

WORLD RELIGIONS

Seventh-Day Adventism

Lesson #18

Seventh-Day Adventism is often listed as a cult in many cult books. There are reasons for this that will be explained, but in many instances Seventh-Day Adventists are more orthodox than many mainline denominations and churches. Within the Seventh-Day Adventist movement, there is a wide range of beliefs. Some Seventh-Day Adventists, who might be labeled as very conservative, would see anyone who doesn't worship on the Sabbath as doomed to hell. Other Seventh-Day Adventists who might be labeled liberal or more biblical, believe in Sabbath observance, but teach that it is not a matter of salvation. Some hold to the writings of Ellen G. White as inspired, others as partly inspired, and still others as uninspired but helpful. Some Seventh-Day Adventists are born again, love the Lord, and are not trusting in their works to save them. Others, however, have fallen into the error of the Judaizers, trying to be saved by grace and kept by works.

It is impossible in a lesson this size to fairly treat each of the many Seventh-Day Adventist groups. Surely some of the things taught in this lesson will not be believed by every Seventh-Day Adventist. However, I have tried to accurately portray the history and tradition of the Seventh-Day Adventist doctrines. Yet even the beliefs of Seventh-Day Adventism have changed in recent years. If you know someone who is Seventh-Day Adventist, it is best not to assume that they believe and hold to everything in this lesson. However, what is taught in this lesson will provide interesting fodder for talking with them.

I. GROWTH AND APPEAL OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM

- A. **The appeal of Seventh-Day Adventism** is that many Seventh-Day Adventists are godly people who love the Lord and love God's Word. Many Seventh-Day Adventist churches preach through the Scriptures. Seventh-Day Adventism promotes healthy lifestyles, commitment to Jesus as Lord, biblical morality, anticipation for Jesus' Second Coming, charity, and the movement has sponsored many excellent hospitals which have blessed millions.

On a negative note, Seventh-Day Adventism can appeal to the desire of some to earn their salvation, to do something that makes them acceptable to God, or to legalism. There is something in man that makes him want to earn or at least help God out in the salvation process. Seventh-Day Adventism provides doctrines that appeal to those with legalistic tendencies and gives them a framework to earn approval with God.

B. The growth of Seventh-Day Adventism as stated by *Wikipedia*:

The world church is governed by a General Conference, with smaller regions administered by divisions, union conferences and local conferences. It currently has a worldwide membership, or baptized members of about 15.9 million people. The church has approximately 20.3 million worldwide adherents, or what the church refers to as Sabbath School members. It has a missionary presence in over 200 countries and territories and is ethnically and culturally diverse. The church operates numerous schools, hospitals and publishing houses worldwide, as well as a prominent humanitarian aid organization known as the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA).¹

Seventh-Day Adventism publishes a periodical entitled *Signs of the Times* as well as many other religious tracts and books. They also have published and widely-distributed picture Bibles for children, which subtly teach Seventh-Day Adventist doctrines. Seventh-Day Adventism has its own radio program, *The Voice of Prophecy*, which is one of the oldest radio programs in America, having been broadcasted for over 80 years.

II. HISTORY OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM

The history of the key players in Seventh-Day Adventism is summed up well by the *New Dictionary of Christian Theology*:

The Seventh-day Adventist Church had its official beginning in 1863, when its first General Conference was held. William Miller (1782–1849), a lay Bible student (later a Baptist preacher), predicted that Christ would return to earth some time between 21 March 1843 and 21 March 1844. One of Miller's followers postponed the date to 22 October 1844. When Christ did not return on that day, however, there was 'great disappointment'.

The following three groups of 'Millerites' later combined to form the Seventh-day Adventist Church: first, the group around Hiram Edson (1806–82), who on the morning after 'the great disappointment' had a vision of Christ entering a heavenly sanctuary—which he interpreted to be the real meaning of Miller's prophecy; second, a group who followed

¹http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seventh-day_Adventist_Church

Joseph Bates (1792–1872), a retired sea captain, who through his study of the Bible became convinced that the seventh day was the proper Sabbath; third, the followers of Ellen G. White (1827–1915), who began to have visions confirming various teachings later to be adopted by Adventists, and who was recognized as having a prophetic gift.²

- A. **William Miller** (1782-1849) never joined the Seventh-Day Adventist movement, but his false prophecies are inextricably linked to Seventh-Day Adventism. Raised in a Christian home, Miller was a skeptic, rejecting the Bible as God’s inspired revelation. After a stint in the army he became a well-respected farmer in Low Hampton, New York. In 1816 he turned from his skepticism and began to study the Bible diligently using *Cruden’s Concordance*.³ Without any formal training, commentaries, or mentors, Miller was ripe to be lead astray. This is exactly what happened and in 1818 he wrote:

“I was thus brought, in 1818, at the close of my two-year study of the Scriptures, to the solemn conclusion, that in about twenty-five years from that time all the affairs of our present state would be wound up.”⁴

Thus Miller was convinced that the end of the world would occur in 1843. Shocked at his own discovery, Miller continued to study for another four years and became more convinced than ever that his convictions were true. He shared his views with a friend who told him he should publish his findings. He did in 1831. Soon he had many requests to speak at churches and in 1834 became a full-time Baptist preacher, preaching almost exclusively on prophetic matters and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The novelty and sensationalism of his claims attracted many followers.

At first Miller said that Christ would return about 1843 but later set a specific date for Christ’s return somewhere during the Jewish year of

²Sinclair B. Ferguson and J. I. Packer, *New Dictionary of Theology*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 637.

³*Cruden’s Concordance* was an early, compact (not exhaustive) concordance, written by Alexander Cruden in 1737. It sadly has played a part in the dramas and beginning of many cults and false religions.

⁴Anthony A. Hoekema, *Seventh-Day Adventism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), 9. Quoting Leroy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1954), IV, 463.

March 21st, 1843 to March 21st, 1844.⁵ Christ didn't return. Miller and his followers were devastated. Shortly after the failure of Christ to return by March 21st, 1844, one of his followers claimed to receive a vision from God which explained that Christ would not return until Oct. 22nd of that year. Miller and his followers again waited with eager anticipation for the coming of the Lord, only to have their hopes dashed to pieces when Oct. 22nd came and went. This led to what is referred to in history as "the Great Disappointment." Miller never again attempted date setting, nor did he accept Seventh-Day Adventism's unique doctrines which came later. "He remained a devout Christian until his death."⁶

- B. **Hiram Edson** (1806-1882) was one of the disappointed followers of Miller. A group of Adventists met at his house to await the glorious return. When Christ did not return, many were disgusted, exasperated and left the meeting, but a few remained. They decided to pray for more light and continued praying until they felt assured God would give them additional revelation. Edson then recounted:

We started, and while passing through a large field I was stopped about midway of the field. Heaven seemed opened to my view, and I saw distinctly and clearly that instead of our High Priest coming out of the Most Holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth on the tenth day of the seventh month, at the end of the 2300 days, He for the first time entered on that day the second apartment of that sanctuary [heavenly Holy of Holies]; and that He had a work to perform in the Most Holy Place before coming to the earth.⁷

Edson interpreted his supposed vision as the answer to the Great Disappointment. Edson said that Miller's calculations were correct, but what he was mistaken about is that Christ did not leave the heavenly sanctuary to return to earth, but left the holy place in heaven to enter the Holy of Holies in heaven. Thus Edson along with his two friends, Franklin B. Hahn and O. R. L. Cosier, studied diligently this new revelation and how it fit into the prophecies of Daniel.

⁵Historical account summarized from Anthony A. Hoekema, *Seventh-Day Adventism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), 9.

⁶Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions, and You* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1981), 91.

⁷Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1945), 458.

Crosier published his new interpretation explaining that Christ, before 1844 was doing the work of a normal priest, but it wasn't until the Day of Atonement, Oct. 22nd, 1844, that Christ entered into the Holy of Holies in heaven to blot out sin completely and to commence an investigation of the deeds of Seventh-Day Adventist believers to see who was worthy to enter into eternal life.⁸ Since believers still sin, Christ is still investigating and awaiting the day when He will take the remaining sins of man and place them on the scapegoat (**Lev. 16**), who they believe is Satan.⁹ After Jesus places the remaining sins on Satan, He will again return to earth. The view of Crosier that Christ is still investigating the deeds of believers to determine who is worthy to enter into eternal life later became known as the doctrine of the "investigative judgment."¹⁰

- C. **Joseph Bates** (1792-1872) was a retired sea captain who became involved in the Adventist movement and was highly involved from 1839 onwards. He became convinced, after reading an article by Thomas M. Preamble, that Christians needed to worship on the seventh day of the week, the Jewish Sabbath, not Sunday. Before this time some Adventists began to embrace the idea that Christians should worship the Lord, not on Sunday, but on Saturday.

It all started when a Seventh-Day Baptist woman, Rachael Oaks, was attending an Adventist communion service in Washington, New Hampshire. After the service she approached the Adventist pastor and asked him when he was going to be willing to obey all ten of the commandments, even the fourth. Thus the pastor was provoked to study the Bible on that subject and came to the conclusion, in March 1844, that Christians should observe the Jewish Sabbath and worship on the seventh day of the week. This was the first group of Seventh-Day Adventists and they influenced Bates to accept the seventh day as the necessary day of worship.¹¹

⁸Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions, and You* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1981), 91.

⁹While Seventh-Day Adventists deny that Satan is in any way our sin bearer, only affirming that Christ is our sin bearer, yet the fact remains that Lev. 16:5 says both goats are sin offerings, making them both sin bearers (see Lev. 16:10). See Walter Martin's, *Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1985), 429-30, for the Seventh-Day Adventist views affirming the sufficiency of Christ's atonement, though still affirming the scapegoat doctrine.

¹⁰See the Seventh-Day Adventist site and point #24 of their "Fundamental Beliefs" for a summary of their doctrine of the investigative judgment – <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>

¹¹A. Hoekema, *Seventh-Day Adventism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), 15-16.

Thus Bates became a strong advocate of seventh-day observance. He published a 48-page tract called *The Seventh-day Sabbath, a Perpetual Sign*. He gave many arguments in an attempt to convince people to worship on Saturday. The arguments were weak, but to the untrained masses they seemed convincing. In his revised edition of the tract, printed in 1847, he interpreted **Rev. 14:6-12**, which speaks of those who worship the beast as teaching that Christians during the tribulation must worship on Saturday or they will receive the mark of the beast. He claimed that the beast was the Papacy, and that the Papacy changed the proper day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. Bates then asserted that those who worshiped the Lord on Sunday, were worshiping the Papal beast and would receive the mark of the beast and be destroyed.

Later, Bates published another tract in 1849 called *A Seal of the Living God*, in which he claimed that the statement in **Rev. 7:1-3** which speaks of the servants of God being sealed on their foreheads, as relating to those who kept the Sabbath. Because **Rev. 7:4** says 144,000 are sealed, Bates concluded and taught that only 144,000 Seventh-Day Adventists would actually be saved.¹² Though not accepted at first by Ellen Harmon and James White (later to be married) they eventually both accepted Bates' interpretations. Thus Seventh-Day observance became the defining characteristic of the true people of God. Seventh-Day Adventism taught that all who worshiped on Sunday would receive the mark of the beast and perish.

- D. **Ellen G. White** – Ellen G. White was born at Gorham, Maine, her maiden name was Harmon. At nine years old Ellen received a blow to the face by a rock thrown by another girl. She was in a coma for three weeks. The injury and complications that arose from it continued for another six years. Her mother believed her life was spared for a special divine purpose.

Ellen and her family left the Methodist church and began to follow William Miller in 1840. They eagerly awaited the Second Coming of Christ in 1844. When Christ did not return she suffered depression. In December of 1844, after a prayer meeting, she claimed to receive a heavenly vision that transported her to heaven. There she saw Adventist believers traveling along a lighted pathway until they reached the shining city of God. Jesus was guiding the group. Soon after, she had a second vision warning her that though she would face disbelief and opposition, she had to tell others about the visions God had given her. Thus began her public

¹²A. Hoekema, *Seventh-Day Adventism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), 16.

ministry of witnessing, counseling, teaching and writing. She said that Christ would not return until the great commission was fulfilled.

Ellen was married to Reverend James White, an Adventist minister, on Aug. 30, 1846. In 1864 James became ill. Ellen nursed him back to health and supposedly received a vision telling her to push for health reform. This led to the establishment of the Western Health Reform Institute in 1866 at Battle Creek, Michigan. During their marriage James said that Ellen had 100 to 200 visions. Many felt she was a prophet guided by the Holy Spirit. On a few occasions she supposedly held out very large Bibles, one was 18 ½ pounds, at arms length, for 20 to 30 minutes! Some believe this is “proof” that she was a prophet.¹³

In 1845, the year after the Great Disappointment, Ellen claimed that she too had a similar vision to Edson’s, and saw Christ enter into the Holy of Holies in heaven. Two years later she claimed that in another vision she was, herself, taken into the Holy of Holies and in the heavenly sanctuary to see the heavenly ark of the covenant and the Ten Commandments in the ark. When she looked she saw a halo of glory around the fourth commandment. This vision confirmed, in the minds of many, Joseph Bates’ teaching about needing to worship on Saturday.

James White died in 1881 and Ellen traveled widely, speaking at churches and conferences in the United States, Europe, and Australia. In 1903 she founded the Southern Publishing Association in Nashville, Tennessee. Before her death she helped move the Seventh-Day Adventist’s headquarters to Washington, D.C. Throughout her life Ellen wrote articles for Adventist periodicals and wrote several books.¹⁴ She addressed many subjects such as salvation, church history, the home, health, education, temperance, evangelism, finance, world missions, the organization of the church and the inspiration of the Bible. Seventh-Day Adventism affirms:

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen. G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings

¹³<http://www.whiteestate.org/issues/faq-egw.html>

¹⁴This information was taken and summarized from R. Vonderlack, "White, Ellen Gould" in *Who's Who in Christian History*, ed. J.D. Douglas and Philip W. Comfort (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992), 715.

are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction.¹⁵

III. ELLEN G. WHITE, PROPHET OF GOD OR FALSE TEACHER?

Many things could be said about Ellen G. White's writings and what Seventh-Day Adventists believe about her writings. Some assert they are inspired revelations of equal authority to the Scripture. Some deny this but at the same time affirm as an official position of the church, that she had the gift of prophecy. Both cannot be true. If she was moved by the Holy Spirit and spoke from God, her writings must be of equal authority to the Scriptures. If the Holy Spirit did not inspire her visions and writings, then she doesn't have the spirit of prophecy. Some believe White's writings are inspired, but not to the same degree as the Bible. The problem with this is that inspiration only comes in one degree. Some believe that Ellen White's interpretations of the Bible are infallible and without error. Some believe her writings are helpful, but see them as suggestions or guidelines or only for Seventh-Day Adventists and not for all the church. As stated at the beginning of this lesson, there are varying beliefs among Seventh-Day Adventists and not all of them can be addressed. The official position of the Seventh-Day Adventists is that Ellen G. White had the gift of prophecy. This is one of the reasons why Seventh-Day Adventism is considered a cult in the eyes of many.

Pastor and theologian Dr. Wilbur Smith, in a letter to Dr. Walter Martin, had insightful comments about Ellen G. White and the place she holds in Seventh-Day Adventism as "the" authoritative commentator. Speaking of the *Seventh-Day Adventists Bible Commentary* Smith wrote:

I do not know of any other denomination in all of Christendom today that has given such recognition, so slavishly and exclusively to its founder or principle theologian as has this commentary to the writings of Ellen White. At the conclusion of every chapter in this work is a section headed, "Ellen G. White Comments." For example, on Genesis 28, the blessing conferred upon Jacob, there are less than three pp. [pages] of comment, but at the end, forty references to the various works of Ellen White. In addition, at the end of the first volume of this commentary is a section again headed, "Ellen G. White Comments," containing eighty columns of

¹⁵See Seventh-Day Adventists doctrinal distinctive #18 at <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html> or *Seventh-Day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957), 16. Seventh-Day Adventism affirms the sole authority of the Bible while also affirming the inspiration of Ellen G. White's writings.

material quoted from her writings. There is no section devoted to Calvin, Luther, Wesley, or anyone else.

The preface to this commentary contains the statement: "At the close of each chapter is a cross reference or index to those passages in Ellen G. White's writings that comment on the various texts in that chapter." And the second sentence following reads: "The Advent movement has grown strong through the study of the Bible; and it can be said with equal truth that the movement has been safely guided in that study by the light shining from the Spirit of prophecy." I would say that the writers of this commentary believe that "the Spirit of prophecy" has rested *exclusively* upon Ellen G. White, for no one else is so classified in this work.¹⁶

James Beverley says, ". . . the writings of Mrs. White deserve praise for their biblical flavor and commitment to Christ as Savior and Lord."¹⁷ However, he goes on to state:

The Adventist emphasis on Ellen G. White as a prophet is not warranted, given her false teaching on certain medical issues and her mistaken prophecies. Further, it is obvious that she plagiarized from other Christians. She even claimed divine inspiration for sections of her books that were copied without credit. This has been documented beyond doubt by Walter Rea in his work *The White Lie*.¹⁸

While Seventh-Day Adventism has tried to make a distinction between Ellen G. White's writings and the Bible, the fact is they believe she is a prophet, an infallible interpreter of Scripture. One can search high and low to find any authoritative Seventh-Day Adventist source that condemns her interpretations of the Word of God on any text as being wrong and yet not find any. While it is desirable to be gracious and give Seventh-Day Adventists who truly love the Lord the benefit of the doubt, and accept their statements that the Bible alone is their sole source of authority, until they condemn Ellen G. White as a false prophet, her writings as not from the spirit of prophecy, and until they begin to use all faithful commentators of the Word of God equally, no such latitude can be offered. They profess to believe in the Bible alone as their soul source of authority, but with their deeds they deny what they say.

¹⁶Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1985), 441, quoting a personal letter from Wilbur Smith to Walter Martin.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., 211.

IV. DOCTRINAL DISTINCTIVES OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM

James Beverley sums up well the primary doctrinal distinctives of Seventh-Day Adventism:

Seventh-day Adventist identity lies in three key notions: (a) the Bible predicts 1844 as the time when Jesus would begin an investigative judgment in the heavenly realm, (b) Christians should worship on the Sabbath, and (c) Ellen G. White is a prophet for the end-time church. Adventists are also known for their emphasis on vegetarianism and obedience to relevant Old Testament laws.¹⁹

A. Jesus' Return in 1844

1. Much of Seventh-Day Adventism focuses around the Second Coming of Christ. This emphasis on prophecy was encouraged by William Miller who taught on prophecy almost exclusively and predicted the Second Coming of Christ by March 21st, 1844. Miller arrived at his conclusion by making several assumptions concerning the 2,300 evenings and mornings mentioned in **Dan. 8:14** coupled with the 70 weeks of Daniel mentioned in **Dan. 9:24-27**. Miller made these assumptions:
 - a. That a "day" in prophetic writings always means a year, thus the 2,300 mornings and evenings of **Dan. 8:14** must refer to years.
 - b. That the seventy weeks of **Dan. 9:24-27** and the 2,300 mornings and evenings of **Dan. 8:14** begin counting down at the same time.
 - c. That the starting date when the 70 weeks and 2,300 days begin was 457 BC as referenced in **Ezra 7:11-26** and **Neh. 2:5-8**.
 - d. That there was a "zero year" (March 21st, 0 B.C.) which in reality there would be no zero year but the calender would go from March 21st, 1 B.C. to March 21st, 1 A.D.

¹⁹James A. Beverley, *Religions A-Z* (Nashville, Tenn.: T. Nelson, 2005), 210.

- e. That the cleansing of the temple spoken of in **Dan. 8:14** happens at the Second Coming of Christ.

Thus it was by making the five assumptions above and adding 2,300 to 457 B.C. that Miller came up with his 1844 date for the Second Coming of Christ to earth. Though Miller was wrong, he said:

Were I to live my life over gain, with the same evidence that I then had, to be honest with God and man, I should have to do as I have done. . . I confess my error, and acknowledge my disappointment; yet I still believe that the day of the Lord is near, even at the door; and I exhort you, my brethren, to be watchful, and not let that day come upon you unawares.²⁰

The failed prediction of Christ's return in 1844 is an embarrassing element in Seventh-Day Adventist history and one that they would like to distance themselves from. Yet the fact remains that one of their founders falsely interpreted the Word of God and led many astray. You would think that Miller's failed prediction would put an end to his movement and disperse his followers, but not so.

Samuel Snow, one of Miller's followers, came up with another interpretation that postponed the Second Coming from March 21st, 1844 to the Jewish Day of Atonement on Oct. 22nd, 1844. Because in the Jewish calendar the Day of Atonement is celebrated in the seventh month, the new interpretation and its followers were called "The Seventh Month Movement." Snow definitively predicted that Christ would return on that day. Miller and most of his followers accepted Snow's interpretation and began to wait for the Second Coming to happen in October of that year.

As the day approached, those who had sold all and waited in anticipation were eagerly awaiting the coming of the Lord, but the day came and went. People were crushed and this led to what is called "The Great Disappointment." Many, exasperated and convinced that their leaders were false teachers, turned their back on Adventism, yet many doggedly continued to follow Miller.²¹

²⁰Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1853), 256. <http://books.google.com>

²¹Anthony A. Hoekema, *Seventh-Day Adventism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), 11-12.

Regrettably, the Seventh-day Adventists, instead of denouncing Miller and Snow as false teachers, “adjusted the prophecy” with another false doctrine – the investigative judgment.²²

- B. **The Investigative Judgment** described above under Hiram Edson, is very unorthodox. Virtually all other biblical commentators believe that the scapegoat of **Lev. 16:5ff** represents Christ, not Satan. Christ is our sin bearer who was crucified to make atonement for sin. Never is Satan spoken of as our sin bearer. He cannot be for he isn't sinless. Not only that, to say that Satan is the scapegoat is to deny the sufficiency of Christ's death and atonement. While many modern Seventh-Day Adventists deny that Satan, represented as the scapegoat of **Lev. 16**, is in any way a sin bearer, Ellen G. White clearly believed the opposite. In her work *The Great Controversy*, White writes:

It was seen, also, that while the sin offering pointed to Christ as a sacrifice, and the high priest represented Christ as a mediator, the scapegoat typified Satan, the author of sin, upon whom the sins of the truly penitent will finally be placed. When the high priest, by virtue of the blood of the sin-offering, removed the sins from the sanctuary, he placed them upon the scapegoat. 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.²³

And

As the priest, in removing the sins from the sanctuary, confessed them upon the head of the scapegoat, so Christ will place all these sins upon Satan, the originator and instigator of sin. The scapegoat, bearing the sins of Israel, was sent away "unto a land not inhabited;" so Satan, bearing the guilt of all the sins which he has caused God's people to commit, will be for a thousand years confined to the earth, which will then be desolate, without

²²James A. Beverley, *Religions A-Z* (Nashville, Tenn.: T. Nelson, 2005), 210.

²³Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing, 1888), 422.

inhabitant, and he will at last suffer the full penalty of sin in the fires that shall destroy all the wicked.²⁴

Another outcome of the doctrine of the investigative judgment is the denial of the security of the believer. No one can be sure they are actually saved, since their salvation depends on their works, and Christ's assessments of their works. Yet the Bible teaches that we can know for certain that we are saved in this life (**Isa. 55:6-7; Jn. 3:16; Rom. 10:8-9; I Jn. 5:13**). Thus the many texts assuring the believer that they will be saved must be explained away (**Jn. 10:27-30; Rom. 8:28-39; I Cor. 1:8-9; Eph. 4:30; Phil. 1:6; I Thess. 5:23-24; I Pet. 5:10; Jude 1:1**).²⁵

C. **Soul Sleep, Annihilationism and the Denial of Hell** is taught by Seventh-Day Adventists. They believe that when a person dies they are not conscious. The wicked will be resurrected to be destroyed completely by fire. They are not conscious after dying or after being destroyed by fire. This doctrine is clearly refuted by texts that teach there is consciousness after death in both heaven and hell by believers and unbelievers alike (**Lk. 16:19-31; II Cor. 5:1-8; Phil. 1:23; Rev. 6:9-10; 14:11**).

D. **Christians Should/Must Worship on the Sabbath** – Because of the influence of Bates, the Seventh-Day Adventists have gone way overboard promoting the necessity of Sabbath worship. Though there is nothing wrong with worshiping on the Sabbath or any other day of the week for that matter, there is something wrong with saying we must obey the fourth commandment in the ten commandments of the law of Moses.

We are not under the law of Moses as a law system (to be discussed below). Furthermore, the New Testament makes it clear that early Christians worshiped on the first day of the week (**Acts 20:6-7; I Cor. 16:2**). Not only that, but there is clear instruction saying the Sabbath is not to be an issue for judging one another (**Rom. 14:4-6; Gal. 4:9-11; Col. 2:16-17**). The author of Hebrews makes it very clear that the Sabbath

²⁴Ibid, 485-486. It is clear from White that Satan not only suffers for his own sin, but is a sin bearer on behalf of the people. Christ is the ultimate sin bearer, but so is Satan, there is a double jeopardy happening where both Christ and Satan are punished for the same sins.

²⁵For a detailed treatment and summary of Seventh-Day Adventist views on the investigative judgment see <http://www.investigativejudgment.info/ij/part7.htm>. This site has many examples of Seventh-Day Adventists who do not believe the doctrine and why it is still an official Seventh-Day Adventist teaching.

rest, which Old Testament saints were commanded to enter, can only be entered by faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ (**Heb. 3:7-4:11, esp. 4:3**).

- E. Christians Must Keep the Ten Commandments of Moses.** Seventh-Day Adventists are confused about the law of Moses. They claim that the law should be divided up into two parts, moral and ceremonial. This distinction is not taught in the Bible for all the commands in the Old Testament law of Moses are expressions of the Ten Commandments, and the Ten Commandments are expressions of the two great commandments – love God and love your neighbor (**Mt. 22:36-40**). The New Testament is abundantly clear we are not under the law of Moses (**Rom. 6:14-15; Gal. 3:13**) but the law of Christ (**I Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2**). Confused about what to do with the law of Moses, they try to separate it from the other commands in the Old Testament as if it is apart from the law, when in reality it is the heart of the law which gives birth to the others. They fail to realize that the law of Christ overlaps with the Ten Commandments in the law of Moses. We cannot worship idols, murder, covet, etc., not because we are under the law of Moses, but because we are under the law of Christ. The law of Christ happens to overlap with the law of Moses in nine out of the ten commandments. Guess which of the Ten Commandments is not repeated for the church? You guessed it, the fourth commandment. Thus in placing us under the law of Moses, they put us under the curse that comes with the law of Moses (**Gal. 3:13**). Not only that, some fall into the heresy of the Judaizers. James Beverly comments:

Adventist focus on the Law often leads to works righteousness in the movement, a fact readily evident in the testimonies of ex-members. Obedience to the commands of God is a necessary part of Christian life, but the Adventist emphasis on Sabbath keeping, Old Testament food laws, and so on can easily overshadow the doctrine of salvation by grace alone.²⁶

Though they affirm salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, they teach that if one does not keep the Sabbath when the Antichrist comes and forces Sunday observance, all who worship on Sunday will receive the mark of the beast.²⁷ Thus one might believe in Jesus Christ

²⁶ James A. Beverley, *Religions A-Z* (Nashville, Tenn.: T. Nelson, 2005), 211.

²⁷ Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions, and You* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1981), 93. See also discussion of Joseph Bates above. For Ellen White's affirmation of this doctrine see her work, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing, 1888), 449. Available to read online at <http://books.google.com>.

alone for salvation but receive the mark of the beast and be condemned. Thus the salvation of the believer ultimately rests on their faithfulness to keep the Sabbath. It becomes clear that Bates invented this doctrine in an attempt to scare and strong arm people into Sabbath observance.

The legalistic nature of Seventh-Day Adventism can also be seen in the doctrine of the investigative judgment. Christ is in heaven evaluating the works of *believers* to see if they will be worthy to attain to the 144,000 faithful ones. The Scriptures, however, teach that believers have passed from judgment to life and that there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (**Jn. 5:24; Rom. 8:1**). In fact Paul is explicit that all the believers' sinful deeds and bad works are forgiven in Christ, nailed to the cross, canceled out, burnt up (**Eph. 1:7; Col. 2:13-14; I Cor. 3:12-15**). Therefore, there is nothing negative or unholy to "investigate." Only unbelievers are judged according to their bad deeds (**Rev. 20:11-15**). Thus underlying several of the distinctive doctrines of Seventh-Day Adventism is the Judaizer heresy which Paul refutes in the book of Galatians.

- F. **Observing Levitical Food Regulations** was encouraged by Ellen G. White and is still practiced by most faithful Seventh-Day Adventists (see **Lev. 11**). Many Seventh-Day Adventists are vegetarians. While Seventh-Day Adventist authorities admit we have liberty to eat all foods, being a former Seventh-Day Adventist myself, I can tell you I never saw a single pork roast, pot roast, or plate of chicken at any of the potlucks I ever attended. While Levitical food laws may not be imposed upon anyone, there is great pressure to conform to Ellen's "advice." The New Testament makes it clear that the dietary laws in the law of Moses have been done away with (**Acts 10:9-16; 11:4-11; Rom. 14:3, 17; I Cor. 8:8; Col. 2:16, 20-23**). Not only that, but Paul says that anyone who advocates the abstaining of any food is teaching "*the doctrine of demons*" (**I Tim. 4:1-3**).
- G. **Michael the Archangel Is None Other than Jesus**. This doctrine of Seventh-Day Adventists is refuted by the fact that in **Jude 9** Michael is described as not daring to pronounce against Satan a railing judgment. Christ is more powerful than Satan, commands Satan, and during His earthly ministry cast Satan out, gave permission to Satan, and told Satan what to do. At the Great White Throne Judgment Jesus will cast Satan into the Lake of Fire (**Rev. 20:7-10**). In the Old Testament Jesus appeared as the Angel of the Lord, not Michael.