

SUMMER 3 - Overcome by God

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[0 : 0 0] Well friends, great to see you here again tonight. And this is a great chapter of the scriptures and so it'll be great fun working through it together.

Let me pray that God will help us. Father, we do pray tonight that you would be at work among us. We pray that you would breathe upon us your Holy Spirit.

That we might rightly understand what you are doing in your world. We might rightly understand your scriptures and that we might rightly obey and live in a way that pleases you as a result.

And Father, we pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Well friends, it is a unique story in the ancient world. The location is the plain of Shinar and the time is a time when all human beings had a common language.

The place in the Bible is Genesis chapter 11. However, before we recount the story, you really need to understand the context of Genesis 11. You see, in Genesis 1 to 10, God has made it clear that his focus is on the whole of the world.

[1 : 1 0] His object is the whole of the world. He creates all humanity and he creates them with a purpose. And that purpose is that they should fill the earth and subdue it.

That they should rule the world under his rule. And with that in mind, we come to Genesis chapter 11. It is a time when humans have a common resolve. And what they want to do in this common resolve is they want to avoid God's command to fill the earth and subdue it.

And they will avoid it. They will avoid being scattered over the face of the earth. Instead, what they will do is they will make a name for themselves. They will stay in one place instead of moving.

They will secure their position in the world in this one place. Their own honor, their own glory will be paramount to them. Together, they will shake their fist at the creator.

And the symbol of their self-centered security, the symbol of their rejection of God's plan, the focus of their unified resolve will be a tower on the plain.

[2 : 1 4] A tower reaching to the heavens. Metaphorically shaking the fist at the will of God. But God, we're told, in Genesis chapter 11, sees from heaven.

And God acts. And God comes with judgment. He confuses their language. And he scatters them over the face of the earth. And then he chooses Abraham in Genesis chapter 12, verses 1 to 3.

You see, humanity wanted to make a name for itself. But we're told in verse 2 of chapter 12 that God will make a name for Abraham.

And through him, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Verse 3. Friends, I want you to travel with me now through the centuries. Follow the story of this one man, Abraham.

Watch him have children. Watch his family grow to be 12 tribes. Watch it then languish in Egypt. Rejoice with it when God rescues them in the Exodus.

- [3 : 16] Stand amazed as he declares them to be his special people in Exodus 19. Grieve with God when they rebel against his amazing love. Hear God's word of blessing to them and curse that they stand on the edge of the promised land in the plains of Morab.
- Grieve again as they engage in idolatry in God's land of promise. Long for God's mercy toward them and therefore toward his world.
- And then see him single out a shepherd boy and make him a king. Hear the grandest of all the promises that God lavishes upon this king.
- Grieve then again as David rejects God's word and stuffs it up. And as generations of his descendants, his sons, sin after him.
- Cry as the kings of Israel are slaughtered and the people of God are taken off into exile. And then shake in fear as God's promise appears to stumble.
- [4 : 26] Worry as David's crown, as Psalm 89 says, appears to be defiled in the dust of Jerusalem's carnage. Call out to God with Israel to be the God of steadfast love again.
- Stand in awe of God as he acts in steadfast love and comforts his people with that love and returns them to the promised land. And wait for them.
- Wait with them for the new temple and the new David. And then cry out with a mixture of joy and disappointment at the new temple. Be disappointed at the absence of a Davidic king to rule over them.
- Long for the promises to be fulfilled. And then see a prophet come. See him in sackcloth. See him with this rough belt around his waist.
- And watch him arrive. And hear the grand promises he makes of one who is coming. And then watch this man arrive. And gather together twelve disciples to mirror the twelve tribes of Israel.
- [5 : 38] And listen to him teach with authority. Observe him fulfill the promises of the prophets. Notice then the jealousy of the religious leaders.
- Grieve. As the religious leaders of Israel crucify the promised son of David. The Messiah. And then wonder at the reports of his appearances after three days.
- And delight in his resurrection. Now having given that background. I want you to turn with me. And listen to the words of Acts chapter 1 verses 6 to 8.
- This new people of God. Represented by these Jewish apostles. Are by Jesus told to go into all the world. They are to witness to this Messiah.
- This king. Jesus. They will announce that through this king of all Israel. All humanity can be forgiven and restored to God.
- [6 : 41] And at the end of Acts chapter 1. The number of apostles will be filled from 11 to 12. As Judas is replaced. And in Acts chapter 2.
- Those 12 descendants of Abraham. Will be gathered together with other followers of Jesus. And they will be waiting as he commanded them to. They are unified.
- Not in their defiance of God. Not in their wanting to make a name for themselves. No as they sit there on that day in that room.
- They are united in their obedience to the Messiah. They are united in the knowledge of the events surrounding Jesus and his coming. And suddenly it happens.
- God descends just as he did in Babel. But not in judgment this time. With the sound of the rush of a violent wind he comes. Divided tongues as of fire appear among them.
- [7 : 43] They rest on each one of them. And they are filled with the spirit. And they begin to speak in other languages. The spirit gives them ability. Jews from the nations.

Spoken about in the genealogy of Genesis 10. Hear them. Shemites. Hamites. Japhethites. The language barriers.

Which might prohibit speaking the gospel. Are just shed. By God. Symbolically. Babel is reversed. Together these people fill the earth.

With the name of Jesus. God has blessed Abraham and his descendants. And God will now bless all the families of the earth.

Through the people of Abraham. God has made the name of Abraham great. Through exalting Jesus. And giving him a name that is above every other name.

[8 : 41] Philippians 2 verse 9. Filled with the spirit. These disciples will make the name of Jesus great. In their proclamation of him. And the day will come when.

His name will be so great. That at the name of Jesus. Every knee shall bow. And every tongue confess. That Jesus Christ is Lord. To the glory of God the Father.

Philippians chapter 2. Friends what I've tried to do in my introduction today. Is to paint for you. Some of the historical and biblical background. For the events of Acts 2.

Now let's turn to the details. First. Look with me. At the miracle of Pentecost itself. Then we will look at the sermon Peter preaches.

We'll draw out some points of application for our own day. And then we'll look at those. Well actually I suspect we'll run out of time. But we'll look at verses 42 to 47. And draw some implications for ourselves. And finally.

[9 : 40] I won't get to this actually. But we'll do it next week. I thought we'd look at the structure of Acts. But we're not going to get there. So let's start by looking at verses 1 to 13. Now when Luke started his first volume work.

Remember that. Sorry. When he started his second volume work. The first volume being Luke. He spoke of the four things that would make up the ongoing of ministry of Jesus. Through his church.

First of all he spoke of the instructions that he would give. Then he spoke of the apostles that he would give those instructions to. Then he spoke of his ascension into heaven.

And then he spoke of the promise of the Holy Spirit. Well in Acts 1 we have seen all of these things happen. In Acts 1 6 to 8. We were told that the church was to be a missionary church.

Its members were to bear witness to Jesus everywhere. In Acts 1 9 to 11. We are told that Jesus ascended into heaven. We're also given every indication. That they were not to focus on his return.

[10 : 41] But on the task of witness that Jesus had given them in verses 6 to 8. In Acts 1 verses 12 to 26. The question of apostleship is sorted out. So that we are given a 12th member to replace Judas.

So instructions have been given. The ascension has happened. A group of apostles has been sorted out. All that remains is number 4. The Holy Spirit to be given.

The promise of the Holy Spirit. And that is what is going on in verses 1 to 13. Now we've already looked at the event in verses 1 to 4. Let's look now at some significant points.

And the impact of the events. Look at verse 4 as an example. We are told that they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And began to speak in other languages.

Now verses 5 to 13 would seem to indicate that the languages being spoken were not ecstatic languages. But were real and known languages.

[11 : 37] Verse 6 makes this clear. Second, I want you to notice verse 12. It is clear that what has happened is that the focus of what has happened is not on the spectacular and the miraculous.

It is weird. But the question inevitably is. What does this mean? What is this that is going on?

What is this? It is spectacular. It is miraculous. It is weird. But what does it mean? Peter gives us what it means from one perspective.

However, you can tell from my introduction that I gave you. That I don't think Peter's explanation of what happens here at Pentecost. By any stretch of the imagination exhausts what it is about.

You see, I think that scripture makes clear that Genesis 1 to 11 has God concerned about the whole world. He wishes to bless the whole world. The nature of humans painted in Genesis 1 to 11 shows them to be self-focused and not God-focused.

[12 : 44] In Genesis 11, 1 to 9, God puts a cap on their independence by causing their language to be confused. It will not be confused. Sorry, it will not be unconfused until their focus is set right.

That is, I think, what's happening in Genesis 1 to 11. The confusion of language will not change until the orientation of human beings is changed, is set right.

And I presume this happens when sin is dealt with at the cross and human disposition away from God is rectified. Genesis 12 indicates that this will be accomplished through a descendant of Abraham.

In Jesus, the descendant, the seed of Abraham deals with sin. Moreover, the disposition that human beings have is cured by the giving of the Holy Spirit, which will gradually transform them.

The pouring out of the Spirit with the gift of speaking in other languages demonstrates that Bible can now be reversed. Now the message of God's kingdom under God's King and through God's King can be proclaimed.

[13 : 58] It can be proclaimed to all nations. God's great focus on all nations begun at the beginning of Scripture can now go ahead with great vigor.

Now let's move and take a look at Peter's sermon.

See, that's what I think is going on here. This is a spectacular event. Peter explains it from his perspective. Let's have a look at his sermon, verses 14 to 36. Basically, you can divide Peter's sermon into two sections, both oriented toward Old Testament Scripture quotations.

First section goes from verses 14 to 21. And we could give this the heading, Scripture and the Spirit. The second section goes from 22 to 41. And we could give this the heading, Scripture and the Christ.

Let's have a look at the first section, Scripture and the Spirit. And the occasion for the address is here in verse 13. Some people look at what's happened at this, what they apparently think is some sort of ecstasy or whatever.

[15 : 15] And they despise it and they think, really, it's just a bit of, you know, they turn the extraordinary into the mundane, which is very human, isn't it? They're saying there's nothing more special going on here than a bunch of people who have imbibed too much new wine too early in the day.

I'm not sure that Peter's defense in verse 15 would hold too much weight these days. It's too early in the morning. But perhaps it did then.

But that's not the fundamental of the point. The fundamental point is made in verses 16 following. See, Peter recalls the prophet Joel. And he says that what is happening is a fulfillment of Joel.

He then quotes in full this section of Joel following the Septuagint, that is the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible. And he amends the text in a couple of places.

Let me show you. Look at verse 17. The original version, if you check it up in Joel, goes like this. Joel says, Can you see the implication of Peter's change?

[16 : 32] He is saying, Joel's prophecy was applying to the last days. The pouring out of the Spirit will happen in the last days.

In other words, he's saying, Since the pouring out of the Spirit has happened, the last days are here. This in turn means that God's final act of salvation promised by Joel is about to happen at any moment, as it were.

The second change occurs in verse 19. Have a look at it. The original version goes like this. I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth. That's Joel 2 verse 30.

But look at what Peter says. I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below. Now, when Peter's talking about signs, what do you think that he means?

I reckon he's probably referring to three things. The gift of tongues already given. The signs of men and women speaking God's word in fulfillment of many Old Testament texts.

[17 : 36] And three, the various other signs and wonders that we see beginning to happen even by the end of this chapter, if you see in the last, from 42 to 47. You see, I think Peter is very clear.

The New Testament authors will follow his lead. The last days have now come upon the earth. Jesus has inaugurated the last days.

The Messianic age has erupted in the world it has begun. And in this period, everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Friends, please listen to this. We are in the last days. We are in the Messianic age. It stretches between the two comings of Jesus.

It is the age of the Spirit. It is the age of the abundance of the Spirit. Friends, if I can put it this way. If you are at home today and you look out of your window at the right moment, I mean, there is a trickling that started during the early part of the day.

[18 : 42] But we had hail and rain at this sort of direction. There was rain in abundance today. You see, that is what is being said here. The coming of the Spirit is in abundance.

Not just a trickle, but an outpouring. And this is the Spirit of prophecy. And that is, He is the Spirit who equips people, young and old, male and female, of all ages, to speak about the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is the Spirit, therefore, who makes possible the mission of the Church, which is, do you remember last week, to bear witness, or on Sunday, to bear witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the ends of the earth.

Friends, we are in the last days. They are days of salvation. This is the age of salvation. This is the moment of salvation.

And in this time, everyone, but everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. Friends, we are so used to this.

[19 : 52] We don't understand. This is spectacular news. Is this not the most incredible thing? Everyone in Israel had waited and waited and waited and waited for this day.

And we Christians so easily tire of it. We are in this day. Please do not tire of it. We who are believers in the Lord Jesus are the inheritors of the dreams of the prophets.

We are the inheritors of the dreams of God Himself. We are in the age of the Messiah, of His Son. We are the recipients of God's Holy Spirit.

We are marked with His seal. We are, every one of us who believes in Jesus, the witnesses of the Lord Jesus and all that has been done in Him. So let's now move on to the second part of Peter's speech.

In verse 22, he turns to the crowd of Israelites who are gathered. And he speaks to them about Jesus. And I just want to give you my summary of it. Look at the list of things he says. Jesus was a man from Nazareth.

[21 : 07] In other words, he was a human being. He was attested by God with visible deeds of power, wonders and signs that God did through him. He was handed over by Jesus, part of God's divine plan.

However, the handing over of Jesus was a totally sinful act, though it was according to God's will. No matter who hammered the nails into his palms and his feet, the Jews crucified and killed him.

He really died. However, God raised him from the dead because death could not hold him in its power. A fact that was predicted by his ancestor, David, in the scriptures.

And he was then exalted to the right hand of God. And under the authority of the Father, he became the one who pours out the Spirit upon the church.

He is therefore without doubt both Lord and Messiah. Peter, there's the outline of Peter's ministry and the person of Jesus.

[22 : 22] Let's turn to verse 37 and see what happens. The Jews who hear, as you might imagine, are cut to the heart. And they cry out in desperation, brothers, what should we do?

And Peter issues the invitation. Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins may be forgiven. And you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit for the promises for you, for your children, for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.

And just as in the two previous sections, these words of Peter's are soaked with Old Testament analogies and echoes. Some 3,000 welcome the message and they're baptized and they too receive the Spirit as promised.

Friends, there's the core of what happens in Acts 2. There is lots of detail there, but I've tried to give you the big picture, both in terms of biblical theology and in terms of the passage itself. Now, let me just spend some time pointing out some implications.

The first one has to do with the content of the gospel. You see, I think in Peter's sermon, and in the response, you can find a wonderful summary of the gospel.

[23 : 34] And I put it on the back of your outlines that you would have received when you came in. It's, of course, not everything that can be said, but it does have the core of the gospel in it. Let's see if we can put it together.

Here's my sort of little putting together in a five-point package you might like to memorize about the gospel. One, Jesus was fully human, born a Jew, attested to by God through miraculous deeds.

Two, Jesus died at the hands of God's people. However, even this great wickedness was part of God's plan.

Three, after death, God was at work again, this time to raise him in accord with scriptural prophecies. Three, sorry, four we're up to, aren't we?

God exalted Jesus, made him both Lord and Christ, or Messiah, and gave him the right to pour out the Spirit. And five, those who repent of sin, who believe, and are baptized, can be forgiven, saved, receive the Holy Spirit, and be added to God's new community.

[24 : 49] Later on, Paul will call it God's new humanity. Friends, let's now move to my second point of application, and here's where, if I haven't got into trouble by now, I'm about to, or I will in the point after this.

The point addressed here is to those who say that the disciples were already Christians, and that what happened here is that they were filled with the Holy Spirit, as a second experience of the Spirit.

this filling and empowering of them would be for witness. It would enable them to witness with power to Jesus.

Now, Christians who take this point of view say that without this filling of the Holy Spirit, the disciples would still be Christians. It's just that they would be weak Christians, Christians without power, Christians who would never expect to get very far in evangelism.

However, with the filling of the Spirit, they are made powerful Christians. Their witness will be vibrant and strong, and the signs of this power will be things like speaking in tongues, miracles, healings, words of knowledge, assorted other miraculous accompaniments.

[26 : 03] However, I need to say that at this point, if you view the passage this way, you misread it. And you misread it on a number of counts. Let me show you. First, the Holy Spirit could not be given until Jesus was glorified.

Peter himself makes that clear within this very passage. Look at verse 33. Two, the references throughout the chapter to the Old Testament, to the day of the Lord, to the fulfillment of prophecy, make it clear that this was a one-off event.

This is a one-off event that all the people of God in the past have been waiting for. It happened once. Third, the end of Acts 1 seems specifically designed to show they did not have the Spirit before this.

Let me explain. At the end of Acts 1, Jesus is gone, hasn't he? He can't advise the apostles about a replacement for Judas Iscariot. He can't choose one himself. He's gone.

With Judas gone, they've got to sort out how on earth do we go about replacing Judas? They've got to do it in some other way. They can't ask Jesus, what do they do? Well, they cast lots. Seems to make some sense to me if you've got no Jesus to consult with.

[27 : 23] And you don't have the Spirit. And casting lots seems a good way to ask for what God's direction might be. And the way that they, after all, Proverbs says, the cast of a lot is in the hands of the Lord.

The way that they may make decisions at the end of Acts 1 is not repeated ever again in the New Testament. The early Christians never make decisions like this again. Why not? Because after Acts 2, they have the Holy Spirit.

And he guides them far more directly. Now friends, what we're dealing with in Acts 2 is a once for all giving of the Holy Spirit to all people for all time.

Admittedly to the representatives of the people of God, but all who are Christians after them have the Holy Spirit as well. From now on, the Holy Spirit is available to all, Jew and Greek, male and female, slave and free.

That is what Acts 2, verses 38 to 39 is about. Peter says, the gathered people tells them to repent, to be baptized in Jesus' name. In other words, turn to Jesus, become Christians, and then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[28 : 32] From this moment on, this is God's promise for all people. Friends, please listen at this point. The Holy Spirit is given to people who become Christian when they become Christian.

There's only one occasion I know of where that doesn't happen. And we'll see it in Acts chapter 8. I'm not saying that there are no, and we'll find out what the reason is at that point.

I'm not saying that there are no deeper experiences of the Spirit. Please don't hear me say that. There are indeed. To say there were no other deeper experiences of the Spirit would be to go against all Scripture, go against the book of Acts.

Those who know God will experience Him and His Spirit's empowering throughout their lives. And there will be highs and lows in their experience of the Spirit. But these experiences will come again and again and again as we get on with witnessing to Jesus and being His disciples.

I wonder if I could repeat it in another way. If you're a Christian, if you believe in Jesus, if you've accepted the death of Jesus for you and dedicated your life to Him, then you have the Holy Spirit in all His power.

[29 : 42] You have all the Holy Spirit that God has to give you. You have all the fullness of God, we're told in Colossians. If you have Jesus, you have all the fullness of God, don't go looking for something else.

And don't let anyone see the lie that there is something else to be had. In Christ, God has given us as Ephesians, Paul says in Ephesians, all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places.

They are ours. And the Spirit is the down payment on all that there is. Let's move on from this a bit. I want to spend some time talking about the whole idea of being filled with the Spirit.

I want to ask you, how can you tell someone who's been filled with the Spirit? How can you identify them? I think they're identifiers for someone filled with the Spirit. And to answer the question, I want us to look at some crucial passages in Luke-Acts.

Remember, Luke and Acts are by the same person. First reference, have a look at Luke 1, verse 41. So Luke 1, verse 41.

[30 : 55] And I want you to listen to what it says. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now, I want you to notice what happens immediately after. What does Elizabeth do when she is filled with the Holy Spirit? Have a look. You can see it for yourself.

Verse 42 tells us that she speaks. And what does she speak about? She speaks about God's great deed in Jesus Christ.

Now, have a look at Luke 1, verses 64-67. In verse 67, the father of John the Baptist, a priest called Zechariah, is filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now, what does he do when he's filled with the Spirit? Look closely, and you can check it out for yourself. It's there in verse 67. He speaks. But what does he speak about?

[32 : 01] Again, you can check it out. He speaks about God's great act that is being done in Jesus. Now, we can move on even more. Let's go to the reference about a priest called Simeon in Luke 2.

In verse 27, our versions say that he was guided by the Spirit. Not at all helpful at this point, because the original says that he was in the Spirit. That is, he was under the direction of the Spirit, but he was in the Spirit.

And what does he do while he's in the Spirit? Take a look at it, and you can check it out for yourselves. In the Spirit, he encounters Jesus. And what does he do? Well, he cannot help but speak.

And when he speaks, he speaks about God's great deed in Jesus. Now, with that in mind, let's go to Acts 2 again and see just exactly what happens. Remember what takes place.

The Holy Spirit is poured out on them. The Holy Spirit causes them to speak. They speak in other languages. And verse 11 tells us they speak about the wonders of God.

[33 : 05] And then Peter, filled with the Spirit, does the same. You can see the role of the Holy Spirit, can't you? The role of the Holy Spirit is to enable the people of God to speak in witness to Jesus.

Exactly what God had told them to wait for so that they could do it. The role of the Spirit of God is to enable the people of God to speak in witness to Jesus.

The role of the Holy Spirit is far broader than that. But this is a primary role for him. This is true in Luke. It's true in Acts 2. It is true throughout Acts.

Check it out with me. Or check it out afterwards. Now turn over though. You can check it out in one place. Acts 4 verse 31. Just to give you an example. Acts 4 verse 31.

The disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit. And what do they do? They speak the word of God boldly. In other words, they speak the gospel.

[34 : 07] They speak about the great deeds of God in Jesus. But that's not the end. Look everywhere in Acts. For example, Stephen in Acts 6 and 7.

Saul in Acts 9. Cornelius in Acts 10. The converts to Jesus from the ministry of John the Baptist in Acts 19. It is the same everywhere. And it is the same in Paul's writings.

Have a look at Ephesians 5. Turn with me to Ephesians 5. This is 18 to 20. And look at what it says.

I love the illusion, you know, the echo perhaps of Acts 2. Don't be drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.

As you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[35 : 08] Can you do any of those things without opening your mouth? Well, you can do the one in your heart, I suppose, but most of them, they require you to open your mouth, don't they? In other words, to speak.

You see, what do you do when you're filled with the Spirit? You open your mouth and you fill it with the Word of God and the glories of Jesus and you declare it to God and you declare it to each other.

Friends, I wonder if I can put it, put the point in a different way by asking a question. Given what you've seen, what I've just shown you now, how do you think you'd know a person who's filled with the Holy Spirit?

I think the Scriptures give us some indication. They don't tell us everything. The ones I've looked at with you don't tell us everything about the role of the Spirit in the believer's life. However, they do tell us a core thing.

People who are full of the Holy Spirit do what the Holy Spirit does. And what does the Holy Spirit do? He directs people to Jesus.

[36 : 16] That's his role. That's what he wants to do. He's the most self-effacing person of the Trinity because he wants to point people away from himself and toward Jesus.

It's not, it's a bit harsh, isn't it, to say that, that he's the most self-effacing, but he wants so desperately to point towards the glory of Jesus which will glorify God of whom he is one person.

you see, it's magnificent the way that the three persons of the Trinity work together. Perhaps we should do a summer series on the Trinity one day, but that's another side of things.

They direct people toward Jesus. That's what someone filled with the Spirit does. They testify of him. They build people up in the knowledge of him.

They speak of him. If you are full of the Spirit, you are full of what God has done in Jesus. And when you're full of what God has done in Jesus, it will just issue from your mouth.

[37 : 23] For the mouth speaks of what is in the heart. Let me even try a bit more starkly and perhaps more controversially. Which churches are full of the Spirit?

Which churches are full of the Spirit? Well, I think if I read Luke Acts correctly, it's clear. Churches and people who teach the Bible. Who teach the Word of God.

Churches and people who declare the great deeds of God in Jesus. Churches and people who speak about Jesus all the time. Whose songs are full of Jesus.

the mark of Spirit-filled churches and Spirit-filled people is not all the other things that people often concentrate on and push forward to us.

The mark of Spirit-filled churches and Spirit-filled people is not what we often look for, which is largely emotional hype, I think, often. The mark of Spirit-filled churches and Spirit-filled people is the declaration of Jesus.

[38 : 30] People and churches who do what Peter did on the day of Pentecost in the first century and say, this is what God is doing in our world. Repent and believe in it.

That's what being filled with the Spirit is about. Saying to people, do God's will. Believe in Jesus because that's what the Holy Spirit is doing between the first and the second coming of Jesus.

Glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ. So the next time someone claims to be filled with the Spirit, put them to this little test if you like. See who or what they speak about all the time.

If they speak about the Holy Spirit all the time, they're not doing what the Holy Spirit himself does. If they speak about what they're doing all the time, they're not speaking about Jesus.

If they speak about miracles all the time, that's good, that's okay, but it's not centered on Jesus often. If they don't concentrate on Jesus, then perhaps they are not as filled with the Holy Spirit of God as they think they are.

[39 : 38] You see, the Holy Spirit loves, is passionate about directing people toward Christ and glorifying him. He loves it.

So you'll see the mark of his work everywhere that people are doing it. Now, I've probably gone a bit too far.

I'll give you my summary of Acts 2, verse 42, if I could. Do you notice that they devote themselves, these early Christians, to four things? Apostles teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers.

This is a great summary of what a true church is on about. The apostles teaching, clearly it was the apostles who had been authorized by Jesus, and so they listened to the apostles teaching.

Now, in our day, what would be the equivalent? Well, the apostles writings, and listening to them explained and paying attention to them ourselves. Now, can you notice, if I was to represent this by an arrow, that's from God to us.

[40 : 45] It's downward directed, isn't it? God speaking to us. Okay? The second thing they did is they devoted themselves to the fellowship. The fellowship was probably the sharing of goods, as well as just mutually caring for each other in a multitude of very practical ways.

The breaking of bread was probably a meal together which had the Lord's Supper as part of it. Now, if I was to represent this diagrammatically, the first one was hearing from God, the second was relating to each other.

See, the Lord's Supper is fundamentally about doing all three, well, I'll come back to the Lord's Supper in a moment, but the Lord's Supper and the fellowship and the breaking of bread together is about interrelating with each other.

And what's the last thing they devoted themselves to? The prayers, which probably means they went along to the temple for the regular prayers in the temple, but then prayed also, we know, through the rest of Acts in their own home. So that's directed back to God.

Can you see that? So, directed from God, hearing the apostles' teaching, the breaking of bread and the fellowship directed to each other, the prayers directed back to God.

[41 : 55] Notice where all come from. All of these come from God teaching. So church is based on hearing from God, responding to each other, responding back to God.

You could put it in a triangle if you like. Hearing from God, responding to each other, responding back to God. I myself prefer this one. Hearing from God, responding to each other, responding back to God.

Now, there are a number of things you can do in church that capture all of those together. What are they? The Lord's Supper captures all together, doesn't it? Because it's a living demonstration of what God has done for us in Christ.

It's an interaction with each other, and it's a response back to God of thankfulness and obedience. Singing, often, if it's good singing, if it's good Christian hymns, we'll do all.

They will teach us, they will allow us to encourage each other, and they'll allow us to praise God. I think that's why Christians get so excited about music, because it can do all three things together.

[43 : 00] It's a marvellous thing. Good Christian music is just wonderful. Anyway, I'd better finish there, or I will go on all night. So how about we pray? I know someone's going to pray for us, you are, aren't you?

So why don't we pray? Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me. Bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good, so that your mouth is renewed like, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.

Heavenly Father, we bless you, we thank you, and we honour you, for all that you have done for us, for the provision of your Son, for the provision of your Spirit.

Thank you, God, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, that in our iniquity and in our sinfulness, you sent your Son to die on the cross in our place, to live the perfect life that we should have lived and that we could never have lived, and to die the death that we should have died.

And so we honour you and we thank you, Father. We thank you, God, for the provision of your Spirit, who enables us, God, to bear witness to you, who gives us a voice, God, to proclaim Jesus Christ crucified to all the nations.

[44 : 35] and the Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. He may know his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

And, Father God, we remember our brothers and sisters across the world and even in this nation who are oppressed for the sake of the gospel. we remember them, Father, and pray that your Spirit would be with them, that your Spirit, God, would give them a voice of boldness to proclaim your gospel to the nations, and that, Father, we stand shoulder to shoulder with them, and that we pray for them, and that we remember them, God, as those who suffer for the sake of the gospel.

And as the man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like the flower of the field, for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and his place knows it no more, but the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children, to those who keep his covenant, and remember to do his commandments.

We remember our place before you, we remember, Father, that we are but dust and ashes, and we remember, God, that our life is in you, and so, Father, we pray that we would commit our very lives, that your Spirit would give us that voice of boldness, not to live unto ourselves, but to live for the sake of your gospel, to live for the sake of your Son, and that the very words on our lips at all times, God, would be all about Jesus Christ and him crucified and risen.

and so, Father, in closing, we pray, bless the Lord, all you, his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word, bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers who do his will, bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion, bless the Lord, oh my soul, bless the Lord, oh my soul, for the sake of your Son, Amen.