

# **“FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT”**

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. “Filled with the Holy Spirit” and “full of the Holy Spirit” are biblical expressions, with different people identified as persons said to have been “filled with” and/or “full of the Holy Spirit.”
2. Today these expressions are supremely popular in our religious culture with more and more people in numerous religious bodies claiming to be “fill with” or “full of the Holy Spirit” because they claim to have experienced what they call a “Pentecost Experience.”
3. This is the case in our day in spite of the fact that the N.T. offers no such promise to present-day disciples of Jesus Christ, though such promise and such practice did exist in the days of the infant church, and the days of the final, and incomplete, full revelation and confirmation of God’s holy will, which is now in written form in the Book we call the Bible, the O.T. and N.T.
4. Since “filled with” and “full of the Holy Spirit” are biblical expressions and God’s people at one time were said to be “filled with” and or “full of the Holy Spirit,” we raise and discuss the question: What do these expressions mean?
5. Since they are biblical expressions, surely the Bible explains what they mean, how God’s people were so filled, and why they were so filled, and why no such thing is promised to believers today.
6. Obviously, to learn what these expressions mean as used in the N.T., we must find and study in context the passages where they are found.

### **II. DISCUSSION**

#### **A. 1<sup>ST</sup>, WE LIST THE N.T. PASSAGES IN WHICH THE EXPRESSIONS ARE FOUND OF WHICH THERE ARE THREE SEPARATE LISTS.**

1. The 1<sup>st</sup> list is of passages where the word “Spirit” is used in connection with the word “**filled**” from the Gr. term

*PIMPLEMI* (*pletho*), play-tho, meaning “to fill,” found in Lk.1:15,41,67; Ac.2:4; 4:8,31; 9:17 and 13:9.

2. The 2<sup>nd</sup> list contains passage where the word “Spirit” is used in connection with the word “full,” from the Gr. term *pleres*, (play-race) meaning “full of”; “filled up” “thoroughly permeated with,” found in: Lk.4:1; Ac.6:3,5; 7:55; 11:24.
3. The 3<sup>rd</sup> list is of passages where the word “Spirit” is used in connection with the word “filled”, from the Gr. term *pleroo* (play-ro-o) meaning “to fill”; “to make full,” i.q., “to fill to the full;” found in: Ac.13:52; Eph.5:18.

**B. 2<sup>ND</sup>, A STUDY OF EACH PASSAGE ON TH 1<sup>ST</sup> LIST INVOLVING “FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT” FROM THE GREET TERE “PIMPLEMI” (play-tho).**

1. Lk.1:15.
  - a. The angel announcing to Zacharias the birth of John said, “and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.”
  - b. Because in every other N.T. passage where the Holy Spirit is used in connection with the Gr. *pimplemi* (*pletho*) it is referring to the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit at work, we conclude such is the case in Lk.1:15.
  - c. J.S. Lamar, Commentary on Luke, p.23, thus concludes, in agreement with Bloomfield, when he says this is a Hebrew hyperbole denoting that John was to be filled with the Holy Spirit “from the earliest period.”
  - d. Barnes Notes, Lk-Jno., p.4, says, “shall be divinely designated or appointed to this office and qualified for it by all needful communications from the Holy Spirit.”
2. Lk.1:41, “...and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.”
  - a. There is no question this a miraculous filling with the Holy Spirit, especially when one views the results of her being “filled with the Holy Spirit” as revealed in Vv.42-45.
3. Lk.1:67 refers to the fact that Zacharias “was filled with the Holy Spirit” with the result that he “prophesied,” leaving no doubt this is another case of the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit at work in an individual.

4. Ac.2:4, “And they (the apostles) were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Cf. Vv.6,8,11.
  - a. Cf. Jno.16:13; 20:19-23; Lk.24:44-49; Mk.9:1; Ac.1:4-8.
  - b. There can’t be any doubt that where the word “**filled**” from the Gr. term *pimplemi* is used in connection with “Holy Spirit,” it has reference to the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit at work.
5. Ac.4:8 is another case of the same nature, because when Peter was “**filled** (*pimplemi, pletho*) [pronounced, play-tho] with the Holy Spirit,” he did some inspired preaching as in Vv.8-12.
  - a. Note: There is no reason to believe that the power of the Holy Spirit was constantly and continuously at work in the apostles every minute of every hour of every day 24/7/365; or that they were never at any time without the power working in them.
  - b. They were “filled with the Holy Spirit”, or operating, or working , or performing works, under his power, when and where they needed it. Cf. Mt.10:16-19.
  - c. The power of the Spirit needed was given when needed.
  - d. Solved the supposed problem of references to them being given the Holy Spirit again and again. It is not a matter of “filled;” being filled again and again with more and more
6. Ac.4:31 is another case where being “**filled** (*pimplemi, pletho, play-tho*) with the Holy Spirit” refers to the miraculous power of the Spirit is at work, by which they “spake the word of God with boldness,” and worked miracles.
  - a. In Vv.29,30 they prayed for boldness to speak the word, the truth, in the face of great opposition – threatenings – and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.
  - b. Vv.31,33 declare that their prayer was answered.
  - c. Clearly they were filled with an effect (or power) of the Holy Spirit, not with deity or with a personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
  - d. Further thoughts on Ac.4:23,24,31,33.
    - (1) V.23, “and being let go, they (the apostles) went to their own company (the church).…”

- (2) V.24, “And when they (“their own company, V.23) heard that, they (“their own company”) lifted up their voices to God with one accord...”
  - (3) In view of what is said in Vv.24b-33, it would seem that it included the apostles. In fact, even emphasize that it referred primarily to the apostles, or placed the emphasis on them, in the action and the result.
  - (4) V.23, “...and great grace was upon them all.”
    - (a) This word “grace” refers to miraculous gifts in Rom.12:3. Cf. Rom.1:5; Eph.3:1-3.
    - (b) Why would it not be so used in this context?
7. Ac.9:17 is simply a case where Ananias was by the Lord’s authority informing Saul of Tarsus, who was to become Paul, the apostle of Christ to the Gentiles, that he would “be filled with the Holy Spirit.” See 2Cor.12:12; Ac.26:16-20; Rom.1:1; 1Cor.9:1,2; Gal.2:7-9.
8. Another case was Ac.13:9-11

**C. 3<sup>RD</sup>, A STUDY OF EACH PASSAGE ON THE 2<sup>ND</sup> LIST INVOLVING “FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT” FROM THE GREEK TERM “PLERES”.**

- 1. Lk.4:1, “And Jesus being full (*pleres*) of the Holy Spirit returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.”
  - a. This is said in reference to Jesus immediately following the Holy Spirit descending upon him at his baptism by John the Baptist. See Lk.3:21,22. Cf. Mt.3:13-4:1.
  - b. See also Lk.4:16-q19; Isa.61:1ff; Mt.12:28; Lk.11:20.
  - c. Can we doubt the expression involves the miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit, who was deity, at work in the life of Jesus, who himself was deity?
- 2. Ac.6:3,5. Cf. V.8.
  - a. Ac.6:3 is a passage that reveals both the number of men required for the work of benevolence in providing for the needy widows in the Jerusalem church and the qualifications required of the men who were to do the work.
    - (1) “Seven men.”

- (2) “of honest report”
- (3) “full (*pleres*) of the Holy Spirit”
- (4) “and wisdom”
- b. Ac.6:5 names the new “the multitude of disciples” (V.2) chose, which included both Stephen and Philip, both of whom possessed and manifested the power of the Holy Spirit to work miracles.
  - (1) Stephen, Ac.6:8,9,10; 7:55,56.
  - (2) Philip, Ac.8:5-7,13.
- c. Another reason Ac.6:3-5 refers to the miraculous is because of the principle of consistency of language.
  - (1) All other usages of this expression, with the exception of Eph.5:18, and perhaps Ac.13:52, are to miraculous actions of the Holy Spirit.
  - (2) There is no good reason why this is an exception to the meaning of this expression in other passages.
- d. Also, since the wording of Ac.6:5 and Ac.11:24 are basically the same, consistency demands that they mean the same thing, which is a strong argument in favor of Stephen and Philip being able to work miracles prior to Ac.6.
  - (1) After all, baptized believers had been promised “the gift of the Holy Spirit” as God through Joel (Joel 2:28-32) had prophetically promised.
- 3. Ac.11:24 is the case of Barnabas: “For he was a good man, and **full** (*pleres*) of the Holy Spirit...” Cf. Vv.25,26.
  - a. See Ac.4:36: “...Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation)...”
  - b. The ASV says: “Son of exhortation” which implies he was already exhorting the church, as is later mentioned in Ac.11:22-26.
  - c. Since the church was exhorted by the word of God (2Tim.3:16-4:5), Barnabas must have used the word of God in exhorting the church.
  - d. In Ac.4 no N.T. scriptures existed (not written yet); therefore, Barnabas possessed a miraculous gift, a power of the Holy Spirit, the gift of exhortation. Cf. Rom.12:6-8
  - e. If Barnabas exhorted the church by the word of God without the written revelation of the N.T., then he

possessed one of the spiritual gifts given by the laying on-of-the-hands of an apostle;

- (1) Barnabas exhorted the church without the written revelation of the N.T.
- (2) Therefore, Barnabas possessed a spiritual gift – a power of the Holy Spirit – the spiritual gift of exhortation. (Rom.12:6-8).

**D. 4<sup>TH</sup> , A STUDY OF EACH PASSAGE ON THE 3<sup>RD</sup> LIST INVOLVING “FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT” FROM THE GREEK TERM “*pleroo*”.**

1. Eph.5:18,19, “...but be filled with the Spirit...” is an exception. It’s a passage where the expression doesn’t refer to a miraculous working of the Holy Spirit.
  - a. When we study Eph.18,19 along with the companion passage, Col.3:16, we must be convinced that we are dealing with the non-miraculous.
  - b. The phrase “be filled with the Spirit” is the imperative mood, and carries a command – it is a command to obey, a thing in which the one subject to it is active. The command of Col.3:16 is its parallel.
  - c. The fact that all Christians are here commanded to be thus filled, is proof that the passage pertains to the non-miraculous.
  - d. Not all N.T. Christians were miraculously endowed, nor were they commanded to be.
  - e. Here the metonymy of cause is beautifully demonstrated by virtue of the parallel passage, Col.3:16, which commands, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly..”
  - f. The expression in Eph.5:18 “...be filled with the Spirit..” obviously means to be filled with communication (the word) of the Spirit, which is effected by the Spirit (the initial cause); here the cause is given where the effect is clearly intended.
  - g. This is an equation – Eph.5:18 is equated with Col.3:16. In Eph.5:18 we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit, and in Col.3:16 we are told how to obey the command.

- h. Moreover, if the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a promise, not a command, as some brethren contend, then it cannot be obeyed as Eph.5:18 requires. Therefore, Eph.5:18 cannot refer to a personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- 2. Ac.13:52 also seems to be an exception in the use of the expression “And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Spirit.”
  - a. In Ac.13:52 Luke used the same word that Paul uses in Eph.5:18, evidently meaning the same thing as in Eph.5:18.
  - b. But even if it has reference to the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit working in brethren in Ac.13:52, it still can’t refer to personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the disciples.

### III. CONCLUSION

- 1. All the passages in which the expression “filled with the Holy Spirit” and/or “full of the Holy Spirit” is employed, except Eph.5:18, and perhaps Ac.13:52, relate to prophesying or working miracles in some fashion, both of which are effected by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- 2. In our final thoughts we remind you that the idea of being “filled with the Holy Spirit” involves us in an important area of study in biblical hermeneutics in the study and use of figures of speech. One figure is the Metonymy.
  - a. The term is taken from the Greek “*meta*” (to change), and “*onoma*” (name), and is defined by Liddell and Scott (*Greek-English Lexicon*, p.1132) as “...the use of one word for another.”
  - b. Metonymy: “a figure (of speech) by which one word put for another on account of some actual relation between the things signified.”
  - c. Or, The “use of one word for another that it signifies, as the effect for the cause, the cause for the effect, the sign for the thing signified, the container for the thing contained, etc. (a man keeps a good table, instead of good food). –Web. New Collegiate Dict., Second Edition, 1960, p.530.
  - d. Or, “...using the name of one thing for another thing because the two are frequently associated together or because one may

suggest the other.” (B. Berkley Micklesen, *Interpreting the Bible*, pp.185-186.

4. For instance: First century persons were said to be filled with the Holy Spirit where, in actuality, they were filled with miraculous power of the Holy Spirit or with mental illumination (i.e., inspiration and/or revelation).
  - a. It is interesting to note that in every occurrence of the word *pimplemi* (rendered *PLETHO*) meaning “to fill” or “filled” in the N.T., when used in connection with the Holy Spirit, it occurs in the passive voice, which means that those said to be filled with the Holy Spirit were actually being acted upon by the Spirit or were under the influence of the Spirit.
  - b. This is further substantiated by the fact that in each occurrence the context clearly reveals miraculous activity on behalf of the one or ones said to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
  - c. It is clearly the effect (miraculous power or mental illumination) that is evident in the one filled with the Spirit. The metonymy of cause (the cause named where the effect is meant) is clearly seen in these references.
5. The argument is often made that there are two different measures of indwellings, the ordinary (non-miraculous) measure and the miraculous measure.
  - a. Is it reasonable, to say nothing of Scriptural, to speak of an “ordinary” or “natural” measure of an “extraordinary” or “supernatural” action?
  - b. How can the indwelling of deity with humanity, which the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who is deity would be, ever be spoken of as “ordinary” or “natural”?
6. To be “filled with the Holy Spirit” and/or “full of the Holy Spirit” is real and actual, but not literal and personal. For “literal” and “actual” or “real” are not the same!
7. This brings me to one final note on the subject at hand.
  - a. The truth is obvious to me that to affirm the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit in baptized believers is to affirm the indwelling of deity in human beings.
  - b. Here is the real issue we face in the discussions concerning the manner in which the believer is “filled with the Holy Spirit,” or the manner in which the Holy Spirit indwells the believer.

- (1) Has it really dawned on us what we are claiming if and when we claim to be personally indwelt with the Holy Spirit?
  - (2) If it is the case that the Holy Spirit is deity, and it is, and we claim to be indwelt with the Holy Spirit, then are we not, in effect, claiming to be indwelt personally with deity?
8. The only evidence that can be offered from the Scriptures in favor of a divine personality of the Godhead dwelling within a human being leads to the conclusion that only once in the history of mankind has this happened; the man was Jesus of Nazareth, who was “God with us” as a result.
  - a. Jesus of Nazareth is the only human, the only man, in whom deity has ever dwelt personally! He was “God in the flesh.” He was “Emmanuel” – “God with us.”
  - b. He was not simply “a god,” not simply “a man” Rather, he was “God” and “man,” i.e., “God-man.”
  - c. How? By “The Incarnation,” the permanent assumption of a human form by a divine personage, “...the Word (“God,” deity) became flesh and dwelt among men,” Jno.1:17. Thus deity was “imbodied in human flesh,” the flesh of Jesus of Nazareth.