

Aim: Be like David – stay close to God so you will not be deceived. What should we do when someone suggests a new way to do things?

Refer: Great Controversy chapter 3; <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Constantine-I-Roman-emperor>

Read or tell the extra story from Sunday in the Orange Lesson

Last week we talked about how Satan really likes to attack us, especially when we are about to do something exciting for God; when David should have been king, Abner, Saul's General caused a civil war, and I told you about the Christians after Jesus had returned to heaven who were put to death in the Roman arena or had to go hide in the catacomb caves.

Satan eventually saw that he couldn't stop the new Christians by persecuting them so he stopped and things became much better for the Christians. In fact, Christianity actually became popular.

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Flavius Valerius Constantinus, also known as Constantine I or Constantine the Great, was the first Christian Roman Emperor. He was born roughly 250 years after Jesus. He became the Emperor after being crowned by the army, and a time of civil war followed at the start of his reign. We do not know when or how he became a Christian, but of course, since the Emperor was now a Christian, the Christians could not be persecuted or killed any more and it actually became a popular thing to be a Christian.

So more and more people joined the church, and more and more people wanted to become Christians, but there were many who probably wanted to be Christians because it was popular, they didn't want to make such drastic changes in their lives, they argued that they would make some changes and the Christians should compromise too.

The first Christians had been Jews and so they still kept many of the Jewish traditions and changes had taken place as the Gospel first spread to the Gentiles. In fact in Acts 15, they had held a special council meeting in Jerusalem to pray, study and discuss the issue of which Jewish traditions should be kept and which were not necessary for the new Gentile believers.

Read part of the letter sent to the Gentile churches after this council in Acts 15:28-29

Now, a similar sort of thing was happening in Rome, as former idol worshipers wanted to join the church, they wanted to accept Christianity while keeping their own traditions. They argued that were making some changes and the Christians should compromise their rigid stance and allow them into the Church. After a time, most Christians finally agreed.

Ellen White in Great Controversy says that this was actually part of a plan of Satan. She says that although these new Christians claimed to be changed the change was only in the outward object of worship; instead of worshipping an idol statue, they now worshiped statues of Jesus, Mary, or the apostles.

Do you see the problem with that? (Read the 2nd Commandment in Exodus 20:4-6)

These sorts of changes have happened many times as the gospel has spread to different cultures and also as cultures have changed over time. Even in the Adventist Church has been through this; topics are discussed and committees are called to study what changes should be allowed and what should be rejected.

How does the Church know what changes are acceptable and what are not?

- Isaiah 8:30 (Agree with the Bible)
- Matthew 7:7, 8 (Ask and seek)
- James 1:5 (If you lack wisdom)
- 1 Peter 5:8 (Be alert for your enemy the devil)
- Acts 5:29 (Obey God rather than man)

One important thing to remember is that although God does not change, people and cultures do, so what might not be right or acceptable at one time may become acceptable at a later time. A good example of this is found in 1 Corinthians 14:34

"Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says." NIV

What law is he talking about? It's not in the 10 Commandments. It was the culture of their time and was seen as very culturally inappropriate for a woman to speak in public.

Optional: Discuss other cultural changes both ancient vs modern and things that are acceptable in different countries.

Optional: Discuss things that might change and things that might stay the same when someone from another culture chooses to follow Jesus.