

And what is even more difficult to understand is that Chafer made this positive declaration in 1948, whereas C. I. Scofield, writing in 1899 in his *Plain Papers on the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* stated the following (pp. 30-31):

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit is revealed . . . as a divine Person. As such He is associated in the work of creation strives with sinful man . . . gives skill of hand . . . bestows physical strength. . . and qualifies the servants of God for a various ministry . . . To this should be added that operation of the spirit by which the men of faith in the Old Testament ages were regenerated. While this doctrine is not explicitly taught in the Old Testament (except prophetically), our Lord's words in John 3:5 and Luke 13:28, leave no doubt as to the fact itself. Since the new birth is essential to seeing and entering the kingdom of God, and since the Old Testament saints are in that kingdom, it follows necessarily that they were born of the Spirit.

Chafer's positive declaration is again difficult to understand in the light of the statements of William Kelly, writing in 1915 in his *Lectures on the New Testament Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*. Kelly states (p. 295) that "the saints had a new nature all through the Old Testament times (though not revealed then) . . ." He also says: "there is such a thing as spiritual life; and there always was such a thing; for it is the necessary condition of having to do with God. There always was, as there is, a positive new nature given to the believer; that is, it is not merely a question of faith, but of a new life." (pp. 3-4) Even more explicitly, he asserts: "Of course, He, the son, is the quickener of all saints, and therefore it is to me no question whether the Old Testament saints have not been quickened as really as ourselves; assuredly they must be and were. I hold, that there never was but one Saviour, and consequently that the new birth, which all need for God's kingdom, is ever the impartation, by the Spirit, of the life which is in the Son of God." (p. 21) And so that Kelly will not be misunderstood, he states: "in point of fact, no intelligent believer doubts it was true from the fall onwards, and that the Old Testament saints were born of water and the Spirit no less than those of the New Testament." (p. 52)

Notice! Neither Scofield nor Kelly subscribe to the principle that lack of explicit teaching concerning an operation of the spirit in a particular time period indicates absence of that operation during that time period!

Simply because the concept of the church as a spiritual body in which Christ and all believers are united was not revealed in the Old Testament, does this mean that the church in this sense could not have existed during the Old Testament? Only if one adopts the assumption: "not revealed therefore nonexistent."

Almost all dispensationalists in the early period of the movement rejected this assumption; a number in the middle period adopted it; and quite a few in the contemporary period have once again rejected it.

However, if one rejects this assumption -- NOT REVEALED, THEREFORE NONEXISTENT -- how can one continue to stress the idea that the church was nonexistent in the Old Testament period, simply on the ground that the concept of the church (and the New Testament church, at that!) was not revealed in the Old Testament?