

Although the Holy Spirit was already active in the Old Testament period, he was, according to the promises of the prophets, poured out in matchless abundance on the church after the ascension of Christ (Nehemiah 9:20; Isaiah 63:11; Acts 2:1–39). This happened on the Day of Pentecost, the Old Testament harvest festival. The Holy Spirit is therefore, in a special way, the Spirit of the New Testament harvest, which consists of the elect from the entire human race. His work is largely concerned with their calling and preservation in this life, and is accomplished by mediating Christ to his people (John 14:16–18; 16:8–11; Ephesians 1:13–14). Thus the work of the Holy Spirit in believers is absolutely essential for their salvation.

The Holy Spirit is the central gift of the new covenant (Ezekiel 36:27; Acts 2:16–21). Ever since Christ poured out the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, believers have received the gift of his indwelling presence immediately upon the exercise of saving faith (Acts 2:39; Romans 8:9). Thus, all true believers have been baptised in (or by) the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13) and possess the gift of the Spirit—a gift which is not to be patiently tarried for or carnally peddled.

(Sola 5 Confession 6.3–6.4)

In his book on the Holy Spirit, Francis Chan writes of the dissatisfaction that many people seem to face with the church: “We understand something very important is missing.... I believe that this missing SOMETHING is actually a missing SOMEONE—namely, the Holy Spirit. Without him, people operate in their own strength and only accomplish human-size results. The world is not moved by love or actions that are of human creation. And the church is not empowered to live differently from any other gathering of people without the Holy Spirit. But when believers live in the power of the Spirit, the evidence in their lives is supernatural. The church cannot help but be different, and the world cannot help but notice.”

The new covenant church ought to show the reality of the Spirit’s power in a way that is obvious to all. The Confession, in 6.3 and 6.4, draw attention to the special ministry of the covenant in the new covenant era.

The Confession notes that **the Holy Spirit was already active in the Old Testament period**. Can you identify some of the ways in which the Holy Spirit was active in the Old Testament? Here are some references to help you.

Genesis 1:2; Psalm 104:30: _____

Numbers 27:18; Judges 3:10; 1 Samuel 10:9–10: _____

2 Samuel 23:2; Ezekiel 2:2: _____

You may be able to identify other texts in the Old Testament that speak of the Spirit at work, but the above should at least make the point that the Spirit was not entirely inactive before Pentecost.

While the Spirit was active in the Old Testament, he was, according to the promises of the prophets, poured out in matchless abundance on the church after the ascension of Christ. The Confession speaks of the **matchless abundance** of the Spirit in the new covenant era. Read the account of the pouring out of the Spirit in Acts 2:1–13 and identify some of the differences between this outpouring of the Spirit and the ministry of the Spirit in the Old Testament. _____

The outpouring of the Spirit **happened on the Day of Pentecost, the Old Testament harvest festival**. The symbolism—that is the connection of the event with harvest—is significant because it shows that the **Holy Spirit is therefore, in a special way, the Spirit of the New Testament harvest, which consists of the elect**

from the entire human race. His work is largely concerned with their calling and preservation in this life, and is accomplished by mediating Christ to his people. Thus the work of the Holy Spirit in believers is absolutely essential for their salvation.

John 14:16–18 and 16:8–11 highlight the role of the Spirit in bringing people to salvation. Why is it important to recognise the role of the Spirit in salvation? _____

What did Paul mean when he spoke of the Spirit as a “seal” and a “guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it” (Ephesians 1:13–14)? What is this “inheritance” and how should it encourage us that the Spirit is the “seal” of this inheritance? _____

The Confession identifies the Holy Spirit as **the central gift of the new covenant** and adds: **Ever since Christ poured out the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, believers have received the gift of his indwelling presence immediately upon the exercise of saving faith.**

The **central gift** of the Holy Spirit, according to Ezekiel 36:27, would have an astounding result. What was that result? _____

According to Romans 8:9, what is the mark that someone belongs to Christ? _____

If having the Spirit is the mark that someone is a child of God, how do we know that someone has the Spirit? Read Ezekiel 36:26–32, where the outpouring of the Spirit in the new covenant is promised, and see if you can identify some things that characterise those in whom the Spirit dwells. _____

The Confession concludes: **Thus, all true believers have been baptised in (or by) the Spirit and possess the gift of the Spirit—a gift which is not to be patiently tarried for or carnally peddled.**

The Confession hereby equates the filling with the Spirit with baptism in the Spirit. This is not the universal understanding of what it means to be baptised in the Spirit. For example, one large Charismatic church in South Africa identifies baptism in the Spirit this way: “The new birth is the work of regeneration that the Holy Spirit executes, by which he then indwells the believer. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience distinct and subsequent to the new birth.... The baptism of the Holy Spirit is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance.” Read 1 Corinthians 12:13 and, taking into account what you know of the situation in Corinth, critique this understanding of baptism in the Spirit. _____

Note that this is probably not the best time to discuss in detail whether or not the gift of tongues continues today. There will be opportunity to have this discussion later in this particular section in the Confession (see 6.9), but for now it is more important to understand what baptism in the Spirit IS than what it is NOT.