

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study guide is to facilitate your study of both the Filling of the Spirit and the Baptism of the Spirit (which I'll use interchangeably with the more technical, Baptism *in* the Spirit, since we are immersed in the Holy Spirit by Christ, who baptizes us). This is a supplement to the sermon and is based on my study and meditation of the relevant verses. The subject matter is controversial and is not one over which we should divide. If we divide anything, let us rightly divide the Word of Truth (2 Tim. 2:15)!

STUDY NOTES

Every instance of the FILLING¹ of the Spirit in Luke-Acts:

- [Luk 1:15-16, 41-44, 67 ESV] 15 for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be **filled with the Holy Spirit**, even from his mother's womb. 16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, ... 41 And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And **Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit**, 42 and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ... 67 And his father **Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit** and prophesied, saying,
- [Act 4:8, 31 ESV] 8 Then Peter, **filled with the Holy Spirit**, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, ... 31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit** and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.
- [Act 9:17-20 ESV] 17 So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and **be filled with the Holy Spirit**." 18 And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; 19 and taking food, he was strengthened. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. 20 And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."
- [Act 13:9-12 ESV] 9 But Saul, who was also called Paul, **filled with the Holy Spirit**, looked intently at him 10 and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? 11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. 12 Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

What do we learn from these examples about the FILLING of the Holy Spirit?

- It is repeatable. Peter is filled with the Spirit in Acts 2, and then twice again in Acts 4. Paul is filled in both Acts 9 and 13.
- Since it is repeatable, it must also be temporary—like a spiritual nitrous boost.
- It results in prophetic testimony. John the Baptist is filled with the Spirit from the womb (Lk. 1:15), and then from the womb, prophetically testifies about Jesus (1:44); Elizabeth is filled with the Spirit and prophesies about Jesus (1:41-43); Zechariah is filled with the Spirit and prophesies (1:67); Peter is filled with the Spirit, not just in Acts 2:4, but in 4:8 and 31, and in each case it is followed by bold testimony; the 120 are filled with the Spirit and then speak in tongues (2:4), which Peter explains as a prophecy phenomenon (2:18-19); Paul is filled with the Spirit in 9:17 and then "immediately" proclaims Christ in 9:20; it happens again to Paul in 13:9, being accompanied by both a miracle and supernatural boldness, which together result in salvation.

¹ To be "filled" with the Spirit is differentiated from being "full of the Spirit," which is a character trait rather than an experience. See Acts 6:3-4.

- I use “prophetic” in its broadest sense here. While in some cases, it involves the narrower sense of dreams and visions (2:17-18) and predicting the future (13:11), it can also apply broadly to testifying about Jesus (cf. Rev. 19:10).
- Thus, the filling of the Spirit is accompanied by prophetic testimony about Jesus, whether that involves signs, wonders, and future-prediction, or else boldly preaching the Gospel as God’s mouthpiece on earth.
- It often, though not always, comes in the face of a hostile audience. In these cases, the filling of the Spirit grants boldness for proclaiming Christ (4:8, 31; 13:9-12).
- Last, the filling of the Spirit occurred not just after, but before Pentecost. This is not true for the baptism of the Spirit, called the promise of the Father, which only occurred after Pentecost. This fact hints to us that there remains a difference between the filling and baptism of the Holy Spirit (even if they can occur simultaneously, as in Acts 2).

Every instance of the BAPTISM of the Spirit in Luke-Acts—and the diverse vocabulary depicting it:

- 1:5: “baptized with the Holy Spirit”
- 1:8: “when the Holy Spirit has come upon you”
- 2:4: “filled with the Holy Spirit”
- 2:18: “I will pour out My Spirit”
- 2:33: “He [Jesus] has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing”
- 5:32: “And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him”
- 8:15: “prayed for them that they might receive the Spirit”
- 8:19: “receive the Holy Spirit”
- 9:17: “be filled with the Holy Spirit”
- 10:44: “the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word”
- 10:45: “the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out, even on the Gentiles”
- 10:47: “received the Holy Spirit”
- 11:15: “the Holy Spirit fell on them”
- 11:16: “baptized with the Holy Spirit”
- 15:8: “giving them the Holy Spirit”
- 19:2: “did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”
- 19:6: “the Holy Spirit came on them”

What do we learn from these examples about the BAPTISM of the Holy Spirit?

- The baptism of the Spirit can be described with terms such as “baptized”, “filled”, “poured out”, “fell on”, “came on”, or of the Spirit being “given/received”.
- The language of “filled with the Spirit” can—at least, in some instances—be used interchangeably with the “baptism in the Spirit,” as in 2:4 and 9:17.
- The different vocabulary words reveal different realities about Spirit-baptism:

- “baptized”: connects it with John’s baptism, which was, (1) initiation into the covenant community (2) an outward show of repentance, (3) for spiritual cleansing/restoration, (4) associated with the dawning of a new age—“the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”
- “filled”: connects it with Old Covenant examples of the Spirit’s empowerment for specific tasks (i.e., Ex. 34; etc.).
 - This means that even though Spirit-baptism is exclusively a New Covenant reality, it was nevertheless foreshadowed by the occasional experience of some Old Covenant saints.
- “pour out”: focuses on the liberality of the Spirit-gift for God’s people. No longer will it be like the days of Moses, when God promised to “take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them” (Num. 11:17; cf. 11:25). Now, God would deluge the church with an unrestrained flood of His presence.
- “fell on”: emphasizes the sudden seizure of individuals by the Spirit’s power.
- “came on”: similar to “fell on”.
- “gift/given”: emphasizes the lavish generosity of Christ to give to us His Spirit at the expense of His life (cf. Acts 2:29-36).
- “received”: emphasizes the special privilege we have as New Covenant believers to receive Christ’s love-gift: the Holy Spirit.

An analysis of this vocabulary—especially that of “baptized in the Spirit”—indicates that Spirit-baptism is associated with conversion. That is, just as John associated water baptism with initiation into the (old) covenant community, repentance, and its associated soul-cleansing, Jesus seems to associate Spirit-baptism with initiation into the (new) covenant community, repentance, and its associated soul-cleansing. If this thesis holds up, it suggests that Spirit-baptism is not a “Second Blessing,” coming perhaps years after conversion. Rather, Spirit-baptism is linked to conversion. It unites us with the body of Christ, the covenant community—just like we read in 1 Corinthians 12:13 (quoted later).

Whether the baptism of the Spirit is simultaneous with conversion (as I believe) or subsequent to it has been a huge debate in the church, ever since the Azusa Street Revival of 1906. Here is how the Assembly of God denomination articulates it:

The most distinguishing features of the baptism in the Holy Spirit are that: (1) it is theologically and experientially distinguishable from and subsequent to the new birth, (2) it is accompanied by speaking in tongues, and (3) it is distinct in purpose from the Spirit’s work of regenerating the heart and life of a repentant sinner.²

We will evaluate the “tongues” aspect momentarily. For now, let us consider further whether the baptism in the Spirit is simultaneous with, or subsequent to, conversion:

- The 120 Jews were baptized in the Spirit in Acts 2, which was subsequent to conversion.
- The three thousand Jews who crucified Christ were baptized in the Spirit, but in conjunction with water baptism and repentance/salvation (Acts 2:38)—aka, with conversion.
- The Samaritans “received the Holy Spirit” (8:17), but it was subsequent to conversion; it came through the laying on of the apostles’ hands (8:14-19).
- Paul was baptized in the Spirit in proximity to his conversion (Acts 9:1-19).
- Cornelius and his Gentile household were baptized in the Spirit at conversion—with no laying of hands, as with the Samaritans, and with no baptism, as with the Jews (Acts 10-11).
- In Ephesus, Paul comes across more Jews who have not been baptized in the Spirit. After asking, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed” (19:2)—as if he expects that conversion and Spirit-

² <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Position-Papers/Baptism-in-the-Holy-Spirit>

baptism to occur simultaneously—Paul then discovers that these men have only known the baptism of John and are ignorant of the baptism of the Spirit (19:2-3). There is reasonable debate about whether these people were Christians. Paul assumes as much when he first meets them, but he then seems to change his tune when he realizes they know nothing about Jesus (19:4). I believe these people were unsaved until they met Paul. Therefore, their baptism in the Spirit was simultaneous to conversion (19:6). If you care to read why I think these “Ephesian twelve” were unsaved before meeting Paul, I explain my reasoning below. Feel free to skip ahead.

- The stories of two sets of individuals (Apollos, and “the Ephesian twelve”) are told back-to-back (18:24-19:6); they are all set in Ephesus; they are all called disciples of John. These similarities hint at an intended contrast.
 - Unlike the Ephesian twelve, Apollos was “proficient in the Scriptures... had been instructed in the way of the Lord (Jesus)... [was] fervent in Spirit (that is, the Holy Spirit)... [and] was accurately speaking and teaching things about Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John” (18:24-25). In other words, Apollos deeply knew the Scriptures, preached accurately the way of Jesus, ministered in the power of the Spirit, and was not baptized in water as if he needed conversion. He lacked some understanding about Jesus, which Priscilla and Aquila corrected (18:25), but he knew enough to be saved.
 - In contrast to Apollos, Luke says nothing about the “Ephesian twelve” knowing the Scripture; they are ignorant of Christ; they are ignorant of the Holy Spirit; and Paul leads them to the sacrament of Christian conversion: baptism.
 - I think we are on safe ground to conclude that Apollos was saved despite his incomplete knowledge (with Priscilla/Aquila filling in some gaps), but that the other disciples were not saved until Paul preached. Why is this relevant? Because Pentecostals use the story of the Ephesian Twelve to say that Spirit baptism is subsequent to conversion, arguing that they were already saved, but baptized in the Spirit much later. I believe this contradicts the context.
- The confusion within the body of Christ is understandable! Some people receive the Spirit at the moment of conversion (the three thousand on Pentecost; Cornelius; the Ephesian disciples of John), but some, subsequent to conversion (the one hundred and twenty; the Samaritans). Some people receive the Spirit in conjunction with water baptism and/or laying on of hands (the three thousand, the Samaritans; Paul; the Ephesian disciples of John), but others, irrespective of those (Cornelius). How do we make sense of every peculiarity?
 - First, all sides must acknowledge that these early disciples existed in a historical time warp. The one hundred and twenty in the upper room received the Spirit after conversion because Spirit-baptism was not available until then (Acts 1:4-5; cf. Jhn 7:39; 16:13-14; etc.).
 - Second, when we read in Acts 2, 9, and 19 that the Spirit is given in conjunction with baptism, we should understand this as being associated with conversion. While we don’t have a perfect understanding for why some are baptized in the Spirit before water baptism, and some after, in each of these cases the timing is so close that we should not split hairs. Spirit baptism and conversion are tightly connected in each of these instances.
 - The two clearest cases for evaluating whether the baptism of the Spirit is subsequent or simultaneous are in Acts 8 and 10-11. The Samaritans are not baptized in the Spirit until after conversion, when the Jewish apostles come to lay hands on them; the Gentiles are baptized in the Spirit at the moment of conversion, without anyone laying hands on them, and without even being baptized. And this leads to another question...

Why did the baptism of the Spirit occur subsequent to conversion for the Samaritans and simultaneous with conversion for the Gentiles? And which of these should we consider to be the normative Christian experience—now that we are outside the “time warp” of the first century?

- I would argue that the Samaritans required the laying on of hands by Peter and John because they were a “special case.” If God was to reunite the southern and northern tribes of Israel (Ezek. 37:15ff)—

which is to say, Jerusalem/Judea with Samaria—then the Samaritans would have to submit to Jerusalem's leadership. If the Samaritans were not blessed by the Jerusalem church, the split between them would have continued, and Ezekiel's prophecy would not have been fulfilled. I recognize this is an inference, but it makes logical sense of related Scriptures and cultural context.

- That Samaria is a "special case" is additionally supported by Luke's parenthetical comment:
 - *[Act 8:16-17 ESV] 16 for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.*
 - Dr. Allison remarks: "the Samaritan experience of the delay of the Holy Spirit is an unusual, rather than typical, experience, as only an unusual experience calls for an explanatory comment."
- I would also argue Cornelius' story—where the Spirit baptizes at the moment of conversion—is intended by Luke to be the normative experience for Christians. Here is why I say Cornelius' experience should be considered normative.
 - Ancient authors organized their works in such a way as to communicate truth. Luke is no different. The story of Cornelius' Spirit-baptism is told twice, in the center of the book, as an emphatic centerpiece for normative Christian experience.
 - Out of the three people groups—Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles—only the latter existed, in a sense, outside of the historical time-warp. Jews and Samaritans had experience with the God of Israel and required special attending circumstances. In a word, there are reasonable explanations for the way God poured His Spirit out in other unique situations, involving Jews and Samaritans.
 - When Paul first (wrongly) assumes the salvation of the men in Ephesus, he asks, "Did you receive the Spirit when you believed?"—because this was the normative expectation. He did not expect them to receive the Spirit after years of waiting, of "tarrying", of fasting, etc. He expected it to occur when they believed.
 - A cross-reference with 1 Corinthians 12:13 tells us that all Christians have been baptized in the Spirit: "For we are all baptized in one Spirit, into the body of Christ."
 - The word "baptized" or "baptism" is a word the connotes initiation. Just as water baptism is associated with conversion, so must be Spirit baptism. In short, we must not divide asunder the sign (water baptism) and the thing signified (Spirit baptism). Both are associated with conversion as part of our initiation into the faith.
 - As John Stott says, "The norm of Christian experience then, is a cluster of four things: repentance, faith in Jesus, water-baptism and the gift of the Spirit. Though the perceived order may vary a little, the four belong together and are universal in Christian initiation..." Stott goes on to explain why the Spirit fell on some believers some time after conversion: "Pentecost caught up to them."

What, then, is the difference between the Filling and Baptism of the Spirit?

- **Filling of the Holy Spirit:** the temporary, repeatable, empowerment of the Holy Spirit for testifying to Jesus.
- **Baptism of the Spirit:** The promise of the Father, by the work of the Son, to immerse new believers in the Holy Spirit, for the purpose of incorporating them into Christ's body—the church.

Is the gift of tongues "the initial physical evidence" of having received the baptism of the Spirit?

- Throughout Acts, we have many instances in which this is the case, but we also have cases in which people are baptized in the Spirit without mention of tongues.
- It is possible that the three thousand converts (2:41) spoke in tongues and we were not told about it; it's also possible that they never spoke in tongues. We cannot discern conclusively from Acts whether tongues is always "the initial physical evidence" of Spirit-baptism.
- We can cross-reference, however, and reasonably conclude that not every believer is intended by God to speak in tongues:
 - *[1Co 12:28-31 ESV] 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all*

*possess gifts of healing? **Do all speak with tongues?** Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.*

- Paul's implied answer to each of these questions is 'no.' Not everyone will receive the gift of tongues. Since, however, the baptism of the Spirit is for every believer, we must conclude that tongues is not necessarily the initial physical evidence of being baptized in the Spirit.