

Title: Head Rush

Why does this matter? To know truth with the head that does not change the heart leaves us BOTH lost and spiritually hungry.

Summary: Our desperate search for meaning and wholeness through a clearer grasp of the facts truth without engaging the heart has come up short and left us empty-handed, our souls still desperately hungry.

Israel—the 10 tribes of the north—had fallen to her enemies because of persistent rebellion. Judah, however, took longer to capitulate. This was, in part, due to the promise of God to the house of David; in part due to the Levitical priesthood remaining a part of the kingdom of Judah; and, in part because Judah and Levi remained more faithful to God for a longer period of time. However, due to their own persistent rebellion, God also turned them over to their enemies. In 605 BC the Babylonians over-ran the country and it never truly recovered.

Some 170 years later . . . **Malachi** shows up, nearly 150 years after the last king of Judah, Zedekiah.

Malachi 1:6-8; 2:7-9. The issue Malachi addresses is the rebellious unfaithfulness of God's people who were constantly going after foreign gods while expecting God's blessings.

About 260 years later . . .

Judah Maccabaeus

Judah, third son of Mattathias the Hasmonean, a Jewish priest from the village of Modiin arises to throw off the oppressor's yoke. He successfully does so, driving Israel's enemies to the coast. Judah's victorys ultimately built up to the purification of the Temple of Jerusalem and its re-dedication on the 25th of Kislev (December 14, 164 BCE). This event is today commemorated yearly as Hanukkah. Around the time of the restoration of the temple a new determination to be faithful to God and avoid future trouble arose among the Jews. Among those striving for perfect faithfulness were the Pharisees. These were among Christ's worst enemies just a short while later. Why? Weren't they seeking to be faithful? Yes, but unfortunately, though striving to be obedient to the particulars of God's instruction, they failed to surrender to the God of those instructions.

Notice Jesus' declaration that they were still missing the point of Scripture—in spite of their earnest effort to be technically right. **John 5:39, 40** The problem: they were missing the Savior in spite of their consuming passion to correctly interpret and apply truth. The Pharisees, in particular, had become so consumed with the text of Scripture and their effort to honor it that they missed the Savior!! The truth in its pages had not been allowed to transform their lives.

John 4:10; 13-14. Jesus offered Himself as the Great Satisfaction to man's thirst—the Water of Life

Some 1700 years later . . .

The Second Great Awakening—under the influence of the Holy Spirit—ignites a burning fire in the hearts of thousands. Seventh-day Adventists were born out of this revival. It included a rousing call to holy living and, for Adventists especially, a passionate cry to be ready for the soon return of Jesus. Much marvelous truth—buried by centuries of error—was unearthed and restored to believers.

For these believers, truth was a precious commodity. In the very earliest days of the Advent movement this truth was accompanied by a deep, earnest devotion to Jesus. However, it was not long before the gripping clarity and power of truth had begun to displace a deep, personal relationship with God. Religious formalism was reborn in Adventism.

Religious formalism—the pursuit of correct doctrine at the neglect of a life-changing relationship with God—has often plagued God’s people. It is the description of God’s people, Laodicea, in **Revelation 3:14**.

Notice some of Ellen White’s own comments:

The message to the Laodicean church is applicable to our condition. How plainly is pictured the position of those who think they have all the truth, who take pride in their knowledge of the Word of God, while its sanctifying power has not been felt in their lives. The fervor of the love of God is wanting in their hearts, but it is this very fervor of love that makes God’s people the light of the world (The Review and Herald, July 23, 1889) 7BC 961.6

The message to the Laodicean church is highly applicable to us as a people. It has been placed before us for a long time, but has not been heeded as it should have been. When the work of repentance is earnest and deep, the individual members of the church will buy the rich goods of heaven. [Revelation 3:18 quoted.] Oh, how many behold things in a perverted light, in the light in which Satan would have them see. {7BC 961.7}

You may manifest great zeal in missionary effort, and yet because it is corrupted with selfishness, and tastes strongly of self, it is nought in the sight of God; for it is a tainted, corrupted offering. Unless the door of the heart is open to Jesus, unless He occupies the soul temple, unless the heart is imbued with His divine attributes, human actions when weighed in the heavenly balances, will be pronounced “Wanting.” The love of Christ would make you rich; but many do not realize the value of His love. Many do not realize that the spirit which they cherish is destitute of the meekness and lowliness of Christ, destitute of the love that would constitute them channels of light (Manuscript 33, 1894). {7BC 961.8}

Many are Laodiceans, living in a spiritual self-deception. They clothe themselves in the garments of their own righteousness, imagining themselves to be rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing, when they need daily to learn of Jesus, His meekness and lowliness, else they find themselves bankrupt, their whole life being a lie (Letter 66, 1894). {7BC 962.5}

Love of self excludes the love of Christ. Those who live for self are ranged under the head of the Laodicean church who are lukewarm, neither cold nor hot. The ardor of the first love has lapsed into a selfish egotism. The love of Christ in the heart is expressed in the actions. If love for Christ is dull, the love for those for whom Christ has died will degenerate. There may be a wonderful appearance for zeal and ceremonies, but this is the substance of their self-inflated religion. Christ represents them as nauseating to His taste [Revelation 3:17, 18 quoted] (Manuscript 61, 1898). {7BC 962.6}

Those whom Christ warns have some excellent qualifications, but they are neutralized by all who have a diseased self-love, self-deception, self-justification for gross neglect to help brethren in the service of God by encouraging words and deeds. There is a dead fly in the ointment. They are being weighed by One who never makes a mistake. He tells the result of actions which demonstrate that the love of Christ is not an abiding principle in the soul. God calls upon you all to learn from Christ His meekness. Put away your faculty for seeing the mistakes of others. Turn your attention to your own defects. Your self-righteousness is nauseating to the Lord Jesus Christ. [Revelation 3:15-18 quoted.] These words apply to the churches and to many of those in positions of trust in the work of God (Manuscript 108, 1899). {7BC 962.9}

To those who do not practice it, the Word of God is a dead letter. Christ says of such, “I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” He cannot present their case to the Father. If they realized that they were sinners, He could plead in their behalf, and the Lord would arouse them by His Holy Spirit. But they are worse than dead in trespasses and sins. They hear the Word, but make no application of it to themselves; instead, they apply the Word spoken to their neighbors

(Manuscript 163a, 1898). {7BC 963.8}

An intensity such as never before was seen is taking possession of the world. In amusement, in moneymaking, in the contest for power, in the very struggle for existence, there is a terrible force that engrosses body and mind and soul. In the midst of this maddening rush, God is speaking. He bids us come apart and commune with Him. “Be still, and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10. {Ed 260.2}

Many, even in their seasons of devotion, fail of receiving the blessing of real communion with God. They are in too great haste. With hurried steps they press through the circle of Christ’s loving presence, pausing perhaps a moment within the sacred precincts, but not waiting for counsel. They have no time to remain with the divine Teacher. With their burdens they return to their work. {Ed 260.3}

These workers can never attain the highest success until they learn the secret of strength. They must give themselves time to think, to pray, to wait upon God for a renewal of physical, mental, and spiritual power. They need the uplifting influence of His Spirit. Receiving this, they will be quickened by fresh life. The wearied frame and tired brain will be refreshed, the burdened heart will be lightened. {Ed 260.4}

Not a pause for a moment in His presence, but personal contact with Christ, to sit down in companionship with Him—this is our need. Happy will it be for the children of our homes and the students of our schools when parents and teachers shall learn in their own lives the precious experience pictured in these words from the Song of Songs: {Ed 261.1}

“As the apple tree among the trees of the wood,
So is my Beloved among the sons.
I sat down under His shadow with great delight,
And His fruit was sweet to my taste.
He brought me to the banqueting house,
And His banner over me was love.” {Ed 261.2}
Song of Solomon 2:3, 4.

Over our history as Seventh-day Adventists we have drifted away from personal relationship with God and spent more and more of our time searching for truth. We have come to believe that the great heart of evangelism is persuading others with the power and clarity of Bible truth. We spar over the correct interpretation of Bible passages. We search bookstores and the world-wide-web for the next great treatise on truth—believing that, if we can just get the facts straight, the ache in our heart will be solved. We love the facts. We are captivated by the “HEAD RUSH” that comes from the profound clarity of well-grounded Biblical doctrine. But the “head rush” of truth is no Savior—it only leads us to the Savior.

Beloved, the great ache in the heart is not for the correct facts—but for the right Savior. This Savior is illuminated by the facts of doctrine, but is greater than the sum of them—He is a person. To be changed and transformed we must move beyond the exchange of and processing of facts toward a personal, daily encounter with Jesus Christ.

Now, does this encounter with Christ displace and supercede the place and value of correct doctrine? Absolutely not—rather, doctrine, seen correctly, illuminates Him. The most important fact in this message is that doctrine is *not* the Savior. We run into big trouble when we equate doctrine and savior. We also run into serious trouble when we seek to have a faith torn away from sound, clear doctrine. In truth, Christ and correct doctrine are inseparable.

For example, the sun is not one of the planets in our great solar-system. Rather, they find their unity and anchor

in our brilliant sun. Likewise, Christ is not merely a doctrine, rather He is the center of the great solar-system of truth—the Great Illuminator and Unifier of all that is true. Christ is the center around which all doctrine clusters, and in which all doctrine finds its purpose and context.

So, the bottom line is:

Our need today is the same that it was 2,000 years ago—a personal walk with Jesus, composed not of mere facts, but of personal association. We need relationship with Jesus as first and last in our lives! Our first, most critical need is not a new reading plan, not a Sabbath School lesson, not a good book—but a time Jesus. We need, first, quietness in His presence. We need time for conversation (prayer) with God. We do not so much need to pursue knowing something different, but knowing the Someone. We need a daily experience with God—an experimental, living experience.

Additional, helpful quotations from Ellen White

The sacrifice of Christ as atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster.—Gospel Workers, 315. {7ABC 457.1}

It [the cross] is the central pillar on which hangs the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which is for those who accept that cross. Under and around the cross of Christ, that immortal pillar, sin shall never revive, nor error obtain control.—Letter 124, 1900. {7ABC 457.2}

The Sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption,—the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers.—Gospel Workers, 315. {7ABC 457.3}

Here's a suggestion if you'd like to begin today to change:

If you're spending no time with God: carve out 10 minutes. Ask Jesus to take your heart and give you a new one. Ask Him to guide you to knowing Him better. Take your Bible. Open the Gospels. Read no more than one story and then prayerfully recreate the story in your imagination, meditating on all the possibilities and applications to your life today. Experiencing the personal presence and power of Jesus in the story.

If you're already spending time with God: put aside whatever you're doing now for the next 30 days (unless you're already doing the following). Put aside you're reading plan, your Sabbath School lesson, your favorite book. Begin with a simple prayer for Jesus to take your heart and give you a new one. Ask Him to guide you to know Him. Take your Bible. Open the Gospels. Read no more than one story and then prayerfully recreate the story in your imagination, meditating on all the possibilities and applications to your life today. Open your heart to Him—as a heavenly adviser / mentor / guide.

Experience the personal presence and power of Jesus in the story. If you really, truly do this, in less than a month you will begin to experience it's profound impact in your life.

“It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.” *Desire of Ages*, 83.