His statutes. Map the correspondences: which elements of Jeremiah’s promise does Ezekiel develop? What does Ezekiel add that Jeremiah does not? How do the two passages together give a fuller picture of the New Covenant’s pneumatological reality than either alone?
5. Read Ezekiel 37:1–14 as a narrative. Note the sequence: bones, then sinews, then flesh, then skin — but “there was no breath in them” (v. 8). Why does God construct the

bodies before breathing life into them? What does this sequence suggest about the relationship between the external form of covenant life and the Spirit's animating breath? How does the repeated use of *ruach* (breath/wind/spirit) in this passage — referring to the natural wind, the spirit of the slain, and the Spirit of God — exploit the Hebrew word's full semantic range?

6. Read Joel 2:28–29 and then Acts 2:14–21 (Peter's Pentecost sermon). Compare Joel's phrase "after this" with Peter's interpretive substitution "in the last days." Why is this change interpretively significant? What does the phrase "the last days" imply about the eschatological character of Pentecost? How does Peter's application of Joel determine the meaning of the Pentecostal phenomena (tongues, fire) as pneumatological fulfillment rather than merely charismatic enthusiasm?

Interpretation Questions (What Does It Mean?)

7. The lesson argues that the Old Testament's five pneumatological promises form a "cumulative, mutually reinforcing, progressively deepening theological trajectory." Evaluate this claim. Does the trajectory exist in the texts themselves, or is it a retrospective theological construction? What evidence from the texts would you cite to argue that the promise's progressive deepening is intrinsic to the Old Testament's own pneumatological witness?
8. The Jeremican New Covenant promise (Jeremiah 31:31–34) is quoted in Hebrews 8 as evidence that the Old Covenant is "obsolete" and "ready to disappear" (Hebrews 8:13). What is the theological relationship between the internalization of the law (the Spirit writing it on the heart) and the obsolescence of the Old Covenant's external legal system? Does the New Covenant abolish the law, transform the law, or internalize the law? How does Ezekiel 36:27 ("I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes") answer the antinomian charge that the New Covenant makes law irrelevant?
9. The Ezekiel 37 vision is interpreted in its immediate context as a promise of national restoration for Israel from exile. But the lesson argues that the pneumatological imagery of the passage — the breath of God animating dry bones to life — carries a significance that exceeds the merely national and points toward individual regeneration and eschatological resurrection. Is this reading exegetically justified, or does it impose a New Testament pneumatological reading on an Old Testament text about national politics? How should the interpreter navigate the relationship between the text's original historical reference and its broader canonical significance?
10. The lesson concludes with the claim that New Covenant believers "are the living fulfillment of what these great saints of God prayed and promised and longed for." Is this claim theologically accurate, or is it potentially triumphalistic? What qualifications need to be added — for example, the "firstfruits" nature of the Spirit's present indwelling (Romans 8:23) suggests that even New Covenant believers are still waiting for the fullness of what the promises anticipate (the resurrection of the body, the new

creation)? How does the “already/not yet” eschatological framework modify the claim that we are the fulfillment of the Old Testament’s promises?

11. The Old Testament’s pneumatological promises consistently use the imagery of water (Isaiah 32:15; 44:3; Joel 2:28 — poured out; Ezekiel 36:25 — clean water sprinkled). Why does the Spirit’s New Covenant ministry attract the water imagery so consistently? What specific aspects of water’s properties — its necessity for life, its ability to cleanse, its ability to saturate and permeate, its abundance when poured out — make it the apt image for the Spirit’s New Covenant work? How does Jesus’ use of the same imagery in John 7:37–39 connect to and fulfill the Old Testament’s pneumatological water-imagery?

Application Questions (What Does It Demand of Us?)

12. The lesson proposes that the study of the Old Testament’s pneumatological longing should “restore the astonishment that familiarity has dimmed.” Has this lesson produced any recovery of astonishment in you? What specific promise — Moses’ longing, the transforming outpouring, the internalized law, the heart of flesh, the dry bones coming to life, the universal prophetic empowerment — most powerfully connected with your own experience of the Spirit? How will you cultivate the kind of ongoing pneumatological gratitude that the lesson says familiarity tends to diminish?
13. Ezekiel 36:27 promises that the Spirit will “cause you to walk in My statutes.” The lesson proposes identifying specific areas of your life where obedience has been most difficult and bringing them to this promise. Name one such area honestly. What does it mean, practically, to pray Ezekiel 36:27 over that area — to ask the indwelling Spirit to “cause you to walk” where your own effort has consistently failed? How does the promise’s divine causation (“I will... cause you”) affect your understanding of your own role in sanctification?
14. The lesson argues that the five Old Testament pneumatological promises together establish what the Spirit’s New Covenant ministry will be: universal, permanent, internal, vivifying, and eschatologically final. Taking these five characteristics one by one, evaluate the extent to which your own congregation’s pneumatology reflects each one. Where do you see the Spirit’s universal ministry recognized (every believer, not just leaders)? Where is the permanence of His indwelling taught and celebrated? Where is His internal transforming work on the heart distinguished from external religious performance? Where is His vivifying power for those who are spiritually dead affirmed?
15. This lesson is the conclusion of Unit 3 on the Spirit in the Old Testament. Looking back over Lessons 6, 7, and 8: what is the single most important pneumatological insight you have gained from the Old Testament’s witness to the Spirit? How has the study of the Old Testament’s pneumatology changed or deepened your understanding of the Spirit’s New Testament ministry? What will you take from this unit into your reading of the New Testament pneumatological texts in the units that follow?

Prayer Focus

Open this final lesson of Unit 3 with a sustained reading of all five key texts in sequence, read aloud as a community with deliberate attention and receptive hearts: Numbers 11:29; Isaiah 32:15; Isaiah 44:3; Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekiel 36:25–27; Ezekiel 37:1–14 (read the whole narrative, not merely the summary); Joel 2:28–29. After reading, pause in silence. These are the words that faithful men and women of the Old Covenant heard and clung to as promises of what God would one day do. They lived and died in the faith of these promises without receiving their fulfillment. Now read them as their fulfillment — as texts that describe your own present reality as a New Covenant believer indwelt by the Spirit who was promised.

Begin the prayer time with a focused act of covenantal gratitude. Name each promise specifically and give thanks for its fulfillment in your own experience. Isaiah 32:15: “Thank You, Lord, that the Spirit has been poured out upon us from on high, and the wilderness of our hearts has been made a fertile field.” Isaiah 44:3: “Thank You that You have poured Your Spirit upon our offspring, and Your blessing upon our descendants.” Jeremiah 31:33: “Thank You that You have put Your law within us and written it on our hearts, and that You are our God and we are Your people.” Ezekiel 36:26–27: “Thank You that You have given us a new heart, removed our heart of stone, and put Your Spirit within us to cause us to walk in Your statutes.” Ezekiel 37:14: “Thank You that You have put Your Spirit within us and we have come to life.” Joel 2:28–29: “Thank You that You have poured out Your Spirit on all of us — sons and daughters, old and young, servants and free.”

Move then to specific intercession for those who have not yet received the promised Spirit — the unconverted people known to the participants. Pray for them using the explicit language of the Old Testament’s pneumatological promises: pray that God would make the wilderness of their hearts a fertile field (Isaiah 32:15), that He would pour the Spirit upon them as water on the thirsty ground (Isaiah 44:3), that He would give them a new heart and remove their heart of stone (Ezekiel 36:26), that He would breathe His life into the dry bones of their spiritual condition (Ezekiel 37:9), and that they would be among the “all flesh” upon whom the Spirit is poured out (Joel 2:28). This is the pneumatologically informed intercession that the Old Testament’s promises authorize and that the New Testament confirms as God’s sovereign purpose for His people.

Close with the doxology that the eschatological character of the Spirit’s New Covenant ministry demands. You are living in the “last days” that Peter announced at Pentecost (Acts 2:17). The Spirit’s presence among you is not the end of the story; it is the firstfruits of the final resurrection, the *arrabōn* of the eternal inheritance, the foretaste of the new creation that is coming. Praise God for what has been given; praise God for what is yet to come. And as you close, speak together the words of Ezekiel 36:27 as a declaration of what the Spirit is doing in your midst: “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.” This is the promise. This is the reality. This is the God we serve.

*“I will put My Spirit within you
and cause you to walk in My statutes,
and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”*

Ezekiel 36:27, NASB 1995

Key Texts: Numbers 11:24–29; Isaiah 32:13–15; 44:1–5; Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekiel 36:22–27; 37:1–14; Joel 2:28–29; Acts 2:14–21; Hebrews 8:7–13; 10:15–17; 2 Corinthians 3:1–6; Romans 8:11, 23

Soli Deo Gloria

To God Alone Be the Glory

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

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