

Seventh Day Adventism

The Adventist movement owes its beginnings to an American Baptist Preacher named William Miller. Miller predicted that the end of the world would come between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844. When this didn't happen, he endorsed an alternate theory of some of his followers, that the end would come in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, October 22, 1844. When this didn't happen William Miller gave trying to predict the end of the world. The movement was later taken over by Ellen G. White, and today is seen by Adventists as the 'founder' of their denomination.

One of the most distinctive beliefs of Seventh Day Adventism is their Sabbath keeping. This idea was invented by one of Miller's followers, Joseph Bates, who believed that Christians should still be keeping the Sabbath, that is Saturday (the seventh day), and that Sunday worship is the 'mark of the beast' spoken of in the book of Revelation. It was invented, they say by the Catholic Church, which is the whore of Babylon, and its leader the Pope, who is the anti-Christ.

Though the Adventists will often try to defend this position, mostly by quotations from the Old Testament, their positions is without any New Testament support or Historical basis. Christians Worship Jesus on Sunday because this is the day he rose. While Adventists try to defend their position with such texts as Genesis 2:1-3 and Exodus 20:8-10, among others, their position is clearly refuted by a number of New Testament texts, most significantly Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2, Gal 4:10; Colossians 2:16-17, and Revelation 1:10.

Another belief of Seventh Day Adventism which is even more central to much of its theology is that those who have died are in either a sleep state, or have even ceased to exist. The latter extreme is more prominent among the Jehovah's Witnesses. Adventism bases this belief on its interpretation of very selective texts, most importantly on the first half of a verse in the book of Ecclesiastes which reads: "For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing..." (Eccl 9:5a). They believe that this proves that those who have died, even good Adventists, go into a *sleep state* until the resurrection. For this reason, among many others, they have difficulty with Catholic prayers to Saints, since in their theology, the Saints are asleep.

However, as with many protestant heresies, this one too is based on a text out of context. The Book of Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon towards the end of his life. He is in a depression, for he has realized that all his wisdom, all his wealth, all his wives and concubines, all his political and military might, is meaningless without the righteousness of the Law of God (cf. Eccl 12:13-14). Throughout the book, Solomon speaks in depressive hyperbolic proverbs. And as with any hyperbolic speech it must be understood in context. If one want to take the first half of Eccl 9:5 out of its hyperbolic context, and interpret it to mean that the dead are not conscious, then one also has to take the rest of the verse in this manner. The entire verse reads: "For the living know nothing, and they have no more reward; but the memory of them is lost." If this is true then those who have died have no chance of the *reward* of eternal life at the resurrection. Nor will they be remembered at the final judgment. Obviously the Adventist does not want to take things this far. Furthermore, there are clear passages in the Bible that show that there is consciousness in death (Gen 15:15; Matt 22:32-33; Luke 16:19-21; Phil 1:23; 1 Pet 3:19; 4:6; Rev 4:4; 5:8; 6:9-11).

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“Do you Keep the Commandments?: Seventh-Day Adventism and the Sabbath

The Adventist movement owes its beginnings to an American Baptist Preacher William Miller who predicted the end of the world would come between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. After March 21, 1844 had passed, he endorsed an alternate theory of some of his followers, that the end would come October 22. After the ‘Great Disappointment’ as they call it, the movement broke into a myriad of factions, some of which are still around today. One of the better known and influential among them are the Seventh Day Adventists, owing much of their early formation of doctrine to the former Millerite Ellen G. White, who became their ‘prophetess.’

One of the most distinctive beliefs of Seventh Day Adventism is their seventh-day Sabbath keeping. This idea was brought into the early Millerite movement by Rachel Oakes Preston, a former ‘Seventh-day Baptist’ and spread rapidly through the writings of Millerite Thomas M. Preble, and eventually Joseph Bates, who solidified its position within the Millerite movement. Ellen G. White also taught that Sunday keeping was the ‘mark of the Beast.’

Adventists will often try to defend their position regarding the Sabbath, mostly from the Old Testament, employing such passages as Genesis 2:1-3 (cp. v. 15; John 5:17) and Exodus 20:8-10 (cp. Deut 5:15); 31:13-17 (cp. Gen 17:13); Isa 66:23 (cp. ‘new moon’), and arguing that there is nowhere in the Bible that teaches that the Sabbath was moved from Saturday to Sunday for Christians (see also Matt 12:8; 24:20 [cp. ‘winter’]; Luke 4:16 [cp. 3:21; 2:21; Exod 23:17]; Acts 13:14, 44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4; 19:8). The argument is based erroneous exegesis of these passages and a faulty historical assumption.

Christians worship Jesus on Sunday, not because the Old Law of the seventh day Sabbath was ‘moved’ from Saturday to Sunday, but rather because Sunday is the day Jesus rose from the dead (Matt 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1). Further signaling this day’s significance is the fact that this is also the day he was recognized in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24:1,13,30,35), the day he appeared to them in the upper room and gave them the power to forgive sins (John 20:19-23), and the day he appeared to them again for the sake of Thomas and for us (John 20:26-29).

The practice of Christians gathering on Sunday is alluded to in the New Testament (Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2; Rev 1:10) and the distinction of the Saturday Sabbath and the Christian day of worship on Sunday is documented in such early Christian writings as the *Epistle of Barnabas*:

Finally he says: “I cannot bear your new moons and sabbaths” (Isa 1:13). You see what he means: it is not the present sabbaths that are acceptable to me, but the one that I have made; on that Sabbath, after I have set everything at rest, I will create the beginning of an **eighth day**, which is the beginning of another world. This is why we spend the **eighth day** in celebration, the day on which Jesus both arose from the dead and, after appearing again, ascended into heaven (*Barnabas* 15, c. AD 70-135; Lightfoot, AF).

Likewise, also Ignatius, bishop of Antioch wrote:

If, then, those who had lived in antiquated practices came to newness of hope, no longer keeping the Sabbath but living in accordance with the **Lord’s day**, on which our life also arose through him...how can we possibly live without him...(*Magnesians* 9, c. AD 110; Lightfoot, AF).

Similarly, the author of the *Didache*: “On the **Lord’s day**, assemble in common to break bread and offer thanks; but confess your sins, so that your sacrifice may be pure” (14:1, c. AD 50-90).

As for the Saturday Sabbath keeping, early Christians associated it with circumcision, Kosher laws, and the rest of the Old Law, and thus as irrelevant for salvation (Gal 4:10; Colossians 2:16-17; cp. 1 Chr 23:31; 2 Chr 2:4; 8:13; Neh 10:33; Hos 2:11).

Miller’s (and Bahai) calculations for the 1844

AD 33

- 490 (Dan 9:24-27)

457 BC (Ezra 7:21-28)

457 BC

+ 2,300 years (Dan 8:14 [Num 14:34; Ezek 4:5])

1843

Major problems:

- 2,300 years? Take another look at Num 14:34 and Ezek 4:5
- Compare 2 Pet 3:8. 2,300 days = 2,300,000 years
- 457 BC + 2,300,000 years = AD 2,299,543