

Denominationalism, Religious Cults and World Religions

Lesson 12

The Seventh Day Adventist Church

Introduction:

The Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) is a denomination that distinguishes itself by keeping the seventh day of the week (Saturday) as a holy day unto the Lord, and by its belief in the imminent second coming (advent) of Jesus Christ. The denomination grew out of the Millerite movement in the United States during the middle part of the 19th century and was formally established in 1863.

William Miller¹ predicted that Jesus would return to earth between the spring of 1843 and the spring of 1844. Miller based this prediction on Daniel 8:14-16 and the erroneous "day-year principle" which is a misinterpretation of 2 Peter 3:8-9. In the summer of 1844, Miller revised his predictions and claimed Jesus would return on October 22, 1844. When this did not happen, thousands² of those who had believed in Miller's predictions disbanded and returned to their original churches in what came to be known as "The Great Disappointment." Hiram Edson, one of Miller's most devoted followers, wrote:

"Our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted, and such a spirit of weeping came over us as I never experienced before... We wept, and wept, till the day dawn."

However, a small core of Miller's followers (approximately 50, including James and Ellen G. White)³ believed his calculations were correct but that his interpretation of Daniel 8:14 was flawed. Miller believed the passage meant that Christ's second coming would occur on October 22, 1844 at which time He would cleanse the earth. However,

¹ William Miller (February 15, 1782 – December 20, 1849) was an American Baptist preacher who is credited with beginning the mid-nineteenth century North American religious movement now known as Adventism. Among his direct spiritual heirs are several major religious denominations, including Seventh-day Adventists and Advent Christians. Later movements found inspiration in Miller's emphasis on Bible prophecy. His own followers are known as "Millerites".

² Estimates of the number of Miller's followers ranged from 50,000 to 500,000.

³ Ellen G. White (November 26, 1827 – July 16, 1915), along with her husband and other Adventist leaders formed the Seventh Day Adventist Church. She became known for her many "visions" and for her prolific writing during the period of time known as "The Great Awakening" in America. Her contemporaries were Joseph Smith, Jr. (Mormon Church), Mary Baker Eddy (Christian Science Church), and Charles Taze Russell (Jehovah's Witnesses).

through the teaching and "heavenly visions" of Ellen G. White, the followers Miller came to believe that Daniel 8:14 was foretelling Christ's entrance into the "Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary" rather than his second coming. This group of Adventists continued to believe in Christ's imminent second coming, although they refrained from setting further dates for the event.

Ellen G. White quickly rose to prominence among Adventists as word began to spread about her many "visions." At first she only shared her visions with family and a close circle of friends. But in time, White began to address larger assemblies – many of which she arranged herself. Eventually she began speaking to large gatherings of Adventists throughout the Northeastern U.S., while also becoming a prolific writer. Following her death in 1915, Seventh Day Adventists began discussing her writings at annual Bible Conferences.

Today, most Adventists believe her writings are inspired and continue to have relevance for the church – despite the fact that critics have uncovered overwhelming and substantial evidence that most of White's writings were plagiarized from the writings of others.

One of the most controversial teachings of Ellen G. White concerns the doctrine of "Investigative Judgment." According to White, the so-called Investigative Judgment began on October 22, 1844 when allegedly Christ entered the Most Holy Place in heaven. James White (husband of Ellen G. White) wrote that an "investigative judgment" was taking place in which the lives of professed believers were passing in review before God. In her writing *The Great Controversy*, Ellen G. White explained the doctrine of the Investigative Judgment in greater detail. She claimed:

"I was shown that ... the door was opened in the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary, where the ark is, in which are contained the ten commandments. This door was not opened until the mediation of Jesus was finished in the holy place of the sanctuary in 1844. Then Jesus rose up and shut the door of the holy place, and opened the door into the most holy, and passed within the second veil, where he now stands by the ark"

– *Early Writings*, Ellen G. White, p. 42).

"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."

- *The Great Controversy*, Ellen G. White, chapter 24

"Now, while our great High Priest is making the atonement for us, we should seek to become perfect in Christ. Not even by a thought could our Savior be

brought to yield to the power of temptation. Satan finds in human hearts some point where he can gain a foot-hold; some sinful desire is cherished, by means of which his temptations assert their power. But Christ declared of Himself: 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me.' John 14:30. Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory. He had kept His Father's commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his advantage. This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble.

- *The Great Controversy*, Ellen G. White, p. 623

The doctrine of Investigative Judgment has now become one of the church's official "28 fundamental beliefs." It states:

"There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He 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 and began His work of 'investigative judgment.'"

Ellen G. White claimed that the end of the Investigative Judgment (called the "close of probation") will mark the time after which even Christians will no longer be able to receive forgiveness for their sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The doctrine claims this will be the case because Jesus will have ended His work as our Mediator and will leave the heavenly sanctuary. Therefore, in order for Christians still living to remain in a saved condition, they must completely cease from all sin (or essentially attain a state of "sinless perfection").

"Those only who through faith in Christ obey all of God's commandments will reach the condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression. They testify to their love of Christ by obeying all his precepts"

– *Manuscript*, Ellen G. White, p. 122, 1901
(Quoted in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 1118)

"To everyone who surrenders fully to God is given the privilege of living without sin, in obedience to the law of heaven. ... God requires of us perfect obedience. We are to purify ourselves, even as he is pure. By keeping his commandments, we are to reveal our love for the Supreme Ruler of the universe"

– Review and Herald, September 27, 1906, p. 8

However, as early as 1877 the doctrine of "sinless perfection" among believers began to be openly criticized by Adventists. Many Adventist theologians claimed Ellen G. White's teachings concerning Investigative Judgment were completely inconsistent with the Bible. This opened the door for many to begin questioning other writings of White, despite her claim that she received these teachings through divine revelation. The result caused many to leave the church while others were disfellowshipped for questioning White's teachings.

During the years 1961 to 1966 the Adventist General Conference appointed a secret committee to investigate this issue, but the committee was unable to reach a consensus. While the Seventh Day Adventist Church has reaffirmed its basic position on the doctrine Investigative Judgment, some in more liberal progressive wing of the church continue to be critical of the teaching. According to a 2002 worldwide survey, local church leaders estimated 86 percent of church members accept the doctrine, although 35 percent believe there may be more than one interpretation. Despite this controversy, Ellen G. White and her extensive writings are still held in high esteem today by the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

Many of the teachings of the Seventh Day Adventist Church are also held by the majority of mainline Protestant denominations – such as belief in the "Trinity" and the infallibility of Scripture. The church is also known for its emphasis on diet and health, its holistic understanding of the person, its promotion of religious liberty, and its conservative principles and lifestyle. However, there are many teachings of the Seventh Day Adventist Church that are completely inconsistent with Biblical teaching – including the unconscious state of the dead (called "soul sleep"); the doctrine of Investigative Judgment; belief in a millennial reign of Christ on earth (known as "premillennialism"); belief that the wicked will be exterminated in the final judgment rather than be punished in hell ("annihilation"); Sabbath-keeping; and belief that the writings of Ellen G. White are inspired, and continue to be an "authoritative source of truth" along with the Bible.

Establishment of the Seventh Day Adventist Church

The Seventh Day Adventist Church was formally established in Battle Creek, Michigan, on May 21, 1863, with a membership of 3,500. The denominational headquarters were later moved from Battle Creek to Takoma Park, Maryland, where they remained until 1989. The General Conference headquarters then moved to its current location in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Despite the influence of Ellen G. White, the Seventh Day Adventist Church struggled to form its core beliefs and doctrines during much of the 19th century. This was primarily due to the fact that a number of the Adventist leaders came from churches that

supported the doctrine of Arianism.⁴ This, along with the church's other theological views, led to a consensus among conservative evangelical Protestant denominations to regard the Seventh Day Adventist Church as a cult. However, to gain acceptance among mainstream denominations, the Adventist Church adopted the doctrine of the "Trinity" (in the early 1900's) along with other widely-held Protestant denominational beliefs, and began to dialogue with other denominational groups during the 1950's and 60's, eventually gaining recognition as a "Protestant church."⁵

Today, the church is governed by a General Conference with smaller regions administered by divisions, union conferences and local conferences. The Seventh Day Adventist Church currently claims a worldwide membership of about 17.2 million people. As of May 2007, it was the twelfth-largest religious body in the world, and the sixth-largest international religious body. 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 humanitarian aid organization known as the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA).

Beliefs

The official teachings of the Seventh Day Adventist Church are expressed in its "28 Fundamental Beliefs." This statement of beliefs was originally adopted by the General Conference in 1980, with an additional belief (number 11) being added in 2005. Among those beliefs that are particular to Seventh Day Adventists are the following:

- Law – (Belief 19) – the Law of God is "embodied in the Ten Commandments," which continue to be binding upon Christians.
- Sabbath – (Belief 20) – the Sabbath should be observed on the seventh day of the week, specifically, from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset.
- Second Coming and End times – (Beliefs 25–28) – Jesus Christ will return visibly to earth after a "time of trouble," during which the Sabbath will become a worldwide test. The second coming will be followed by a millennial (one thousand year) reign of the saints in heaven. Adventist eschatology is based on the historicist method of prophetic interpretation.

⁴ Arianism is the theological teaching attributed to Arius (ca. AD 250–336), and concerned the relationship of God the Father to the Son of God (Jesus Christ). Arius asserted that the Son of God was a subordinate entity to God the Father, and that the Son of God did not always exist, but was created by God the Father. This belief is grounded in an erroneous interpretation of John 14:28 where Jesus said: "You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I."

⁵ See: Common Seventh Day Adventist Doctrines Shared in Common with Protestant Denominations,

- Holistic human nature – (Beliefs 7, 26) – Humans are an indivisible unity of body, mind and spirit. They do not possess an immortal soul and there is no consciousness after death (commonly referred to as "soul sleep").
- Conditional immortality – (Belief 27) – The wicked will not suffer eternal torment in hell, but instead will be permanently destroyed (annihilationism).
- Great Controversy – (Belief 8) – Humanity is involved in a "great controversy" between Jesus Christ and Satan. This is an elaboration on the false theory that evil began in heaven when an angelic being (Lucifer) rebelled against the Law of God.
- Heavenly sanctuary – (Belief 24) – At his ascension, Jesus Christ commenced an "atoning ministry" in the "heavenly sanctuary." In 1844, He began to cleanse the heavenly sanctuary in fulfillment of the Day of Atonement.
- Investigative Judgment – (Belief 24) – A judgment of professed Christians began in 1844, in which the books of record are examined for all the universe to see. The investigative judgment will affirm who will receive salvation, and vindicate God in the eyes of the universe as just in his dealings with mankind.
- Remnant – (Belief 13) – There will be an end-time "remnant" who keep the commandments of God and have "the testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 12:17). This remnant proclaims the "three angels' messages" of Revelation 14:6–12 to the world.
- Spirit of Prophecy – (Belief 18) – The ministry of Ellen G. White is commonly referred to as the "Spirit of Prophecy" and her writings are considered "a continuing and authoritative source of truth," though ultimately subject to the Bible.

I. Some Truths They Have Advocated:

- A. Like all religious denominations and religious cults, the Seventh Day Adventists teach some truths.
 1. They believe in verbal, plenary inspiration⁶ of the Scriptures.
 2. They believe in the Genesis account of creation and strongly oppose evolution.
 3. They strongly oppose the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other harmful, un-prescribed (so-called "recreational") drugs.

⁶ "Verbal Inspiration" means the words, and the grammatical construction found in the Scriptures are specifically and precisely what God desired and divinely directed them to be – without exception. "Plenary" is defined as "full in all respects," "complete, entire." Plenary inspiration means the Bible is the full and complete, divinely-inspired revelation of God for all mankind and for all time (Psa 119:89; 2 Tim 3:14-17; Heb 1:1-2; 2 Pet 1:2-4; Jude 3).

II. Seventh Day Adventist Doctrine vs. Bible Doctrine:

- A. Seventh Day Adventists claim two laws were given on Mt. Sinai – the "law of God" (Ten Commandments, or the so-called "moral law") and the "law of Moses" (the so-called "ceremonial law"):⁷
 1. Seventh Day Adventists claim the "law of God" (Ten Commandments) is still binding today, but the "law of Moses" (the so-called "ceremonial law") was abolished – despite the fact that the term "ceremonial law" does not appear in the Bible, nor do Jews consider there to be two laws; one the Ten Commandments, and the other ceremonial.
 - a. According to the Seventh Day Adventists, the law of Moses ("ceremonial law") contained all the laws concerning sacrifices, holy days, and other laws that were given through Moses to the people of Israel.
 - b. They maintain the Law of Moses ("ceremonial law") was abolished and is no longer in effect, but the Law of God (Ten Commandments) remains in effect and is binding on all Christians today.
 2. However, the Bible does not make a distinction between the "Law of God" and the "Law of Moses" – the Bible use these terms interchangeably.
 - a. Ezra read "the book of the law of Moses," which was also called "the book of the law" and "the book of the law of God" (Neh 8:1-3, 18). It was all one "book" – the word "books" does not appear anywhere in the text of Ezra. Ezra uses the terms law of Moses and law of God interchangeably.
 - b. Mary obeyed "the law of Moses," which was called also "the law of the Lord" (Luke 2:22-23). Furthermore, according to the law of the Lord Mary was required to offer, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons" (Luke 2:24; Lev 12:8). Luke uses the terms law of Moses and law of the Lord interchangeably.
- B. Seventh Day Adventists teach two specific errors concerning the Sabbath: they teach (1) the Sabbath was given by God as a holy day at creation, (2) and the Sabbath (seventh day - Saturday) must be kept by Christians today as a day of worship.
 1. Was the Sabbath was ordained by God at creation?

⁷ See Attachments: *Old Testament Scriptures Regarding Sabbath-Keeping and "The Law of God" vs. "The Law of Moses,"* p 1.

- a. To support this claim Seventh Day Adventists quote Gen 2:2-3.
- b. At the time Moses wrote the book of Genesis, the Sabbath had already been established as "the Sabbath to the Lord." Therefore, as Moses was writing Genesis he was looking back in time to the creation and explaining why the seventh day of the week had been blessed by God as a day of rest for the Jews – it was the day God "rested from all His work which God had created."

This does not mean that the seventh day was established as a day of rest for all mankind at creation, but explains why God selected the seventh day of the week to be "the Sabbath to the Lord." The King James Version says, "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested." The phrase "had rested" (shaabat) is in the past perfect tense of the verb and refers to an action completed sometime in the past. Even if we read it as simple past tense, the fact still remains that the day was sanctified some time following the rest.

There is nothing to indicate that the Sabbath was set apart at creation. Moses wrote the record of it about 2,500 years after God rested, and at the time he wrote the day was sanctified. But there is no proof that it was sanctified 2,500 years before Moses was born.

- c. According to Exodus chapter 16, the Israelites had not been keeping the Sabbath previously; for if they had, the Lord would not have needed to "test" them to see if they would walk in the law of the Lord or not (v 4). Therefore, in preparation for eventually receiving the Sabbath law, the Israelites were told to gather manna on the first six days of the week, but not on the seventh. That day would be a "holy Sabbath to the Lord" (vs 22-26). However, some disobeyed God's commandment (vs 27-30).
 - d. The Bible clearly teaches that the Israelites were given the Sabbath law at Mt. Sinai (Exo 20:8-11; Neh 9:13-14) – in fact, Moses specifically said the covenant (which included the Sabbath laws) was not made with their fathers (Deut 5:1-3).
2. Is the Sabbath (seventh day - Saturday) a day of worship that must be kept by Christians today, or was it given only to the people of Israel?
- a. Seventh Day Adventists claim the Sabbath is "forever," and a "perpetual covenant" (Exo 31:16-17) – meaning it is intended to last forever.

- (1). However, Moses specifically stated that the Sabbath would be a sign "forever" and would be a "perpetual covenant" between God and the children of Israel "throughout their generations." This shows the Sabbath was intended to be temporary – it would remain in effect "throughout their generations," or only as long as the Israelites remained God's chosen people.
 - (2). The phrases "throughout your generations" and "everlasting ordinance" was also used concerning the Passover – the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exo 12:14-20, 17); burnt offerings (Exo 29:42); burning incense (Exo 30:8-10), and Pentecost (Lev 23:15-21). Do the Adventists keep these "everlasting ordinances"?
 - (3). Regardless of how the Seventh Day Adventist read Exodus 31:12-18, the fact remains that the Sabbath was a "sign" between the Lord and "the children of Israel: - not a sign between God and anyone else, including the Seventh Day Adventist (Exo 31:16-17; Deut. 5:1-21).
- b. Concerning the Law or the Prophets, Jesus said He "did not come to destroy but to "fulfill," and "one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matt 5:17-18).
- (1). The apostle Paul affirmed that Christ "abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances. . ." (Eph 2:14-16).
 - (2). The apostle Paul also said Christ, "wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Col 2:14-17).
 - (3). The Hebrew writer said since there has been a change of the priesthood (with Jesus Christ now being our High Priest), "of necessity there is also a change of the law" (Heb 7:12-13)
 - (4). The Hebrew writer also said the change in priesthood (Jesus Christ as our High Priest) has also made the "first covenant" obsolete and "what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away" (Heb 8:1-13).
 - (5). The apostle Paul said we (Christians) are no longer under the law (Gal 5:16-21; Rom 6:14-15).

- (6). The apostle Paul says "the law," which was written on "tables of stone," was done away (2 Cor 3:2-13).
- c. The Seventh Day Adventist claim the apostle Paul kept the Sabbath (Acts 13:14, 27, 42-44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4).
 - (1). There is no indication in any of these passages that Paul ever *kept* or *observed* the Sabbath as a day unto the Lord. Paul entered synagogues to preach on the Sabbath for two reasons: (1) he was a Jew and had every right to speak in synagogues, and (2) synagogues were where Paul would find Jews assembled on the Sabbath who knew the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, all of which testified of Jesus Christ.
- d. The apostle Paul specifically said "the handwriting of ordinances" were "wiped out," and that the Lord took those ordinances "out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Col 2:14).
 - (1). The Seventh Day Adventist claim "the handwriting of ordinance" refers to the so-called "ceremonial law" which concerned the old system of sacrifices and other Jewish ordinances that dealt with "food" or "drink" (Col 2:16).
 - (2). However, regarding "the handwriting of ordinances" that were nailed to the cross, Paul said "let no one judge you in food or drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths" (Col 2:16). The word "festivals" refers to yearly (annual) services, "new moon" refers to monthly services, and "sabbaths" speak of weekly services.⁸ In other words, Paul said we are no longer to be judged in respect of annual, monthly or weekly serves that were part of the Old Law.
- e. The Seventh Day Adventists claim Constantine changed the official day of worship from the Sabbath to Sunday (the first day of the week) in 321 AD.⁹
 - (1). Constantine decreed: "On the venerable day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all

⁸ Seventh Day Adventists claim the term "sabbaths" in Colossians 2:16 is not speaking of weekly sabbaths, but yearly sabbaths (or annual Jewish holy days). However these weekly, monthly and annual services are mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament (2 Chron 2:4; 8:13; 31:3; Neh 10:33, etc.), and in each, the term "Sabbaths" is clearly identified with the weekly Sabbath since they are separated from the "three appointed yearly feasts" and "set feasts" which were observed annually.

⁹ See Attachments: *The First Day of the Week (Sunday) Through the First Centuries*, Robert Sanders, p. 11.

workshops be closed" (Codex Justinianus lib. 3, tit. 12, 3; trans. in Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 3, p. 380, note 1).

- (2). No one disputes that Constantine issued this decree. However, this decree did not change the day of worship from the seventh day of the week (Saturday) to the first day of the week (Sunday). Constantine merely made the first day of the week (Sunday) as an official day of rest in the Roman Empire. The first day of the week had already been a day of worship among Christians long before Constantine (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2).

f. The first day of the week (Sunday) is the Christian's day of worship for several reasons:

- (1). Christ arose on this day (Matt 28:1; Mark 16:1-2; Luke 24:1).
- (2). The church began on this day – the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:1, 47; Lev 23:15-16).
- (3). The first gospel sermon was preached on this day (Acts 2:14-36).
- (4). The first people baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins were baptized on this day (Acts 2:37-41).
- (5). Christians assembled on this day to "break bread" – or observe the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7-12).
- (6). Christians were commanded to give as they have been prospered on this day (1 Cor 16:1-2; 2 Cor 9:7).

C. Seventh Day Adventists declare that Ellen G. White was a prophet of God.¹⁰

1. The official position of the Seventh Day Adventist church is: ". . . the gift of prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church. . . this gift was manifested in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White." (*The Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh Day Adventists*.)
2. The apostle Paul wrote that when "that which is perfect (the New Testament) was come", prophecy, and all other spiritual gifts, ceased (1 Cor 13:8-10; Jas 1:25).

¹⁰ See Attachments: *Ellen G. White Contradicts the Bible*, p 16.

4. Ellen G. White claimed to have had over 2,000 "visions" during which she allegedly received a number of revelations. These so-called revelations were later incorporated into much of her writings. However, there are numerous instances in which White "revealed" things that she claimed came through inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but which are in direct conflict with what the Bible reveals.
- D. According to Ellen G. White, the Seventh Day Adventist's prophet, Jesus Christ and Michael the Archangel are the same person. This false doctrine is also taught by the Jehovah's Witnesses.¹¹
1. Compare the Bible with the teachings of Ellen G. White and the Seventh Day Adventist's paraphrased Bible, *The Clear Word*.
 - a. Jude 8-9 – Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"
 - b. Ellen G. White: "Satan the tempter had claimed the body of Moses because of his sin; but Christ the Savior brought him forth from the grave." (*Desire of Ages*, p. 421).
 - c. Ellen G. White: "Moses passed through death, but Michael came down and gave him life before his body had seen corruption. Satan tried to hold the body, claiming it as his; but Michael resurrected Moses and took him to heaven. Satan railed bitterly against God, denouncing Him as unjust in permitting his prey to be taken from him; but Christ did not rebuke His adversary, though it was through his temptation that the servant of God had fallen. He meekly referred him to His Father, saying, 'The Lord rebuke thee.'" (*Early Writings*, p. 164).
 - d. Seventh Day Adventists – *The Clear Word*: Jude 9 – "In contrast to these ungodly men is the Lord Jesus Christ, also called Michael, the archangel in charge of the entire angelic host. When He was challenged by Satan about His intentions to resurrect Moses, He didn't come against Satan with a blistering attack nor did he belittle him. He simply said, "God rejects your claim to the body." (*The Clear Word – A devotional paraphrase of the Bible expanded for clarity*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1994)

¹¹ See Attachments: *Are Jesus and Michael the Archangel the Same Person?*, p. 20.

- e. Dan 10:13 – But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.
 - f. Ellen G. White: "For three weeks Gabriel wrestled with the powers of darkness, seeking to counteract the influences at work on the mind of Cyrus; and before the contest closed, Christ Himself came to Gabriel's aid." (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 572)
2. There are only five references in the entire Bible to Michael, and not one of these references identifies Michael as Jesus Christ (Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9; Rev 12:7-8).
- a. If no angel was ever called God's Son (Heb 1:5), and since Jesus is, in fact, the Son of God, then how could Jesus be Michael the archangel? Obviously, He cannot possibly be Michael.
 - b. And, if no angel can rule the world (Heb 2:5), and since the Scriptures clearly affirm that Jesus Christ King of kings and LORD of lords (1 Tim 6:15; Rev 17:14; 19:16); and if Jesus has been given complete and absolute authority in heaven and on earth, then how can Jesus be the archangel Michael. Obviously, Jesus Christ and Michael the archangel are not the same person – despite the claims of Ellen G. White.
3. Clearly, Ellen G. White made a false, perverted and unbiblical claim regarding the body of Moses by claiming Michael "gave him life before his body had seen corruption."
- a. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead after the body of Lazarus had begun decaying and after four days in the grave (John 11:17, 39).
 - b. But there is no statement in the Bible that anyone resurrected Moses from the dead before his body saw corruption.
 - c. All Michael did was to rebuke Satan by invoking the name of the Lord.
- E. Seventh Day Adventists forbid the eating of certain foods.
- 1. They specifically forbid foods that were listed in the dietary restriction that the Lord imposed on the children of Israel (Lev 11:1-23), specifically pork (v 7).

2. These foods were forbidden in the Law which God specifically gave to the Israelites, and therefore are not forbidden today since that Law has been taken away (Col 2:14-16).
 3. Christians are told that every creature of God is good if it is received with thanksgiving (1 Tim 4:1-5).
- F. Seventh Day Adventists deny the Bible doctrine of eternal punishment in hell, but teach a doctrine known as "soul sleep."¹²
1. They believe that Satan and the disobedient will be annihilated at the final judgment.
 - a. Seventh Day Adventists maintain that the annihilation of the wicked and unrighteous at death, rather than eternal punishment in a burning hell, is an expression of God's grace, mercy and lovingkindness.
 - b. However, hell is just as long as heaven, for the same word is used to determine the length of both (Matt 25:46). (cf. *American Standard Version* (1901) or any Greek Interlinear New Testament.)
 2. The Seventh Day Adventists also teach that man is wholly mortal.
 - a. However, the Bible teaches:
 - (1). Man is made up of body, soul, and spirit (Matt 10:28; 1 Thess 5:23).
 - (2). Our spirits come from God, and at death will return to God (Eccl 12:7; Zech 12:1; Heb 12:9).
 3. The Seventh Day Adventists also teach that when a man dies he "sleeps" – thus the doctrine of "soul-sleep" (1 Thess 4:13-14).
 - a. Seventh Day Adventists do not believe that man or any part of man is "immortal" (Seventh Day Adventists, *Questions on Doctrine*, p. 518).
 - (1). Therefore, at death they maintain the saved will experience "soul sleep" (i.e., no conscious existence from the time of death until the resurrection), and that the wicked will simply experience annihilation (i.e., the body and soul are destroyed at death rather than experiencing everlasting torment).

¹² See Attachments: *The Denial of Hell And The Doctrine Of "Soul Sleep,"* p. 25.

- (2). They claim one can have immortality only by coming to Christ through the teachings of the Bible in concert with the teachings of Ellen G. White – the infallible guide to Holy Scripture. Then, on resurrection day, the body will be *re-created* and their soul reunited with the body.
 - b. However, the account of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16 clearly refutes the doctrine of so-called "soul-sleep" – since both the rich man and Lazarus, as well as Abraham, were all conscious and aware of their condition after death.
 - c. The Seventh Day Adventists attempt to refute this by claiming the account of the rich man and Lazarus is only a parable.
 - (1). The Bible does not say it is a parable.
 - (2). Even if it is, parables were always based on reality (cf. Matt 13).
 - d. Following his death, the rich man was clearly conscious, was able to recognize Lazarus, and grew concerned when he remembered his five brothers back on the earth (Luke 16:23-28).
- G. The Seventh Day Adventists also wrongly claim that Satan was once an angel in heaven, but rebelled against God and was cast out.¹³
- 1. Ellen G. White made it clear to her followers that the details of the origin of Satan were revealed to her in the 1858 vision that served as the basis for *The Great Controversy*:
 - a. "Before the entrance of evil there was peace and joy throughout the universe. . . God desires from all His creatures the service of love – homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service. . . But there was one that chose to pervert this freedom. Sin originated with him who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God and who stood highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven. Before his fall, Lucifer was first of the covering cherubs, holy and undefiled. 'Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering. . . . Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth;

¹³ See Attachments: *False Seventh Day Adventist Theories About Satan Falling From Heaven*, p. 27.

and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.' Ezekiel 28:12-15." (*The Great Controversy*, Ellen G. White, *The Origin of Evil*, chapter 29)

- b. Therefore, since Ellen G. White claimed she received the teaching regarding the origin of Satan during a vision, the Seventh Day Adventist Church is left with no choice except to interpret all passages of Scripture about Satan in the light of White's prophecies.
2. Ellen G. White claims the Bible supports her vision of the origin of Satan (Luke 10:18; 2 Cor 11:14; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6; Rev 12:7-9; Ezek 28:12-15; Isa 14:12-14).
 3. However, these passages are either misapplied or taken completely out of context.
 - a. Speaking about AD 30, Jesus said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). The passage does not say that Satan was literally in heaven or that he literally fell from heaven. Jesus makes a comparison indicated by the simile "like". (Simile: a figure of speech that expresses a resemblance between things of different kinds usually formed with "like" or "as"). Jesus is not saying as lightning falls from heaven so Satan literally fell from heaven. He is making a comparison to the swiftness of the fall of Satan, saying it is "as" lightning falling from heaven.
 - b. The "Satan" of 2 Corinthians 11:14 is not a rebel angel but rebel Jewish adversaries who were undermining the apostle Paul's influence in Corinth. (See 2 Cor. 10:2, 10-18; 11:3-26). Paul said: "for such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder for even Satan [the chief leader] disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his servants [misguided supporters] also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness." (vs. 13-15, RSV). This same Satan is also referred to in 2 Corinthians 2:11 – "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."
 - c. Regarding 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6, there are five erroneous and unsupported assumptions made about these verses.

- (1). It is an unsubstantiated assumption to say the "angels who sinned" and the "angels who did not keep their proper domain" are speaking of Satan and his demons. There is nothing in either of these verses that identifies who these "angels" were.
 - (2). It is an unsubstantiated assumption to say the events of which Peter and Jude speak occurred "before the flood of Noah's day" or at some time prior to the creation of the world.
 - (3). It is an unsubstantiated assumption to say the "angels" which sinned were spirit creatures. The Greek word "aggelos" translated "angel" means "messenger, agent" (according to Young's Concordance), and is used of both human and divine messengers. It is used of humans in the following places: Matt 11:10; Luke 7:24, 27; 9:52; and Jas 2:25.
 - (4). It is an unsubstantiated assumption to say "sons of God" (prior to the flood) must refer to divine angels. (It refers to humans in Deut 14:1 (RSV); Psa. 82:6 (RSV).; Hos 1:10; Luke 3:38; John 1:12; 1 John 3:1.)
 - (5). It is an unsubstantiated assumption to say evil power can still be exercised by the "angels that sinned" despite the fact that they are "reserved in everlasting chains." (Why bother to chain angels if, as the Jehovah's Witnesses contend, they can still exercise dangerous power over us today?)
- d. Revelation 12:7-9 is the chief text on which Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists build their doctrine that the devil is a fallen angel. Since the devil is associated with the serpent (vs. 9) they argue the devil used the serpent to bring about the fall of man (Gen 3). It is further argued that the devil must be a fallen angel since his cohorts are called angels (vs. 9). However, even the most zealous advocate of the "fallen-angel-turned-devil" theory is forced to admit the symbolic nature of other characters mentioned in this passage. A seven-headed, ten-horned red dragon isn't the kind of description one would ordinarily associate with an angel - fallen or otherwise.
- e. The context of Ezekiel 28:12-15 clearly shows that God was speaking to a prince, a king, a man – the prince of Tyre, the king of Tyre.

- f. The context of Isaiah 14:12-14 also clearly shows that God is speaking about and to, "the King of Babylon," not Satan, and not a cherub (cf. Ezekiel 28). The king of Babylon (Lucifer – star of light, sun of the dawn) is nothing more than a "man who made the earth tremble..." Just like the rulers of nations before him who thought that they were "gods" represented in the stars of heaven, and who exalted themselves and their throne to heaven, and who also made the earth tremble, shook kingdoms, and destroyed cities, the king of Babylon will be brought down. Isaiah chapter 12 is not speaking of the fall of Satan at all, but rather the fall of a pompous king who died in infamy without even a proper burial.
- H. Seventh Day Adventists claim "foot washing" is an ordinance commanded by God for the church today.
1. "The Master ordained the service of foot-washing to signify renewed cleansing, to express a willingness to serve one another in Christ-like humility, and to unite our hearts in love."¹⁴
 2. However, the instance of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples (John 13:14-15) was simply to teach them a lesson – the need to humble oneself to serve rather than be served.
 3. Following this example, there is no further mention of the practice of "foot washing." There are no examples of "foot washing" in the church, nor are there any command by God for the practice to be observed by the Lord's church as an ordinance.
- I. Concerning the plan of salvation, Adventists teach salvation is through a direct operation of the Holy Spirit:
1. "Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ, as Substitute and Example. . . Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life."¹⁵
 2. "By baptism we confess our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and testify of our death to sin and of our purpose to walk in newness of life. Thus we acknowledge Christ as Lord and Saviour, become His people, and are received as members by His church.

¹⁴ Seventh Day Adventist Website: http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/church_manual/chapter3.html#9

¹⁵ *Fundamental Beliefs*, General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists

Baptism is a symbol of our union with Christ, the forgiveness of our sins, and our reception of the Holy Spirit. It is by immersion in water and is contingent on an affirmation of faith in Jesus and evidence of repentance of sin."¹⁶

3. Seventh Day Adventists correctly teach that baptism is by immersion, and only for those who are old enough to accept responsibility for their actions. However, they also require the person being baptized to publicly acknowledge this set of thirteen baptismal vows:
 - I believe in God the Father, in His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit.
 - I accept the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary as the atoning sacrifice for my sins, and believe that through faith in His shed blood I am saved from sin and its penalty.
 - I renounce the world and its sinful ways, and have accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, and believe that God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven my sins and given me a new heart.
 - I accept by faith the righteousness of Christ, recognizing Him as my Intercessor in the heavenly sanctuary, and claim His promise to strengthen me by His indwelling Spirit, so that I may receive power to do His will.
 - I believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word, and that it constitutes the only rule of faith and practice for the Christian.
 - 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.
 - I look forward to the soon coming of Jesus as the blessed hope in my heart, and I am determined to be ready to meet the Lord, and to do all in my power to witness to His loving salvation, and by life and word to help others to be ready for His glorious appearing.
 - I accept the Biblical teaching of spiritual gifts, and believe that the gift of prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church.
 - I believe in church organization, and it is my purpose to support the church by my tithes and offerings, and by my personal effort and influence.
 - I believe that my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and I will honor God by caring for it, avoiding the use of that which is harmful, abstaining from all unclean foods, from the use,

¹⁶ *Fundamental Beliefs*, General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists

- manufacture, or sale of alcoholic beverages, the use, manufacture, or sale of tobacco in any of its forms for human consumption, and from the misuse of or trafficking in, narcotics or other drugs.
- I know and understand the fundamental Bible principles as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is my purpose, by the grace of God, to order my life in harmony with these principles.
 - I accept the New Testament teaching of baptism by immersion, and desire to be so baptized as a public expression of faith in Christ and His forgiveness of my sins.
 - I accept that the Seventh Day Church is the remnant church of Bible prophecy, and that people of every nation, race, and language are invited and accepted into its fellowship. I desire to be a member in this local congregation of the world church.
4. However, the Bible plan of salvation does not require anything that is even remotely similar to what the Seventh Day Adventist church requires its prospects to do or to confess.
- a. The Bible teaches that one must simply:
- Hear the Word of God (Rom 10:11-17)
 - Believe in Jesus Christ (John 3:16; 8:24; Heb 11:6)
 - Repent of their past sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:37-38)
 - Confess their faith in Christ before men (Matt 10:32; Rom 10:10; Acts 8:36-37)
 - And be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet 3:21; Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27).

Conclusion:

- I. Despite the efforts of the Seventh Day Adventist church to be accepted as a mainstream religious denomination, they remain a dangerous religious cult with close ties to Jehovah's Witnesses.
- A. From the early days of the Lord's church we read of warnings against division or schisms – a breaking away, or a heresy (Rom 16:17-18; 1 John 2:19)
1. Sociologist, John Lofland, said "cults are 'little groups' which break off from the conventional consensus and espouse very different views of the real, the possible, and the moral." (*What Is a Cult? – A Guide to Cults and New Religions*, Ronald Enroth, 1983, p.14.)

2. Religious cults may claim to accept the truth of Christ and salvation as do some mainstream religious denominations, but deny one or more of the core doctrines of Biblical teaching.
 - a. They change the core teachings of the Bible by claiming the Bible does not mean what it appears on the surface to say. This is most often done by the cult leader who claims to have received direct revelation from God through visions – like the visions of Ellen G. White.
3. This is one of the main reasons why the Seventh Day Adventist Church is clearly a cult.
 - a. They blindly follow the teachings of Ellen G. White, who they claim received more than 2,000 visions during which God allegedly revealed His will to her, and allegedly gave her more divine and spiritual insight, and the ability to understand God's word more clearly than anyone else.
 - b. And like any true cult, the followers of Ellen G. White display an excessively zealous and unquestioning commitment to her, and regard her beliefs, ideologies, and practices as the Truth and Law. Those who question the authority of Ellen G. White are eventually disfellowshipped by the church.

Study Questions:

1. Who was William Miller and what role did he play in influencing Ellen G. White, the founder of the Seventh Day Adventist Church?
2. What was Ellen G. White's teaching concerning "sinless perfection"?
3. What do Seventh Day Adventists teaching concerning the "Law of God" and the "Sabbath"?
4. Explain how there is no difference between "the law of God" and "the law of Moses."

5. List some of the reasons why the Sabbath is not binding on Christians today.

6. What do Seventh Day Adventists teaching concerning the punishment of the wicked and the origin of Satan?

7. How do the Seventh Day Adventists teachings concerning dietary restrictions differ from what the Bible teaches?

8. Give some reasons why Ellen G. White's claims to be a prophet of God are not true.

9. What is "soul sleep" and explain why this doctrine is incompatible with Bible teaching.
10. Explain why "foot washing" is not a practice in the Lord's church today.
11. List some of the errors in the baptismal vows of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.
12. Why would it be proper to identify the Seventh Day Adventist Church as a religious cult?