

Men's Discipleship

False Religions: Seventh Day Adventist Part 3

1. Sabbath Observance (Saturday vs. Lord's Day)

- **SDA teaching:** The SDA Church affirms that the Creation Sabbath is still in force: “The fourth commandment of God’s unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry...” szu.adventist.org. Seventh-day Adventists, therefore, insist on Saturday (“seventh-day”) worship as a perpetual covenant sign szu.adventist.org. **Ellen G. White** emphasized the sanctity of the seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) and warned against Sunday observance. White taught that **keeping Sunday as a holy day instead of Saturday** was a human invention – a “false” or “idol” Sabbath – introduced by church authorities during the great apostasy of early Christianity whiteestate.orgadventistreview.org. In her view, **God’s true “seal” or sign of loyalty is Sabbath observance**, whereas the “mark of the beast” (from Revelation 13) **represents enforced Sunday worship** in defiance of the fourth commandment whiteestate.orgnonsda.org. She wrote bluntly that “**the observance of the first day of the week**” in place of the biblical Sabbath is the mark of the beast in prophecy nonsda.org. Sunday was thus characterized as a **counterfeit Sabbath** – “the mark of papal, Roman authority” as opposed to God’s command.
- **Historic Protestant (WCF/LBCF):** The Westminster Confession explicitly teaches that Christ’s resurrection changed the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day: “*from the resurrection of Christ... [the Sabbath] was changed into the first day of the week, which in Scripture is called the Lord’s Day; and is to be continued to the end of the world as the Christian Sabbath*” thewestminsterstandard.org. The 1689 Baptist Confession likewise states that from Christ’s resurrection “the first day of the week... is called the Lord’s Day” and that observation of the seventh day Sabbath is abolished the1689confession.com. Historical Protestantism regards Sunday, not Saturday, as the Christian day of worship (see Exod. 20:8–11; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10).
- **Puritan commentators:** Thomas Watson explains that God shifted the memorial of creation (7th-day Sabbath) to a memorial of redemption (the Lord’s Day), saying: “*The grand reason for changing the Jewish Sabbath to the Lord’s Day is that it puts us in mind of the ‘Mystery of our redemption by Christ.’*” theologyquotes.com. This reflects the Christian consensus that the Sabbath command endures (Exod. 20:8–11) but as Sunday worship, in light of Christ’s work (Mark 2:27–28; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10).
- **Biblical note:** Adventists rely on Exod. 20:11 and Jesus as “Lord of the Sabbath,” but do not explain the NT practice of Sunday observance. By contrast, historic Protestants point to passages such as Acts 20:7 (“on the first day of the week, when the disciples

came together...”) and Revelation 1:10 to justify Sunday worship, consistent with WCF 21.

2. Christ’s Atonement and Heavenly Sanctuary (Investigative Judgment)

- **SDA teaching:** SDA doctrine holds that at His ascension, Christ began a two-phase heavenly ministry. “At His ascension, Christ was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry, typified by the work of the high priest in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. ... In 1844 [Christ] entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry... a work of *investigative judgment* which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin” szu.adventist.org. This teaching implies that Christ’s one sacrifice was not fully completed on the cross and requires an additional “cleansing” of the heavenly temple (cf. Dan. 8:14).
- Seventh-day Adventists believe that in **1844** Christ entered the heavenly Most Holy Place to begin a pre-Advent “investigative judgment” – a final phase of atonement before His Second Coming. This doctrine was notably taught by Adventist co-founder **Ellen G. White**, who wrote that the prophet Daniel’s vision of Christ coming to the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:13–14) was **not** the Second Coming to earth, but Christ entering the heavenly sanctuary in 1844 to commence judgment. In *The Great Controversy*, she describes how “*Attended by heavenly angels, our great High Priest enters the holy of holies...and there appears in the presence of God to engage in the last acts of His ministration in behalf of man – to perform the work of investigative judgment and to make an atonement for all who are shown to be entitled to its benefits.*” ellenwhite.info According to White, this pre-Advent judgment examines only professed believers: “*So in the great day of final atonement and investigative judgment, the only cases considered are those of the professed people of God. The judgment of the wicked is a distinct and separate work and takes place at a later period.*” ellenwhite.info In this heavenly judgment, the **records** of each life (“books” of deeds) are reviewed (cf. Dan 7:10, Rev 20:12) so that God’s character is vindicated before the universe. White taught that Christ will “*blot out*” the sins of the righteous from the record, and only those who have persevered in faith and repentance will be confirmed as “**worthy**” of eternal life ellenwhite.info. When this investigative phase is completed, human probation will come to a close, and Christ will return. As White summarized: “*The work of the investigative judgment and the blotting out of sins is to be accomplished before the Second Advent...when that work is completed, there will be no further sacrifice for sin*” (cf. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 357). She emphasized that this doctrine places solemn responsibility on believers to live in repentance and faith while Christ intercedes in the sanctuary on their behalf.
- **Historic Protestant (WCF/LBCF):** The Westminster Standards affirm that Christ offered Himself *once for all* as a full and final atonement. For example, WCF 8.5 states that Jesus “once offered up to God... hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father, and purchased... reconciliation” thewestminsterstandard.org. Likewise, the 1689 Confession explains that the Lord’s Supper is only a *memorial* of Christ’s one offering: “*Christ is not*

offered up... in this ordinance, nor any real sacrifice made... but only a memorial of that one offering up of himself by himself upon the cross, once for all"

the1689confession.com. These confessions teach that Christ's sacrifice on Calvary was complete and need not be repeated or supplemented by any later judgment work.

- **Puritan commentary:** John Owen, in his exposition of Hebrews 9–10, emphasizes that Christ's death was "not repeated or continued" but was a single, sufficient offering. He notes that the apostle Hebrews "demonstrates... 'by one offering [of himself], and that once offered, he put away sin, and forever perfected them that are sanctified'" studylight.org, cf. Heb. 10:14). Owen therefore rejects any idea of an "investigative" or repeated sacrifice.
- **Biblical note:** Hebrews 9–10 stresses Christ's single sacrifice: "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" (Heb. 9:28; 10:12). There is no scriptural hint of an 1844 judgment phase. Historic Protestants see Adventist "investigative judgment" as a novel error contradicting Heb. 10:10–14 ("by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified").

3. Key Biblical and Theological Objections Summarized

Protestant theologians have opposed the Investigative Judgment on multiple grounds:

- **Finality of Atonement:** Scripture teaches that Christ's atoning sacrifice was **once for all** and completely sufficient (Hebrews 10:10–14). The idea of a "final atonement" beginning in 1844 appears to **contradict Christ's declaration, "It is finished," by suggesting that sin's guilt was not fully removed at the cross (baptistconfession.org)**. Protestant confessions insist that Jesus "fully satisfied divine justice" on Calvary (baptistconfession.org), whereas the Adventist view implies a continuation or completion of the atonement later, which critics call unbiblical.
- **Assurance of Justification:** In classic Protestant theology, believers **stand confident** in the judgment clothed in Christ's righteousness, "*openly acknowledged and acquitted*" by God's grace cambridgepres.org.uk. The investigative judgment – which teaches that believers' *behavioral records* are examined to confirm who is "worthy" – is seen as undermining the **assurance of salvation**. Westminster declares that the justified "*can never fall from the state of justification*" even though they still err blueletterbible.org. By contrast, Adventists fear that "backsliders" can be lost if they do not pass the heavenly review. Critics argue that this blurs the distinction between justification and sanctification, leaning toward a form of judgment based on works, which Protestant Reformers explicitly rejected as the basis of salvation (blueletterbible.org).
- **God's Omniscience and Justice:** The notion that God must "investigate" the lives of the righteous strikes non-Adventists as incompatible with God's omniscience. They argue it is not God who needs to discover anything; rather, "*the Lord knows those who are His*" (2 Tim 2:19) from the moment of each person's genuine faith. Christian writers often highlight that the **name of each true believer is written in the Book of Life** from the

foundation of the world (Luke 10:20, Rev 13:8), and **nothing can separate them from Christ** (Rom 8:38-39). If their sins are forgiven and “remembered no more” (Heb 8:12), the idea of God calling those sins to remembrance in 1844 for a re-evaluation seems to **impugn the completeness of forgiveness**. Furthermore, **Romans 8:33-34** portrays a courtroom where no charge against God’s elect can even be laid – because Christ’s death and resurrection have decisively secured their acquittal. Protestant theologians see this as incompatible with the Adventist scene of believers’ sins being reviewed (even if only to confirm they are covered). They also raise the issue of “**double jeopardy**”: if Christ paid the penalty for sin, it would be unjust for God to hold those sins for *further* judgment. Adventists respond that the judgment is not to *condemn* the righteous but to affirm their salvation publicly; still, the imagery of an investigative judgment has struck many evangelicals as portraying a needless retrial of those already justified. As one Adventist scholar candidly acknowledged, “*Our prophetic interpretation method is not shared by others...no one outside Adventism finds 1844 in Scripture*” (lifeassuranceministries.org); as a result, the doctrine has often been viewed with skepticism or outright rejection by other Christians.

- **Interpretation of Daniel 8:14:** Non-Adventist biblical scholars virtually unanimously interpret the “*2300 evenings and mornings*” of Daniel 8:14 as a literal time period (about 6.3 years) fulfilled by the atrocities of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the subsequent **reconsecration of the Jewish temple** in 165 B.C. gotquestions.org/puritanboard.com (events commemorated by Hanukkah). They do not see any warrant to project this prophecy to 1844 or to redefine the “sanctuary” as the heavenly one. The **historicist year-day calculation** Adventists use (combining Daniel 8:14 with Daniel 9’s 70 weeks to arrive at 1844) is considered tenuous by most scholars and was largely abandoned by Protestants after the 19th century. Reformed interpreters generally categorize the 1844/IJ doctrine as a **reaction to the Great Disappointment** of 1844 – an **ad hoc** explanation early Adventists devised when Christ did not return as expected. They note that no major Christian body before Adventism taught such an idea, and even some early Adventist associates (e.g. Advent Christian Church) rejected it.
- **Christ’s Heavenly Ministry in Hebrews:** Adventists appeal to Hebrews’ teaching of Christ as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. However, Christian scholars argue that Hebrews portrays Christ as having entered **the proper Most Holy Place at His ascension**, “*having obtained eternal redemption*” (Heb 9:12) – **not** waiting until 1844 to do so. “*We have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,*” says Hebrews 10:19-20, implying believers already have access to God’s immediate presence through Christ’s completed work. The idea that Christ was restricted to a “Holy Place” ministry until 1844 is seen as an overly literal and erroneous application of the sanctuary typology. Puritan commentators like **John Owen** (in his Hebrews commentary) taught that Christ’s ascension **inaugurated** the antitypical Day of Atonement, where, by virtue of His sacrifice, He entered *once for all* beyond the veil for us. Thus, many Protestants view the Adventist claim that Christ only **began** the Most Holy Place ministry in 1844 as a serious misreading of Hebrews that *diminishes the glory of Christ’s priestly work accomplished once for all*.