

In Focus: Seventh-day Adventists at Weekly Bible Study

Like any exclusivist, world-wide Church, Seventh-day Adventism faces the constant challenge of maintaining its crucial, dogmatic integrity across a vast spectrum of cultures. One of its major instruments is its Bible Study Guides (formerly Sabbath School Lessons). The very impressive result is that, from Africa to Alaska, between Dundee and Dunedin, every Sabbath millions of motivated members assemble in small classes to discuss virtually the *identical* study guides in their *native* tongues.

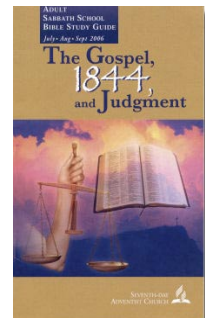
Even as there is more to applaud than to bemoan amongst its almost 30 Fundamental Beliefs, Seventh-day Adventism's weekly Bible Study guides can present quite acceptable, at times excellent, theology. The primary purpose of this review of these lessons' *major* points, then, is to give credit where credit is due while expressing frank, objective, albeit strictly *lay-oriented* concern over any serious errors.



Each quarter this weighty task will be entrusted to an experienced authority in the relevant field. However, his or her personal positions are not necessarily endorsed by the current sponsors. This quarter we welcome the voluntary services of Dr. Fred Mazzaferri, a freelance, Australian theologian who gained his Ph.D. in IIT theology in 1986 from the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. He specialises in John's rather enigmatic Book of Revelation.

Third Quarter, 2006

The Gospel, 1844, and Judgment



GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Although the current Study Guides [revisit](#) Seventh-day Adventism's crucial dogma, a pre-Advent judgment of every professing individual since Adam, beginning in 1844, they are highly commendable in aiming "to look at the judgment in the context of the *gospel*," stress supplied. However, right from the very outset they admit as frankly as arrestingly that, of all their sweeping doctrines, every one is repletely endorsed by other confessions, too, "(e)xcept one: the 1844 pre-Advent judgment."

Not that this need worry anyone!

For some, this fact is worrisome; Why don't more Christians see it, as well? For others, the uniqueness of the doctrine points even more powerfully to the special calling of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It's precisely because no one else teaches this judgment that we have been raised to do so. From this doctrine, perhaps more than any other, our distinct identity as Seventh-day Adventists arises.

Oh no!?! The very striking fact that this denomination appears completely unable to parade one *single*, solitary, intellectually honest Bible student outside its ranks who, for all his or her efforts, sees *any* light in this dogma ought to silence such sheer arrogance. Moreover, it is a simple matter to list scholar after honest *Seventh-day Adventist* Bible scholar who, along with members in their thousands and pastors in their hundreds, harbour grave doubts, often in "political" silence, over the dogma which, above all others, their leaders fiercely defend as their Church's *sine qua non*.

Whatever, this "judgment in the context of the gospel" is before us, and we owe it to our sincere Christian friends, the Seventh-day Adventists, open mindedly to review what they are taught here as their "biblical basis for the pre-Advent judgment".

NOTE: Unless otherwise specified, the regular Bible for citation is IIIV, all stress supplied.