The Herald of Christ: The Holy Spirit in Luke and Acts

Derrick Bledsoe

Dr. Mike Wilkinson

SYSTH 7634

April 10, 2023

The Herald of Christ: The Holy Spirit in Luke and Acts

The Christian experience has, since the inception of the Christian faith, been connected to the confession of Jesus Christ as Lord. It is the "liar" who, according to the apostle John, "denies that Jesus is the Christ" (1 Jn. 2:22, ESV). The inward belief and outward expression of the Lordship and saving nature of Jesus Christ is not only intrinsic to the Christian's identity, but, according to the apostle Paul, the initiating action unto salvation itself: "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Rom. 10:9). John Chrysostom wrote concerning this confessional posture: "The understanding must be strongly fixed in pious faith, and the tongue must herald forth by its confession the solid resolution of the mind."[1]

The question this paper seeks to address is by what means or power does the tongue herald forth such a confession? This paper will examine a selection of passages in The Gospel According to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles in conjunction with both historical and contemporary perspectives to present the prophetic power of the Holy Spirit as *primarily* concerned with heralding Jesus Christ as the Son of God. This work will also consider implications for the role of the Spirit in both preaching and evangelism.

"Filled with the Spirit"

Scripture and history speak clearly concerning the roles of the Triune Godhead.[2] More specifically, the Spirit could be said to be an agent of the Godhead:

---

[1] Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions* 1.19.

[2] Robert Letham, *Systematic Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 66. Robert Letham notes the progressive nature in which the formalized doctrine of the Trinity has come into formation: "The Trinity is revealed in the Old Testament in latent form and in the New Testament implicitly and pervasively, but the full-fledged doctrine awaited prolonged reflection by the church." See also: Malcolm Yarnell III, "The Trinity," in *A Handbook of Theology*, eds. David L. Akin, David S. Dockery, and Nathan A. Finn (Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2023),

> As the person of the Trinity who applies God's initiating and redemptive work, we may say the Holy Spirit is the divine agent of the Godhead. By this, we do not mean that he is subordinate to the Father or the Son but rather that he administers that which God wills. These ministries express both the Spirit's equality in, and relationship to, the divine persons.[3]

The Spirit, as divine agent of the Godhead, accomplishes several tasks in and through the lives of believers among which are filling believers with His presence, and as John Nelson Darby wrote, "may have produced, by a new nature, holy desires, and the love of Jesus."[4] In Pauline literature, the filling of the Spirit is connected to "joy and peace in believing" that one "may abound in hope" (Rom. 15:13), as well as a means unto a life of holiness (Eph. 5:18).

In Lukan literature the filling of the Spirit, marked by an entirely different word in Greek, seems to emphasize a slightly more nuanced outcome. Whereas Paul describes the Spirit's filling with *πληρόω*, Luke chooses *πίμπλημι* to describe his vision of the Holy Spirit's prophetic power to declare the Messianic identity of Jesus Christ.[5] Luke's usage of *πίμπλημι* connotes the idea of simply being made full.[6] He uses it to describe the filling of the Holy Spirit at least nine times between Luke's Gospel and Acts, and in every instance (including Acts 5:3 which will be considered later) it is consistent the simple concept of *being filled*. *πίμπλημι* is also used twice in

---

235-236. Yarnell adds, "The eternal ontology of God as Trinity is epistemologically unveiled to us in a progressive manner."

[3] Katie J. McCoy, "The Holy Spirit," in *A Handbook of Theology*, eds. Daniel L. Akin, David S. Dockery, and Nathan A. Finn (Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2023), 389-390.

[4] John Nelson Darby, *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible* (New Delhi: Prabhat Prakashan, 2015), 155.

[5] Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 78. Osborne notes Matthew's preference of *πληρόω*: "The use of 'to fulfill' (*πληρωθῇ*) is Matthean, found in ten particular fulfillment passages (1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 27:9).34 Four are in the infancy narratives and establish the theme for the rest of the book, namely, that God sovereignly controls all events in conformity with his plan. The primary method Matthew uses is typology; that is, the events of Jesus' birth are analogous to the way God has worked during the old covenant. Yet there is also a direct relationship between promise and fulfillment here (see below on v. 23). God has sovereignly controlled salvation history in order to prepare for his Messiah."

[6] BDAG, s.v. "πίμπλημι," 813.
See also: MGD, s.v. "πίμπλημι," paragraph 11843.

Matthew's Gospel account, and in both instances it conveys the idea of a kind of vessel being filled with something else, indicating the same semantic force as the contexts in which it is used to describe the Spirit in relation to people.[7] Yarnell notes, "The Spirit is the agent of salvation as seen in the Lukan concepts of regeneration, baptism with the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Spirit, and the meaning of Pentecost."[8] The Spirit is indeed an agent of many works in Lukan literature including *filling* those whom He chooses for the purpose of heralding the true identity of Jesus. Luke establishes a pattern of *filling* in the first chapter of his Gospel account using *πίμπλημι* and then continues to develop this pattern throughout Acts as demonstrated below.

A Pattern Emerges: Luke 1

Luke's Gospel begins with three distinct *fillings*, all of which empower the individual in some manner to acknowledge publicly the Messianic identity of Jesus. Robert Stein notes: "Luke's Gospel begins with a literary prologue or "period" that ranks among the best Greek literature of the first century."[9] Luke first writes of the filling of the Spirit in Luke 1:15b concerning an unborn John: "And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled (*πίμπλημι*) with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." This filling is unusual for several reasons. First, it is an unusual way to describe the Holy Spirit's interaction with human beings coming out of an Old Testament perspective.[10] Beyond that, the Spirit usually comes

[7] In Matthew 22:10, Jesus tells *The Parable of the Wedding Feast* and describes the wedding hall as "filled (*πίμπλημι*) with guests." Later in Matthew 27:48, during the crucifixion account, Matthew describes how the soldiers "took a sponge" and "filled (*πίμπλημι*) it with sour wine." While neither text describes the filling of the Holy Spirit, they do produce a feasible illustration for the function of πίμπλημι that supports Luke's usage of it.

[8] Malcolm B. Yarnell III, "The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 491.

[9] Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, in vol. 24 of The New American Commentary, eds. E. Ray Clendenen and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 62.

[10] Jack Levison, *A Boundless God: The Spirit according to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020). Levison notes: "Filling with the spirit in Israel's Scripture looks, at first blush, like a similar experience. The prophet Micah claims to be filled with the spirit. The artisans who construct the tabernacle are filled

upon prophets later in their lives, not in early childhood and certainly not prior to being born.[11] This is a significant departure from the prophetic economy one would expect from an Old Testament perspective.

John's filling of the Spirit moves him to later acknowledge (the pre-born) Jesus' Lordship, and subsequently trigger a kind of Spirit-filling chain reaction in others as well. His mother Elizabeth is the first to be affected: "And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled (*πίμπλημι*) with the Holy Spirit" (Lk. 1:41). This filling led her to refer to Mary as "the mother of my Lord," (Lk. 1:43) indicating a prophetic empowerment to recognize the Lordship of Jesus even prior to His birth. Green writes:

> Here is the purpose of his prenatal experience of the Spirit, embodied in his joyful leaping: Even from the womb he prophesies, implicitly transferring the designation of "Lord" to Mary's unborn baby, recognizing in this baby the eschatological coming of God. The association of "joy," already related to the advent of divine redemption in 1:14 (and cf. 1:47), with "leaping" encourages this reading of John's act. The Spirit that fills him prompts his recognition and certifies for us the trustworthiness of his prophetic action concerning Jesus.[12]

Luke's first chapter ends with a third act of Spirit-filling in verse 67: "And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied." Zechariah's prophetic speech indicates, like John and Elizabeth, that the Spirit has empowered him to recognize and acknowledge the true Messianic identity of Jesus. He refers to Mary's yet unborn child as "a horn of salvation" (Lk. 1:69), who was spoken of "by the mouth of his holy prophets" (Lk. 1:70), that will bring about a continuation of the covenant promises to Abraham (Lk. 1:73). Zechariah

---

with the spirit of wisdom" (105). Still, Levison notes the usual description of the Spirit's work in the life of an Old Testament prophet or judge is "rushed or came upon or clothed" (10). See also: Letham, *Systematic Theology*, 602.

[11] David E. Garland, *Luke*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 67. Garland notes: "His prophetic role, therefore, will begin even before his birth."

[12] Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 95.

also connect his newly born son John to the forerunner of the Lord who will "prepare his ways" (Lk. 1:76), which points towards a fulfillment of Malachi 3:1. Luke further connects John's ministry and Zechariah's words in verse 76 to a fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3-5. Garland notes, "Luke's infancy narrative highlights an outbreak of the prophetic Spirit as each of the main characters bursts forth with prophetic utterances and praise."[13] This outbreak of the prophetic Spirit establishes a pattern for the Spirit's operative force among God's people throughout the Lukan corpus to rightly recognize Jesus as the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy and ultimately, as *Lord*.

It is important to note, while not a part of the Lukan corpus, that this filling and subsequent recognition of the identity of Jesus in Luke's Gospel is consistent with Jesus' own words in John 14:20: "In that day you will know that I am in my Father and you in me, and I in you." In other words, the way in which Jesus is "in the Father" serves as a type for the kind of filling believers will experience with the Holy Spirit. Borchert writes, "The 'inter-indwelling' of the Father and Son would serve as the pattern of the 'inter-dwelling' of Jesus and his followers."[14] Letham adds: "Jesus says that when the Spirit comes to indwell his disciples, they will know for themselves that he and the Father are in each other, and they will also know that Christ is in them."[15] The role of the *παράκλητος*, the "Spirit of truth," is to reveal all truth, including the true identity of the Son and the relationship between the Son and the Father. Oden clearly sees this connection: "It is precisely what the Son conveys from the Father that the Spirit truthfully conveys from the Son to the believer's heart."[16]

---

[13] Garland, *Luke*, 67.

[14] Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21*, The New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen and David S. Dockery, vol. 25B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 127.

[15] Letham, *Systematic Theology*, 601.

[16] Thomas Oden, *Class Christianity: A Systematic Theology* (New York: HarperOne, 1992), 541.

Luke's first chapter in his Gospel account establishes a pattern wherein the Holy Spirit indwells a human being with the result of both an inward recognition and outward acknowledgment of the Messianic identity of Jesus Christ. This pattern is consistent with the Johannine perspective on the role of the Holy Spirit, and it will continue at the beginning of Pentecost in the book of Acts.

Pentecost: Acts 2

Luke continues his employment of *πίμπλημι* beginning in the second chapter of Acts to describe the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on God's people beginning with Pentecost. Bavinck noted: "After creation and the incarnation, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the third great work of God.[17] Certainly the Spirit's work was concurrent in creation and the incarnation, but this event of outpouring the Spirit in Acts 2 was unique and builds upon the first two great works of God. Letham adds, "The Spirit is now present in a heightened way. He was present in the Old Testament (he could hardly have been absent) but not in the foreground as in the New."[18] On the day of Pentecost, the disciples were "all together in one place" (Acts 2:1) and were "all filled (*πίμπλημι*) with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4). This filling continues the pattern established in Luke 1 of heralding Jesus Christ as Lord. Peter, upon being filled with the Holy Spirit, preaches to the men gathered for Pentecost and first connects the Spirit's arrival to at least a partial fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32. Bruce writes:

> Luke sees in these words an adumbration of the worldwide Gentile mission, even if Peter could not have realized their full import when he quoted them on the day of Pentecost.

[17] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vrend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 3:500.

[18] Letham, *Systematic Theology*, 602.

> Certainly, the outpouring of the Spirit on 120 Jews could not in itself fulfil the prediction of such outpouring "on all flesh"; but it was the beginning of the fulfilment.[19]

Acts 2, then, "marks a new era in the history of redemption."[20] Calvin wrote:

> But in bringing forth judgment Christ is greatly superior to all others, for he has received the Spirit from the Father, that he may pour it out on all his people; for not only does he by word or writing prescribe what is proper, but inwardly forms the hearts of men, by the grace of his Spirit, to preserve the rule of righteousness.[21]

What the Lord received from the Father had already been poured out in word (and later preserved in writing), but here in Acts 2, He pours out His Spirit to the end of inwardly changing the hearts of His people just as it did in Luke 1 in the infancy narrative. While this filling began sparsely with John, Elizabeth, and Zechariah before, it now will indwell God's people on a far larger scale, but with the same predictable outcome: heralding Christ as Lord. Beginning in verse 14, "Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed" the crowds, first by proclaiming the coming of the Holy Spirit as a fulfillment of Joel 2, and then attesting to the true identity of Jesus: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). Luke's employment of ἐπλήσθησαν (aorist, passive, indicative) is telling as well. Schnabel writes:

> Luke uses the aorist indicative form (ἐπλήσθησαν) with genitive of divine Spirit to designate "short outbursts of spiritual power/inspiration, rather than the inception of long-term endowment of the Spirit," a fact that explains why a person might be "filled with the Holy Spirit" on many occasions while at the same time remaining "full" of the Spirit.[22]

---

[19] F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, New International Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 61. Garland and Green also agree that this is a partial fulfillment or the beginning stages of fulfillment. For an alternative reading from a Pentecostal perspective, see Robert P. Menzies, "Luke's Understanding of Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Dialogues with the Reformed Tradition," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology 16* (2008): 86-101.

[20] Letham, *Systematic Theology*, 602.

[21] John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, trans. John King (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847), paragraph 69460.

[22] Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 115.

Dragkiotis adds:

> The filling of the Spirit is not an experience that occurs only once in the life of a disciple; on the contrary, it is an on-going process. It may start as a fascinating experience, but it must continue as a step-by-step process. Today's fulfilment is not 'enough' for tomorrow. It must be repeated tomorrow.[23]

In the same way that the Spirit would "rush upon" God's servants in the book of Judges to accomplish a specific task, the Spirit fills individuals in the New Testament era for the multiple tasks of heralding the true identity of Christ throughout the scope of their lives. Peter's *filling* of the Spirit led to his public call to receive Jesus as the true Messiah of Israel and through his words the Spirit worked: "So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41).

The events that take place in Acts 2 confirm the words of Jesus spoken just prior to His ascension as well. Following the resurrection, the Lord appeared to His disciples and commanded them to "not depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4), the same promise He made in John chapter 14. Jesus then tells them the purpose of this coming outpouring of Holy Spirit: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). The Spirit's primary role is power in witness unto Jesus. Hughes notes that the word witness (μάρτυς) "occurs no less than thirty-nine times" throughout the book of Acts.[24] Bruce adds:

> When the Holy Spirit came upon them, Jesus assured them, they would be vested with heavenly power that power by which, in the event, their mighty works were accomplished, and their preaching made effective. As Jesus had been anointed at his baptism with the Holy Spirit and power, so his followers were now to be similarly anointed and enabled to carry on his work. This work would be a work of witness-bearing a theme which is prominent in the apostolic preaching throughout Acts.[25]

---

[23] Constantinos Dragkiotis, "Emptiness, as a Prerequisite for being filled with the Holy Spirit," *JEPTA: Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 34, no. 2 (June 2014): 198.

[24] R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire,* Preaching the Word (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1996), 15.

[25] Bruce, *The Book of the Acts,* 36.

This powerful, Spirit-filled witness is articulated prior to the ascension of Christ, ratified at Pentecost in Peter and the eleven, spread among the diasporic hearers in Jerusalem, and next finds Saul, "still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1).

Saul: Acts 9

In Acts 9, following the martyrdom of Stephen, Saul is confronted on the road to Damascus by the risen Lord: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do" (Acts 9:5-6). Polhill writes concerning this confrontation:

> It would be hard to imagine how these words must have struck Paul. They were a complete refutation of all he had been. He had persecuted Christians for their "blasphemous lie" that Jesus was risen, that he was the Lord reigning in glory. Now Paul himself beheld that same Jesus and the undeniable proof that he both lived and reigned in glory.[26]

The importance of this is crucial because it establishes a benchmark of sorts. Saul was not only uninterested in proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus; he was in direct opposition to it. Hengel notes the contextual conditions that motivated Saul to move with hostility against Stephen, the disciples, and ultimately, Jesus Himself:

> The Torah puts under God's curse anyone who does not observe all its commandments and prohibitions. To the young Pharisaic student, the agitators seemed to be accursed lawbreakers, and followers and proclaimers of an accursed deceiver who had led the people astray – was that not reason enough, like Phinehas, to enter the breach in 'zeal for the Torah,' to bring down a just punishment on their enemies or to drive them out?[27]

Saul was the product of his wayward understanding of the God of Israel as revealed in the Old Testament Scripture. It was not anger nor repudiation that moved him to act with

---

[26] John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen and David S. Dockery, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 234.

[27] Martin Hengel, *The Pre-Christian Paul*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1996), 84.

persecution, but *zeal* for what he believed was true (Phil. 3:6). However, after being blinded and humbled by the Lord, he eventually ended up at a house with a man named Ananias who had also been instructed by Jesus to minister to Saul upon his arrival. Jesus commanded him: "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 (*πίμπλημι*) with the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 9:17). Again, Luke speaks of the filling of the Spirit, and this filling once again results in the immediate proclamation of the true identity of Jesus Christ: "And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of God'" (Acts 9:20).

While this proclamation is not unique, the identity of Jesus in Paul's proclamation *is* unique. Fitzmyer notes, "The title ho huios tou theou now appears for the first time in Acts; It first appeared in the Lucan Gospel in the message of Gabriel to Mary in Luke 1:35, and several times thereafter."[28] This implicitly connects Paul's filling with the initial instances of the Spirit's filling in Luke's first chapter in the infancy narratives. Peterson adds:

> "Saul preaches fearlessly 'in the name of Jesus' (9:27-28), suggesting continuity with the ministry of the apostles (4:17-18; 5:28, 40). Moreover, he proclaims Jesus as the Son of God (9:20) and proves that Jesus is the Messiah (9:22), suggesting also a parallel with Philip, who 'proclaimed the Messiah' in Samaria (8:5) and preached 'the name of Jesus Christ' (8:12).[29]

Paul's conversion intimates the same pattern that Luke develops in Luke chapter 1 and Acts chapters 1 and 2. This filling is also consistent with Schnabel and Dragkiotis's assessment of it being an on-going process, as evidenced by the later events surrounding Paul in Acts 13.

---

[28] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Anchor Yale Bible. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 435.

[29] David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Pillar New Testament Commentary. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 312.

The apostle "was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence" (Acts 13:7) and contended with "Elymas the magician" (Acts 13:8). Interestingly, Elymas exhibits behavior that is opposite to the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings about recognition and proclamation of the Lordship of Jesus, but Elymas "opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith" (Acts 13:8). Polhill notes, "At this point Sergius Paulus was not a believer. Elymas sought to hinder the missionaries from their witness to the faith, to divert Paulus's attention from the proclamation."[30] It is in this context that "Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit," opposed Elymas, rebuked him, and told him he would become temporarily blind (Acts 13:9-11). Polhill continues:

> Paul himself had experienced blindness, not, however, as punishment but as a sign of the Lord's presence in his conversion. One would like to agree with Chrysostom, who argued that Paul inflicted his own blindness on Elymas in the hope that it would lead to his conversion, just as it had been a sign of his own.[31]

After a cursory examination, it seems as if this passage breaks with the pattern previously established in that there seems to be more of an emphasis on rebuke and judgment on Elymas and less heralding the identity of Jesus, but one would have to discount the result of this interaction to come to that conclusion! The result of Paul's Spirit-filled witness is described in verse 12: "Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord." The Lord's identity was so thoroughly attested to by Paul's actions and words that the proconsul believed; Jesus' identity was heralded through the power demonstrated by Paul in the Spirit. Peterson adds:

> Despite the opposition of Elymas to the gospel and its messengers, when the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord. What the proconsul saw was an amazing supernatural event, which enabled him to

---

[30] Polhill, *Acts*, 293.

[31] Polhill, *Acts*, 294.

> believe. But what truly amazed him was the teaching about the Lord and it was clearly this teaching that he believed.[32]

One additional note should be made concerning the ordering of these events in Acts. Harwood acknowledges the fulfillment of Jesus' words in Acts concerning the ordering of the Gospel to "Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).[33] In Acts 2 at Pentecost, the Spirit fills believers to enact the first movement in Jerusalem and Judea. In Acts 9, Saul receives the filling of the Spirit, and his actions lead to "the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria" having "peace" and being "built up," and "walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:31), which enacts the second movement into Samaria. Finally, with Paul's Spirit-filled contention with Elymas, the proconsul believes, enacting the third movement of the Spirit coming to the Gentiles. There appears to be a three-fold reception of the Spirit. This present study would also acknowledge a three-fold reception of the Spirit in the pre-Pentecost instances in Luke chapter 1 in a male (Zechariah), a female (Elizabeth), and an unborn child (John). The Spirit's indwelling shows no partiality (Acts 10:34); it's no wonder believers are told to avoid such behavior as well (Ja. 2:1).

Inverse Cases: Luke 4:16-30 and 6:11

Having examined select instances of Luke's usage of *πίμπλημι* to convey a filling of the Spirit that leads to an inward recognition and outward heralding of the Lordship of Jesus Christ, it would also be helpful to examine at least two instances wherein it seems like the inverse of such a transaction occurs. In Luke 4:16-30, Jesus "came to Nazareth where he had been brought up" and "as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to

---

[32] David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 382.

[33] Adam Harwood, *Christian Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Systematic* (Bellingham: Lexham Academic, 2022), 500-504.

read" (Lk. 4:16). Upon reading Isaiah 61, Jesus made his own prophetic identity known to the crowds: "Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk. 4:21). The crowds however were filled with disbelief which led to a sharp rebuke from the Lord.

Their response demonstrates an inverse response from the pattern already established in chapter 1: "When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled (*πίμπλημι*) with wrath *(θυμός*)" (Lk. 4:28). In Luke 1 when the Spirit filled an individual, it led to a proclamation of the Lordship of Jesus. Now, in Luke 4, when Jesus proclaims Himself as a prophet who fulfills Old Testament Messianic prophecy to a non-Spirit-filled crowd, those individuals become subsequently filled with attributes that were contra the Spirit.

The significance of *θυμός* in juxtaposition to the Spirit should not be overlooked. In his letter to the church in Galatia, Paul distinguishes between "the works of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19) and "the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), and notably wrath (*θυμός*) is among the former list in opposition to the working of the Spirit in a believer's life. The filling of the Spirit leads to not only a natural acceptance of Jesus' Lordship but a proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah. However, an individual who is not filled with the Spirit will be filled with the inverse fruit of the Spirit upon being met with the proclamation of Jesus' Lordship.

In Luke 6:11, there is again a kind of filling that takes place upon non-Spirit-filled individuals witnessing Jesus fulfill the Messianic mandate predicted in Isaiah 61 that Jesus read in Luke 4: "But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus." Present in verse 11 is a yet another kind of filling that takes place, this time of fury (*ἄνοια*), or "madness."[34] Lea and Griffin argue that their folly "was probably more a reference to

[34] MGD, s.v. "ἄνοια," paragraph 1432. See also Stein, *Luke*, 189; and R. Kent Hughes, *Luke Volume 1: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word. (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1998), 203.

the conduct of the heretics than to their doctrines."[35] Cyril of Alexandria saw this madness as envy: "The miracle sometimes converts to faith those who had disbelieved the word, but the Pharisees watched him to see if he would heal on the sabbath. The nature of an envious person is such that he makes the praises of others food for his own disease and is wickedly maddened by their reputation."[36] Luke seems to be subtly establishing an inverse relationship between being filled with the Spirit and being filled with ideations of the flesh. Garland writes:

> Luke has made it clear that "the power of the Lord was with him to heal" (5:17). The Pharisees do not consider the possibility that if this man's healing were not in accord with the will of God, he would not have been healed. They are imprisoned by their own inflexibility that blinds them to the coming of God's reign. Jesus brings healing on the Sabbath; the Pharisees plot destruction.[37]

Where the Spirit fills an individual, they are led to proclaim the identity of the Messiah. However, where the Spirit does not fill an individual, the true identity of the Messiah is inflammatory. Both instances in Luke 4:16-30 and 6:11 convey a kind of inverse filling in an individual that creates further hostility towards Jesus and His kingdom. Instead of an acknowledgment and proclamation of Jesus' true, Messianic identity, the individual instead becomes a herald of the inverse fruit of the Spirit: mockery and spite, a clear work of the flesh in opposition to the Lordship of Jesus Christ that would lead to not the filling of the Spirit but the grieving of the Spirit.[38]

---

[35] Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, in vol. 34 of The New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 229.

[36] Arthur A. Just and Thomas C. Oden, eds., *Luke*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. 3 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 99.

[37] Garland, *Luke*, 264.

[38] Joshua M. Greever, "What Does It Mean to Grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30)?" *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry* 16, no. 1 (Spr 2019): 27. Greever argues: "Paul is commanding Christians to do what is pleasing and not grieving to the Lord by speaking words that build one another up, by refraining from unrighteous anger towards one another, and by putting away falsehood and acting with truth towards one another." The act of putting away falsehood and acting with truth in general is consistent with the Spirit's intention to move a person to proclaim the true identity of Jesus as Messiah and Son of God.

Prophetic Heralding as Preaching

An important implication in preaching is derived from this present study. If it is true that the Holy Spirit fills believers for the purpose of heralding the Lordship of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the impact of this working of the Spirit would almost certainly be felt in the formal proclamation of the Word. In fact, the biblical account even demonstrates such a claim is true. In Acts 9, wherein Paul, having just been filled with the Holy Spirit, "proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying 'He is the Son of God'" (Acts 9:20), Paul is doing what contemporary theology would commonly call *preaching*. Paul, later in his life, exhorted Timothy to "preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2). Present here is the same verb as in Acts 9:20: *κηρύσσω*. Paul contrasts the people of this present age who will reject Jesus and His words in exchange for "myths" (2 Tim. 4:4) with Timothy who is to "be sober-minded, endure suffering," and to do "the work of the evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5). That Paul explicitly connects preaching with evangelism further evidences the need for the preacher to be Spirit-filled as he heralds the identity of Christ to non-believers and implores them to receive His Spirit.

It should also be noted that the act of proclaiming (κηρύσσω) is not a one-time event, but rather an *ongoing* practice. Schnabel adds, "The imperfect tense of the verb 'proclaimed' emphasizes that Paul's preaching in the synagogues was going on for some time."[39] This formulation of preaching in the power of the filling of the Spirit to reveal the identity of Jesus to others forms the basis upon which preaching has been understood for centuries. Thiselton writes: "When we consider postbiblical writers, we will see in Part II that Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Calvin, Estius, Matthew Henry, John Wesley, and James Denney regard prophecy in Paul *as the*

[39] Schnabel, *Acts*, 453.

public preaching of the word of God or applied exposition of Scripture."[40] This is what some refer to as prophetic preaching. Howard writes, "So, in a word, prophetic preaching is not so much angry shouting, as reminding our hearers that "God sends the church in the power of the Holy Spirit to share with Christ in establishing God's just, peaceable, and loving rule in the world."[41]

Steven W. Smith adds:

> At some point in recent times evangelical preachers decided they are not preachers as much as communicators… We are indeed communicators, but we are more than communicators. We are re-presenters. We are not just communicators who have a loose connection to an ancient text that we go to so we can pepper the conversation with an authoritative vibe. Nor are we taking a text and making observations from the text. Rather, we are pre-presenting what God has already said. This is iconic preaching. We are point people to another reality while imitating the rhetorical strategy of Christ.[42]

Smith is conveying the reality that there is more happening in the act of preaching than simply a regurgitation of information. Vines and Shaddix add, "The preacher wants to know what the Spirit said when He inspired the biblical text, and he wants the Spirit to empower his communication when he preaches what the Spirit has said in the biblical text."[43] Preaching, then, must be accompanied by the power and presence of the Spirit as the preacher proclaims the words of the Spirit. Moreover, for preaching to truly be effective, it must be done by an individual who is filled with the Spirit of Christ and moved by the Spirit to become a herald of the identity Jesus the Christ as revealed in the Scriptures. In other words, it is a prophetic act.

---

[40] Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit: In Biblical Teaching, through the Centuries, and Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 113.

[41] Robert R. Howard, "The Prophetic Edge of Missional Preaching," *Encounter* 78, no. 3 (2018): 63.

[42] Steven W. Smith, *Recapturing the Voice of God: Shaping Sermons Like Scripture* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015), 25.

[43] Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* Revised Edition (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2017), 35.

This is not to say that preaching and prophesy are the same thing, as William Perkins argued.[44] Contemporary theology rightly recognizes the nuanced difference between the gift of prophecy and the act of preaching. There is, however, a line of continuity that runs between the two. Benjamin Phillips wrote concerning the dangers of conflating the preaching with the gift of prophecy:

> The danger of equating prophecy and preaching is that preachers, and perhaps some hearers, can come to believe that the unique features of prophecy characterize their preaching. When this happens, preachers abandon the exposition of the Scriptures and claim direct revelation from God. They claim authority equal to, and inevitably greater than the written word of God. Together, this leads swiftly to preaching that cannot be held accountable to the Scripture and so runs the risk of Scripture's condemnation of false prophets and false preachers.[45]

Phillips warns against blending the art of preaching with the gift of prophecy because it will inevitably render the preacher powerless. If the herald of Christ believes themselves to be the source of their own power, they are no longer engaging in a Spirit-filled activity. While they might claim to herald Christ with their words, their sentiment and intentions will likely boast only of themselves. However, to see no connection between the preaching and prophecy is also detrimental as Phillips explains:

> The danger of seeing only the discontinuities between prophecy and preaching is that preaching loses its unique place in the economy of the Holy Spirit. Preachers can come to think that their study, their intellect, their rhetorical skill is what will make preaching faithful and effective. Missing the high and dangerous calling of preaching invariably means missing the joy of dependence on the Spirit, and the recognition that true preaching is in all cases a miracle.[46]

---

[44] William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying with the Calling of the Ministry*, ed. Sinclair Ferguson (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), 1.

[45] Benjamin B. Phillips, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Pulpit: Reconsidering Preaching as a Form of Prophecy," *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry* 16, no. 1 (Spr 2019): 25.

[46] Phillips, "The Spirit of Prophecy," 25.

This present study agrees with Phillips' conclusion: "We must not conflate prophecy and preaching, yet we should also affirm that when the word of God is preached faithfully, then the Spirit of prophecy is present in the pulpit."[47] Rarely do broad strokes prove effective in theological discourse. The filling of the Spirit for the purpose of heralding the identity of Christ certainly does not adequately describe the gift of prophecy, but it is a working of the Spirit not only helpful but necessary in pulpit ministry. The continuity between the two is thus beneficial for the pastor in his duties.

Conclusion

An exegetical examination of Luke's employment of the term *πίμπλημι* reveals an understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit unique to Luke's account. The Spirit fills individuals in order to move them into not only inward recognition of Jesus' true identity but outward proclamation or heralding of His Lordship as a witness to His Gospel. There also seems to be an inverse correlation to those who are confronted with His true identity but do not possess the filling of the Spirit; they are instead filled with the works of the flesh including fury (*θυμός*) and madness (*ἄνοια*). This pneumatological reality is especially important to the practice of preaching, a distinct practice separate from the gift of prophecy, but a practice that nonetheless is prophetic, and therefore dependent upon the filling of the Spirit. Further study could be useful in the fields of missiology as well. For the evangelist, the importance of the prophetic proclamation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God is self-evident. However, specific work could be done with regard to evangelism that is not primarily conducted through the practice of preaching.

[47] Phillips, "The Spirit of Prophecy," 26.

Ultimately, in order for anyone to successfully proclaim Jesus as Lord, the Spirit of God and Herald of Christ must precede them, fill them, empower them, as well as their hearers.

Bibliography

Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics*. Vol. 3. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vrend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.

Borchert, Gerald L. *John 12–21*. The New American Commentary. Edited by E. Ray Clendenen and David S. Dockery, vol. 25B. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002.

Bruce, F.F. *The Book of the Acts*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.

Calvin, John. *Calvin's Commentaries*. Translated by John King. Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847.

Chrysostom, St. John. "Baptismal Instructions." Translated by Paul W. Harkins. Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1962.

Darby, John Nelson. *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*. New Delhi: Prabhat Prakashan, 2015.

Dragkiotis, Constantinos. "Emptiness, as a Prerequisite for being filled with the Holy Spirit," *JEPTA: Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 34, no. 2 (June 2014): 184-199.

Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *The Acts of the Apostles*. The Anchor Yale Bible. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.

Garland, David E. *Luke*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.

Green, Joel B. *The Gospel of Luke*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

Greever, Joshua M. "What Does It Mean to Grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30)?" *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry* 16, no. 1 (Spr 2019): 27-40.

Harwood, Adam. *Christian Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Systematic*. Bellingham: Lexham Academic, 2022.

Hengel, Martin. *The Pre-Christian Paul*. Translated by John Bowden. London: SCM Press, 1996.

Howard, Robert R. "The Prophetic Edge of Missional Preaching." *Encounter* 78, no. 3 (2018): 61-80.

Hughes, R. Kent. *Acts: The Church Afire*. Preaching the Word. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1996.

———. *Luke Volume 1: That You May Know the Truth*. Preaching the Word. Wheaton: Crossway Books: 1998.

Just, Arthur A. and Thomas C. Oden, eds. *Luke*. In vol. 3 of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

Lea, Thomas D. and Hayne P. Griffin Jr. *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*. The New American Commentary. Edited by E. Ray Clendenen and David S. Dockery, vol. 34. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992.

Letham, Robert. *Systematic Theology*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2019.

Levison, Jack. *A Boundless God: The Spirit according to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020.

McCoy, Katie J. "The Holy Spirit." In *A Handbook of Theology*. Edited by Daniel L. Akin, 387-396. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2014.

Oden, Thomas C. *Classic Christianity: A Systematic Theology*. New York: HarperOne, 1992.

Osborne, Grant R. *Matthew*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.

Perkins, William. *The Art of Prophesying with the Calling of Ministry*. Edited by Sinclair Ferguson. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1996.

Peterson, David. *The Acts of the Apostles*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.

Phillips, Benjamin B. "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Pulpit: Reconsidering Preaching as a Form of Prophecy." *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry* 16, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 12-26.

Polhill, John B. *Acts*. The New American Commentary. Edited by E. Ray Clendenen and David S. Dockery, vol. 26. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992.

Schnabel, Eckhard J. *Acts*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.

Smith, Steven W. *Recapturing the Voice of God: Shaping Sermons Like Scripture*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015.

Stein, Robert H. *Luke*. The New American Commentary, edited by E. Ray Clendenen and David S. Dockery, vol. 24. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992.

Thiselton, Anthony C. *The Holy Spirit: In Biblical Teaching, through the Centuries, and Today*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013.

Vines, Jerry and Jim Shaddix. *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons.* Revised Edition. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2017.

Yarnell III, Malcom B. “The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit.” In *A Theology for the Church*. Edited by Daniel L. Akin, 483-540. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2014.

———. “The Trinity.” In *A Handbook of Theology.* Edited by David L. Akin, David S. Dockery, and Nathan A. Finn, 235-247. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2023.