

Seventh-day Adventists

Origins

Seventh-day Adventism originated with the American preacher William Miller (1782–1849). He preached that the return of Christ, his *advent*, was about to happen, specifying a day in 1844. When this did not happen the year became known as the Great Disappointment and he lost many followers. However, Ellen G. White argued that Christ had indeed returned in the sense that he had entered a heavenly temple. He would only return to earth once this heavenly temple had been cleansed. She also said that the Sabbath should be observed on Saturday. Despite the setback in 1844, the movement grew steadily. In 1861 the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association was formed, and in 1863 Seventh-day Adventism became a formal denomination. Three years later it founded its first health-care institution. This reflected the church's emphasis on the whole person, including the body as well as the mind and spirit.

Today

Worldwide, Seventh-day Adventists number around 14 million. Missionary work is an important element of Seventh-day Adventism. There are around 700 Seventh-day Adventist schools worldwide and over 100 colleges and universities. There are over 700 Seventh-day Adventist medical facilities in existence. Seventh-day Adventists have a clear organisational structure, headed by a president and nine vice-presidents. In 2005 a female was elected for the first time as a vice-president.

What the mainstream says

- There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons.
- The Holy Spirit leads the church into all truth, and through it a person is born again.
- A created being in heaven became Satan and led into rebellion a portion of the angels.
- Baptism is immersion in water contingent on an affirmation of faith.
- The gift of prophecy is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. Her writings are an authoritative source of truth, although the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.
- The seventh day should be observed as the Sabbath day of rest.
- In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2,300 days, Christ began the work of investigative judgment, which reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and who among the living are abiding in Christ.
- When Christ literally returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die.
- The resurrection of the unrighteous will take place a thousand years after the righteous.
- During the thousand-year reign of Christ the earth will be occupied by Satan.
- After the thousand years God will provide an eternal home on earth for the righteous.

(Source: <http://www.adventist.org>)

Suggested initial Scriptural approach

It is important to establish the meaning of the word *satan*, showing that it means 'adversary' and does not refer by definition to an evil angel. The words in Psalm 2, where the kings and rulers say, "Let us break their bands asunder" (v. 3), can be compared with Revelation 20:2, where *satan* is bound, and from this an exposition of the millennial reign of Christ can be developed. Colossians 2:16, "Let no man therefore judge you . . . of the sabbath days", is helpful when challenging the keeping of the Sabbath.