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**Editorial Office** 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904

**Principal Contributor**

Clifford R. Goldstein

**Editor**

Clifford R. Goldstein

**Associate Editor**

Lyndelle Brower Chiomenti

**Publication Manager**

Soraya Homayouni Parish

**Editorial Assistant**

Larie S. Gray

**Pacific Press®  
Coordinator**

Paul A. Hey

**Art Director and Illustrator**

Lars Justinen

**Concept Design**

Dever Design

- ▶ **Key Text, Lesson Aim, and Outline:** Philip Oreso, freelance writer, Nairobi, Kenya.
- ▶ **The Commentary:** John Fowler, associate director, Education department, General Conference of SDA, Silver Spring, Md., U.S.A.
- ▶ **The Inductive Bible-Study Method:** Steve Chavez, managing editor, *Adventist Review*, General Conference of SDA, Silver Spring, Md., U.S.A.
- ▶ **The Focus-on-Witnessing Approach:** Mark Kellner, assistant director, GC Communication, General Conference of SDA, Silver Spring, Md., U.S.A.
- ▶ **The Life-Application Approach:** Fylvia Fowler Kline and Jezeniah Fowler Kline, freelance writers, Burtonsville, Md., U.S.A.

The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is prepared by the Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The preparation of the guides is under the general direction of the Sabbath School Publications Board, a subcommittee of the General Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM), publisher of the Bible study guides. The published guide reflects the input of worldwide evaluation committees and the approval of the Sabbath School Publications Board and thus does not solely or necessarily represent the intent of the author(s).

# THE *Gospel, 1844,*

## *The 1844 judgment brings the Cross into greater focus.*

As Adventists, many of our “unique” doctrines are not, really, unique. After all, other Christians (not many, admittedly) keep the seventh-day Sabbath, as well. Though a majority of the Christian world believes in the immortality of the soul, other Christians understand that the dead sleep in the grave until the resurrection, either the first or second. Various “Adventist” teachings, i.e., eternal destruction (as opposed to eternal torment) or the nature of the millennium, can be found elsewhere too. In fact, almost all our doctrines are scattered throughout Christendom.

Except one: the 1844 pre-Advent judgment.

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.

This quarter we will study the 1844 pre-Advent judgment. But not in isolation. As the title suggests, we're going to look at the judgment in the context of the gospel, because judgment without the gospel is like law without grace: It leads only to fear, condemnation, and death. On the other hand, judgment with the gospel (like law with grace) leads to faith, assurance, and hope.

Perhaps the clearest link between the gospel and judgment is the first angel's message: “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach. . . . Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come” (*Rev. 14:6, 7*). As far as God is concerned, the “everlasting gospel” includes judgment; how foolish for us to make it any less inclusive.

Our study this quarter will be divided into various parts. First, we'll let Scripture fill in the background for the judgment and the whole plan of salvation.

# and Judgment

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Next, in the bulk of the quarter, we'll establish the biblical basis for the 1844 judgment, seeing for ourselves just what a solid basis we have for this teaching, rooted in the Cross. For those whose knowledge of the doctrine began and ended with an evangelistic series, this study will help firmly ground you in this key truth. For those who have already studied it in depth, this quarter will reinforce what you already know and, perhaps, help you understand it even better.

We'll then look at some questions the teaching faces, using them as a vehicle to better grasp the biblical basis for the pre-Advent judgment.

Most important, we'll look at the judgment in the context of the gospel, of Christ's death in our behalf, with the understanding that because of His death we can have assurance in the judgment. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (*Rom. 8:1*). No condemnation now, and especially in the judgment.

Finally, we seek to answer such questions as: What does a judgment whose beginning was dated in the nineteenth century mean for us in the twenty-first? What does it tell us about ourselves, our church, and, most important, about the God who promises to return and take us home?

In the end, a proper understanding of the 1844 judgment will bring out Christ's death for us in greater clarity and depth, especially as we await the Second Coming. Perhaps that's why we, as Seventh-day Adventists, have been called to preach it, because it does bring the Cross into greater focus, and as we near the consummation of all things, how important that the Cross be understood with all possible clarity. Thus, more than wanting you to come away from these lessons with a better understanding of charts, dates, and numbers, we want you to come away with a greater understanding of the Cross, of Jesus, and of His ministry in heaven for us. If so, then our work together this quarter will have been—through the grace of God—richly rewarded and more than worth the effort.

# How to Use This Teachers Edition

The teachers comments demonstrate different methods of teaching the adult standard edition Bible study guide. Five parts make up the teachers comments:

- ▶ **Key Text, Lesson Aim, and Outline:** The key text is taken from the standard edition guide. The lesson aim is designed to (a) help class participants understand and know about the lesson material, (b) evoke an appropriate feeling about the lesson material that complements the lesson content and helps to internalize it, and (c) help class participants apply the lesson material to their daily lives. The lesson outline may not always follow exactly the material that appears in the standard guide. It may reflect additional perspectives as it attempts to stimulate class discussion.
- ▶ **The Commentary** follows the traditional teaching methods of Sabbath School. It explains Bible passages and provides appropriate information leading to spiritual applications.
- ▶ **The Inductive Bible-Study Method** emphasizes careful, methodical discovery of the meaning in a text. The teacher encourages and supports the learner's investigation and discovery, using distinctive approaches: (a) Study a text thoroughly and systematically before drawing a conclusion. (b) Look for textual meaning carefully and thoroughly, understand the passage in context, avoid misquoting the author. We must not develop opinions without biblical proof. (c) Share insights through group discussion as students examine a Bible passage together. (d) Apply the text to life today. (e) Allow the Holy Spirit to minister to class members during Bible study.
- ▶ **The Focus-on-Witnessing Approach** should be used in conjunction with other methods of Bible study to demonstrate how particular passages of Scripture can be used to encourage people to commit their lives to Christ and to nurture spiritual life once it has been awakened.
- ▶ **The Life-Application Approach** demonstrates how issues that grow out of Bible study can be shared in a small-group setting. This section uses an approach suitable for discussion in a small group in which interpersonal sharing and dialogue are key elements.

*Use a combination of teaching methods. Within one class period it often is possible to draw from all five methods demonstrated in the teachers comments. Some teachers will prefer to focus on one method of teaching, drawing heavily on the material in the teachers comments.*