

Being Filled With the Spirit

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*This study is designed for individual reflection:
its questions are not particularly conducive to group study.*

THE SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Read Numbers 11:16-29.

- What happened when the Spirit of God came upon these people?
- What did God tell Moses the purpose for the Spirit of God coming on them was?
- What was Moses' desire?

Below is a chart of every passage in the Old Testament that talks about the Spirit of the Lord coming on a person. When looking at these passages, we need to keep two things in mind: the phenomena that accompany the Spirit's coming on a person and the purpose of the Spirit's coming on a person. In some cases we know the reason but not the accompanying phenomena (such as Bezalel in Exodus 31 - we are told why he was filled but his filling is never described in the Scripture, and for some others the event is described but no detail is given).

Who?	What Happened?	To What Purpose?
70 elders: Numbers 11:16-29	prophecy	to lead the people
Bezalel: Exodus 31:3; 35:30-31	no details	to serve God with skill
Balaam: Numbers 24:2	prophecy	to demonstrate God's power
Joshua: Deuteronomy 34:9	no details	to lead the people
Othniel: Judges 3:10	no details	to appoint him judge
Gideon: Judges 6:34	blew a trumpet	to deliver God's people
Jephthah: Judges 11:29	no details	to deliver God's people
Samson: Judges 13:25; 14:6,19; 15:14	no details ¹	to deliver God's people
Saul: 1 st Samuel 10:9-13; 11:6; 19:23-24	prophecy	to lead the people
David: 1 st Samuel 16:13	no details	to lead the people
Saul's Messengers: 1 st Samuel 19:20-21	prophecy	to allow David to escape
Amasa: 1 st Chronicles 12:18	prophecy	to appoint them leaders
Azarash: 2 nd Chronicles 15:1-8	prophecy	to encourage King Asa
Zechariah: 2 nd Chronicles 24:20	prophecy	to judge King Joash

There is a great deal of consistency in these experiences: when the Spirit of God comes on a person it is usually for the purpose of enabling them to do some task and is usually accompanied by some audible manifestation that the person gives in response to the Spirit's presence.

¹ Samson is filled multiple times. No details are given of his initial filling. Afterwards we see Samson experiencing incredible strength and agility when the Spirit comes on him: he broke things and hurt people.

Notice that this is a rare occurrence in the Old Testament. This is every single instance that describes the Spirit of God coming on a person: it only happened 14 times. How different from Moses' hope!

With that in mind, read Joel 2:28-32.

- What is the prophecy that is given?
- What will be the result of the outpouring of the Spirit?
- Who will receive the Holy Spirit?

JOEL'S PROMISE EXPLAINED

Read Matthew 3:11 and John 1:33.

- What is the prophecy of John the Baptist?

Read John 14:15-17, 25-26.

- What is the promise of Jesus?
- Where will the Holy Spirit be?
- What will the Holy Spirit do? (See also John 15:26; 16:13-15)

Read John 7:37-39.

- What had to happen before the Holy Spirit could be given?

Read John 20:21-23 and Acts 1:4-5 (see also Luke 24:49).

- They have an experience with the Holy Spirit, yet Jesus tells them to wait for another. How can you explain this? Did they have the Spirit or not?

JOEL'S PROMISE FULFILLED

Read Acts 2.

- What accompanied the Holy Spirit's arrival?
- What happened when the Holy Spirit came upon them?
- Notice that the manifestation of the Spirit's presence is different from the Spirit's purpose in coming. What is the purpose of the baptism with the Holy Spirit? (Acts 1:8)

- Peter links the events surrounding him with Joel's prophecy. What phenomena did Joel say would accompany the fulfillment? What phenomenon does Peter interpret as fulfilling that prophecy?
- Who does Peter say that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is for?

THE SPIRIT IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

- There are 5 examples in Acts of people being filled with the Spirit for the first time.² Look up these Scriptures in Acts and determine if the Bible points out a consistent experience. Put a in each applicable box.

Did the baptism with the Holy Spirit follow conversion?

Acts 2:1-13 Acts 8:14-19 Acts 9:17-19 Acts 10:42-46 Acts 19:1-7

Was the laying on of hands necessary for the baptism with the Holy Spirit?

Acts 2:1-13 Acts 8:14-19 Acts 9:17-19 Acts 10:42-46 Acts 19:1-7

Was the event described in any detail beyond "they were filled with the Holy Spirit"?

Acts 2:1-13 Acts 8:14-19 Acts 9:17-19 Acts 10:42-46 Acts 19:1-7

If the event was described in detail, were there any things that happened in each instance?

Read Galatians 3:2, Acts 1:12-14, and Luke 11:11-13.

Based on the questions and answers above, if you have not already been baptized with the Holy Spirit is there any reason why you should not seek now?

Whatever you decide about being filled with the Spirit, remember that this is not a one-time event. Spirit empowerment is not a thing we receive but a relationship we experience. Read Acts 4:23-31 and Ephesians 5:18: seek continually!

² I include the experience of Saul (Acts 9) on the list, but his experience is strange compared to the other examples in the book of Acts. Read Acts 9:10-19 and answer these three questions: What precisely did God tell Ananias to do? What did Ananias say God had told him to do? What does the text say happened to Saul? Line these up and a discrepancy emerges: Ananias was not instructed to pray for Paul to be filled with the Spirit, but he told Paul that he was. Furthermore, the text doesn't say that Saul was filled with the Spirit when Ananias prayed for him. So it's possible that Saul wasn't filled with the Spirit in Acts 9 (although most theologians maintain that he was). Now it's clear that Saul was eventually filled with the Spirit – the book of Acts gives ample evidence of Paul's empowerment. With that in mind, it's worth reflecting on 1st Corinthians 14:18.