

"... How many times?"

Are we filled only once? Or, twice? Or, many times? Is this very much like the Roman Catholic claim to sacrifice Jesus at every Mass (which is heresy)? We need to look at the actual word meanings and the context of the words. What is the difference? Simply that Christians cannot rest on wrong meanings, which corrupt true meanings, and thus true doctrine.

With reference to being filled with the Holy Spirit, the primary word is *pimplēmi*. However, as the word is also used with reference to other subjects (food, knowledge, ships, etc.) we must examine the word in its various settings before we can say, one way or the other, if we are filled only once, or possibly many times.

There is also the logical question: if someone or something is 'filled', it might mean it is full to capacity. If someone or something is thus filled to capacity, how can he/it possibly be refilled? After all, filling to capacity leaves no room for extra filling! On the other hand, we can say we have 'filled a room' with furniture, but we do not *literally* mean every space is full of furniture. In scripture we find there are various shades of 'filling', and that the word can apply to many situations.

Matthew 5:6

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Nine chapters later, verse 20, we find the same word for 'filled', this time used to describe the filling of baskets with bread and fish. Yet, the verse above refers to being filled with salvation, or, the Holy Spirit Who brings salvation. In the case of the crowd fed with literal food, though they were filled, they needed 'filling' again, perhaps the next day, because the body requires constant feeding to stay alive (but this can only occur because the body is emptied regularly of previous foods). The word for 'filled' in both texts, is the verb, *chortazō*, which is often used for literal feeding with food. It also means to satisfy (as in 5:6). However, the same idea is often used by charismatics to describe the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Is it the same with a man? Does he need 'topping up' with the Holy Spirit? Logic tells me 'No', because "it is finished". However, let scripture run its course...

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Matthew 27:48

“And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.”

Now, the word for ‘filled’ in this text is the verb, *pimplēmi*, meaning to be filled or to be fulfilled. In the text it literally means to fill a sponge with vinegar (rough alcoholic wine favoured by Roman soldiers). But, we can question whether or not the sponge was filled to capacity, or just enough to satisfy at the time. That is, not to capacity, and so could accommodate more liquid if required. The word for ‘filling’ can also mean to accomplish, to furnish, to come.

Pimplēmi, can be used to describe filling containers, such as boats, vessels, etc., or filling with things, such as fish, food, wine, etc. It can speak of filling people, or it can refer to filling with the Holy Spirit, or emotions, etc.

So, in Luke 1:15, for example, is “he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost” a one-off action, or one of a series of actions of the same nature?

Before answering, take a look at Mark’s version of the vinegar-filled sponge written of in Matthew (Mark 15:36). Here, a different word is used for ‘filled’... the verb, *gemizō*. It has the same meaning as the word in Matthew, with perhaps a slight expansion: ‘fill full’ (to the brim, or as with a boat loading cargo). It is also used of smoke filling a room, a house being full, the belly being full, and so on. In each case, ‘filled’ can relate to varying degrees of ‘full’, from partial to total.

Luke 1:41

“And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in *her womb*; and *Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost*.”

In this text the word for filled is *pimplēmi*. The question we must ask is “Was this filling once-only in perpetuity, or one of a series of ‘filling’?” The text appears to tell us that it was once-only, but for a specific reason, much like a radio being switched on just for the news.

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Beforehand, Elisabeth appears NOT to be filled with the Spirit, because, when her baby jumped in the womb, only then was she 'filled' with the Holy Ghost. She proceeded to utter a reassurance to Mary. The filling of Elisabeth, then, was temporary, for a specific purpose. Or was it? Both she and her husband were godly, so does this filling have a specific meaning. Did it simply mean that though she and her husband were godly and therefore had the Spirit as a constant companion, the 'filling' on this occasion meant that God gave her a special spiritual gift to enable her to speak to Mary?

Same For Jesus?

Did Jesus have the same measure of the Spirit as, say, any one of us? No. Jesus had the Spirit fully, as we find in John 3:34. But, us? We have our own spiritual benefits. All who are saved have the Spirit of God within, because we are the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16). So, every child of God has the Spirit of God indwelling. This 'dwelling' has the sense of perpetuity about it. It does not suggest that the Spirit comes in and out, leaving us alone at times. This indwelling has to be perpetual, for *"if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his"* (Romans 8:9). It is therefore vital that the Spirit remains in us throughout our lives on earth. Without the Spirit within we would all fall to the lusts of the flesh, at any moment (Galatians 5:16).

Not only that, but each saved man and woman receives gifts decided upon by God... they are each differently allocated (1 Corinthians 12:7-on). It is very wrong to imply that Christians may demand this or that gift, when God has already determined which gifts we are to have.

Each Christian is given his own measure or portion of the Spirit. This is predetermined by the Lord, according to His will (Ephesians 4:7). Therefore, whatever level of faith, etc., we have, is the level or measure He has decided upon. This means that whatever that measure is, it must be the optimum for our spiritual lives at that time. It cannot, then, be made greater, except the Lord determines it to be greater... not as desired by us.

What this means is that any 'filling' after our salvation cannot be a filling in the salvatory sense, but must be more like the filling experienced by Elisabeth. It did not add to her state of grace before God, but was a sign that God gave her something special to do or say for that moment. For this reason 'filled' in these circumstances must mean 'to be fulfilled', or 'accomplished', or 'to furnish'... a prophesied or commanded action by God that does not add to the filling of the Spirit at the moment of earthly salvation, for every gift of God is always 'to overflowing': it cannot, by definition, be added-to, any more than a completely full bath of water can be made 'more full' by adding more water!

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As the Holy Spirit dwells in every believer from the moment of salvation, and such a gift is overflowing, it stands to reason that any 'filling' after that (as with Elisabeth and her husband, Zacharias) MUST not mean the same as the general indwelling of the Spirit. It has to be something else, such as the giving of a message to a particular Christian, for a particular temporary purpose. One cannot be filled when filling has already taken place and is overflowing!

Acts 4:8

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,"

This is a statement of present and perpetual reality. Peter was not suddenly filled with the Spirit again. Rather, it means that the same Spirit Who filled him previously (verse 4) was now acting in him, giving him the very words to speak. Thus, the same kind of meaning must apply to the time they later met together and were 'filled' with the Holy Ghost (verse 31), enabling them to speak with boldness. These 'fillings' are of special purposes for the moment they are given. They do not add to the general filling given at salvation, but are separate from it and for special reasons.

We see the difference in, say, Acts 9:17, where Paul, previously an unbeliever and hater, suddenly received the Holy Ghost. He was 'filled' in the salvatory sense. Then, in 13:9, we see the result of that filling, when Paul used the same filling to denounce a sorcerer. Thus, where we are told he was "filled with the Holy Ghost", we are NOT being told he was AGAIN re-filled, but that what he had to say was predicated on his once-only salvation experience or 'filling'.

Put it this way: if I have been trained by a Master to play the violin, and I later play a famed piece of music before an audience, it does not mean that I have to re-train all over again. It simply means I base what I now play on my previous training. One arises out of the other. Similarly, the words in Ephesians 5:18 do NOT imply another filling, but an exhortation to use the salvatory filling to live an holy life; the filling had already taken place.

Acts 4:31

Peter and Paul were held by the authorities and then let free. Later, when they met with fellow

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disciples, there was much praise, and Peter or Paul asked God to fill them with boldness, in order to face the coming persecution. The result was “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost”. Now, if the same disciples were previously filled with the Holy Spirit, how could they be re-filled? Another meaning must apply – ‘to be furnished with’... boldness, thanks to the stirring of the Holy Spirit within.

That is, they were *already* filled with the Spirit, and now, after Peter/Paul’s request, God caused the same Spirit to give them boldness. On the other hand, if these disciples had not been filled at Pentecost, it was now their time to be filled for the first time. To me, this ‘filling’ is the same as the filling of Elisabeth and her husband... a prompting whose actions arose from the Spirit already within. This means that any future ‘filling’ after the initial salvatory filling has to be dependent on, and fuelled by, the original filling.

Go to Acts 13:49 and you will see that ‘filled’ *could* refer to a separate filling, but, it could equally refer to an action founded on their *original* filling. It depends on how we read the text. For example, they were filled with joy “and, also”, the Holy Ghost. This is because the conjunction, *kai*, can mean both because it can have a cumulative force... both working together. In this text, then, the meaning can be that they had joy *because* of their original filling at salvation. Or, that they were filled because only then did they believe.

The Heresy

So, to say, as do many charismatics, that they are constantly being ‘filled’ with the Spirit is nonsense, if not blasphemy. It suggests they were previously empty! How else can they be ‘filled’? Assuming they were indeed genuinely saved, it is possible that God gave them a particular task to perform, and prompted the Holy Spirit within to further prompt the individual to say or do something. This is not ‘filling’ in the salvatory/original sense, but a special prompting to say or do something, using the measure of the Spirit *already within* the person.

There is, then, no ‘second blessing’ of ANOTHER filling of the whole person with the Holy Spirit. To suggest otherwise is to imply that the Holy Spirit plays a game, jumping in and out of the person. This is not so. Once we are saved, we become the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit and He ‘fills’ us to the brim with Himself. There is no more room for extra ‘doses’ as a top-up.

The situation:

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1.

A person is saved at a time determined by God.

2.

Salvation automatically means he is filled with the Spirit.

3.

He cannot be partially filled, because that would mean he is also partially NOT filled and so open to filling of the rest by Satan (which is impossible).

4.

To be filled means to be filled to the brim. There is no more room.

5.

Therefore, any future filling must refer to the prompting of the Spirit (Who is already within) for the saved person to say or do something specific at the behest of the Father. This is what various texts suggest.

6.

This being so, it would appear that to 'keep being filled' is simply another way of acknowledging the Spirit within and following His prompting when commanded by God, for a particular temporary reason.

Problems

To imply an ongoing filling of the same Spirit is to have Romanistic thinking, which also says we may sacrifice Jesus at every Mass.

It can lead to feelings of superiority amongst believers, some of whom could be proud to tell

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others of their new 'filling'.

It can be a claim made by heretics who boast of their spiritual gifts and which give them a supposed reason to say or do certain things that oppose scripture. (This is prevalent amongst charismatics).

Any such claims to be 'filled' can support an unbiblical mindset, especially if there is no actual and powerful sign that reinforces the claim. (One only has to follow the absurd or horrendous claims made by 'big name' charismatic teachers, to see this in action).

Warning

I have seen too many so-called fillings of the Holy Spirit amongst charismatics to accept it as a second blessing! Their words and behaviour are sinful. That is why my instant response to anything charismatic is "They lie". Any examination usually confirms my response.

As a 'second filling' arises mainly in charismaticism, my ongoing response is one of not just scepticism, but of disbelief. Their claims beg the question: "If one can be filled again, then that means they were previously empty. Can a saved man be empty of the Holy Spirit?" I do not think so! (Read the account of the demons who populate a cleansed house).

Other Considerations

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." (Romans 15:13)

Now, the Holy Ghost/Spirit has no communication with an unsaved soul. So, these words to saved men say that the Holy Spirit can "fill you" with joy, etc. 'Fill', *plēroō*, more clearly parallels 'filled'; it means to fill to the fullest; to supply liberally, to complete, fill to the brim, to accomplish/realise, to cause one to obey God as one should. The word thus gives a clearer definition of 'filled': a prompting given by the Holy Spirit, bringing about words or deeds that arise from a man already full to the brim with the Holy Spirit; the power causes him to further experience this holy relationship. Throughout the texts we see that saved men are filled to the uttermost with the Holy Spirit, so to say they are given even more of the Spirit is contradictory and illogical. Also, it is not sound exegesis to imply that some part of our person is NOT filled

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with the Holy Spirit, or that such filling is not perpetually 'to the brim'.

If we start to believe we are only partially 'full', then what of Jesus? We are told that He was "full of the Holy Ghost", 'full' being *plērēs*, actually full, thoroughly permeated, complete (from the verb form, *pimplēmi*). (Luke 4:1). Dare we suggest that His 'filling' was only partial? I do not think so. Similarly, Jesus was "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). It was not possible for this fullness to be partial or temporary; it had to be complete and liberally supplied, otherwise sin could have had a foothold where there was no fullness. (Which, of course, is rhetorical in the case of the Son of God).

The same full-to-the-brim is also found in us (*plērōō*) (John 15:11). And seven men who were "full of the Holy Ghost" were chosen for a particular holy task (Acts 6:3), where *plērēs* is used – filled up to the brim (not empty at all); they were thoroughly permeated with the Spirit. Therefore any further 'filling' (in the charismatic sense) would have been superfluous. Rather, any further 'filling' must have the sense of the *already existing* fullness being prompted to obey the Lord's command to say or do something.

This is how we should read Acts 6:5, where Stephen was "full of faith and the Holy Ghost", which could be read as 'because he was full of the Holy Ghost he was also full of faith'. The one arises from the other.

It behoves us, then, to understand that just as Christ cannot be sacrificed time and again in separate repeated acts of sacrifice (as in the Mass) so a man cannot be 'filled' to the brim with the Spirit time and again, for such would be superfluous, with no real purpose. We can say that a man is filled when he is saved, and that later, once or more times, God prompts the man to say or do something by exciting the Spirit already within, this being termed 'filled'.

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