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Untangling The Eschatology of Seventh-day Adventism: Part 2

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This is the second installment of this two part series analyzing the amazing maze of Seventh-day Adventist eschatology (Read Part 1 here: <https://www.marketfaith.org/2026/09/untangling-the-eschatology-of-seventh-day-adventism-part-1-tal-davis/>). In Part 1 we reviewed the comparison of four different millennial views held by various evangelical Christians as presented in a recent article by MarketFaith Ministries President Freddy Davis (Read it here: <https://www.marketfaith.org/2026/06/revelations-presuppositions/>). We then introduced the fact that another eschatological system is held that is unique in comparison to the others: the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For a summary and comparison of Seventh-day Adventism with Historic Christianity go here: <http://www.marketfaith.org/what-about-seventh-day-adventism/>.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) was started by Mrs. Ellen G. White when she claimed to receive visions outlining the secrets of the end times leading up to Christ's return. Her interpretations of Scripture, as stated in her books, are regarded by SDA followers as the divinely inspired "Spirit of Prophecy." Therefore, the distinctive beliefs of the SDA are the result of Mrs. White's supernatural comprehension of apocalyptic Scriptures, especially in Daniel and Revelation.

So now let's look at the SDA program for the period of the end times, in which, the SDA says we are now living! We have to start with ancient prophecies recorded in the book of Daniel. As we said in Part 1, William Miller predicted the return of Christ in 1844. He arrived at that date by studying Daniel 8:14 and counting "unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (2300 meaning symbolic prophetic years) from 457 BC. Miller took that 2300 years to mean when Christ would return. 457 BC was the point of the seventh year of the rule of Persian King Artaxerxes (?-424 BC) when God told the Israelites to go back and rebuild Jerusalem. He added 2300 years to 457 BC and got the date AD 1843. He boldly predicted Jesus would come that year and many believed him. But when He didn't return in 1843, Miller realized he had made a mathematical error. The Julian/Gregorian calendar does not have a year zero. It jumps from year 1 BC right to AD 1. So any time you count a number of years from a date in BC extending into the ADs, you have to add one to the cal-

culution. So Miller refigured the date to 1844 and waited again. Still no return.

So Miller gave up predicting, but, as we said before, others did not, including the Whites. So, they had to do more study of Daniel and decided that 1844 was still a key year in God's timetable. They figured that the "2300 days" would be cut after 70 weeks (that is 490 years - Dan. 9:24) which would be the year AD 34 (shortly after the ascension of Christ). What they realized was that the remaining 1,810 years (of 2,300) until "the sanctuary would be cleansed" was not when Christ would return or when the earthly sanctuary in Jerusalem would be cleansed. The Jerusalem temple had been destroyed in AD 70 so there was nothing there to cleanse in 1844. Thus, it had to mean something else. They finally decided it was describing the holy sanctuary in heaven which consists of two compartments, the outer and the inner holy of holies (symbolically portrayed in the Jerusalem temple). So, in 1844, Jesus Christ went from the outer heavenly sanctuary to the inner heavenly sanctuary where he completed the work of redemption and initiated what Seventh-day Adventists call "the Investigative Judgment." Thus, 1844 was the starting date for what can be called the "last days" leading up to the coming of Christ. This doctrine is clarified in SDA Fundamental Beliefs # 24

Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary - There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle that the Lord set up and not humans. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. At His ascension, He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and, began His intercessory ministry, which was typified by the work of the high priest in the holy place of the earthly sanctuary. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry, which was typified by the work of the high priest in the most holy place of the earthly sanctuary. 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. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judg-

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ment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent. (Lev. 16; Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:6; Dan. 7:9-27; 8:13, 14; 9:24-27; Heb. 1:3; 2:16, 17; 4:14-16; 8:175; 9:11-28; 10:19-22; Rev. 8:3-5; 11:19; 14:6, 7; 20:12; 14:12; 22:11, 12.) (https://szu.adventist.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/28_Beliefs.pdf)

Simply put, the "Investigative Judgment" involves an examination by Christ of the lives of the "sleeping" dead. The SDA believes that when a person dies they go into an unconscious "soul sleep" state to await the general resurrection at Jesus' return. His examination of the dead's life is to ascertain whether or not they are worthy of being part of the first resurrection. He is also determining who among the still living are abiding in Christ and keeping God's commandments (especially keeping the Sabbath). Does this mean that, when Jesus went into the heavenly "holy of holies," if He found we committed any sins while we were alive, we might lose our salvation even if we had believed in Christ?

The SDA maintains it believes that salvation is only by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. However, its teaching often implies that certain legalistic acts of righteousness are also necessary to maintain one's assurance of salvation. Especially required is observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. SDA members are also expected to observe strict dietary regulations, and to abstain from alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. Modest dressing is also strongly encouraged. Healthy living habits are certainly advocated for Christians but not at the price of burdening believers with doubts about their salvation. In other words, if someone eats pork, are they in danger of losing their salvation?

This "Investigative Judgment" doctrine comes very close to being an out-and-out theological heresy. Why? Because it implies that Jesus did not fully complete the work of the atonement once and for all on the cross. There is no indication in Scrip-

ture of this "Investigative Judgment." People are saved solely by their acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. It is entirely by grace through faith in Christ alone and that is all. The atonement was a finished work when He died on the cross and our redemption made complete by His resurrection. He is not going to go back and look at our past life to see if we did things that disqualified us from salvation. Only rejecting Christ would do that! So for the SDA to say that 1844 was a special date for a heavenly judgment and the beginning of the last days before the second coming is an audacious claim based on cryptic dating calculations and bad biblical hermeneutics.

Likewise, putting Ellen Gould White on the pedestal of a modern prophet places her in danger of violating the warnings of Deuteronomy 18:20-22 (NASB):

"But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name, a word which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.' And if you say in your heart, 'How will we recognize the word which the Lord has not spoken?' When the prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, and the thing does not happen or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you are not to be afraid of him."

So, we are now in the final days awaiting Christ's imminent, yet unknown, return, according to the SDA timetable. But many other signs have been or are being fulfilled to prepare the way for the Lord's coming.

1. Signs in the Natural World (Luke 21:25; Mark 13:24-26; Rev. 6:12)

- "In fulfillment of this prophecy 'the largest known earthquake' occurred on November 1 1755."
- Witness of the sun and moon. This was fulfilled on May 19, 1780 when an extraordinary darkness covered the northeastern North American continent.
- Witness of the stars. Fulfilled by the great meteoric shower of November 13, 1833.

2. Signs in the Religious World

- A great religious awakening after the end of a 1260 year period of Papal dominance in 1798.
- Preaching of the Gospel around the world particularly by Seventh-day Adventists.

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3. Religious Decline - Despite the spread of the Gospel, true spirituality will fall toward the end of time.

4. A Resurgence of the Papacy - Despite a loss of influence since 1798, "many people view the Pope as the moral leader of the world."

5. Decline of Religious Freedom - "The revival of the Papacy will affect Christianity dramatically." Remember we indicated that in the last days a worldwide government mandated, and Roman Catholic endorsed, Sunday worship law will be enforced. People will be forced to choose between loyalty to God or to the Beast (the AntiChrist, the Pope) and his image and his mark (Sunday worship).

6. Surge in World Crime

7. Sexual Revolution

8. Wars and Calamities - These include regional and even world wars, natural disasters, and famines.

These kinds of "signs of the times" are like those cited by evangelical prophecy "experts" as evidence for the imminent return of Christ. However, the SDA's citing of random historic events is dubious. Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the SDA approach to eschatology is its intense anti-Catholicism. Now don't get me wrong, I am not a defender of Roman Catholicism. It has much about it that I believe is contrary to biblical teaching.

That being said, I don't believe it's right to blame the world's problems on the Catholic Church as some conspiracists do. Promoting a theory that the Pope is the Antichrist is unjustified. Furthermore, to argue that he wants to force everyone in the world to worship on Sundays at the threat of losing their lives is absurd. The world is definitely filled with religious conflict. But most of it is incited by radical Mus-

lims trying to violently impose Islam on everyone they can. There is no evidence of the Catholic Church trying to coerce itself on anyone anymore. If anything, it has given up its world mission of evangelization as did many other denominations in the 20th century.

I recall years ago speaking with an SDA pastor about this concept of the Sunday "mark of the beast." I said it seemed to me that, if anything, the cultural momentum is all moving in the opposite direction. There is far less impetus on keeping the Sunday Lord's Day now than ever. Fewer people get up and go to church on Sunday, many preferring to stay home and rest or play, golf or swim. I have heard no one in the Roman Catholic world even hinting that they want to compel people to attend church on Sunday. Besides, the Pope does not have the political or military power to enforce such a law. In fact, most Catholic churches have mass on other days of the week for those who want to attend. The same is true for other denominations.

So, are you now totally confused? You probably think all of this is difficult for anyone to comprehend. Eschatology is hard enough to figure out anyway as Freddy Davis' article showed. But to throw in all

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the complexity that Ellen G. White and the Seventh-day Adventists have added to the picture makes it even more confusing. I'm sure that the lecturer at *The Future Unfolding* programs, Mr. Bradshaw, will explain it all clearly in three nights (see Part 1). I expect he will have to reveal, however, that he is a Seventh-day Adventist minister. After all, it is the "remnant church" that has the secrets to knowing the true end times events and he will tell them to us. I hope he will also invite those present who do not know Christ as their Savior to receive Him as their Lord. I'm not sure of that. But I believe he will subtly encourage those who are already Christians to leave their churches and join the SDA, the "remnant church." They need to do so before the Antichrist – the Pope – forces them to take the mark of the beast and worship on Sunday.

So what do you think? Does all this make sense? It seems to me that Ellen G. White took an amalgam of strange teachings and claimed to have them given to her by divine revelation. None of her peculiar doctrines were original, but somehow she was able to convince enough people around her that she was a genuine prophet of God. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, like other American cults and sects that originated in its time, has managed to grow worldwide on a message of the last days. The SDA's problem is that it relies on the supposed divine revelations of a modern prophet rather than the sound interpretation of the Bible itself. For many years, scholars, even some inside the SDA church, warned of the theological and historical errors in Mrs White's writings. Yet the SDA has stubbornly resisted acknowledging these honest criticisms. As Bible believing Christians we should extend our hand of love and fellowship to our Adventist brothers and sisters. Nevertheless, we must, with love, reject their unbiblical teachings that distract from the basic message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.