

THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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Quick facts

2003	40 Millions Members
206	Countries reached in the World
700	Languages
56	Countries that produce literature
Bible Version	<i>The Clear Word Version of the Bible</i>
300	Words added to the book of Daniel
50,000	Ordained Ministers
Head quarter	Silver Spring, Maryland
Publisher	Pacific Press

SHOULD WE CONSIDER THEM A CULT?

There are now two distinct camps in Adventism. The split became apparent in the late 1970s when pastors of many years' standing began to question their prophetess, Ellen G. White. They began to question her peculiar doctrines which could not be supported fully by the Scriptures. Many were disillusioned by the revelation of her plagiarism, which was very extensive, and documented in the book, "The White Lie" by former SDA pastor, Walter Rea.

The hundreds of pastors who questioned Ellen White as an absolute authority and discovered the cover-up by the White Estate, soon found themselves on the outside, still trying to bring about reform from that disadvantaged position. Two camps quickly formed, those loyal to Ellen White, the Traditional branch, and those determined to be loyal to the Bible above all else, the Evangelical branch.

Those loyal to Ellen White published such statements as those contained in the "Ministry" Magazine of October, 1981. Ron Graybill, who was then assistant secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate, made this statement on page 8, "We believe the revelation and inspiration of both the Bible and Ellen White's writings to be of equal quality. The superintendence of the Holy Spirit was just as careful and thorough in one case as in the other." end quote. Graybill, however, went on to state that... "we dare not use Ellen White as the final arbiter in matters of doctrine." In later years, he resigned his position.

The Seventh-Day Adventist church "felt the heat," and formed councils to look into Ellen White's peculiar doctrines. They have spent months in discussion, published endless papers, but have not corrected Ellen White's views. Therefore, since an adequate time period has passed for these issues to be corrected by the church, we must again take a look at Adventism as it stands today and decide, Christian or Cult?

Now if we consider the Evangelical branch we should say they are not a cult because they simply differ from evangelicals only regarding the respect of the Sabbath instead of Sunday, while the Traditional and more influential branch which does most of the missionary work is definitely to be considered a cult, and we will mainly talk about it. Actually there is also another branch, called liberal, but their number is very little.

HISTORY

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has its origin during the "Great second advent awakening, which consisted in the prophetic interpretation of the book of Daniel, focusing on the second return of Jesus. The initiator of this theory, based on Daniel chapter 7 and 8 was a former Baptist, called William Miller.

He said that between March 21st, 1843 and 1844 Jesus would come back to take his Saints. The 18th of March, 1844 Miller admitted his mistake and apologized. Here the reaction from Josiah Litch 24th October, 1844: “The sheep are scattered, our Lord did not come back).

But then, something extremely important happened. Between 1844 and 1847 three important groups joined together.

1. From Western N.Y., Hiram Edson and O.R. L. Crosier with the *Doctrine of Investigative Judgement*
2. From Massachusetts, Joseph Bates, with the *Doctrine of the observance of the 7th day Sabbath*
3. From Maine, Ellen G. White, with the *Doctrine of the Spirit of Prophecy and testimony of Jesus*

(The earliest Adventist were known as the Millerians (from Miller, who admitted his mistake) and Sabbatharians, because of Joseph Bates’ doctrine)

SOME SDA DOCTRINES ARE ORTHODOX

Let us begin by saying that SDA’s quite orthodox on a number of doctrines. Each person baptized as a SDA receives a “Certificate of Profession of Faith.” Each person being baptized must sign a thirteen-point statement entitled “My Commitment.” As we read the first five points, the document appears perfectly, fundamentally, Christian. However, by point six, we find the deviations beginning. Point six reads, “I accept the Ten Commandments as still binding upon Christians, and it is my purpose by the power of the indwelling Christ, to keep this law, including the fourth commandment, which requires the observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord.” Point eight has the convert believing, “that the gift of prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church.” Point thirteen identifies the Seventh-Day Adventist Church as the “remnant church of Bible Prophecy.”

These doctrines are the teachings of Ellen G. White. As the convert peruses his baptismal booklet under the heading “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-Day Adventists,” the peculiarities of Adventism become apparent. Under heading 17, “The Gift of Prophecy,” we find this statement “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 are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church, comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction.”

Under heading 19, “The Sabbath” we are told that (God)... “instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation.” The fourth commandment of God’s unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day sabbath...It is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God’s Kingdom. The Sabbath is God’s perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people.”

Heading 23 becomes even more of a deviation. Entitled, “Christ’s Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary,” it contains this information, “He (Christ) was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of atonement.”

Other headings cover such subjects as diet, a view of death as an unconscious state, and foot-washing. We can see from this quick review just what it is that makes Adventism different from orthodox Christianity. How important are these deviations, are they important enough to call Seventh-Day Adventism a cult?

THE SEVENTH-DAY SABBATH

Seventh-Day Adventists strive to keep “THE LAW” of the Old Testament. They place emphasis on the ten commandments as “the Law,” when in fact the ten commandments form only a small part of the entire Law. Saturday Sabbath-keeping is greatly stressed as a requirement for salvation in this extremely legalistic group. SDA’s have a habit of thinking “Ten Commandments” or “Sabbath” every time the Bible mentions “The Law.”

This is not correct. The word “Law” occurs over 400 times in Scripture, and refers to the entire Law, comprising ceremonial feasts, special days, sacrifices, dietary restrictions, cleansings etc. The term never applies solely to either the ten commandments or the Sabbath alone.

Realistically speaking, no Seventh-Day Adventist REALLY keeps “The Law.” Where are their blood sacrifices? Do they heat their houses on Saturday? They are all Law-breakers if they carefully and honestly examine their lives in light of the entire Law. The Bible makes no distinction regarding the Law, that some parts are “ceremonial” as the SDA’s claim, a claim designed to avoid truly keeping the Law in its entirety.

THE LAW WAS FOR THE NATION OF ISRAEL ONLY

Regarding the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:2 states, “I am the Lord your God, who BROUGHT YOU OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT, out of the house of slavery.”

The ten commandments were obviously given to those who had been brought out of the land of Egypt. This would limit the ten commandments to God’s chosen people, the Israelites, the Jews. Deuteronomy 5:3 shows that the Law was binding on those Israelites or Jews alive in MOSES’ day. “The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, with all those of us alive here today.” Therefore, no covenant was made to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, etc. as claimed by SDA’s.

SABBATH-KEEPING

Seventh-Day Adventists make the Saturday Sabbath of extreme importance in their plan of salvation. Yet it is not Christians, and Deuteronomy 5:15 applies it only to the Jews “And you shall remember that YOU WERE A SLAVE IN THE LAND OF EGYPT and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; THEREFORE the LORD your God commanded you to OBSERVE THE SABBATH DAY.

Notice that the Sabbath was a special covenant for those people delivered from bondage in Egypt. (see also Ezekiel 20:10-12; Exodus 31:12-18; Exodus 16:29; Nehemiah 9:13, 14.)

IS THE SABBATH A MEMORIAL OF CREATION ?

It is true that Genesis 23 says God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, but there was no command to memorialize it in remembrance of creation. The command to keep the Sabbath day went only to those who were slaves in Egypt. There is no biblical record of the Sabbath being kept in the interim between creation and the days of Moses. Why? Obviously because it was not commanded to be kept.

I have carefully looked up every scripture reference given by the SDA’s regarding Sabbath-keeping. (Gen. 21-2; Ex. 20:8-11; Luke 4:16; Isaiah 56:5,6; 58:1,3,14; Matt. 12:1-12; Ex. 31:13-17; Eze.4:16 Ezekiel 20:12,20; Deut. 5:12-15; Heb. 4:1-11; Lev. 23:32; Mark 1:32). All commands to keep the Sabbath are Old Testament ones to the sons of Israel. The scripture from Isaiah 56:5,6, has no reference to the Sabbath at all, but refers to a “memorial NAME,” not a DAY. The New Testament references are not commands to keep the Sabbath.

IS THE SABBATH “CEREMONIAL?”

Seventh-Day Adventists in particular get out of keeping all the points of the Law by claiming some are “ceremonial” and don’t require strict observance, but in their understanding the Sabbath does require strict observance. Leviticus, chapter 23 lists several “Holy Convocations.” The first-mentioned one is the seventh-day Sabbath. The chapter goes on to list other “holy convocations,” namely the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened bread, the Wave offering, the Feast of Booths, etc. All are identified as “holy convocations.” Why then claim that the first one mentioned, namely the seventh-day Sabbath, is NOT “ceremonial,” but ALL OTHERS listed are! Let’s interpret the Bible honestly, and in context!

ARE CHRISTIANS UNDER THE SABBATH LAW ?

Seventh-Day Adventists judge Christians very harshly for not keeping “Sundown Friday to Sundown Saturday.” Christians, on the other hand, don’t condemn others for worshiping on Saturday if that is their preference. Christians recognize that we are under grace, and not under the Law.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians, “Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or A SABBATH DAY- things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.” (Col. 2:16,17).

No one calling himself a Christian should judge another respecting the Sabbath, and yet the SDA church would have Christians receive the “mark of the beast” for not keeping the Saturday Sabbath. They have therefore made salvation dependent on which day of the week one keeps!

Hebrews, chapter four, shows that the fulfillment of the Jewish Sabbath was not the keeping of the same day by Christians, but the entering of Christians into God’s rest. The early Christians preached on the Jewish Sabbath because the Jews were gathered in the synagogue on that day. (See Acts 17:2-4). Their fellowship together was always the “first day” of the week, Sunday, the day of Christ’s resurrection. (See Acts 20:7)

CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE SABBATH

There is NO scripture commanding Christians to keep the Saturday Sabbath. Surely there would be a command if it was of such importance as to affect our salvation! Christians have always met for fellowship and the breaking of bread on the first day of the week, Sunday, and continue to do so until this day. They do not claim Sunday is the “Sabbath” but rather , the “Lord’s Day.” Sunday worship was not introduced by the Roman Catholic Church, although they like to take credit for it. Catholics merely carried on where the Apostles left off. The claim by SDA’s that Christians are worshiping the sun by meeting on Sunday, is just as ridiculous as us accusing the SDA’s of worshiping Saturn, because they meet on Saturday!

WE ARE NOT UNDER THE LAW!

The Law was our tutor, or teacher leading us to Christ. Galatians 3:25 concludes “we are no longer under a tutor.” The Law divided Jews from Gentiles, so Christ abolished it. (Ephesians 2:14-16).

Even the Jews knew the old Law Covenant would pass away Jeremiah 31:31 says, “Behold the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” God would write His new law on people’s hearts (vs. 33). Jesus Christ Himself instituted the new covenant. (See 1 Corinthians 11:25), fulfilling and abolishing the old Law covenant. Yes, the old Law Covenant, including the seventh-day Sabbath observance is now over. The letter of the Law is finished. Christ Himself is described as the end (Greek, “telos” or “terminator”) of the Law. (Romans 10:4).

We will close this subject by quoting Romans 8:2-4, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did; sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin. He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”

THE 1844 INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT DOCTRINE

The investigative judgment doctrine teaches that in fulfillment of Old Testament sanctuary typology, Christ entered into the second apartment of the sanctuary in heaven in 1844 in order to begin a work of “investigative judgment” to see who was worthy of eternal life, both of those still living and those dead.

A brief background for this teaching is called for. Ellen G. White, under the influence of William Miller, an early Adventist, agreed with his date for the visible return of Christ. October of 1844 was set for the second coming of Christ. Christ obviously did not return on that date, so in order to “save face” over a false prophecy, “investigative judgment” was born. 1844 came to be the date when a work of final atonement, which would blot out a believer's sin would begin.

This teaching is the opposite of the full atonement taught by the Christian church, and also mocks at the words of our Savior from the Cross, “It is finished.” (John 19:30). Hebrews 10:12 also states “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, FOREVER, sat down on the right hand of God.” Christ paid fully for our sins, atoning for them fully. No scripture teaches otherwise.

SERIOUS RAMIFICATIONS OF THE 1844 INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT TEACHING

In 1877, Uriah Smith, an early Adventist, declared, “Christ did not make the atonement when he shed his blood upon the cross. Let this fact be fixed forever in the mind.” (The Sanctuary and the Twenty-Three Hundred Days of Daniel VIII, 14, p. 276, quoted in "Are the Gospel and the 1844 Theology Compatible?" by Robert D. Brinsmead, p.17).

Ellen White herself declared in “The Great Controversy” that “before Christ’s work for the redemption of men is completed, there is a work of atonement for the removal of sin from the sanctuary. This is the service which began when the 2300 days ended.” (1844). We will not be citing page numbers for “The Great Controversy” since so many editions were printed, but by looking in the index for the subject, the quotes can be found. So, Ellen White places the time of Christ's atonement after 1844.

While plagiarizing various evangelical writers of this time she did also copy statements teaching that redemption was finished at the cross, and some SDA’s like to quote only these references, but in all honesty, they must admit the SDA view was and is a denial of the atoning work of Christ at Calvary. There is even found in “The Great Controversy” this denial of Him as our absolute mediator. “Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above, are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort, they must be conquerors in the battle with evil.”

Later in the same book this statement is made, “In that fearful time the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor.”

What a terrible thought to have to stand before God without Christ as our mediator! Thank God for the assurance found in 1 John 2:1, "...And if any man sin, we have an advocate (intercessor) with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

WHO BEARS OUR SINS?

The answer to the above question comes quickly to the Christian because the scriptures plainly teach that Christ "bore our sins IN HIS OWN BODY on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). 2 Corinthians 5:21 says that Christ was "made...to be sin for us." The SDA go one step further, and say that Christ will in turn lay our sins on Satan, and he will bear them! Their strange interpretation of Leviticus 16, making Satan the Scapegoat, is unsupported from Scripture, and is further proof that by using "The Great Controversy" they would add to Christ's finished work of atonement.

IS JESUS MICHAEL?

SDA's persist in perpetrating Ellen White's error that Jesus Christ is Michael. They are quick to point out that they do not believe Jesus is any kind of an angel. Since Michael is called an "Archangel," they interpret this to mean that Jesus is "Chief over the angels," while still being God. However, Daniel 10:13 says that Michael is "ONE OF the chief princes." Jesus is not one of any group! Michael lacked the authority to rebuke Satan (Jude 9). Jesus, on the other hand, repeatedly rebuked Satan (Matthew 17:18, Mark 9:25, etc.). Jesus is clearly not Michael.

THE DENIAL OF HELL AND THE DOCTRINE OF SOUL SLEEP

In the early 1800's, groups began arising that taught that hell was not a place of eternal torment. "Soul sleep" or a state of unconsciousness replaced torment. Seventh-Day Adventists embraced this doctrine.

THREE WORDS FOR HELL

Most of the confusion surrounding the topic of hell, is because the King James Version of the Bible translated three distinct Greek words by the one word "hell." The three Greek words are *tartaros*, *hades*, and *Gehenna*. Only one of these three words refers to the place of eternal torment commonly called "hell," and the other words are often given mistaken meanings. Let's consider these three words and their meanings.

TARTAROS (HELL)

Tataros need not concern us too much since it is a special abode for angels who are confined to this special pit of darkness. The word, *Tartaros* occurs only once in the New Testament in 2 Peter 2:4.

HADES (HELL)

Hades, also translated *Hell* occurs ten times in the New Testament and is referred to by three writers, Matthew, Luke, and John. The most detailed information we can find about Hades is in Luke, Chapter 16, where we are told about a rich man and Lazarus. Lazarus died in a righteous condition and the angels took him into Abraham's bosom, to a place of peace and security. The rich man, on the other hand, went to *hades* or *hell*, and was in great torment. He was obviously fully conscious of his surroundings and not in a condition of so-

called “soul sleep,” for the account in Luke records, “The rich man also died and was buried; and in hell (or hades) he lifted up his eyes, being in torment.” (Luke 16:21,22). He pleaded for a drop of water to cool his tongue because of the torment of the flame. He could also see the happy condition of Lazarus, but could not leave his place of torment. He spoke about his worry over his five brothers who had yet to die. He wished to spare them his present agony. Yes, this pitiful rich man had all his faculties, and was indeed experiencing ongoing torment.

IS LUKE 16 ONLY A PARABLE?

Groups denying the reality of hellfire do indeed claim that the above account is “only a parable,” or is “figurative” or “spiritual.” However this account is not a parable, since proper names of recognizable Bible characters are used, whereas Jesus never used proper names in his parables, and generally indicated when He was teaching in a parable.

Even stretching the point and allowing that Luke 16 could be a parable, it teaches a spiritual truth, and Jesus taught truth, not falsehoods.

HADES IS NOT THE FINAL DESTINATION

Hades in the Greek, finds its parallel in the Hebrew word *Sheol*. Hades and Sheol (both translated hell), are often called the “holding tanks” by some Bible scholars, since souls in this “hell” are not in their final destination. According to Revelation, chapter 20, those in *hades* will yet stand before the Great White Throne Judgment. Hades will be terminated at this time. Those with condemnatory judgment will be cast into *Gehenna* (Hell), the Lake that burns with Fire and Sulphur.”

GEHENNA (HELL)--THE FINAL DESTINATION

The term *Gehenna*, also translated *hell* occurs twelve times in the New Testament, and every quote is by Jesus Christ. Six of the twelve references to Gehenna mention fire as one of its characteristics. Southeast of Jerusalem was the Valley of the Son of Hinnom. During Old Testament times, children were offered to the false god Moloch in this valley, and later Jews used this valley to dispose of their rubbish, as well as the bodies of dead animals and unburied criminals. To consume all this, a fire was kept burning continuously, and gnawing worms abounded. It was a vile place. The Jews of Jesus' day certainly had a vivid picture of what being thrown alive into Gehenna would mean for them.

WHAT DID JESUS SAY ABOUT GEHENNA?

One has only to read the words of Jesus in Mark 9:42-48 to know the seriousness of a destination of Gehenna. “And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. And if they hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into Gehenna (or hell), into the fire that never shall be quenched; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”

The same warning is issued regarding a foot or an eye that would hinder us, that “the fire would not be quenched,” and “the worm would not die.” Christ stressed that it would be better to lose the most precious things in this life and avoid hell, than to retain all that this life holds dear, and be cast into this dreadful place. Why all these warnings by the Lord Himself, if we are only going to be unconscious?

WHAT ABOUT “SOUL SLEEP?”

A condition of soul-sleep is obviously not taught by Christ. The inhabitants of hell are not unconscious or annihilated. When we really believe the word of God as it is written, and don't try to "figurize" or "spiritualize" it away, it becomes evident that Hell is a very real destination, and its inhabitants are conscious.

Let's compare Revelation 19:20 with Revelation 20:10. Notice that before the 1,000-year reign of Christ, the beast and the false prophet were cast into the Lake of Fire. Were they annihilated in that Lake of Fire (Hell)? No, for 1,000 years later they are still alive, and the Devil joins them in their condition of torment. Scripture says plainly, "they shall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever."

CHOOSE YOUR DESTINATION!

Let's just believe the words of Jesus Christ in Matthew 25:46, that there are two destinations, one for believers, and one for unbelievers. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into everlasting life." The same exact word in the Greek describes both conditions. Both are "everlasting," "eternal" and "ongoing." We may choose eternal life or eternal punishment and torment. Denying the reality of Hell won't prevent us from going there! Choose life and truth today.

TRUSTING IN ELLEN G. WHITE

Seventh-Day Adventism rises or falls on Ellen G. White. We do not need to elaborate on the excellent research already done by her (former) followers, proving that she plagiarized almost all of her writings, even while claiming "visions" from God.

The SDA church has chosen their prophetess and her organization. Therefore we state that they are a cult for the following reasons

1. Misrepresentation of Jesus Christ as to His person, mediatorship, and atoning work.
2. They are a cult due to their claim to exclusivity. They believe they alone will receive salvation, avoiding the "mark of the beast" they believe they alone are the "remnant church."
3. Salvation has been "boiled down" to which day of the week you keep. Grace has been contaminated with extreme legalism and works.
4. Seventh-Day Adventism is a cult because they chose to endorse a proven false prophetess and embrace her teachings, even after the truth was shown to the leaders.

Seventh-Day Adventists used to like to point out that cult expert, Dr. Walter Martin did not regard them as a cult in his book, "Kingdom of the Cults." However, Dr. Martin has since altered his view, now that all the facts are in. On public television, during "The John Ankerberg Show," he made this statement, "I fear that if they continue to progress at this rate, then the classification of a cult can't possibly miss being reapplied to Seventh-Day Adventism, because once you have an interpreter of Scripture, a final court of appeal that tells you what Scripture means, as soon as you judge Scripture by that, as soon as you have someone who has made doctrinal errors in the past, even on the deity of Christ and the doctrine of the atonement and other things, and that person is raised to that position or authority, you have polarization around that person."

Sadly, we must concur with Dr. Martin. Seventh-Day Adventism has placed itself in the category of a cult.