

**Acts 2:1-4**

1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Luke, the author of Acts, was probably a Gentile Christian. He knew of God's promises in the scriptures that were made to the ancient people of God. This church, the original church on the day of Pentecost, was a church of continuity. It stood in continuity with all of the believers and with Israel's history. However, a problem soon developed as the Christians from a Gentile heritage threaten embedded traditions of the Christians from a Jewish heritage. The very 1<sup>st</sup> Christians were faithful Jews that were located in Jerusalem that were pushed out by persecution. Meanwhile, the Apostle Paul stressed that the acceptance of Gentiles into the life of the church was an act of God. Therefore, the Christian faith grew in continuity with Israel's history. Paul's constant visits to the synagogues and his Jewish lifestyle reinforces this continuity with Jewish roots. The missionary goal of the original church is for them to all be together as one, everyone with a single purpose to expand the Christian mission throughout the Roman Empire under the direction of the Holy Spirit and according to the purpose of God.

The day of Pentecost came. It was an Old Testament holiday of thanksgiving for the 1<sup>st</sup> harvest of the season. However, this particular Pentecost was special. The Holy Spirit descended upon all of them and gave them the ability to take the gospel into the world. The goal is to spread the gospel but it is to be one of continuity. Though all of them spoke different languages it was a united body that was congruent according to the purpose of God.

The problems that developed were people oriented. People believe what they want to believe and do what they want to do and as such, they implemented human desires into traditions and human doctrine into the growth of the gospel. This, of course, created continued problems. It falls at the root of the original problem from the very beginning with Adam & Eve; the will of human beings challenging the will of God. Jesus came for the very specific purpose of redemption - to save us. This was needed because the religious establishment was off track from the will of God. Jesus did not have a problem with demons. The problem that Jesus faced was dogmatic doctrine that claimed to be right with God but in reality was not.

This problem of human doctrine competing with the will of God repeats itself throughout history. About a thousand years later the Roman popes made increasing claims to preeminence. However, this attitude of superiority was not acknowledged in east. When they insisted, it created a schism that led to the 1<sup>st</sup> split in the Christian church. This was not the will of God and it is something that Jesus cautioned against, "in teaching human precepts as doctrines. You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition" (Mark 7:7-8) This was addressed by Jesus because it is the exact same sin that the religious leaders were committing at that time. This very same type of problem repeats itself another five hundred years later in Europe. At that time the

Catholic Church acted as an intermediary between the people and God. As such, they instituted an indulgence system for the people to purchase a pardon for sin. Again, this ties into the exact same sin of human doctrine and practice that goes against the will of God. You simply cannot buy or earn forgiveness. Salvation is already given to us by God through Jesus.

The problem continues to repeat itself as dogmatic beliefs go against the teachings of Christ. Key aspects of the Restoration Movement were that some people were prevented from partaking of the Lord's Supper and human creeds keep us divided and cause. The goal of the Restoration Movement was to rid ourselves of divisive denomination labels in favor of scripture and restore the church to the original New Testament faith and practice. Christians should be united not divided. Jesus Christ intended to create one church. We can find agreement and be congruent if we stay true to the Bible and find common ground in what Jesus said and did. All of the divisions within the church stem from human doctrine, human will, and people prioritizing their own goals and agendas over unity.

I recently met a young woman that was scared due to religious practices and beliefs. She was so scared that she had become physically ill. When I talked with her she kept repeating, "I want to go to heaven, I don't want to go to hell." Within the conversation she asked me if she was saved. So, I reviewed her faith tradition and what they teach. Jesus is the Son of God. He died on the cross and was resurrected. Jesus brings us salvation. He gave his life to save us. So, you have been baptized, accept Jesus as the Savior, and have repented. So, I asked if she has lived out a new life devoted to Christ. And she said "no." I said, "OK, most Baptists traditionally call that back sliding. We all do that, the key is to repent. Have you repented?" She answered affirmatively. Upon that I asked, "So, what's the problem?" She said "people tell me that if I keep repenting, then I'm not saved." This is the danger of pseudo-theology, human doctrine that is off centered from teachings of Jesus and the will of God. It is a repeat of the same old problem of human doctrine that is taught and emphasized over what is actually taught in the Bible.

I joined the disciples due to theology. I was living in a community of dogmatic doctrine and I craved a church that emphasized the teaching of Jesus and discouraged errant human doctrine. We are called to be the church of today's specific Scripture reading where they were all together as one, guided by the Holy Spirit, with the Word of God as their doctrine. The missionary goal of the original church is for them to all be together as one, everyone with a single purpose to expand the Christian mission throughout the Roman Empire under the direction of the Holy Spirit and according to the purpose of God.