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Ponderings from the Prophets

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Ezekiel 26:24-28 (ESV)

I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 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. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Zechariah 4:6

Then he said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.

Friends. Just a reminder as we're walking through the Old Testament and we're doing this Bible overview. There are two narratives going on, two stories being told to us, two revelations given to us about what's true in our world and in our history. One narrative is what's happening in the scene realm, that we can see what God has created. We live in what God has created. We see the gift of life. We see the flourishing of life on our planet. We also see the destruction, the death and decay that's on our planet, and that's all that we see. But also in the thread of Scripture, there is the constant reference to the unseen, that which is going on behind the scenes, which you and I can only experience by faith and understand by faith through God's revelation of His Word and through what he's taught us and what he's revealed to us there. And of course, all of this came into existence not by just some random chance or some crazy, unpredictable set of circumstances. All of creation. We can see it. We know it in our hearts. Is designed by some intelligent designer. Behind the scenes. The wonder and the marvel of it all is just crystal clear that the Earth is just in the right place to support life and the marvel and wonder of regeneration and recreation and fruit bearing that happens on our earth. Friends, this is not just random chance. There is a designer behind the scenes, and we see this all the way through and we see his hand operating in the world.

It's not just as if there's a creator who stepped back from the world, but he's involved in the world. The Bible tells us he's intricately working to display who he is and to declare his glory to us. And he's teaching us about his ways. And the whole Bible unveils this beautiful picture of a God who loves his

creation and loves the people in it, and cares deeply for them, and is deeply saddened by the pain and the hurt and the heartache we cause ourselves by rebelling against him and rebelling against his ways. And this God is very patient and kind and tender and gentle and oh, this is a story, friends. The more you study the Bible, the more understanding you get of the nature of God, the more you are just drawn to him, to to experience his goodness and his kindness and his power and his grace to us. But how do we experience him now? The Bible is clear we don't live in the time when we could see Jesus face to face. We experience him through the presence of His Spirit, and an understanding that the spirit gives us in the revelation of His Word. And so as we've unfolded the Old Testament, We've seen God's hand working down through history. And when we say that, we mean His spirit working in history to bring about his good will and his good plan, and to draw people to himself, to experience him and come to know what he's like and start to live in a vibrant relationship with him so that he might display his power and his glory and his light through us.

So that's what the book's about, friends. It's about the work of God in human history. It's accurate about history, but it's also accurate spiritually about the nature of God. He hasn't made mistakes in revealing his word to us. And he describes himself as working in the world now by the presence of his spirit. And that was the same through the Old Testament. What do we know of His Holy Spirit? He was there in the beginning. We know that at the very start, at the genesis of all things, the very first few verses of the Bible says this. It was God in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, but the earth was formless and empty, and darkness was over the surface of the deep. And then it says this, that the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. There is the presence of God, and God is going to bring order to his creation, so that we see the intelligent design that's around us today. Sometimes throughout the whole Old Testament, the Holy Spirit of God is referred to as the Breath of God that gives life to all humanity and life to all that lives, all of the creatures.

We see this in Genesis chapter two verse seven, when God breathed into the first man that he created the very breath of life. This is the Ruach of God. The Spirit of God breathed life into this man. We see it in job 33, verse four. We see it in Psalm 104, verses 29 through 30, that the Holy Spirit is like the breath of God, which gives life to that which it breathes on. The Holy Spirit breathed. We understand all the pages of the scriptures. All Scripture is God breathed. Paul wrote to Timothy. Not just some of it, but from Genesis to Revelation. God's spirit worked in human history over a period of 1400 years, through 40 different individuals, to breathe these pages of this book onto the papyrus paper, whatever it was written on in that particular time. And it is one congruent story that unfolds this marvelous work of God in human history. And this could only be done ultimately by one author. When you think of these writings written different centuries that actually fit together and make a congruent understanding and are accurate to what we find in history today, and even in geology and the study of what we uncover in land France. This is the hand of God who does not make mistakes, who is perfect in every way. There from the very beginning, carrying those people along through the Old Testament times, the New Testament says, inspiring his Word to be written down so that you, you, and I can have it.

And this word brings life to you and I. Today, friends, I don't know if you've ever experienced this, but if you've ever kind of sensed God speaking to you through His Word because His Spirit is impressing His Word on you, that's what he does. The Word of God is the sword of the spirit. And the Bible says this. When God uses it, it's like a sword that can divide our soul from our spirits and give us revelation internally, deep in our hearts. Nothing else can do this. It's like we have epiphanies, like we have understandings that spiritually are illuminated to us by the work of the Holy Spirit who breathed the pages of Scripture, was there in the beginning, carried the saints of old along, inspired the prophets to speak, corrected, and instructed his people all through the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, the Bible tells us in Genesis chapter six, at the very beginning, God's Spirit was striving with sinners,

working to resist and restrain evil in the world to convict us. The Bible says to convict us when we're moving in the wrong direction, when we're moving toward sin and unrighteousness. This is God's kindness to us working in the world by his unseen hand in the presence of his spirit.

And then we see as we move towards the end of the Old Testament, he empowers the work of the rebuilding of the temple after the people come back into Israel. And then he starts to prophesy. And you see this all through the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit speaking of a coming day. When the Savior comes, the Messiah comes, the one comes. Who who saves us from all of this brokenness in the world. And you can feel this building in the writings of Scripture all through the Old Testament, because the Holy Spirit is always pointing towards Jesus. You see God the Father and God the Son and God the Spirit all work to serve each other in perfect community and the Holy Spirit. We know when we're operating with the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit always exalts and points to Jesus. And that is exactly what happens all through the Old Testament. The Old Testament prophets speak to the people in their time, but then when they speak of the future, they're always hinting at this coming Messiah in the line of David, in the line of Abraham. And at the very end of the Old Testament, we come to the last prophet, Malachi, and he says something interesting. He says, I will send the prophet Elijah to you. And the Holy Spirit, of course, would quicken these prophets, and he will come before that great and dreadful day of the Lord. And here's what it says he will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents.

Friend, this is about the kindness of God working in human history to continue to draw us back to his ways, to the center of how he designed like a family to work so that we might flourish in life so that we might not have all the pain and suffering and hurt and heartache of this broken world with its broken relationships. And God is always working to do this by the power of His Spirit. And I just I just want to remind you that this spirit that's at work in the world that was prophesying through the Old Testament, that was there in creation, laying the foundations of the earth. This is the same spirit the prophet Joel spoke of when he prophesied of a coming day. And it's the day that we're living in when this spirit would be poured out on all people, not in the Old Testament way where the spirit came upon individuals, but after the time of Christ and after the death of Christ and the Messiah came. And we're going to move into the New Testament here starting next week. When the Messiah came and the temple curtain was torn in two, and you and I started to have fellowship with God in a whole new way because of the shed blood of his son sprinkling our hearts clean with the prophet Zechariah spoke of where our hearts now become not a heart of stone, but were given a new heart, and a new spirit is put within us.

You and I can be empowered by to live and to walk in this spirit. Friends, This is the whole new covenant. This is the opportunity you and I have to live under the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives right now. This is the same spirit that entered that tomb some 2000 years ago, where the dead body of Jesus lay and the power of the spirit came into that body and resurrected the body of Jesus to new life, symbolizing what God wants to do with our mortal bodies. Quicken us to live in a supernatural way, even though our bodies are decaying and wasting away outwardly. That's happening inwardly by the work of God's Spirit. You and I can be renewed day by day by day, growing richer and stronger in our walks with God. Until that day when we shed this old earth suit. We step out of this old body and we step into the very presence of the Almighty. And where the spirit of the Lord is there, and there's no more flesh to be crucified in us. We know great freedom. We know We know great joy. We know great peace. We. Friends, it will be overwhelming and we can have foretastes of it right now.

I remind you again with the Scripture says, no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind can conceive what God has prepared for those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. And so, friend,

as we've been going through the scriptures, I just want to ask you, the scriptures aren't just for our knowledge, they're for the instruction of our heart, so that in our heart we might come to know God, that we might be corrected from our sin, trained in righteousness, and have a sense of deep knowing, of knowing of him by faith. He is calling us to faith. You see, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. We read through the scriptures. We teach the scriptures so the Holy Spirit can impress these revelations on our hearts, and we can come awake and alive in him and start to and continue to live as his people in the world. Do you know, friend, that the Holy Spirit wants to inspire you today? You know, to be inspired is to be breathed into. That's what it literally means. And that was the first work of the Spirit of God after creating human flesh. Was he breathed into the first man the very breath of life, and then he breathed his word into those that went down before us. If you read through the scriptures, you see God breathed faith into his people by the power of His Word.

And he's still doing it today. And he wants to do it with you, friend. And that means confessing our sins when we grieve the spirit. That means not quenching the spirit or pretending like the Spirit's not there, or trying to be in control. Resisting the spirit. The Bible speaks of putting out the Spirit's fire by quenching it and saying, I don't want to be a part of it. Are you kidding me? The Spirit of God and the work of God that brings life in the world. The Bible. But our stubborn hearts. Friends, I've done this. I've resisted God because I like to be in control. We can quench him. We can resist him. And we can, in a sense, grieve the spirit and sadden the spirit by fixing so much on our sinful nature, or negative things or bitterness and having our hearts hard. But friends, God's Spirit is always reaching to us, wanting to soften our hearts, as the prophet Ezekiel said. He wants to take that heart of stone out of us and put in this heart of flesh. And then he wants to put His spirit in us, which will move us to follow his decrees, what Ezekiel said, and to be careful to want to. Walk with him so that we might live in the blessing that he designed us to live the anointing he had designed us to live. And this is why Paul, after kicking against the work of the spirit in his life for many years, would later, after meeting God and experiencing the patience and the kindness and the goodness of God through Jesus in his life.

This is why he would write to the believers in Ephesus, and by then God's work in His Spirit to us today, he would say, do not be foolish. Don't get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery or unrestrained, self-indulgent, immoral behavior. Don't. Don't get carried away with the craziness of this world. Instead, he says, be filled with the spirit. Friends, that's what God wants for us. To fill us with his presence so that we can operate under his power, in his strength. It's something we have to learn, and we listen to His word, and we let it correct us. And our hearts get soft. We become pliable before God, and he can minister to us and work in us as we move from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Friends. We're moving from a time where God starts to pour out his spirit far more than he did in Old Testament times, and it's beautiful to live in this time. Father, thank you for your work down through history, preparing the world for your Messiah. As we sit on this side of the arrival of Christ. Help us understand what all you've done for us, and help us be tuned and aware and listening and open to the work of your spirit. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.