
I am a trumpet player and when I run out of breath, I need to stop playing and take in more air. Then I can resume playing. In the same way, Paul says 'keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit (Ep 5:18).' He means, 'stop and take in more of the Holy Spirit, then resume the beautiful melody of the Good News.' Now is your chance to keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit, to stop and take more of the Holy Spirit in. We have time this morning to receive more.

In between college and Bible school, I worked with a land surveyor. On my first day, he took me by the hand, and we walked outside. He pointed and said, 'That way is north, that way is south, that way is east, and that way is west. The day you forget that is your last day here.'

- Have everyone point north, south, east, and west.

The Bible uses direction or points on the compass not only for direction, but to describe God's presence and His mission.

God's Presence:

- 'Your own ears will hear him. Right behind you a voice will say, "This is the way you should go," whether to the right or to the left (Is 30:21 NLT).'
- 'Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast (Ps 139:7-10 NIV).'

As believers, God is always with us, whether we go north, south, east, or west.

God's Mission:

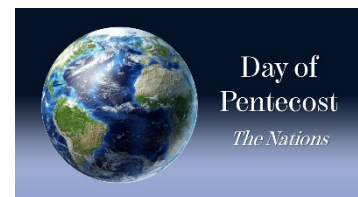
- 'People will come *from east and west and north and south*, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God (Lk 13:29 NIV).'
- 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and *to the ends of the earth* (Acts 1:8 NIV).'

Today is **Pentecost Sunday**, and I want to remind you of the part we play in sharing the Good News.

- Close your eyes and **think of your neighbors**. Think north (or in front of you), think south (or behind you), think east (left of you), and think west (right of you). If you live in an apartment building you may have someone over you or below you.
- If you know their names, **pray for them** as I pray.
- **There is directionality to our calling. We are called to 'our Jerusalem,' 'our Samaria,' and to the ends of the earth.**

Again, today is the Day of Pentecost, the day God filled His people with all they needed to fulfill God's mission to their neighbors and the nations.

Day of Pentecost *The Nations*



Like every great writer, Luke sets the stage for a great story.

1. Context.

There is a peaceful start.

- One hundred and twenty (Acts 1:15) are in the upper room are waiting for what Jesus promised, to be 'clothed with power from on high (Lk 24:49 NIV).'
- We presume they were praying because the story says, 'They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers (Acts 1:14 NIV).'
- It is so peaceful, Luke says they were sitting (Acts 2:2).

When 'Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them ... ¹²Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine (Acts 2:1-4, 12-13 NIV)."'

That is how the story should be told. I skipped verses 5-11 because they seem boring.

But Luke is a great story teller: it is well written, fast paced, and there is even some tension.

- One moment there is peace and the next moment there is visible fire, people speaking in other languages.

- People are polarized by the speaking in tongues; some are amazed while others think they are drunk.

So why does Luke interject something so boring as a list of nationalities between verse four and twelve?

- He could have gone right into Peter's sermon.
- Occasionally Luke interrupts a story with something seemingly random, but it has an important purpose.¹

Luke breaks this great story to say ...

2. The Nations.

'Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ^{d 10}Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues (Acts 2:5-11 NIV)!"

These **were diaspora Jews** who had returned to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost.

- Diaspora means 'scattered,' or separated from their homeland. People who are live abroad for various reasons.
- They were **normally sophisticated, urban-dwelling** Jews.
- **Galileans** were considered country people, the opposite of the sophisticated Jerusalem residents and these world travelers.

But why would Luke break his exciting story to list a bunch of nations? There are three reasons:

Luke listed the 15 nations because ...

1. The tongues attracted outsiders' attention.

- It **really shocked** these diaspora Jews to hear these country people praising God in the **languages of the country** they are from.

¹ Luke sandwiches the boring genealogy between Jesus being filled with the Holy Spirit and his being tempted in the wilderness. Why? Luke is alluding that Jesus is for all humanity, the second Adam, Joel B. Green, *NICT The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 189-90; Keener, *Volume 1 - Acts*, p. 840.

- The excitement **attracted men and women** to whom Peter would preach and three thousand would be believe (Acts 2:41).

2. These languages are symbolic of the whole world.

- Luke is using these 15 languages as representative² of ‘every nation under heaven (v. 5).’
- We know they are just representative because he omitted some important places that hosted diaspora Jews Greece, Macedonia, and Ethiopia.
- These men and women would be filled with the Spirit and then return home. They are being filled with the Holy Spirit to fulfill the mission Jesus gave them.

Here is a **map of the nations in listing order (follow the numbers here)**. The geography jumps around, but it ‘keeps circling back to Jerusalem, as the theological “center” of the earth.’³



- There were few maps in those days.

Let me highlight a few of the fifteen places.

- The **Parthian Empire** (1), the first one that is mentioned is the furthest point east and ‘the place of the longest exile.’⁴ They were the most feared enemy and present threat to Rome.
- **Mesopotamia** (4) was the second largest concentration of Jews outside of Israel. Over one million diaspora Jews lived in Mesopotamian cities.
- **Egypt** (11) was also home to a million diaspora Jews.
- **Rome** (13) is the climatic geographic place. As the capital of the Roman Empire, it would be like us saying Washington D.C.
- **Arabia** (15) is notable because of today’s situation. At that time Jews were ‘making converts among some Arab tribes as far south as modern Saudi Arabia.’⁵
- **There is directionality to our calling. We are called to ‘our Jerusalem,’ ‘our Samaria,’ and to the ends of the earth,**

² Keener, *Volume 1 - Acts An Exegetical Commentary: Introduction and 1:1-2:37* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), p. 840.

³ Keener, *Volume 1 - Acts*, p. 835. People had heard of faraway places like India, China, and Britannia, but could not envision directly where they were geographically, 841.

⁴ Keener, *Volume 1 - Acts*, p. 845.

⁵ Keener, *Volume 1 - Acts*, p. 851.

The **third reason** Luke lists the nations is

Luke listed the 15 nations because ...

1. The tongues attracted outsiders' attention.

2. These languages are symbolic of the whole world.

3. Symbolized a reversal of the tower of Babel and a unified mission.

- Luke is emphasizing a reversal of the tower of Babel – the Good News is for all the nations.
- Like Babel, these men and women were to be scattered around the world, but for a purpose:
- 'Repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name *to all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem (Lk 24:47 NIV).'

They were to receive the message, receive the Holy Spirit, and then go back to their people and share the Good News.

3. Reversal of the Tower of Babel

Let me briefly share the story of Babel. The world's population is growing after Noah's flood. The very next story is of the tower of Babel: 'At one time all the people of the world spoke the same language and used the same words ... ³They began saying to each other, "Let's make bricks and harden them with fire ..." ⁴Then they said, "**Come, let's build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world.**" (They were to multiply and fill the earth). ⁵But the Lord came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building. ⁶"Look!" he said. "The people are united, and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them!" ⁷Come, let's go down and confuse the people with different languages. Then they won't be able to understand each other." ⁸In that way, **the Lord scattered them all over the world, and they stopped building the city.** ⁹That is why the city was called Babel, because that is where the Lord confused the people with different languages. In this way he scattered them all over the world (Ge 11:1, 3-9 NLT).'

At Babel, God divided their languages and scattered them around the world for attempting to be god and for their disobedience.⁶

- **God came down** to punish disobedient humankind.

But **at Pentecost**, the fifteen nations represent a reversal of what happened at Babel.

- They were obediently waiting and seeking God.
- **God came down** to empower them to share the Good News.

⁶ 'For trying to deify themselves', Keener, *Volume 1 - Acts*, p. 843.

- Even though their languages were divided **praised God with one voice.**
- **They were obedient and united in purpose, not for self-exaltation, but to glorify God.**

Our **early Pentecostal forefathers** understood the mission: that the empowering of Pentecost was to share the Good News.

They changed the world but misunderstood the symbolism of tongues that day.

4. Missionary Tongues

They thought, like the Day of Pentecost, that tongues-speech was a specific foreign language. They thought, 'all I have to do is go overseas and God will enable me to preach in other languages.' Missionary tongues.

- For example, 'A person who has the gift of tongues can speak other languages at will, and, no doubt, several different languages.'⁷ – George F. Taylor, 1907
- But within a year and because so many people had experience failure on the field, they discarded missionary tongues: 'The tongues they speak in *do not seem to be intended as a means of communication between themselves and others*, as on the Day of Pentecost.'⁸ – Apostolic Faith, 1907⁸

They misunderstood, but they were pioneering and recovering something that had been lost in church history.

- The early Pentecostal missionaries had to be told to go get passports.⁹
- Some of them bought a coffin, packed their belongings into the coffin and got on a boat.
- They soon learn and adapted. **The important thing is that they went and shared the Good News.**

There is directionality to our calling. We are called to 'our Jerusalem,' 'our Samaria,' and to the ends of the earth

⁷ George F. Taylor, *The Spirit and the Bride* (Dunn, NC, 1907), pp. 62-63.

⁸ 'The Promise of the Father and Speaking with Tongues In Chicago', *AF* 1.9 (Jun 1907), p. 3. Italics mine.

⁹ Editor, 'To Out-Going Missionaries' *TBM* 5.105 (Mar 1, 1912), p. 2.

The story continues ...

Conclusion.

Peter got up and shared a simple story: 'Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs ... ²³ was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you ... put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him ... God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah ... ³⁸ Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:22-24, 36, 38 NIV).'

There were signs in the heavens with the wind and appearance of fire, and the miracle of speaking in tongues.

3,000 believed the story I just read. They repented and received the Holy Spirit.

What about you today?

- Believe, repent and receive.
- Pray.

The power of the Holy Spirit was not just on Peter that day, but also on the hearers to understand the message.

Sometimes, it takes time.

- These diaspora Jews already believed in one God, sin and righteousness, and that one day there would be a Messiah who takes away their sin.
- Our neighbors might be secularists – believing only in human intelligence, or Buddhists, or Muslim. Those neighbors take time as they must have a foundation for their decision.

But the Good News is that God has called you and equipped you. He has uniquely placed you where you live. Paul wrote, 'Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen (Ep 3:20-21 NIV).'

If you claim to be filled with the Holy Spirit, I want you to again think of the neighbors around you. All directions – north, south, east, west.

Final Prayer.

