

Th123 A Study of the Holy Spirit

Th123-18 You Can Know When You Are Filled

After the Day of Pentecost, the church grew rapidly. Soon the 12 apostles became overburdened with administrative matters. They needed someone to relieve them of this duty so they could devote themselves to prayer and the proclamation of the gospel. They asked the church to choose seven men who were “known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.” These they would appoint over the task (Acts 6:3). But how would they know which men in the church were full of the Holy Spirit? What distinguished them from others? Or to personalize the question, “How can someone know for certain that they have been filled with the Spirit? In this lesson, we will answer this important question.

The good news is that one does not have to wonder whether they have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. They can know for sure. The New Testament cites a number of indicators. The Book of Acts, however, focuses on two primary signs, Spirit-inspired tongues and Spirit-empowered witness.

In Acts, when people were initially baptized in the Holy Spirit, they miraculously spoke in tongues as the Holy Spirit gave them the ability. This first happened on the Day of Pentecost: “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:4). Speaking in tongues happened two more times in the Book of Acts. It occurred a few months later in the coastal city of Caesarea. On that occasion, as Peter was preaching, “the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.” The Jewish believers with Peter were convinced that these Gentiles had received the Spirit, “for they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God” (Acts 10:44-46).

Finally, 25 years after Pentecost, Paul arrived in the city of Ephesus. There he encountered twelve disciples. After a brief conversation with them, “Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied” (Acts 19:6). Note how, in each of these instances, when believers were baptized in the Holy Spirit, they spoke in tongues.

On the two other occasions in Acts when people were initially baptized in the Spirit, the context implies that they too spoke in tongues. The first instance occurred in the city of Samaria in Acts 8. When Peter and John laid hands on the new Christians there, something extraordinary happened. It was so amazing that Simon the sorcerer wanted to purchase the ability to lay hands on people to receive the Holy Spirit. Scholars, both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal, believe that Simon likely saw these new believers speaking in tongues.

On the second occasion, in Acts 9, Ananias laid hands on Saul of Tarsus, and the apostle-to-be received the Holy Spirit. Although the text does not say that he, at that moment, spoke in tongues, he later testified to the believers in Corinth, “I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you” (1Cor 14:18). The most likely time for him to have begun speaking in tongues was the moment he was baptized in the Holy Spirit, just as happened to others in Acts.

Scholars thus call this kind of speaking in tongues the “initial physical evidence” of one’s being baptized in the Holy Spirit. It could also be called the “normative missional sign” that one has been empowered to witness in the Spirit’s power. In other words, this means that when someone is baptized in the Holy Spirit, God will cause them to speak in tongues as a sign that He has empowered them as His witnesses to the lost.

In Acts, another constant result of believers being filled is that they immediately began to witness with power. Peter is a good example of this. A careful reading of the Pentecost story reveals that, on that day, Peter spoke by the Spirit two times. First, along with the 120 or so other disciples, he spoke in tongues “as the Spirit enabled them.” Then, he spoke by the Spirit a second time. This time, however, Peter spoke in the common language. He preached the gospel in the power of the Spirit, thus fulfilling Jesus’ promise in Acts 1:8: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses.” This pattern is repeated throughout Acts. When people are filled with the Spirit, they immediately begin to witness for Christ.

For example, in Acts 4, Peter was again filled with the Spirit, this time in the presence of the Jewish authorities. He then boldly announced, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven [other than the name of Jesus]...by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:8-12). Later, when God again poured out His Spirit on the church in Jerusalem, they “spoke the word of God boldly” (4:31). Again, when Paul first received the Holy Spirit, “at once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God” (9:20). In Acts, every time someone is filled with the Spirit they begin to witness for Jesus.

All of this convinces us that you can know that you have been baptized in the Holy Spirit when you begin to speak in tongues, as believers did in the Book of Acts. You should also expect to be filled with the passion and power to more effectively share Christ with others. Both of these signs are clear indications that one has been truly empowered by the Spirit.

This lesson is **important** because in it you have learned how you can know that you and others have been truly baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that, when a person is filled with the Spirit, they should expect to speak in tongues as the Spirit enables them. They should also expect to receive power to witness to others.

Let’s **review** some important truths we have learned from this lesson:

1. What is the “initial physical evidence” of being baptized in the Holy Spirit?
A. [PAUSE] If you said, “The initial physical evidence of being baptized in the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues as the Spirit enables us,” you answered correctly.
2. According to the Book of Acts, what two signs can one expect when he or she is baptized in the Holy Spirit?
A. [PAUSE] If you answered that they can expect to speak in tongues and they can expect to begin witnessing with added power, you are correct.

3. In what two ways did Peter speak by the Spirit in Acts 2?
 - A. [PAUSE] If you answered, “Peter first spoke in tongues with the other 120 disciples, then he preached the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit,” you are correct.

4. How is the disciples’ receiving the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost a fulfillment of Jesus’ promise in Acts 1:8?
 - A. [PAUSE] If you answered, “Because when Peter and the other disciples received the Spirit, they received power to be Christ’s witnesses as He had promised,” you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to re-listen to it until you understand each of its teachings. You are then to teach others how they can know that they have been baptized in the Holy Spirit.