

The Cults Exposed

Seventh Day Adventism:



Introduction: **Setting a Date for Christ's Return?**

October 28, 1992 -- Korean Expectation
October 22, 1844 – Millerite Expectation

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." -- **Matthew 24:36**

❖ **William Miller Stirs Great Expectations (1831-1844)**

Miller's Background: Back to the Bible from Deism

- 1782 - born [Pittsfield, MA], self taught farmer
- 1812 - captain in War of 1812
- moved to western NY state becomes a Baptist
- swayed into Deism (Deism = non interfering clockmaker god)
- 1816 - regains his faith, become avid Bible student. Sixteen years with his *Bible and Cruden's Concordance!*
- 1818 - discovers in Daniel 8:14 a prophetic indication of Lord's soon return but hesitates for years to tell others.

"My great fear was, that in their joy at the hope of a glorious inheritance so soon to be revealed, they would receive the doctrine without sufficiently examining the Scriptures in demonstration of its truth. I therefore feared to present it, lest by some possibility I should be in error, and be the means of misleading any." [Apology and Defense, p. 16]

Miller's Teaching: Christ Will Return in 1843-44

- 1831 - first sermon: topic soon return of Christ becomes popular speaker on the theme. The "Millerite Movement" flourishes.
- 1833 - ordained Baptist minister, itinerant teacher
- 1836 - publishes: *Evidence from History & Scripture of the Second Coming of Christ about the Year 1843*

"It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be cleansed."

2,300 days until the sanctuary is cleansed
2300 days = 2300 years (beginning in 457BC)
Return of Christ: >> between spring of 1843 and 1844

Miller's followers pinpoint: March 21, 1843

- 1840 - appearance of the periodical *Sign of the Times*
Rev. Joshua Himes of Chardon Street Chapel [Boston] endorses Miller's views

1843 (March 21) - comes and goes. Followers are disappointed. Some adjust their calculations in favor of March 21, 1844 [the Jewish calendar year 1843]. In one camp meeting a man named Snow declares the date October 22, 1844 is the date. This date becomes popularly known.

1844 (March 21) - comes and goes, October 22 increasingly becomes the focus. As it approaches farmers neglect planting and harvesting. People are encouraged to come out of their false churches and join together.

1844 (October 22) - tens of thousands gather in houses and on hilltops (some in robes) to sing wait and pray.

When October 22 passes many abandon disillusioned others are left to search their Bibles for what went wrong. One leader wrote on the 24th:

"It is a cloudy and dark day here—the sheep are scattered—the Lord has not come yet." [Dr. Josiah Litsch, *The Midnight Cry*]

Miller's Reaction and Retraction: Error Acknowledged

Six weeks after the passing of March 21, 1843 date:

"...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..." [Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller*, p. 256]

Miller rejected the explanatory theories following the Great Disappointment. (October 22nd)

On his tombstone following death in 1849

"At the appointed time the end shall be."

❖ **Ellen G. White Consolidates the Millerite Movement after the Great Disappointment (1844-1955)**

Three Groups Emerge Each with a Distinctive Tenet

Hiram Edson: Heavenly Sanctuary Doctrine

The day following the Great Disappointment Edson had a cornfield revelation. Jesus actually moved from the Holy Place to the Holy of Holies to cleanse the *Heavenly Sanctuary*. He will return to earth following his work there ("investigative judgment") whereby He examines the works of believers to determine worthiness to have eternal life.

"We started, and while passing through a large field I was stopped about midway of the field. Heaven seemed open 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 2,300 days, He for the first time entered on that day the second apartment of that sanctuary; and that He had a work to perform in the most holy before coming to this earth." [*Midnight Cry*, p. 458]

Note: The error was not timing, it was an error of geography!

Joseph Bates: Seventh Day Sabbath

Advocated the keeping of the seventh day (i.e. Saturday) as the Sabbath. This he claimed is the “perpetual sign” of the remnant church of 144,000 faithful Adventists. Sunday worship was identified as the “mark of the beast.”

Ellen G. White: “Spirit of Prophecy”

Ellen White emphasized a “spirit of prophecy” would be manifest among the remnant according to her understanding of Rev. 19:10. Her many visions lead to her recognition as the sole possessor of this “spirit of prophecy.”

Among her more “interesting” revelations:

- Women should wear short dresses with pants.
- American slavery would be abolished by Christ at His coming.
- Jesus and Paul were tried before the same Herod.



Ellen White “Spirit of Prophecy”

Ellen White Consolidates the Seventh Day Adventist Church

- 1827 - twins (Ellen and Elizabeth Harmon) born to Methodist family.
- 1836 - Ellen was almost killed when a boy threw a rock hitting her in the face leaving her permanently scarred and arguably an epileptic.
- 1840 - attended meetings led by William Miller causing her to be anxious about her faith and was soon consoled by Jesus in her dreams.
- 1844 - Beginning of her visions at age 17:
 - 1st - vision of Adventist believers on the road to heaven. [Two months after the Great Disappointment]
 - 2nd - vision confirming that the door to salvation for sinners had been closed after October 22nd. [Edson’s tenet]
 - 3rd - vision confirming the seventh day sabbath. [Bates’ tenet]
- 1846 - marries an Adventist minister, James White, who edited the *Review and Herald*. His publishing his wife’s visions (after editing the grammar) was discontinued in 1851. A backlash from her supporters ensued. He was eventually asked to step down and apologize to his wife for deprecating her visions.
- 1855 - James and Ellen White move their headquarters to Battle Creek, MI. Ellen lectures widely on diet and temperance.
- 1863 - Seventh Day Adventism is officially organized as a church. Ellen White remained prophetess and evangelist, but not President of the church.
- 1885 - James White dies. Ellen’s influence increases despite rival prophetesses: Anna Garmire in 1884, Anna Phillips Rice in 1891, and lastly Fannie Bolton.
- 1911 - Ellen White publishes: *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*, a religious history from the early church to the end times. White was a prolific writer.
- 1915 - Ellen White dies.

Distinctive Beliefs Leading to The Classification of Seventh Day Adventism as a Cult

Ellen White’s Role as a Prophetess

Investigative Judgment

Soul Sleep or Conditional Immortality

Annihilation of the Wicked

Sunday Worship, the Mark of the Beast

❖ Denominational Leaders Seek Mainstream Acceptance (1955-Present)

The Discussions of the Mid 1950s

The Overture by Walter Martin & Donald Grey Barnhouse:

In 1954 Walter Martin approached the Adventist leaders as he began to research the SDA Church indicating his desire to treat them fairly. He requested an interview with them which was welcomed. Martin prepared a series of about forty questions concerning their theological views.

The Adventists Clarify Their Mainstream Beliefs

In August, 1955 seven evangelical leaders (including Martin and Donald Grey Barnhouse) met with the Adventist leaders to examine their written responses to the questions. A number of the views in question were said to be held only by a "lunatic fringe" of the Adventist church and did not represent mainstream denominational beliefs.

The answers softened some previously offensive SDA views:

- [1] Sabbath - They acknowledge that "all who are trusting Christ as savior and are following Him according to the light they have are saved." This includes millions from all ages and various denominations. [XI.5]
- [2] Ellen White - They consider her "the great counselor of their movement." Her writings are not viewed on a par with Scripture and are not to be a test of fellowship. Scripture is the only foundation for doctrine. The "spirit of prophecy" is described as a "lesser light" leading to the "greater light."

Other historic SDA views were affirmed:

- [1] Salvation and Present Assurance of Salvation
"Every person in order to obtain salvation must experience the new birth."
[VI.2] "One who truly understands and accepts the teachings of the SDA Church can assuredly know he is born again... He has in his soul the assurance of present salvation, and need be in no uncertainty whatsoever."
[VI.4]
- [2] Investigative Judgment, Soul Sleep and the Book of Life
They acknowledge that Christ's death at Calvary was a complete atonement for all mankind. Application of these benefits await Christ's current investigative judgment. He "determines who of myriads sleeping in the dust of the earth are worthy of a part in the first resurrection and who of its living multitudes are worthy of translation." [IX.4]

Further they state, "In view principles here set forth, it seems to us abundantly clear that the acceptance of Christ at conversion does not seal a person's destiny. His record after conversion is also important... Nor can it be said that a man's record is closed when he comes to the end of his days. He is responsible for his influence during life, and is just as surely responsible for his evil influence after he is dead." [IX.6]

"The blotting of names out of the book of life is, we believe, a work of the investigative judgment. A complete and thorough check of all the candidates for eternal life will need to be completed before Christ comes in the clouds

of heaven, for when He appears, decisions for life or death have already been made.” [IX.8]

- [3] Annihilation of the Wicked
“We reject the doctrine of eternal torment for the following reasons:...”
[VIII.2]

The Conclusion of Walter Martin and Donald Grey Barnhouse

Both men concluded after consideration of the views expressed by these leaders that the SDA should not be considered as a cult. They concluded SDA beliefs were basically evangelical in terms of the person of Christ and salvation (initially) through faith in Christ’s work on the cross. They warned their readers that Adventists still hold a number of views which are errant and troubling and need Biblical correction.

The Dissension of the 1970s and 1980s

70's - Questioning of Ellen White's Writings and Her Integrity

Walter Rea published, *The White Lie* (1982) which offered extensive evidence that much of White’s 53 books were “borrowed.” Rea was only one of many scholars, since the 70s, to criticize Ellen White and Adventist esteem for her and her writings. Their conclusion was: Mrs. White could and should not be revered as a prophetess in light of her undeniable plagiarism and subsequent cover-up.

Note: In contrast, Walter Martin concludes that while Mrs. White’s plagiarism should not be excused it could be “understood as the actions of a Christian who makes mistakes. She was both mortal and a sinner like everyone else.” Some of her prophecies were false, he argues, but since she was a genuine believer she should not be considered a false prophet, rather someone whose writings contain error.” [KC, 445-46]

Mollerus Couperus in June of 1985 published an article entitled, “The Significance of Ellen White’s Head Injury” in which he examines from a medical perspective the description of her injury and subsequent experiences, actions and writing. He concludes that visions and writings bear characteristics typical of partial complex seizures associated with temporal lobe epilepsy. [see: www.ellenwhite.org for link to article]

80's - Questioning SDA Doctrine of Investigative Judgment

Desmond Ford, an Australian Adventist, with over 100 other Adventist pastors and teachers challenge two key concepts of their church:

- [1] That 1844 is a special year.
- [2] That the concept of investigative judgment is biblical. Ford’s purpose was to see his denomination come into full harmony with scriptural teaching on justification.

Ford’s ordination was “annulled” and his group was expelled.

Conclusion: *How Should Seventh Day Adventism Be Viewed Today?*

The Marks of a Cult:

- Authoritarian Leader
- Additional Revelation
- Defective Gospel
- Novelty and Exclusivity
- Loyalty Mechanisms
- Historical Revisionism

CULT ←

→ ORTHODOXY

- ❖ **Adventism under William Miller?**
- ❖ **Seventh Day Adventism under Ellen White?**
- ❖ **Seventh Day Adventism Today?**

1- Prophetic Confusion

Deut. 18:18 I will raise up a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites. I will tell that prophet what to say, and he will tell the people everything I command him. 19 I will personally deal with anyone who will not listen to the messages the prophet proclaims on my behalf. 20 But any prophet who claims to give a message from another god or who falsely claims to speak for me must die. 21 You may wonder, 'How will we know whether the prophecy is from the LORD or not?' 22 If the prophet predicts something in the Lord's name and it does not happen, the LORD did not give the message. That prophet has spoken on his own and need not be feared.

2 - Investigative Judgment Confusion

Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.