



# Truth Matters

*A Publication Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters*

Scripture Reading  
Week of  
February 13<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>



Monday

- ❖ Leviticus 11, 12
- ❖ Psalm 36
- ❖ Mark 8

Tuesday

- ❖ Leviticus 13, 14
- ❖ Psalm 37
- ❖ Mark 9

Wednesday

- ❖ Leviticus 15, 16
- ❖ Psalm 38
- ❖ Mark 10

Thursday

- ❖ Leviticus 17, 18
- ❖ Psalm 39
- ❖ Mark 11

Friday

- ❖ Leviticus 19, 20
- ❖ Psalm 40
- ❖ Mark 12

Saturday

- ❖ Leviticus 21, 22

Sunday

- ❖ Leviticus 23, 24

## The Filling of the Holy Spirit . . . in the Old Testament?

by Philip Bramblet

I recently wrote about the filling of the Spirit as described by Luke. Luke is the only biblical author who uses the filling metaphor, and he uses two different words to portray two different kinds of filling. One kind of filling is the kind that simply refers to being spiritual. The early church chose seven men who were "full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (Acts 6:3). That is, they were spiritual and wise.

The other kind of filling refers to a special act of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes upon a person to accomplish a specific task, usually the powerful and effective proclamation of the truth. For instance, "Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied" (Luke 1:67); or, "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). This kind of filling is an *unsought, sovereignly bestowed, temporary, repeatable empowerment for a specific task, and is not necessarily related to godliness*.

What I want to show you now is that this kind of act of the Holy Spirit described by Luke as *filling* is essentially identical to the work

of God's Spirit described in the Old Testament.

First, note that the Old Testament terminology is different. The Spirit of the Lord is described as *being upon* someone, *clothing* someone, or *overpowering* someone, but the characteristics and effects of these acts of the Spirit in the OT are the same as Luke's filling. The terminology doesn't have to be the same. How would *you* describe to someone an act performed by a being that has no body and is everywhere at once? None of these descriptions are literal, neither are they technical theological categories (including *filling*). They are all metaphors used by the biblical authors to try to communicate an act performed by a spirit being who is omnipresent. So just because the terminology differs doesn't mean they are describing different things.

Second, note the primary effects of the work of God's Spirit through people in the Old Testament. There are two primary effects: victory in battle, and prophecy.

*Victory in battle:* In Judges 3:10, the Spirit of the LORD came

(*hayah*, "was"<sup>1</sup>) upon Othniel with the result that he became Israel's judge and overpowered Cushanrishathaim of Mesopotamia who had been oppressing Israel. The Spirit of the LORD later came upon (labash, "clothed"<sup>2</sup>) Gideon with the result that he gathered an army and was used to defeat the Midianites (6:34ff). Jephthah had the same work of the Spirit that resulted in his defeating the Ammonites (11:29ff). The last judge recorded to have been influenced by the Spirit of the LORD is Samson. Three times the Spirit of the LORD "came upon him mightily" (*tsalah*, "overpower"<sup>3</sup>) so that he tore apart a lion easily (14:6), killed thirty Philistines (14:19), and later killed one thousand Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey (15:14-15).

*Prophecy:* In fulfillment of a series of signs given by Samuel, Saul was overpowered (*tsalah*) by the Spirit of God and prophesied (10:10). Later, when he sent a band of men to capture David, the Spirit of God came upon them and they prophesied. Saul sent two more groups of men with the same result.

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<sup>1</sup>Leon J. Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 41.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

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Finally Saul himself came to take David, but the Spirit of God came upon him also and he prophesied for several days (1 Sam. 19:18-24).

At the end of David's life he stated that "the Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2 NIV). When Jesus quoted one of David's psalms in Mark 12:36, he said that David was "speaking by the Holy Spirit."

Amassai was a military leader who came with his men to support David (1 Chron. 12:18). When David came out to meet them and ask what they wanted, the Spirit came upon (*labash*, "clothed") Amassai and he spoke an encouraging word of prophecy from the Lord.

The Spirit of God was on Azariah so that he pronounced a prophetic message of encouragement and instruction Asa (2 Chron. 15:1-7).

When several nations gathered together to fight Israel during Jehoshaphat's reign, the Israelites prayed to God for help. In response, the Lord delivered a message of deliverance through Jahaziel precipitated by the Spirit of Yahweh coming upon him (2 Chron. 20:14-17).

When Balaam was employed by Balak to curse the Israelites, the Spirit of God came upon him and he pronounced a prophetic blessing instead (Num. 24:2). Balaam is described in the New Testament as one "who loved the wages of wickedness" (2 Peter 2:15 NIV; cf. Jude 11).

In Micah 3:8 the prophet says, "But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin" (NIV). Micah states that the

influence of the Spirit of Yahweh on him is for the purpose of declaring his prophetic message.

God recounts through Zechariah how the Israelites had hardened their hearts so they could not hear "the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets" (Zech. 7:12 NASB). Since Zechariah was one of the last prophets, the "former prophets" includes almost all the Old Testament prophets.

Many more OT examples of the Holy Spirit causing people to proclaim truth from God could be cited.

What can we observe about this OT work of the Holy Spirit? First, the influence of the Spirit is usually associated with a specific task, whether gathering an army and defeating the enemy, killing a lion, building the tabernacle, or pronouncing a prophecy. The clear implication is that this influence is temporary empowerment for a specific task, especially when one considers that it happened repeatedly to certain people.<sup>4</sup>

Second, this ministry of the Spirit of God was sovereignly bestowed. This may be seen from two facts. First, no one is ever recorded asking for such an experience. Second, it is not related to godliness, since both Balaam and Saul and his henchmen experienced it when they were actually trying to do something sinful (much to their chagrin!). Obviously there were no spiritual prerequisites to being used by the Spirit in this way. God sovereignly bestowed the Spirit upon individuals to accomplish his own purposes.

In summary, the work of the Spirit of Yahweh in the Old Testament is described

as an *unsought, sovereignly bestowed, temporary, repeatable empowerment for a specific task, and is not necessarily related to godliness*. Where have we seen that before? In Luke's description of people being filled with the Spirit (Lk. 1:15, 41, 67; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9)!

One point of application: If I am correct in equating the OT work of God's Spirit with Luke's description of the special filling of the Spirit, it means that any view that elevates the special filling of the Spirit as a sign of great spirituality is incorrect. This is commonly done in many Christian circles. Charismatics take the filling of the Spirit that results in speaking in tongues (or jibberish, in my opinion) to be an indication that the recipient has attained a new height of spirituality. Many Fundamentalists and other Evangelicals commonly teach that this special filling of the Spirit that leads to powerful and effective proclamation of the Gospel is a sign of deep spirituality. But if it is the same as the OT work of the Spirit, they are wrong. The Holy Spirit could sovereignly step in and use a debauched Satan-worshiper to lead thousands to the Lord if he wanted to. This kind of Spirit-filling is not necessarily related to godliness at all. Our efforts should be focused on the other kind of fullness of the Spirit: a spiritual maturity characterized by consistent, Spirit-prompted obedience to the Scriptures.

<sup>4</sup>Two exceptions exist: kings Saul and David. The Holy Spirit seems to have had a continuing presence with these kings, since 1 Samuel 16:13 says "the Spirit of the LORD came mightily on David from that day forward" (emphasis added), and at the same time departed from Saul (1 Sam. 16:14). This indicates that this continuing (although not permanent) presence of God's Spirit was related to their position as king, which is why David says in Psalm 51, "Don't take your Holy Spirit from me." He is saying, "Don't do to me what you did to Saul. Don't remove me as king." This work of the Spirit is unique to these kings and different from the work I am describing.