

## 2. The Church's Certain Power

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, if you'd like to turn with me to the beginning of the book of Acts, page in our church Bibles. And we're going to look at this first part of Acts chapter 1 tonight, all about preparations for a Pentecostal church.

And tonight we're focusing on the church's certain power. Last Sunday evening we began a news study in the early chapters of Acts.

I'm not sure quite how long we'll be there, but I'm planning at least in the meantime that we'll continue in the evenings until half term, which all the teachers will be saying hallelujah is nearly on the horizon at last.

And then we'll probably continue in the mornings, I think perhaps till Christmas. Last Sunday evening we began, we took a bird's eye view looking at the broad brush strokes of this marvellous book.

And I hope that we got some things of the big picture clear. We saw that Luke, who wrote both of these books, both parts, Luke's Gospel and Acts, we saw that he is a historian of the early church, but that he's much more than that.

[ 1 : 1 4 ] He's also an apologist. And he's more than that. He's also an evangelist and a teacher. In other words, Luke writes to record and to defend and to explain the ministry of Jesus.

Begun on earth, that's his Gospel, but also continued in Heaven and from Heaven. And we saw that the pivotal point in Luke's two writings is the ascension of Jesus.

That's how his Gospel ends, it's how Acts begins. And it's made very explicit, isn't it? Acts chapter 1, verse 1. The first book, he says, is all about what Jesus did until the day that he was taken up.

By implication, the second book is about everything he does after his ascension through his spirit-filled Pentecostal church. I hope that we got a grasp of that big story of this two-part work of Luke, that it's all about the certain unstoppable kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the melody, the unmissable theme tune of Luke's works. Although, of course, there are many harmonies that come together to add richness to Luke's score.

[ 2 : 2 7 ] And many paradoxes, too. We saw that although the triumph of the kingdom of Christ, of Christ's church, must be, it must be, says Luke, because of the invincible power of the Holy Spirit, yet at the same time we saw that the indisputable pattern of the way that happens is through much turmoil, much suffering, much opposition.

And we saw that although the progress of the kingdom of Jesus is inevitable, it must be, it is unhinderable, it's God's sovereign purpose. Yet at the same time, every single human being is therefore faced with an inevitable personal involvement in that kingdom's advance.

And that can be either as one who progresses that kingdom's advance, by participation in it gladly, or it can be by opposing it, by those who persecute the gospel and the church, and ultimately persecute the Lord Jesus Christ himself, as Paul, Saul, was doing before the Damascus Road.

Well, now what we're going to do tonight is begin to zoom in on some of the detail of the story. And when we do that, I think that we'll see again and again that these great themes that we looked at last week are, in fact, in evidence all the way through Acts, in all the individual stories as well.

There's a great consistency all the way through Acts. And Luke deliberately repeats key things all the way through his book, just so that we don't miss them. In fact, there are many things in Acts that Luke repeats deliberately three times each.

[ 4 : 00 ] I'll have some homework for you for next week. Read through Acts and see what Luke repeats three times. I'll tell you the first, it's the coming of the Holy Spirit. We have it three times. First of all, in Acts chapter 2, at the very beginning of the New Testament church.

But then again, in Acts chapter 8, with what's called the Samaritan Pentecost, the beginning of the Samaritan Christianity. And then again, in Acts chapter 10, at the very beginning of proper Gentile Christianity.

And that's deliberate from Luke. He's doing it deliberately to show us that Gentile Christians and their church are just exactly on the same par with the Jewish Christians and their church.

And he's also doing it to remind us and to insist that only through the invincible power of the Holy Spirit can the church be Christian at all. And indeed, that the whole church is to be a Pentecostal church.

There's no other kind of church. And he wants to show us that the church is Pentecostal for a purpose. The purpose is given to us in Acts chapter 1, verse 8.

[ 5 : 08 ] That of witness, bold mission to the ends of the earth. That's the purpose of the coming of the Spirit to all of God's church everywhere, always. And Acts chapter 1 is a chapter preparing the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the church.

It's a chapter all about the preparation for a Pentecostal church. And Luke writes, remember, that Theophilus and others who read the book might be certain, he says, about the things that they've been taught.

Remember at the beginning of Luke 1. And there are three things in Acts chapter 1 that he wants Theophilus and the church, and in fact all New Testament Pentecostal churches, to be clear about. So that they'll understand what it is to be a Pentecostal missionary church.

And those things are the three sections in our chapter, Acts chapter 1. In verses 1 to 11, he wants them to be clear about the church's power. Then in verses 12 to 14, clear about the church's prayer.

Then in the rest of the chapter, clear about the church's pain. Well, tonight we're going to look at the first of those. We'll come to the next week. The church's certain power.

[ 6 : 23 ] Central point there in verses 1 to 11 is surely verse 8. But you will receive power. And the big point is this, that the church can be certain of power because of the enthronement of God's Son, and because that enthronement is real.

That's the key message of these verses tonight. Now Luke deals with two key things in these verses that he wants us to be very clear about and certain about.

The first is this. The evidence for the permanent resurrection of Jesus. And following on from that, the correct explanation of the significance of that in the lives of his people.

And what it tells us about the coming of the kingdom of God. Now notice that. Luke's concern is both evidence and explanation. So look at verse 3.

He presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs. Some versions say by many infallible proofs, appearing to them over 40 days. Do you see? Certain evidence about his resurrection.

[ 7 : 30 ] Absolute proofs of the reality of it. He's referring back, isn't he, to the end of Luke's Gospel, chapter 24, where, do you remember, he records that Jesus appears and he eats fish with them, among other things.

Well, the point is clear, isn't it? Ghosts don't eat fish. It's a real bodily resurrection. And yet, it's different, isn't it, to all other resurrections.

Don't forget that these disciples had seen bodily resurrections before, hadn't they? They'd seen people raised from the dead by Jesus. Luke himself records the raising of the widow of Nain's son.

And John records the raising of Lazarus and so on. But you see, Luke's point is, this resurrection is different. It's permanent. And he records Jesus appearing and disappearing.

When he appears, he has a real physical body. It's a body you can touch. It's a body you can recognize. It's a body that can eat real food. But, it's a body that can pass through walls.

[ 8 : 32 ] He can vanish. He can reappear again. It was a new kind of real body altogether. It was real, but different. No less solid. It wasn't ghostly.

In fact, it was quite the opposite. It was more solid. It's a permanent resurrection body that Luke is showing us here. A permanent resurrection to a real and true and everlasting and indestructible physical life.

In fact, it's a body that's so solid and lasting that this present world, when faced with it, seems to be just a shadow of a much, much greater reality that's to come.

See, in this world, when you think about it, our bodies are quite solid, aren't they? In fact, some people's bodies are more solid than others when we think about it, I suppose. But all of us, we can walk through air, can't we?

We can wade through water. We're more solid than these things. We can't walk through wood. We can't walk through stone. But you see, Jesus' resurrection body is built for a lasting world.

[ 9 : 37 ] It's built for a world that is so solid that it passes through everything in this world. Even the most solid thing in this present physical universe is as a shadow in comparison with the solidity of the permanent body of a risen Jesus.

That's the point. And for 40 days, you see, the disciples had to get used to the fact that Jesus was alive, that Jesus was with them, even when they couldn't see him all the time.

They could touch him, they could see him, but not all the time. And he was teaching them to walk by faith, wasn't he? Not by sight. He was teaching them to trust in the truth that Jesus was alive and was risen forever.

But that there were differences. It wasn't just going back to the past, this was going forward to a future. He was teaching them to walk by faith and not by sight in that reality.

It's a very important lesson for all believers to learn, isn't it? But you see, to do that and to trust Jesus on that, you have to know that his resurrection is real and that it's permanent.

[ 10 : 46 ] It's not like Lazarus who died again. It's not like the widow of Nain's son and every other one who was raised from the dead who died again. And that's why Jesus insists, isn't it? Not just on the evidence for his resurrection but also on his explanation of what it means.

So, look at the second half of verse 3. He was speaking to them about the kingdom of God. As Luke told us in chapter 24 of his gospel, he was opening their minds so they could understand what the scriptures meant when they looked forward to the great day of the Lord, the great coming of the kingdom of God on earth.

And it's clear that Jesus taught them well. they did grasp the significance because in the next pages of Acts when we read the apostles preaching on the day of Pentecost and beyond, they are passing on with great clarity an explanation of the kingdom of God and of Jesus' resurrection and Jesus' ascension exactly in line with what the scriptures promised.

This is the promised day of God's power. That's their message. It's the long awaited day. It's now come. And crucial to that for the apostles was the evidence of the permanent resurrection of Jesus.

But not just his resurrection. All that displaying of the evidence of his resurrection, all of that occurred, says verse 2, until the day he was taken up.

[ 12 : 12 ] And that's the other great event, isn't it, that occupies these first verses of Acts. Luke wants us to have absolute clarity, yes, about evidence for the permanent resurrection of Jesus, but also about the exaltation to the permanent rule of the risen Jesus.

And he wants us to be very clear about what the correct expectation for his disciples should be because of that ascension and rule. He wants us to be absolutely clear what their expectation should be for both now, the present, and also for the future when Jesus returns.

See, look at verses 4 to 5. Jesus tells them to wait. Wait for the promise of the Father that you heard about from me. Well, he told them all about that, hadn't he, in the upper room. He said he was going to take his place at his Father's side and that he would send his Spirit to be with them forever.

And that's what Luke records for us here a second time in verses 9 and 10, his actual ascension. Now, look at these verses. Notice the detail. Notice the emphasis on the eyewitness testimony.

Verse 9, As they were looking on, he was lifted up. A cloud took them out of their sight. While they were gazing into heaven, the angels appeared.

[ 13 : 34 ] What did they say? Why are you looking into heaven? See, they witness the exaltation to the permanent rule of the risen Jesus, just as they witnessed the evidence for the permanent resurrection of Jesus.

But once again, it's not just the events that Luke records, it's the explanation. And it's vitally important. He insists, he insists that we get clear the explanation and that therefore we have the correct expectations of what Jesus' ascension and rule actually means for us.

And so either side of verses 9 and 10, either side of the actual events of the ascension, Luke records for us our expectation of what it means.

In verses 6 to 8, the correct expectation for what Jesus' rule means now in the present. And then in verse 11, in the angels' words, the correct expectation of what Jesus' ascension and rule will mean in the future that's still to come.

Now I want to think about this very carefully tonight. Very, very important. What Luke records in verses 9 and 10, Jesus' ascension, is the final vindication, it's the final triumph of Jesus Christ over all his enemies.

[ 14 : 54 ] It says, he is the victor. Remember back to his trial. Don't look it up, but in Luke 22, when the priests and the scribes, they say to him, if you are the Messiah, will you tell us?

And Jesus says, if I tell you, you won't believe in me, because they've had every opportunity to believe in him. But, says Jesus, the day will come when I won't need to convince you of this, because the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.

And in response to that, they all say to him, are you then the Son of God? You see, they knew exactly what he was talking about. They knew he was referring to the book of Daniel and to the vision that Daniel had in chapter 7 of the ascension and the rule of the Son of Man, who receives all dominion and all power and all authority, who is Lord of all things.

They know that Jesus is saying, that's what's about to be fulfilled right now. And Peter speaks in exactly those terms in Acts chapter 2, in the words that we began our service with.

At verse 32, he says, this Jesus God raised up, and of this we were all witnesses. That's his permanent resurrection. And he goes on, being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, this he has poured out, what you yourselves see and hear.

[ 16 : 18 ] He goes on to quote Psalm 2 about the exalted Son of God. You see, it's certain he's saying, he has risen, his rule is forever. He's both Lord and Christ, he's the Savior and he's the judge and the ruler of all things.

And the further proof of that will be the coming of the Holy Spirit of Jesus that the prophets spoke of long ago. This is that, Peter's saying. It's the day of the Lord.

It's the day of God's judgment. It's the coming of the kingdom of God. And that's what Jesus was teaching his disciples about in these 40 days.

He was teaching them about the kingdom of God. No doubt from scriptures like Isaiah 4 verse 4. In that day the branch of the Lord shall be glorious and those recorded for life in Jerusalem shall be called holy, cleansed by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of burning.

It's a great thing. It's promised the coming of God's Spirit. Or Isaiah chapter 11 where the Spirit of the Lord will make the root of Jesse a signal for the peoples and the Lord will recover his remnant forever to Zion.

[ 17 : 27 ] Or Isaiah 32 verse 15 when the Spirit is poured out from on high and the wilderness becomes like a fruitful field and the world will be full of justice and righteousness and peace.

And Jesus says don't depart, wait in Jerusalem for this promise to be fulfilled. What amazing expectations these disciples must have had, surely.

They can hardly believe it and that's why when we come to verse 6 they say to him Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? Is this really what the prophets spoke of?

Can this really be? Now if you read commentaries on this chapter of Acts you will find that the vast majority of commentators simply berate the disciples for asking that question.

John Calvin says there are as many errors in this question as words. And John Stock quotes that too approvingly and everybody else seems to berate them. They say are these stupid disciples.

[ 18 : 33 ] Jesus apostles mind you but they say are these stupid disciples. They don't understand anything. All they can think about is themselves. All they can think about is their nation. They're stupid.

They don't understand that what Jesus is talking about is a spiritual kingdom. I think that's very very unfair to the disciples here. I think it's quite wrong too.

Even if John Calvin said it he's wrong. Even if John Stott says it he's wrong too. Because it was quite natural quite natural that they should expect everything that the prophets had spoken of.

If Isaiah said that on the day the spirit is poured out from on high it would herald the recreation of the universe then it's right to believe the word of God isn't it? That's why they say Lord is that right?

Is this it? If Micah says in Micah 4 verse 8 that in that great day of God's triumph it would signify kingship for the daughter of Jerusalem and God would assemble all the nations at Zion well then we must believe it.

[ 19 : 40 ] And if Jesus had taught them that yes this was about to be fulfilled. Wait in Jerusalem wait in Zion city until the promise of the Father the Holy Spirit comes well I think verse 6 is a very natural question don't you?

It's the right question. It's a question that expresses trust in God's word. It seems too good to be true but is it true Lord? Now notice also Jesus does not rebuke them.

He doesn't berate them. He doesn't say you idiots you've misunderstood everything in 40 days. There's no question of any real restoration restoration of a kingdom like this. He doesn't say oh don't take these prophecies about being about real tangible things.

It's just about spiritual things just a way of speaking. Of course he doesn't say that because that's not what these prophecies are about. He simply says to them look verse 7 he says to them you're asking about timing.

Well times and seasons for everything that you ask that just is something that belongs only to the Father. I can't tell you about that. That's what he says. It's a clear echo isn't it of Jesus teaching earlier back in Matthew 24 when he says that you can't have the time and the season for when Jesus will come to judge the world in glory.

[ 21 : 03 ] No timing isn't your concern he says but what matters is that your expectations of my ascension are right. That you understand what my enthronement means for you now and also what it doesn't mean quite yet for you.

You see he's not rebuking them. In fact he's answering their question very clearly in verses 8 to 11 he's answering their question in a rather affirmative way. He's saying yes this is the restoration but it's just beginning now.

It's not yet being consummated as you're talking about. And what you need my disciples is the right expectation for now and you need the right expectation for something that's still to come in the future.

Now is the day of power verse 8. You will receive power when the spirit comes. You're right. It's the day of God's power. But my work on earth isn't finished yet Jesus is saying.

I've still got work to do. The gathering of the nations that the prophets spoke about is going to happen around a real tangible Jerusalem as well. The new Jerusalem but the way it's going to be brought about is that you are going to go out to all the world with the gospel.

[ 22 : 22 ] That's how it's going to be fulfilled. The Holy Spirit comes as Paul later says in Galatians so that in Jesus Christ the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles. God is going to gather the Gentile nations to Zion through the gospel.

He's saying yes this is what John the Baptist prophesied. You will be baptized in the Holy Spirit but now now is the age for witness through the Spirit. God will gather them into Zion as you go out from Jerusalem as gospel witnesses.

That's the correct expectation to have now of what it means that Jesus is enthroned. It's not yet the consummation of all things. Not yet but yes that will come.

It will come. You're right to expect that to. Not yet but it will come. And that's the angels message isn't it in verse 11. A real bodily return of Jesus Christ to this earth.

He will come in the same way as you saw him go. Not yet. We don't know when. The times and seasons belong to the Father but he will return.

[ 23 : 35 ] Now Luke had recorded that previously in Jesus' own words in Luke 21 verse 27. They will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with power and great glory. Every eye will see him says Revelation 1 verse 6.

It's not going to be just a spiritual coming. It's not going to be something that just heralds a sort of spiritual restoration of the world. It will be a real coming and it will herald a real restoration of all things.

And that will be at the final consummation according to the Father's timetable. people. And God's kingdom will be restored to his people on earth. It will be a renewed earth as Peter says.

He calls it the home of righteousness. A renewed earth for a renewed people. A renewed people of Gentiles and Jews. As Paul says fellow heirs, members of the same body, partakers of the promise in Jesus Christ through the gospel.

The true Israel of God will have a kingdom that's real to live in forever. but when Jesus comes. That's the picture the Bible closes with, isn't it?

[ 24 : 46 ] Just listen to Revelation chapter 21. It's so wonderfully clear. It's a vision but it's not ethereal. It's not just spiritual. It's very solid, isn't it? It's very real.

Listen. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning or crying or pain anymore for the former things have passed away.

You see, that's the future when Jesus comes back. It's not that our Christian hope is that we will go to heaven. The Christian hope in the Bible is that heaven is coming to earth.

[ 25 : 45 ] Earth is going to be made heavenly forever by the presence of God and by the banishment of the curse of sin forever. Darkness defeated and Eden restored. That's the promise of the gospel.

But much more than Eden as we sang in that great hymn by Isaac Watts where he displays his heavenly power. There Eden's curse prevails no more. In him the tribes of Adam boast more blessings than their fathers lost.

And that is what the power of Jesus' presence enthronement guarantees, makes certain. Blessings abound where Jesus reigns. The prisoner leaps to lose his chains.

The weary find eternal rest and all who suffer want are blessed. It's true, says Jesus. It's what you're longing for. It's what the prophets spoke of.

It's going to happen. But not yet. Lord, at this time will you restore the kingdom to Israel? Will there be the earthly restoration of this world that we've longed for?

[ 26 : 50 ] Will it be complete? No, not yet, is Jesus' answer. Not for us to know the time when that will happen, but that it will happen.

That is absolutely sure. It's certain because of Jesus' enthronement to the right hand of the Father. And we're to rejoice in that fact that he will return.

But now, now the disciples are to focus on a different expectation, aren't they? The power that comes from heaven now is for something quite different.

It's for an age of witness. And you see just how clear Luke wants his readers to be about that. It's part of the vital preparation for a truly Pentecostal church to know what our expectation from Jesus' work and his power is now.

And to know what it's not to be now. What is yet to be when he comes. And that's so important, the thing that Jesus repeats it again in his very last words before he enters heaven.

[ 27 : 55 ] He's taught it often, but he makes it his last words for his disciples. Because we always remember last words, don't we? We always remember the last words that somebody spoke to you.

But it was teaching that Jesus had all the way through his ministry. It might just be worth you turning back to Luke chapter 21 just to see how clear it is. I want you to be absolutely in no doubt about this.

We studied this, of course, in Matthew's gospel not long ago, but let's stick with Luke since it's his book. Now notice Luke chapter 21 verse 7. The same question, isn't it? When? Teacher, when will these things be?

And what will be the sign that they're about to take place? When will be this ultimate intervention of God? I haven't got time to look at all of this, but just look at verse 8. The first thing he says interestingly is don't be led astray.

And he tells them when it won't be, verse 9. There'll be wars and rumors of wars and all of these things, but don't be terrified. All of this must take place. Notice the must, one of Luke's favorite words, but the end will not be at once.

[ 28 : 59 ] All kinds of things will happen in world history, says verses 10 and 11. But it won't yet be the end. But, verse 12, what will be before this?

Well, there'll be a great time of struggle and persecution and suffering for the church. But what will that be, verse 13? This will be your opportunity to bear witness.

It's the age of witness. It'll be hard, won't it? But just remember the verse we read from Acts 14, 22, last Sunday. What Paul taught to all the churches through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of heaven.

But you will enter. Jesus says the same here in Luke 21, verse 19. By your endurance, you will gain your lives. And so as he was about to ascend to the Father, Jesus repeated that again and he said, this is now.

It's the time for costly enduring witness to begin. That's what the Holy Spirit is going to come and empower you for in this age. But don't fear, says the angels, all the rest of it is true as well.

[ 30 : 04 ] Jesus will come back, just as you've seen him. Just as Jesus went on in Luke 21 to say that, in verse 27. They will see the Son of Man coming in power and great glory.

But first, age of witness, struggle, toil, pain. And that's Jesus' last word. A word of essential preparation for a truly Pentecostal church.

We can be certain, he says, about power from heaven because of Jesus' ascension and because it's real. He is enthroned as Lord of all and one day that power will restore all things.

The desert will bloom like the crocus, as the prophet said. The redeemed of the Lord shall return to Zion. Everlasting joy shall be upon their head. But not yet.

But you will receive power now for witness. Jesus. The evidence, the evidence that that heavenly power of the risen Jesus is at work today, now on earth, will be that the gospel is going out to the very ends of the earth in the mouths of these witnesses.

[ 31 : 18 ] And that men and women and boys and girls of every tribe and tongue and nation will be constantly bowing the knee to Jesus Christ. That's the evidence of the power of the Spirit at work in this world.

My friends, if getting these expectations correct for the first Christians was a vital concern for Jesus, and if recording it was a vital concern for Luke, for his audience, and the reason it's recorded in Scripture for us is that it must be vital for us today too, mustn't it?



We too must have the right expectations, not the wrong ones, of the power that Jesus tells us we can be certain of because of his enthronement in heaven. We must have the right expectation if we are going to be rightly prepared also to be a truly Pentecostal church.

Right expectations of what Jesus promises for now, and no more than that, and right expectations of what Jesus promises for the future when he comes, and no less than that.

And both our understanding and our practice as a church and our proclamation must be consistent with those right expectations, mustn't they? That now is not yet the time of the restoration of all things.

[ 32 : 37 ] Now is not yet the time for the church to be engaged forever in the pure and perfect worship of heaven. But rather now is the time for the church to be engaged in the powerful and persistent witness to the gospel here on earth.

Our calling is not to be staring, looking up into heaven as it were, as the disciples were then. No, rather our calling is to be witnessing, boldly, witnessing to the historical fact of Jesus' resurrection and exaltation, and explaining the significance of that fact to all the world.

That God has exalted him to the highest place, that he is made both Lord and Christ, that he is the judge of all. But that he is also, today, still the saviour of all who believe, of all who will repent, of all who will bow to his rule.

That is the present task of the church of Jesus Christ. And that is what our preoccupation must be as a church of Jesus, if we are to be a truly Pentecostal church, a truly spirit-filled church.

Because that is the preoccupation of the Holy Spirit of God. That is why he was sent to this earth. So let me conclude with three marks of a truly Pentecostal church, properly prepared by the Lord Jesus today.

[ 34 : 02 ] The first is this. Its message won't ever promise too much from this present age, from the time before Jesus' coming. It won't promise more than Jesus himself will promise for this age.

It won't ever preach a gospel that promises that if you come to Jesus, all your troubles will be over. You'll be healthy always. You'll have healing always.

You'll have prosperity always. Or that you'll ever reach sinless perfection now in this life. It won't pretend that the time of all restoration is now.

It won't pretend that this is the age for the lame to leap, the blind to see, for every tear to be wiped away. That will come, yes. We don't know when.

It will only come when Jesus comes. And then we will all know it. Every eye will see him. There will be no mistaking it. No doubt. Absolutely none. No, the gospel that a truly Pentecostal church will preach will proclaim the Lordship of Jesus now, yes.

[ 35 : 07 ] And the certain future coming of the Lord Jesus as judge, yes. And it will call for repentance now. And it will promise the gift of the Holy Spirit now for every single person who repents and receives his word.

That's how Peter in chapter 2, verse 41, describes Christian conversion, receiving his word. And a Pentecostal church will gladly proclaim forgiveness now in Jesus' name and glory to come through Jesus' reign.

But it will also warn, it will also remind us we're saved in hope. That full salvation is not yet. That through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

A truly Pentecostal church promises and proclaims nothing more than Jesus himself will promise. Friends, it's so, so destructive when the church today proclaims and promises more than Jesus promises us for this life.

So damaging to the credibility of the gospel when people preach a prosperity gospel, a gospel of health and healing always. It's so damaging to the faith and to the church when people are making fervent prayer for somebody's healing and a loved one isn't healed.

[ 36 : 29 ] They get worse and they die as every single person does in the end. Even if they are sometimes healed. So easy, so often that leads to bitterness.

It leads to rejection of Christ. Or it leads to despair and self-doubt because you say, well, it must be that my faith can't be strong enough. If Jesus has promised to do these things and he hasn't done them for me, it must be something wrong with me or my prayer.

So damaging. It's not true. Or when somebody who has some kind of an illness denies themselves medical treatment and refuses to have the treatment that God has providentially ordered and given to us to have and to benefit from.

Because they demand that God will heal them and they will be fine. And by the time they come to their senses, their tumor or whatever it is has progressed so far that they are incurable and they leave their family fatherless and husbandless.

It's a tragedy. I've seen so many people damaged in that way. So many of Christ's lambs led astray by that so-called restorationist theology.

[ 37 : 38 ] But Jesus has not yet promised that restoration. Not yet. And we mustn't promise more than Jesus himself does for now, for this time. But second, on the other hand, a true Pentecostal church will not proclaim anything less than Jesus does promise for the time after his coming.

And that's been an equally pernicious error in the church down the ages. Watering down the real expectation of Christ's second coming so much giving no thought at all to a real and tangible physical return of the Lord Jesus and a real and physical new heavens and earth.

The church has been so vague about that so often. So often it spiritualizes it away until it almost means nothing at all. On the one hand you have liberal theologians rejecting any notion of a world to come and all the focus therefore becomes on the present.

And the coming of Christ's kingdom is really just nothing more than our efforts here to make this world a little bit of a better place. A bit more justice. A bit more peace and all that sort of thing.

That's what lies behind the slogan of Christian age, you know. We believe in life before death. What they're really saying is they don't believe in anything like what Jesus means by his real kingdom coming when he returns.

[ 39 : 02 ] But that's the only way that this world's ills will ever be cured. The only way that this world's disasters will ever be stopped. And you know evangelical Christians have often been just as vague about this.

So many Christians are so vague about the future, about heaven. As though it was some kind of non-physical, intangible spirit world where we float around as wisps.

Well who wants that? I think that's probably one reason why the Jehovah's Witnesses have been so successful. Because at least they get one thing right. They promise the restoration of a real earth.

Everything else is wrong but at least that's right. But Jesus does promise a real restoration. Not yet. But certainly when he comes in person to this earth to reign forever.

He promises a transformation of the earth, sure. But he says it will be the same real world. It will be a world where we have fish eating bodies. We won't have to even be vegetarians.

[ 40 : 04 ] Resurrection bodies. Restored bodies for a restored world. That's the true Christian hope. Not yet. But yes, the Father has fixed the time and the date at his pleasure.

And it will come. A day when all tears really will be wiped away. Not just pretend and biting our lips. A day of joyful reunions when we will abound with those who have gone before us.

With those who have loved Jesus and who have loved us and we have loved. Our spouses. Heirs together with us in the grace of life. Who have gone to be with Jesus before us.

And godly parents that we've loved and that we've missed. Or maybe children even. That we've buried in the midst of tears and absolute heartbreak. Or friends that we miss so dearly.

And Paul says we'll meet them in the air when Jesus comes. And we'll be caught up together with them forever to be with the Lord. And he'll reign in the midst here. In a real bodily existence.

[ 41 : 07 ] With resurrection bodies that can never die. And that will all be on the day that we see him come back. Just as certainly with our own eyes as the disciples saw him ascend into heaven.

As real and as tangible. And that's the true gospel hope that Jesus makes certain by his ascension and by his reign. One day I'm coming.

Oh glorious day. That's what he says. And behold. I make all things new. Don't let's ever preach less than Jesus promises for that day when he does come.

But finally. A true Pentecostal church will never claim too little for the present either. We can be certain of heavenly power for our life and for our witness on earth because the enthronement of the Son of God is real.

It did happen. His promise was fulfilled. You will receive power and you will be my witnesses to the end of the earth. If that wasn't true friends none of us would be here tonight.

[ 42 : 16 ] Because it was because that was fulfilled that the gospel came to Glasgow. Or wherever it was that you heard the gospel and were born again. And it's because that promise is true that we can be certain and confident that as we witness to the gospel today in our lives God's power will be at work.

God's power will always be at work when we witness to the gospel of Jesus. When we proclaim that gospel. Because that's why the Holy Spirit was given. For witness in this age.

For witness to the very ends of the earth. So which promises can you rely on so that you can be certain that God will always answer your prayers?

Well not things that Jesus hasn't promised for this age. Full health and healing that you'll never die or anything like that.

That's not to say God can't and won't answer these prayers sometimes. You can't rely on that as a promise till he comes. But prayers for things that he has promised now he will answer.

[ 43 : 24 ] Prayers about witnessing to his son. Prayers for the gospel to be fruitful and multiply and call people to Jesus. Those prayers God will always answer. Always.

Because that's why he sent his spirit. Gave us power. And that means friends that we can be bold in proclaiming the gospel. Because we can be certain of the Holy Spirit's empowering of our mission.

However weak we feel ourselves. However pessimistic we happen to feel ourselves about it. That will depend on your personality. Some people are optimists. Some are pessimists. But it doesn't matter.

We can be bold in prayer for all our witness to Jesus Christ and for an ever increasing witness to Jesus Christ through our lives, through our workplace, through our church, in our CUs and universities and every other opportunity.

We can be certain of God's answering prayer. However inadequate we feel. Because that's why he sent his Holy Spirit. It's Satan.

[ 44 : 23 ] It's Satan who wants us to doubt the power of Christ at work in the world. It's the world that mocks any thought that the power of Christ is at work in the church. But listen, the world is wrong and Satan is wrong.

Jesus is risen. And Jesus rules. He's enthroned in heaven. He has all power. And his spirit is at work in the earth now. He's wielding that power today.

And so because of that, as long as we don't ignore Jesus' teaching about what our proper expectations should be, not gazing wistfully up at heaven, wanting what's not yet, but rather grasping hold of what Christ has called us to be as his church here on earth, witnesses to the lordship of Jesus and his rule, then we can be certain, absolutely certain, that his mighty power will be at work in us and through us.

Will there be insults? Yes, there will. Will there be mockery? Yes, there will. Will there be tribulation? Yes. But there will be power.

Mighty. Resurrection power for witness to Jesus. Of that we can be certain. Because the ascension and the enthronement of Jesus is real.

[ 45 : 53 ] I don't know about you, but I think that ought to give us heart for this coming week, don't you? Confidence to pray for God to be at work through our lives, through our lips tomorrow and Tuesday and every day this week.

Let's never underestimate the true power of a Pentecostal church. A witnessing church is what Jesus has prepared us to be.

Well, let's pray together. Father, the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe according to the working of his might, that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him as his right hand in the heavenly places.

Heavenly Father, we pray that you would prepare every one of us fully and really to be Pentecostal believers, certain of your power and therefore ready to be your witnesses.

And we pray that we would see that power at work and rejoice in its fruit among us and from us and beyond us. Today and all this week and indeed until that great day when you shall come.

[ 47 : 17 ] For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.