

WHAT IS ADVENTISM? WHAT IS A BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE ADVENTIST MOVEMENT?

The word advent simply means “coming.” Many Christians observe and celebrate Advent in preparation for Christmas, as they remember Christ’s coming to earth as a baby. The future return of Christ is often called the second coming or the second advent. Broadly speaking, anyone who expects Christ to return might be referred to as an Adventist. However, the term Adventist is normally reserved for people or groups who expect Christ to return at any moment, or who at least allow for that possibility. Postmillennialists and those who believe in a post-tribulation rapture would not fall into this category; however, those who believe in a pre-tribulation rapture would. Even though the rapture is not synonymous with the second advent, it is seen as the “opening act” of the second advent. Beyond the broad theological meaning that could apply to a great number of Christians, a limited number of groups through the years have been referred to as Adventists.

The beginning of Adventism as a movement is often credited to William Miller, a preacher who predicted that Jesus Christ would return some time in 1843 or 1844. Trusting Miller, his followers withdrew from society and waited. This resulted in what is referred to as the Great Disappointment of 1844. When Jesus did not return when Miller predicted He would, most of the Millerites went back to their normal lives. Miller continued to express confidence in the return of Christ but admitted that he may have made some errors in his calculations.

Today, there are two major groups that have the label “Advent” or “Adventist” in their names. Seventh-day Adventists arose directly from the theological line of William Miller through the further teachings of Ellen G. White. There are many doctrinal problems with Seventh-day Adventism, but the name “Seventh-day Adventists” refers to two parts of their theology: they observe the seventh day (Saturday) as a Sabbath, and they expect the Lord to return at any time. They are Adventists who observe the seventh day.

The Advent Christian Church is another significant body with “advent” in its name. Sometimes they refer to themselves as “First-day Adventists.” There are some significant differences between Advent Christians and Seventh-day Adventists, although both trace their development back to William Miller. Advent Christians are generally orthodox with the exception that they teach “soul sleep,” which means that, when a person dies, he “sleeps” until the return of Christ—in other words, the soul is not consciously aware of anything until it is reunited with the resurrected body at the second advent or, in the case of unbelievers, resurrected for judgment.

This doctrine is an error as the Scriptures teach that, for the believer, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (Philippians 1:23).

Another problem with the Advent Christian Church is clarity regarding the means of salvation. Neither their Statement of Faith nor the Declaration of Principles (an elaboration on their statement of faith) contains an unambiguous statement of “justification by faith alone,” so it is not uncommon to find some within the Advent Christian Church who are trusting Christ alone for salvation and others who are holding on to some mixture of faith and works. (The same can be said of many churches that do have clear statement regarding justification by faith!) In addition to these two major groups, there are a number of minor Adventist groups.

In the final analysis, all Adventists hold in common an expectation of the imminent return of Christ. Beyond that belief, there are a great many differences that have to be examined and evaluated separately. While Scripture does teach us to expect the return of Christ at any time, setting dates and making specific predictions is always unbiblical (see Matthew 24:36).

WHO WAS ELLEN G. WHITE?

Ellen G. White became a leader of a segment of the Millerites (who called themselves Adventists) in May of 1863. Her many visions and writings influenced the formation of Seventh-Day Adventism and greatly shaped its doctrine. Today, most Seventh-Day Adventists still consider Ellen White to be a prophetess of God.

Ellen G. White was formerly a Methodist but later converted to Adventism through the preaching of William Miller, a false prophet who had predicted Christ would return in 1843 or 1844. When Miller’s prediction of Christ’s second advent failed to come true, the Millerites disbanded in dismay; however, a couple of Miller’s followers claimed to have visions to account for the failed prophecy. One of these seers was 17-year-old Ellen G. Harmon, who had the first of her 2,000 purported visions in a prayer meeting shortly after Miller’s disgrace. In her vision, Ellen claimed to have seen the Adventists on a journey to the city of God. Ellen G. Harmon soon became the beacon of hope for disappointed Millerites, the unifier of Adventist factions, and the spiritual guide for a new religious group.

In 1846, Ellen married James White, an Adventist preacher. Together, they began to study the teachings of Joseph Bates, who promoted Sabbath-keeping for all Christians. Convinced that Bates was correct, James and Ellen White began observing the Saturday Sabbath. Soon thereafter, in 1847, Ellen G. White had another vision, this one confirming her new belief: she claimed to have been shown the law of God in a heavenly sanctuary, and the fourth commandment (concerning the Sabbath) was surrounded by a halo of light. The Whites began to uphold Sabbath-keeping as a primary doctrine.

Ellen G. White was a prolific writer. Her first book, *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, appeared in 1851. She would go on to write about 60 books total. The Whites travelled extensively, and Ellen wrote constantly to tell people what God was

supposedly telling her. In 1855, James and Ellen G. White settled in Battle Creek, Michigan. In the next 55 years, Ellen G. White wrote nearly 10,000 pages of prophetic material, much of it published in the nine-volume Testimonies for the Church.

During a funeral service in Ohio in 1858, Ellen G. White had yet another vision, which she later detailed in her 219-page book *Spiritual Gifts, Volume 1: The Great Controversy Between Christ and His Angels and Satan and His Angels*. In this vision, Mrs. White saw a cosmic war being waged throughout the ages between Jesus and His angelic army and Satan and his. The Great Controversy, said Mrs. White, will be won as Christians help Jesus.

In May 1863, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was officially incorporated. Ellen G. White never considered herself the head of the new group, but her visions were definitely instrumental in its founding and early guidance. The Seventh-Day Adventists considered Mrs. White to be a true prophetess of God. Modern Adventists still lift her up as having the gift of prophecy. Seventh-Day Adventists interpret “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” in Revelation 19:10 as a reference to Ellen G. White’s writings. The following statement was approved by the General Conference session in the Netherlands in June 1995: “We consider the biblical canon closed. However, we also believe, as did Ellen G. White’s contemporaries, that her writings carry divine authority, both for godly living and for doctrine. Therefore, we recommend . . . that as a church we seek the power of the Holy Spirit to apply to our lives more fully the inspired counsel contained in the writings of Ellen G. White” (cited in <http://www.apologeticsindex.org/3100-seventh-day-adventism#return-note-3100-17>, accessed June 2, 2016).

Ellen G. White continued to have visions that she attributed to divine inspiration. Some of these visions dealt with the need for healthy eating habits, which Mrs. White called “the gospel of health” (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 6, p. 327). Her health requirements included placing restrictions on consuming meat, or “flesh food,” as Adventists call it. “Flesh food is injurious to health, and whatever affects the body has a corresponding effect on the mind and the soul” (*The Ministry of Healing*, Chapter 24: “Flesh as Food,” p. 316). It is not surprising that, having required Sabbath-keeping, Adventist theology began to allow other elements of Law-keeping to creep in as well. Interestingly, corn flakes were the creation of John Harvey Kellogg, a Seventh-Day Adventist doctor in Battle Creek who sought to provide a “healthy” vegetarian alternative to meat-laden breakfasts. In other visions, Mrs. White received the unorthodox doctrines of soul sleep and annihilationism.

After her husband’s death in 1881, Ellen G. White pledged to continue to promote Adventism and Sabbatarianism. She traveled to Europe and Australia, encouraging Seventh-Day Adventists, organizing schools, and establishing medical works. She continued to speak at Adventist meetings and to write down her prophecies until her death in 1915.

Ellen G. White was a false prophetess. Her promotion of Sabbath-keeping as a primary doctrine in the church goes against the clear teaching of the New Testament on the matter (Romans 14:5). Her “revelation” that hell is not eternal contradicts Jesus’ words concerning “eternal punishment” in Matthew 25:46. Her teaching that the sins of believers will be placed on Satan, the “scapegoat” (The Great Controversy, p. 422, 485), is the opposite of what the Bible says about who bore our sins (see 1 Peter 2:24). Her identification of Jesus as Michael the archangel (Jude 1:9, Clear Word Bible, published by Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1994) is a denial of the true nature of Christ. Her repudiation of the verbal inspiration of the Bible (Selected Messages, Book 1, p. 21 Manuscript 24, 1886) is at variance with passages such as 2 Timothy 3:16 and Psalm 12:6.

More basically, followers of Ellen G. White face a very real question concerning the sufficiency of Scripture. Is the Bible sufficient for our faith and practice, or do we need further revelation in the form of 2,000 visions from a self-proclaimed prophetess? Seventh-Day Adventists’ official stance is that “the Holy Scriptures are the supreme, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the definitive revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history” (<https://www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/god/holy-scriptures/>, accessed June 2, 2016). Yet, at the same time, most Seventh-Day Adventists accept the works of Ellen G. White as authoritative and binding. From the same official website: “Her writings speak with prophetic authority and provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church” (<https://www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/church/the-gift-of-prophecy/>, accessed June 2, 2016). What is “prophetic authority” if not the right to mandate belief based on divine words given through a human? How do the utterances of Ellen G. White differ from the Bible’s declarations of truth?

Seventh-Day Adventism is a diverse movement, and not all Seventh Day Adventists groups hold to all the teachings of Ellen G. White. But two facts should give Seventh-Day Adventists pause: Mrs. White, a teacher of aberrant doctrine, is a co-founder of their church; and their church has its roots in the failed prophecies of William Miller.

HOW TO REFUTE A SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST

These false doctrines of Seventh-day Adventism warn people to not join up with Seventh Day Adventists, or to leave Seventh Day Adventists if they are already involved.

- I. **THE SABBATH** — Seventh Day Adventists insist that we must keep the Sabbath as a day of worship. This is wrong because:
 - A. The New Testament never commands Christians to worship or meet on the Saturday Sabbath. Instead, Christians are recorded as meeting on the first day of the week, Sunday, in the following Bible passages:
 1. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 -- to put money in the collection.

2. Acts 20:7 -- Paul preached to Christians at Troas whose habit was to meet to break bread on the first day of the week.
 3. John 20:19, 26 -- Jesus, after His resurrection met with the disciples on the first day of the week.
 4. Romans 14:5-6 -- Paul, when discussing which day to meet, did not say that you must meet on the Saturday Sabbath, (as Seventh Day Adventists say), but he said "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."
 5. Colossians 2:16-17 -- "Let no man judge you in ... holy days or Sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come."
- B. Seventh Day Adventists judge Christians wrong who keep Sunday as a holy day. Paul says that Seventh Day Adventists are wrong to judge Christians for not keeping Saturday as a holy day.
1. Seventh Day Adventists claim that the Roman Catholic church after Constantine in 320 AD changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. This is completely false, because we have at least ten quotes from major church writers from 90 -- 300 AD who all say that the practice of Christians everywhere was to meet on Sunday, not the Jewish Saturday Sabbath. Seventh Day Adventists have no early quotes to show that early Christians met on Saturday.
- II. **SOUL SLEEP** — Seventh Day Adventists deny that believers on death go to heaven. They say that believers go to soul sleep in the grave until Christ's return.
- A. Jehovah's Witnesses, Christadelphians and other false groups believe this error.
- B. The main verses disproving the soul sleep error are:
1. Philippians 1:23 -- "I am in a straight betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and TO BE WITH CHRIST; which is far better."
 2. 2 Corinthians 5:8 -- "To be absent from the body (death), and to be PRESENT WITH THE LORD." (in heaven)
 3. Hebrews 12:1 -- "We are surrounded by so great a cloud of WITNESSES". (The departed believers discussed in Hebrews 11)
 4. Hebrews 12:23-24 -- "The heavenly Jerusalem ... the church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven and to the SPIRITS of just men made perfect".
 5. 1 Thessalonians 4:14 -- "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God BRING WITH HIM". This means that when Christ returns to resurrect believers bodies at the second coming, He brings our spirits and souls with Him from heaven
 6. Revelation 6:9-10 -- "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God ... they cried with a loud voice saying..."
 7. Isaiah 14:9-10 -- "Hell from beneath ... stirs up the dead for thee. All they shall speak and say to thee."
 8. Ezekiel 32:21 -- "The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell ..."

9. Ezekiel 32:30-31 -- "The Zidonians which are gone down with the slain ... Pharaoh shall see them and shall be comforted, even Pharaoh and all his army slain by the sword."
10. Luke 16:19-31 -- the rich man and Lazarus who had died spoke to each other.
11. These 9 scriptures show soul sleep of Seventh Day Adventists to be false.

III. CHRIST

- A. Mrs. White said: "Christ took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature. Christ took our nature and it's deteriorating condition." (Q.D. p.654-656).
- B. According to White and Seventh Day Adventists, Christ acquired a sinful nature. This is false. Christ had a sinless human nature. Christ took our sin punishment, not our sin nature.

IV. LOSS OF SALVATION

- A. "Now while our Great High Priest is making atonement for us, we should seek to become perfect in Christ." (The Great Controversy, E.G. White, 1911, p. 623).
- B. Seventh Day Adventists teach that though saved by grace, we are kept saved by keeping the Law. This is partial atonement. Therefore, to stay saved according to Seventh Day Adventists, we must continue to keep the Sabbath, the 10 Commandments and pay the tithe.

V. INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT

- A. Investigative judgment means no assurance of salvation. According to Seventh Day Adventists, beginning on October 22, 1844, Christ entered upon the "judgment phase" of His ministry, whereby He blots out sin. The Seventh Day Adventists "Investigative Judgment" doctrine rests on Ellen White's claimed revelation that Christ entered the Holy of Holies not at His ascension, but in 1844 (The Great Controversy, p.362-373).
- B. Hebrews 9:12 contradicts White's theory: "by His own blood he entered (past tense) in once (not in 1844) into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.' Hebrews 9:12, 25."... now once in the end of the world hath (past) he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (v.26).
- C. Seventh Day Adventists teach that Christ transferred the record of believers sins to the heavenly sanctuary, which will be finally cleansed at the conclusion of the Investigative Judgment, their day of atonement.
- D. Mrs. White says in "Patriarchs and Prophets", p. 357, this heresy: "The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel the sin. It would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement." Hence Seventh Day Adventists sins are not cancelled or forgiven yet. What a worry. No wonder they have no assurance of salvation until the imaginary Investigative Judgment is finished.
- E. If Christ can create the universe in 6 days, why does he take from 1844 until now to investigate the books? Is Christ a slow reader?
- F. These verses show the Investigative Judgment to be false:
 1. "The Lord knoweth them that are His." (2 Timothy 2:19

2. "I know my sheep." (John 10:14)
 3. "cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)
 4. "he had by himself purged our sins." (Hebrews 1:3)
 5. "yet now hath he reconciled ..." (Colossians 1:21)
 6. "having forgiven you all trespasses." (Colossians 2:13)
- G. Christ's judgments are AFTER he returns, not BEFORE He returns: "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory ... then shall he sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations." (Matthew 25:31-32)
- H. Hebrews 4:13 exposes the Seventh Day Adventists limitation on Christ's omniscience: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."
- I. Since Jesus knows all cases already, why must He investigate?

VI. SATAN AS THE SCAPEGOAT FOR OUR SINS

- A. White says in The Great Controversy page 422: "When Christ, by virtue of His own blood, removes the sins of His people from the heavenly sanctuary at the close of His ministration, He will place them upon satan, who, in the execution of the judgment, must bear the final penalty."
- B. Satan, according to Seventh Day Adventists's, becomes the scapegoat of Leviticus 16. This lack of clear distinction between the forgiveness of sins at salvation, and the blotting out of sins at some time in the future, makes it impossible for anyone to know, even at death, whether he is saved or not.
- C. Seventh Day Adventists are not allowed to experience assurance of salvation, because there would be no pressure for them to keep the Old Testament law and Sabbath as interpreted by Ellen White.
- D. Having the sins of all men laid on satan, assigns to satan an indispensable role in the blotting out of sins. This nullifies the all-sufficiency of the finished work of Christ.

VII. ANOTHER GOSPEL

- A. The Investigative Judgment and Scapegoat theories are "another Gospel" that Paul warns us about in Galatians 1:8-9. Paul places a curse on those preaching a false gospel such as Seventh Day Adventists.

VIII. THE MARK OF THE BEAST

- A. Seventh Day Adventists believe that Sunday keeping will be the mark of the Beast of Revelation 13:16-18.
- B. White says in The Great Controversy, page 449: "But when Sunday observance shall be enforced by law, and the world shall be enlightened concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath, then whoever shall transgress the command of God, to obey a precept which has no higher authority than that of Rome, will thereby honor popery above God. He is paying homage to Rome and to the power which enforces the institution ordained by Rome. He is worshipping the beast and his image. As men then reject the institution which God has declared to be the sign of His authority, and honor in its stead that which Rome has chosen as the token of her supremacy, they will thereby accept the

sign of allegiance to Rome--'the mark of the beast.' And it is not until the issue is thus plainly set before the people, and they are brought to choose between the commandments of God and the commandments of men, that those who continue in transgression will receive 'the mark of the beast.'"

- C. This is not rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). This shows Seventh Day Adventists careless, deceitful handling of Scripture.

IX. SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS'S ARE VERY CONFUSED ON PROPHECY.

- A. Seventh Day Adventists think that God has finished with Israel. Romans 11:2 and 25 contradict this idea. To Seventh Day Adventists, much of Revelation had been fulfilled by 500 AD. They don't understand Daniel's 70 week prophecy. (Daniel 9:24-27)