

## CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

### Every Wind of Doctrine

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The Seventh-day Adventist Church is facing its greatest opportunities but also its greatest challenges today. Since the devil knows that a united church focused on the proclamation of the gospel in the light of the Three Angels Message preached to the entire world will usher in the return of our Lord, he will do ever thing within his power to hinder the forward progress of the proclamation of truth. Whether it is false ideas about the trinity, an emphasis on the feasts, a mistaken understanding of contemplative prayer and Christian meditation, the emerging Church, debates about creation, the sanctuary or the remnant, or a reapplication of the time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation and setting dates for the return of our Lord, the devil will use all of his cunning to counteract God's end time mission. Where truth takes only one form, error can take many. Today we will study a few of Satan's strategies to deceive God's people and how to detect them.

### FALSE TACHINGS SHOULD NOT SURPRISE US

Paul predicted false teachings would enter the New Testament Church in the first century. (Acts 20:28-30) He also counseled young Timothy that in the last days of earth's history spurious teachings would enter the church. (1 Timothy 4:1)

In Ephesians 4: 8-11, the apostle uses the expression "every wind of doctrine" to describe the widespread nature and the varying heresies that will enter God's church at end time. Ellen White quotes Ephesians 4 and uses the expression "every wind of doctrine" in a powerful article that appeared in the Review and Herald of January 11, 1887. I have quoted extensively from that article below so you can get its full context.

**"Already the judgments of God are abroad in the land, as seen in storms, in floods, in tempests, in earthquakes, in perils by land and by sea. The great I AM is speaking to those who make void his law. When God's wrath is poured out**

upon the earth, who will then be able to stand? Now is the time for God's people to show themselves true to principle. When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when his law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our courage the most unflinching. **To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few,--this will be our test.** At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason. The nation will be on the side of the great rebel leader. {RH, January 11, 1887 par. 2}

The days of purification of the church are hastening on space. God will have a people pure and true. In the mighty sifting soon to take place, we shall be better able to measure the strength of Israel. The signs reveal that the time is near when the Lord will manifest that his fan is in his hand, and that he soon will thoroughly purge his floor. {RH, January 11, 1887 par. 3}

**The days are fast approaching when there will be great perplexity and confusion. Satan, clothed in angel robes, will deceive, if possible, the very elect. There will be gods many and lords many. Every wind of doctrine will be blowing.** {RH, January 11, 1887 par. 4}

One of the agencies that Satan will use quite effectively, just before the return of our Lord, will be false teachings. As these false teachings enter the church they accomplish at least four of the devils purposes.

1. Heresy often minimizes the significance of the Three Angel's messages and the uniqueness of heaven's last day message.
2. Heresy effectively hinders mission. The unity which undergirds mission suffers in the context of doctrinal controversy.
3. Heresy undermines the authority of the church and casts dispersion on leadership.
4. Heresy shakes out of the church many people who are deceived by its falsehoods.

## **The Adventist Church Impacted by False Teachings**

**The book of Hebrews reveals that a mighty shaking is coming upon God's church. Heresy or false teachings will be one of the agencies God uses to cause the shaking. (Hebrews 12:25-29)**

**“When the shaking comes, by the introduction of false theories, these surface readers, anchored nowhere, are like shifting sand. They slide into any position to suit the tenor of their feelings of bitterness.”**(Testimonies to Ministers, page 112.

“Satan has made his boast of what he can do. He thinks to dissolve the unity which Christ prayed might exist in His church. He says, "I will go forth and be a lying spirit to deceive those that I can, to criticize, and condemn, and falsify." Let the son of deceit and false witness be entertained by a church that has had great light, great evidence, and that church will discard the message the Lord has sent, and receive the most unreasonable assertions and false suppositions and false theories. Satan laughs at their folly, for he knows what truth is. Many will stand in our pulpits with the torch of false prophecy in their hands, kindled from the hellish torch of Satan” (Testimonies to Ministers, page 409,410)

### **EVERY WIND OF DOCTRINE**

#### **1. Dust storms of doubt**

Have you ever been in a dust storm with the wind blowing fiercely across the prairies? Dust storms obscure vision. They make staying on the right road nearly impossible. They create confusion and make proper decision making difficult. If the devil can persuade us to doubt God's Word or question His revealed will, He knows we are on the pathway to apostasy.

**Satan's first attack in Eden was to insinuate doubt in the Word of God.**

He approached Eve with the words. ---“Has God Said” Satan deceived Eve by insinuating doubt regarding the Word and will of God. (Genesis 3:1-3)

The evil one attempted to use the same strategy on Jesus in the wilderness. (Matthew 4:6)

“Though he appears as an angel of light, these first words betray his character. “If Thou be the Son of God.” Here is the insinuation of distrust. Should Jesus do what Satan suggests, it would be an acceptance of the doubt. The tempter plans to overthrow Christ by the same means that were so successful with the human race in the beginning. How artfully had Satan approached Eve in Eden! "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Genesis 3:1. Thus far the tempter's words were truth; but in his manner of speaking them there was a disguised contempt for the words of God. There was a covert negative, a doubt of the divine truthfulness. Satan sought to instill into the mind of Eve the thought that God would not do as He had said; that the withholding of such beautiful fruit was a contradiction of His love and compassion for man.” (Desire of Ages page 118)

The difference between Adam and Eve’s fall in Eden and Jesus triumph in the wilderness is precisely on this point. They doubted God’s Word and questioned His authority. Jesus trusted God’s Word and accepted His absolute authority.

## 2. **Pestilence laden breezes of heresy:**

There are some diseases that are air borne. An **airborne disease** is any disease that is caused by pathogens and transmitted through the air. The pestilence laden breezes of heresy travel rapidly from one person to another, one church to another rapidly causing spiritual disease and death leaving conflict and division in their wake.

The apostle Paul counseled Timothy about the heresy and false teachings of Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Timothy 2:14-19)

Commenting on this heresy, Ellen White gives us this counsel,

“We have encouragement in the Scriptures that if we walk humbly before God, we shall receive instruction. But we are warned against undue curiosity. "Shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness," leading into paths of supposition and imagination, with which we have nothing to do. These are vain, unessential theories of human creation, which keep the mind dwelling upon nothingness. They have in them nothing sure or substantial. Of those who advance these theories, Paul says: "Their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some... In the days of the apostles the most foolish heresies were presented as truth. History has been and will be repeated. There will always be those who, though apparently conscientious, will grasp at the shadow, preferring it to the substance. They take error in the place of truth because error is clothed with a new garment, which they think covers something wonderful. But let the covering be removed, and nothingness appears (RH Feb. 5, 1901).

The nature of this heresy had to do with the timing of the resurrection. Think about the different false teachings that are believed by some people today that have to do with the issue of timing. There are quite a few. The timing of creation, the reapplication of time prophecies, the timing of the feast days ect.

### **3. Fiery winds of fanaticism**

Fanaticism is often based on an emotional type of religion that emphasizes feelings above God's Word. Signs and wonders become the essence of faith. Miracles become the sum of the religious experience and a sign of God's favor. The devil will use miracles, signs and wonders in a powerful way in the last days to deceive many. Although miracles will be wrought when the Holy Spirit is poured out in Latter Rain power, they do not establish the truth of God's Word. (Matthew 24:24; Revelation 13:14, 16:14, 19:20)

“Wonderful scenes, with which Satan will be closely connected, will soon take place. God's Word declares that Satan will work miracles. He will make people sick, and then will suddenly remove from them his satanic power. They will then be regarded as healed. **These works of apparent healing will bring Seventh-day Adventists to the test.**--2SM 53 (1904).

Fanaticism often begins with the substitution of human opinion for the Word of God; a drift from studying God's Word, an emphasis experience over truth and can be ushered in by music styles that exalt human experience over divine Revelation. (See 2SM 31-38)

**“When the enemy sees that the Lord is blessing His people, and preparing them to discern his delusions, he will work with his masterly power to bring in fanaticism on one hand and cold formalism on the other,** that he may gather in a harvest of souls. Now is the time to watch unceasingly. Watch for the first step of advance that Satan may make among us. ”Review and Herald, Jan. 24, 1893.”

#### **4. Cold Winds of formalism:**

Formalism often adds external requirements to God's Word de-emphasizing the life transformational salvation by faith in exchange for the externals of a self-imposed religious experience. They unite with the Pharisees in an attitude of spiritual pride which leads to judging others. (Matthew 7:1-5)

“A salvation which was purchased for humanity at such an infinite cost should be held in the most precious vessel by every believer. That which is of such value should ever be highly regarded and not cheapened and made common by the coarseness and roughness retained by those who receive the truth. {Our High Calling, page 34)

**Truth as it is in Jesus is not cold and lifeless and formal. . . . Truth is full of warmth, of evidence from the presence of Jesus.**

The Lord Jesus, on the Mount of Olives, plainly stated that "because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." He speaks of a class who has

fallen from a high state of spirituality. Let such utterances as these come home with solemn, searching power to our hearts. **Where is the fervor, the devotion to God that corresponds to the greatness of the truth which we claim to believe?** The love of the world, the love of some darling sin, has weaned the heart from the love of prayer and of meditation on sacred things. **A formal round of religious services is kept up; but where is the love of Jesus? Spirituality is dying. Is this torpor, this mournful deterioration, to be perpetuated? Is the lamp of truth to flicker and go out in darkness because it is not replenished by the oil of grace? . . . (Testimonies Volume 5, page 538,539)**

## **5. Gentle Zephyrs of Laodiceanism**

A zephyr is a gentle, warm breeze that tends to lull one to sleep. Imagine sitting at the beach with an idyllic view with the gentle warm breezes blowing reading a book nodding off in quiet repose. A wonderful example of a gentle zephyr masking imminent danger is found in Acts 27:9-38.

The church at Laodicea was wealthy, educated and complacent. Laodiceans do not reject religion. They are simply not passionate about it. They do not reject Christ; they are simply not passionate about Him. They may talk about mission but they do not participate in it. They are apathetic, lukewarm and spiritually sleepy. (See Revelation 3: 14-22)

“The work which the church has failed to do in a time of peace and prosperity, she will have to do in a terrible crisis, under most discouraging, forbidding, and circumstances. The warnings that worldly conformity has silenced or withheld must be given under the fiercest opposition from enemies of the faith. **And at that time the superficial, conservative class, whose influence has steadily retarded the progress of the work, will renounce the faith, and take their stand with its avowed enemies, toward whom their sympathies have long been tending.**” (5T 463)

## **Principles in Detecting False Teachings**

## **1. False Teachings often come in the form of so called “new truth.”**

“In every age there is a new development of truth, a message of God to the people of that generation. The old truths are all essential; new truth is not independent of the old, but an unfolding of it. It is only as the old truths are understood that we can comprehend the new. When Christ desired to open to His disciples the truth of His resurrection, He began "at Moses and all the prophets" (Christ’s Object Lessons, page 127)

## **2. False Teachings often involve a reapplication of time prophecies.**

Commenting on Revelation 10 verse 7 the prophet of God for the remnant makes this insightful statement, “This time, which the angel declares with a solemn oath, is not the end of this world's history, neither of probationary time, but of prophetic time, which should precede the advent of our Lord. That is, the people will not have another message upon definite time. After this period of time, reaching from 1842 to 1844, there can be no definite tracing of the prophetic time. The longest reckoning reaches to the autumn of 1844. {7BC 971.7}

## **3. False teachings often cast away confidence in established biblical truths.**

(See Hebrews 10:38)

“There is to be no change in the features of our work. It is to stand as clear and distinct as prophecy has made it. We are to enter into no confederacy with the world, supposing that by so doing we could accomplish more. If any stand in the way, to hinder the advancement of the work in the lines that God has appointed, they will displease God. **No line of our faith that has made us what we are is to be weakened. We have the old landmarks of truth, experience, and duty; we**



**are to stand firmly in defense of our principles, in full view of the world.**  
(Manuscript 3,1899)

**“The enemy will bring in false theories, such as the doctrine that there is no sanctuary.** This is one of the points on which there will be a departing from the faith. Where shall we find safety unless it be in the truths that the Lord has been giving for the last fifty years?-- Review and Herald, May 25, 1905.

“The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God's remnant people in the true testimony.--1SM 48 (1890).

#### **4. False Teachings often come in the context of a “new” spiritual experience based on subjective feelings.**

(See the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus for Jesus admonition about signs and wonders in relationship to the Word of God. (Luke 16:21)

#### **5. False Teachings often question church authority and organization.**

“The Lord has declared that the history of the past shall be rehearsed as we enter upon the closing work. Every truth that He has given for these last days is to be proclaimed to the world. Every pillar that He has established is to be strengthened. We cannot now step off the foundation that God has established. We cannot now enter into any new organization, for this would mean apostasy from the truth.—Manuscript 129, 1905.

## **How to Keep from Being Deceived by the Devil's Last Day Delusions.**

### **1 .Understanding truth is a matter of the heart as well as the mind.**

Jesus outlines this principle in John 7:17. The willingness to do whatever God says is a vital pre-requisite in knowing truth.

### **2. Understanding Truth is a matter of knowing God's will as revealed in His Word.**

(John 17:17, GC 48)

### **3. Understanding truth involves the willingness to stand for it when God reveals it. Even if it is not the popular thing to do.**

### **4. Understanding truth involves the willingness to accept, as far as possible, the authority of God's church and the desire to be in harmony with God's people.**

Soon God's people will be tested by fiery trials, and the great proportion of those who now appear to be genuine and true will prove to be base metal. (Last Day Events, page 180)

When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when His law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our courage and firmness the most unflinching. To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few--this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason.--5T 136 (1882).

The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out--the chaff separated from the precious wheat. This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place.-2SM 380 (1886).

As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition.--GC 608 (1911).

Although deceptions and falsehoods will come as they did in the early church, we are secure in Christ and kept by His Spirit through His word. With Jesus love filling our hearts and His Word saturating our minds, we are safe from the deceptive teachings of the evil one. Christ alone revealed in His Word Alone is our refuge from every wind of doctrine. When the gale force winds of deception are blowing, there is refuge in the One who is the hiding place in every storm. (Isaiah 32:1,2)

“From every stormy wind that blows,  
From every swelling tide of woes,  
There is a calm and sure retreat beneath the mercy seat.