

## A Comparison of Seventh Day **Baptists** and Seventh-day Adventists

Some people confuse Seventh Day **Baptists** and Seventh-day Adventists because they have similar names. The groups do have some things in common, but there are differences in their history, teachings, and organisation.

### History

**Seventh Day Baptist** history begins in the 1600s in England, although similar groups existed much earlier. They discarded traditions that were not supported by Scripture, and restored doctrines that others groups had abandoned. Five truths were central to early Seventh Day Baptist teaching:

- Salvation is God's gift to those who believe in Christ's atoning sacrifice.
- The Bible must be the Christian's only authority for doctrine and practice.
- God gave the moral law (the Ten Commandments) for all people in all time periods.
- The seventh-day Sabbath is part of God's moral law. No human authority has the right to change the day of rest and worship.
- Secular governments should not have authority over the church ("separation of church and state").

Seventh Day Baptists endured persecution in both Great Britain and the United States because of these teachings.

Seventh-day **Adventists** developed about 200 years after Seventh Day Baptists. Early SDAs had been followers of William Miller. Mr. Miller had predicted that Christ would return in 1844. His inaccurate prophecy resulted in the "Great Disappointment" for his followers. Some of these people became convinced of the Sabbath truth through Seventh Day Baptists and added Sabbath observance to their interpretation of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. This combined message was reinforced by the leadership of James and Ellen G. White. Mrs. White wrote many books, sometimes borrowing material from other authors. She claimed to have visions that resolved various doctrinal issues in the young denomination. She came to be seen as **the** authority in Bible interpretation for her church. As early as 1857, the SDA Conference declared that her testimony to the church was "received as the voice of the Lord to His people" (see *Review & Herald*, 12 November, 1857).

The first Seventh Day Baptist church in North America organised in 1671. Their work in Australia began in the 1950s. Seventh-day Adventist first organised in the United States shortly after the "Great Disappointment" in 1844. Their first missionaries came to Australia in the 1880s.

### Some Similarities

Both groups

- Observe the original Sabbath of the Bible, the seventh day of the week, commonly called "Saturday."
- Support religious freedom and the separation of government and church.
- Practice baptism by immersion. (For differences in the meaning of baptism, see the back of this pamphlet.)

### Some Differences

#### Bible

**Seventh Day Baptists** view the Bible as the final authority in all matters of faith and practice both for the individual Christian and for the church as a whole.

**Seventh-day Adventists** insist that the Bible is the source of their faith, but also teach that Ellen G. White was an inspired prophetess. They consider her writings and teachings as authoritative in their church.

#### Interpretation of the Bible

**Seventh Day Baptists** consider liberty of thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to be essential to Christian belief and practice. They encourage unhindered study and open discussion of Scripture. They uphold the individual's freedom of conscience in seeking to understand and apply God's Word.

**Seventh-day Adventists** use a creedal approach to the interpretation of Scripture. They expect members to accept and support the official position of their church in all areas of doctrine. Only limited freedom is permitted to members to interpret for themselves.

#### Atonement

**Seventh Day Baptists** teach that Christ's atoning work was finished when He died on the cross. Eternal life is not something we earn through good works. It is a gift through God's grace. The believer is free from condemnation because of this finished atoning work of Christ. While all people should do good works, salvation is not dependent on our efforts.

**Seventh-day Adventists** stress the "third angel's message" (Revelation 14:9-12). They teach that Christ entered the "heavenly sanctuary" in 1844 and is completing His atonement by investigating the lives of all people. They call this the "investigative judgement." An emphasis on human effort causes some SDAs to be uncertain about salvation for themselves and others.

#### Prophecy and the Second Coming

**Seventh Day Baptists** believe that Christ will return to earth in power at an undisclosed time in the future. They believe and teach Bible prophecy, but do not place great emphasis on a detailed prophetic timetable for those future events.

**Seventh-day Adventists** emphasise interpreting prophecy and expect all members to accept the official church interpretation. Many SDAs believe that only those who accept their interpretation of "present truth" will be "translated" when Christ appears.

#### Health and Diet

**Seventh Day Baptists** teach that it is important for believers to follow a healthy life style, but they do not impose a specific model. Some SDBs follow Old Testament dietary laws, but it is not considered to be a requirement for salvation or church membership.

**Seventh-day Adventists** teach that the Old Testament dietary laws are still mandatory for Christians today. While not an absolute requirement for church membership, SDAs strongly encourage a vegetarian diet for all church members.

### Contributions and Stewardship

**Seventh Day Baptists** teach that each believer is responsible to God for the use of material possessions as well as Spiritual gifts and abilities. How the believer uses what is kept is as important as what portion is given for the work of the church. SDBs approve of the tithing model, but do not emphasise it as an absolute obligation for church membership.

**Seventh-day Adventists** hold that tithing (the giving of ten per cent of income) is obligatory on all church members. They teach that the tithe should be supplemented by offerings.

### Church Organisation

**Seventh Day Baptists** are “congregational” in organisation. The responsibility to organise and function as a church rests with the people on the local level. Such matters as the selection of leaders, ownership of property and setting priorities in ministry are seen as duties of each congregation. Cooperation among churches is encouraged to promote larger efforts, fellowship, training, and spiritual enrichment.

**Seventh-day Adventists** are authoritarian in organisation. It is fundamentally an “Episcopal” form of church government. Appointment of pastors, ownership of local church property, setting of goals and development of programs all flow from the top down. Most tithes and offerings go to the central church government for distribution according to the plans of the leadership.

### Relationships with Other Christians

**Seventh Day Baptists** believe they have great truths to share with other people – both unbelievers and believers. For this reason, SDBs have been open to fellowship with other Christians, including those who have not yet embraced the truth of the Sabbath. In general, SDBs see the “mark of the beast” as still in the future and that it will include far more than a change in the day of worship.

**Seventh-day Adventists** subscribe to “remnant theology” which many SDAs understand to mean that only members of their own church will receive salvation. The “Great Controversy” identified Sunday observance as the “mark of the beast” mentioned in the book of Revelation. These two facts restrict association with other denominations, especially those who do not observe the Sabbath.

### Sabbath

**Seventh Day Baptists** have observed the Sabbath for nearly 400 years. They have preached this distinctive doctrine as a blessing provided by God for all people to experience. Obedience is our loving response to God's grace. SDBs believe that the Sabbath should be faithfully observed as a day of rest, worship, and fellowship.

**Seventh-day Adventists** embraced the Sabbath truth that was presented to them by Seventh Day Baptists. They have often presented the Sabbath as “work” that is essential to salvation. The Sabbath also plays an important role in Adventist interpretation of prophecy with their historic identification of Sunday with Revelation’s mark of the beast.

### Baptism

**Seventh Day Baptists** teach that baptism by immersion is a testimony to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because this is a personal testimony of the person being baptised, SDBs generally accept previous immersion baptisms from other groups if the person views the baptism as valid.

**Seventh-day Adventists** generally do not accept baptisms by other groups. They view baptism as more than a symbol of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. For them it also represents acceptance of SDA doctrine and membership in their church.

Did you say  
Seventh Day  
Baptist?

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and  
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This document seeks to give a fair presentation of the doctrines of both groups. It is not possible to cover all issues. It should be noted that individuals who affiliate with either organisation may hold to somewhat different positions on some issues.